

# INITIAL TEACHER TRAINING PROGRAMMES IN SLOVAKIA AND ENGLAND: UNIVERSITY OF PREŠOV AND UNIVERSITY OF BOLTON

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## **Abstract**

The paper is the result of the cooperation of the authors during the two months of Erasmus + Exchange Programmes at University of Bolton in Bolton in UK in the summer term 2015. It is a preliminary study into the initial teacher education programmes established at the two institutions, the University of Prešov in Slovakia and the University of Bolton in England, UK. The aim of the paper is to enable better understanding of teacher education systems currently available in both countries; their structure, content and educational policies. It is, we believe, a necessary first step for the development of mutually rewarding and effective research collaboration into teacher education between these two universities. The paper describes the structure of the educational systems in both countries and explains how both universities meet the demands of the sectors they prepare their trainee teachers for. It informs about the structure and the content of their initial teacher courses and provides some suggestions for future collaborative research projects.

**Key words:** schooling system, teaching programme, university, educational system, education

## **Abstrakt**

Článok je výsledkom vzájomnej spolupráce autoriek počas dvojmesačnej stáže realizovanej prostredníctvom programu Erasmus+ na univerzite v Boltone vo Veľkej Británii v letnom semestri roku 2015. Porovnáva učiteľské programy na dvoch vzdelávacích inštitúciách, a to na Prešovskej univerzite v Prešove a na University of Bolton v Boltone vo Veľkej Británii, a zároveň prináša návrhy na prípadnú budúcu spoluprácu v rámci spoločného výskumného projektu. Článok informuje o histórii a štruktúre vzdelávacieho systému v oboch krajinách. Autorky sa domnievajú, že práve takéto poznatky sú prvým a kľúčovým krokom porovnávania učiteľských programov na jednotlivých univerzitách, resp. v dvoch rozdielnych krajinách. V článku autorky využívajú vlastné skúsenosti zo štúdií a pôsobenia na uvedených univerzitách. Detailne popisujú jednotlivé programy zamerané na prípravu budúcich učiteľov a poukazujú na rozdiely medzi nimi. Výsledky prieskumu ukazujú, že v oboch krajinách je vzdelávanie ovplyvnené viac-menej politickým zriadením a ideológiou. Zatiaľ čo v Anglicku prevláda neoliberalný postoj k vzdelávaniu, na Slovensku je snaha o modernizáciu, demokratizáciu a humanizáciu vzdelávania sústavne potláčaná morálnym i finančným podhodnocovaním učiteľskej profesie. Z porovnania učiteľských programov na konkrétnych univerzitách, na Prešovskej univerzite a na University of Bolton, vyplynulo, že v Anglicku sú, na rozdiel od Slovenska, učiteľské programy orientované viac na praktickú stránku, pretože študenti sú priamo zapojení do vyučovania; dokonca v niektorých prípadoch univerzitné vzdelanie ani nie je súčasťou prípravy na učiteľské povolanie. Obe univerzity sa zameriavajú na prípravu budúcich učiteľov v rôznych sektoroch vzdelávania. Prešovská univerzita pripravuje učiteľov všetkých stupňov vzdelávania a University of Bolton sa špecializuje na učiteľov v doplnkovom vzdelávaní. Obe univerzity však spája záujem o zlepšenie kvality učiteľských programov. Táto štúdia by mohla byť podnetná v hľadaní námetov na zefektívnenie kvality učiteľských programov.

**Kľúčové slová:** školstvo, učiteľský program, univerzita, vzdelávanie, vzdelávací systém,

## **1 The system of education in Slovakia and England**

In order to describe how the initial teacher education is organised in Slovakia and the UK, namely England, a short description of their educational systems will be provided. This will hopefully enable readers understand better how this impacts on the teacher education systems in both countries.

Since World War Two both countries have undergone major political and social changes resulting in their distinctively different ideological and structural approaches to education. In the UK that consists of four jurisdictions (England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales), the political devolvement in the last decades meant that Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales have been formulating and constructing their own educational policies, including the content of school curricula and the structure and content of pre-service teacher education programmes. Beauchamp et al. (2013) point out the education policies in Northern Ireland, Wales and Scotland have reflected the need to emphasise the ‘development and/or re-affirmation of national identities’ (Beauchamp et al. 2013, p. 1) while in England the decision-making about the education has been more informed by ‘ideological agendas’, namely that of neo-liberalism and ‘corporate managerialism’ (ibid., p. 5). Consequently, the current changes in the structure and funding of education have demonstrated a move towards increased commercialism and privatisation of education, as will be illustrated later in the paper.

In Slovakia the changes in the political system since 1989 and then the establishment of the independent Slovak republic in 1993 have had a considerable impact on its educational policy and the structure of educational system. This could be visible in the desire to innovate education, in the support of the privately established educational institutions and in the sudden rise of the number of universities delivering teacher education programmes.

### **1.1 Change of policy and its influence on education in Slovakia**

Concerning Slovakia, educational system has undergone significant changes since the political changes initiated by the fall of communism in November 1989. Slovakia before 1989, being part of Czechoslovak Socialist Republic, built its educational policy on the key policy document *The Further Development of the Czechoslovak System of Education and Training* which was, according to Institute of Information and Prognoses of Education, “*approved under the conditions of the Czechoslovak Socialistic Republic (1976) and codified by the education acts passed in 1978*” (2005, p.3).

Admittedly, the revolutionary changes in politics, society and economy have had a significant impact on the educational system. After 1990, and namely after 1993 when Slovakia became an independent state, the educational policies have been informed by various international documents, such as:

*UNESCO, Copenhagen Document (KBSE No. 1203) on Human Dimension and Minority Rights (1990), OECD, Bologna Declaration, White Paper on Education and Training –*

*Teaching and Learning (1995), EC Copenhagen Declaration on Vocational Education (2002), Convention on International Labour Organisation on the Right of Employees to Further Education, etc.) and new provisions of the Constitutional Act of the CSFR (1991) on implementation of universal rights and freedoms in agreement with the Declaration of Rights and Freedoms which were also included in the Constitution of the Slovak Republic in 1992. (Institute of Information and Prognoses of Education, 2005, p.3)*

The process of change was gradual with the emphasis on ‘democratisation and humanisation’ (ibid., p. 4) of the entire schooling system at all levels, including the structure and content of the national curriculum, the management of institutions and their administration. However, despite the ideals brought by the ‘Velvet Revolution’, the political instability in Slovakia has hindered the pro-democratic and innovative initiatives to update more radically the curricula at primary and secondary levels. Moreover, many reforms have only been partially completed, due to non-systematic planning and insufficient time allocation. The changes have not included appropriate support for teacher development and there has been no overall consensus about the aims and objectives of the state education among all the stakeholders involved in the sector, namely teachers, employers, politicians, and various state independent interest groups (Zimenová, 2011).

Currently, the key government education policy has been formulated in the document “Štátny vzdelávací program škôl” (SPU, 2011-15). The document identifies the stages of the Slovak educational system, its management and administration, the aims and objectives of the national curriculum, the outline of its content and organisation, including assessment strategies to be implemented by individual schools. It also allows schools to adapt the curriculum to their needs that are determined by the social and cultural context in which they operate.

At present, the educational policy concerning the further education (age 15 – 19) is focused on the development of the ‘dual system’ of education and training which should meet the economic needs of the country as well as to provide a political solution for the high unemployment of young people. The system, following examples from Germany, Switzerland and Austria, should encourage employers to be more involved in the organisation of and input into various vocationally oriented qualifications and training programmes, as the current Minister of Education, Juraj Draxler, suggests (Úrad vlády Slovenskej Republiky, 2015).

### **1.1.2 Educational system in Slovakia**

The Slovak educational system is divided into the following main stages as identified in the above-mentioned document “Štátny vzdelávací program škôl” following an international document of ISCED – International Standard Classification of Education (SPU, 2011 – 15): pre-school education ‘Preprimárne vzdelávanie nultého stupňa’ (0 – 6); the primary education “Primárne vzdelávanie – vzdelávanie na primárnej úrovni” (6 – 11) that is followed by lower secondary education “Nižšie sekundárne vzdelávanie – vzdelávanie na nižšom sekundárnom

stupni” (11- 15); the higher secondary education “Vyššie sekundárne vzdelávanie” (15 – 19). The compulsory school age is from 6 to 16, it means Slovak students are expected to complete successfully all nine years at the “základná” school that provides primary and lower secondary education and at least one more year at a higher secondary institution. The higher secondary education (in the UK this would be referred to “further” education) is offered by a variety of providers. There are mainly state schools funded through regional governments but also privately funded institutions supported by various religious groups, employers or parents themselves. Slovak pupils can decide to follow a more academic route through gymnasiums that can be from 4 to 8 years long (the latter taking on pupils from the age 11). However, they can decide to follow a more vocationally oriented route where they can choose 3 to 5 years of schooling depending on the type of school and chosen route. The schools can be secondary technical colleges, specialised art colleges and conservatories and apprenticeship specialised colleges. The secondary education is in majority cases completed by the state exam called ‘Maturita’ which is a national test required for the entrance on a university (at the age of 18 or 19). The tertiary education is traditionally organised by universities or academically accredited lower level institutions, called “vysoká” schools. And they are divided according to their character and coverage into university ‘vysoká’ schools and non university ‘vysoká’ schools. However, there are universities which contain the term ‘vysoká’ in their name (e.g. Vysoká škola múzických umení v Bratislave). The universities in Slovakia, similar to those in the UK, offer three levels of higher education awards (Bachelors, Masters and Postgraduate).

The gymnasium route is very popular, there is a network of more general four years’ institutions or bilingual institutions taking from 5 to 8 years as they can recruit children from the age of 11. They deliver education in a foreign language, for example in Spanish, English, German and French; these are funded partly by their particular foreign countries’ education departments and/or by various private stakeholders, e.g. churches and sometimes by parents themselves. Some learners however follow an apprenticeship route that in some way prevents them from further education progression as they complete their education within 3 years without the university required ‘Maturita’ exam.

Becoming a teacher in Slovakia requires a university education; however there are specialised colleges in pedagogy which prepare their graduates for being teachers at the pre-school or primary level. The teachers and trainers preparing pupils from the age of 15 at vocationally oriented courses need to have a level 3 qualification in their subject and completed a "minimal pedagogical qualification" that might be equal to the PTLLS (Preparing to Teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector Level 3 or Level 4) qualification currently available as a minimum teacher training qualification in England.

### **1.1.3 Educational system in England**

Education has a high political priority in the UK. Each political party presents their views on education in their pre-election programme and is eager to formulate their plans and realise

them as soon as they form the government and take office of the Department for Education (DfE). Currently, the education system is under a huge pressure to accept and adapt to the political decisions introduced mainly by the previous Secretary of State for Education, Michael Gove (2010 – 2013), who became the head of the DfE in 2010 for the Conservative Party in the Coalition Government. Being successful in the last elections, the Conservative Party will certainly continue to implement their pro-market oriented, competition-based educational policy, justified by the ideology of neo-liberalism "with its faith in the efficacy of the market as the basis for decision-making in all areas of human activity, including education" (Hipkins et al., 2010, p. 116) despite its criticism from teacher unions, representatives of colleges and teacher education universities.

The schooling system in England has become very complex due to the government policies that allow various private organisations and interest groups to open their own schools in the name of equality and diversity, this means for example that various religious groups have been encouraged to set up their own schools or parent groups can now apply for a free school funding. The private institutions are usually partially funded by the state as well as having more independence from the state dictated national curriculum.

In England the education system (GOV.UK, n.d.) is divided into 5 stages: early years (0 – 5), primary (5 - 11), secondary (11 – 16), further education (FE) (16 – 19; and 19+) and higher education (19 and above). Education is compulsory for all pupils from the age of 5 to until recently 16. The Schools White Paper 2010 though raised the school leaving age to 17 in 2013 and 18 in 2015 (DFE, 2010). The last two years at the secondary school are focused on the preparation for the General Certificate in Secondary Education (GCSE) and pupils are expected to achieve at least five GCSE's above the grade C, including maths and English. If they fail to get a GCSE at English and maths, the learners are expected to continue studying these subjects even if they go on a further education course. The GCSE exams are currently undergoing fundamental changes, though, with a stronger emphasis on the academic knowledge and skills and with a different approach to the assessment regime, for example a new grading system is introduced from 1 to 9 (9 = top level), assessments are by external exam mainly and they will be linear with exams conducted at the end of the two-year course in June (OCR, 2015). The key changes are outlined in the policy paper "2010 to 2015 Government policy: school and college qualifications and curriculum" (DFE, 2015).

The further education sector, which is officially called 'the further education and skills sector', represents a very complex system of educational opportunities and institutions for young people and adults from the age of 16 to 19 and 19+. The sector consists of local governments' funded further education colleges, in some places there are still popular grammar schools, then various private training providers, prisons, community learning and skills providers, such as charities, independent specialist colleges and sixth form colleges. Many colleges are gradually applying for independent academy status due to the government financial initiatives and are becoming independent academies, often funded by various church groups.

The sector is currently under the pressure to develop apprenticeship programmes. These are government funded educational initiatives encouraging employers themselves deliver various forms of training that are often conducted with close cooperation with colleges. To make apprenticeships more attractive, the government has supported the accreditation of higher apprenticeships of the level 3 that equal to A-levels or BTEC Diplomas at level 3 to enable the students to be accepted at some universities. For example the learners who achieve a vocational award at level 2, e.g. in Beauty Therapy which equals to a GCSE level may aspire to study further. In this case they can apply for a higher apprenticeship course at level 3, securing them a chance to be accepted at some universities.

The funding of courses is very complex and has a decreasing tendency, with funding cuts by 35% to date, targeting specially the provision for 18-year-olds (AoC, May 2014). The changes introduced to funding and structure of the FE education and training are justified by the rhetoric of the need to balance the state budget, meeting the demands and competition of the global market, increasing the competition among providers and therefore providing student choice. The government also emphasizes the need to involve employers in the development and financing qualification awards. The sector offers vocational and academic study programmes that are currently free of charge for learners up to the age of 18. However, if the learners wish to continue at a level 3 programme some fees are expected to be paid by employers or students aged over 19. The fees were introduced in the Schools White Paper 2010 (DfE 2010) and adults aged 24 or over studying higher level courses (Level 3 or higher) will be expected to apply for student loans (BIS, 2010a & b).

The complex nature of the further education and skills sector is also reflected in its being supervised by two government departments. While the Department for Education is mainly concerned with education at the early stages of schooling (up to the age of 16), the further education and skills sector (for post 14-aged learners) is from 2009 ‘*overseen by the new Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, although some parts (such as education and training for 14-19 years old) fall within the remit of the Department for Education*’ (Gov.UK, n.d., p.3). However, it must be said, both departments cooperate closely, and the political decisions made by the DfE are then closely followed by the BIS policies (BIS, 2011).

The reforms in further education and skills sector have been introduced through the BIS strategy papers, *Skills for Sustainable Growth (BIS, 2010a)*, *Investing in Skills for Sustainable Growth (BIS 2010b)* and *New Challenges, New Chances (BIS, 2011)*. The ideology underpinning the reforms stresses the importance of providing greater freedoms to colleges from the central government control and asks them to become more accountable to their stakeholders, namely to their learners, employers and communities.

The colleges are encouraged to follow various business models, collaborate with employers, create local enterprise partnerships (LEPs) and are expected to contribute to the local economic growth (LSIS, 2013). Consequently, the learners can find a whole range of courses delivered at their local college, from very basic, vocationally oriented apprenticeships to higher

education, university based programmes, including teacher education ones, which have been established through collaborative partnership between a higher education institution (university) and a college. An example of such collaboration is the partnership between the University of Bolton's School of Education and Psychology and five different institutions: Bolton College, Bury College, Brooksby Melton College, Salford City College and The Skills Company in Manchester that deliver the university accredited Initial Teacher Education 14+ programme at their premises with their own teaching staff up to the level 6.

## **2 Initial teacher training programmes**

### ***2.1. Becoming a teacher in Slovakia***

To start with, let me introduce the study programmes focusing on future teachers at University of Prešov in Slovakia. Unlike in UK students in Slovakia decide being teachers at the beginning when enrolling for a study programme. Applicants are at liberty of choosing from wide range of teaching study programmes in miscellaneous combinations. University of Prešov offers the teaching programmes at three of its faculties (1) Faculty of Art, (2) Faculty of Education, (3) Faculty of Humanities and Natural Sciences and (4) Faculty of Sports; and two university workplaces.

While at Faculty of Education students are educated to be teachers at pre-school and primary level, Faculty of Arts and Faculty of Humanities and Natural Sciences offer extensive spectrum of subjects which may be studied as a single major programme (e.g. English language and literature) or double major programme (e.g. teacher training in English language and teacher training in literature and German language and literature) and students are being prepared for teaching at secondary level. The undergraduates following a teaching pathway of their study will be qualified to teach at the lower secondary level of 'základná' school, namely learners from age 11 to 15 as well as to teach at higher secondary level institutes (gymnasiums or technical colleges) – up to the age of 19. They are also qualified to teach adult learners as well. Normally the whole programme takes five years and it is divided into two parts: three years of Bachelor degree and two years of Master degree.

Studying at Bachelor degree is concentrated more on general knowledge about the particular subject and prepares students to be experts in their field. For example, students of single major programme of teacher training in English language and literature (EFL pre-service teachers) must go through the sections of phonetics and phonology, syntax, morphology, grammar, literature, linguistics, realia and history of English speaking countries. Besides, there are also compulsory courses from general pedagogy which cover pedagogy, human biology, didactic and psychology. When speaking about EFL pre-service teachers, they have one week of observation at school but not teaching practice. Accordingly after finishing Bachelor level of studies, graduates are well educated in their subject, yet they cannot work as full-time teachers. In case they want to be qualified teachers, they need to continue to Master level.

The Master level specialises students to be good teachers in their field. It covers several courses of methodology and pre-service teachers are exposed also to practical teaching experience. While the Bachelor level is concentrated rather on the subject matter of chosen study programme (e.g. English language), the Master level focuses mostly on the methodology of the particular subject and practice. Pre-services must pass the courses like Current Trends in Teaching Foreign languages, Socio-Cultural Aspects of Foreign languages, EFL Methodology, Educational Psychology, Teaching English and Teaching English to Young Learners. Picking out the programme teacher training of English language and literature, students, apart from learning for example about various approaches to teaching English and methods how to develop learners' competences and how to proceed when teaching particular aspects of language, have chance to assist a teacher while teaching pupils at 'základná' school two lessons a week during whole term. This assistance is very beneficial for pre-service teachers because they can cooperate with real teacher and real students, moreover, they have space for longitudinal observation of the teacher and the learners they work with. Unlike during the own pre-services' teaching practice, students tend to present their real behavior when they are in the environment which is natural for them or which becomes natural. Because having an assistant in the classroom may be disruptive for learners at the beginning but after certain time, when they get used, they start to reveal their personalities. This is perfect opportunity for pre-service teachers to observe and learn how to deal with potential problems or how to manage classroom. Besides, it is not stressful for them because they are only in the role of observer and they are not expected to sort the situation out.

However, the part of Master level of study is also own direct teaching of pre-services, the teaching practice. The teaching practice is carried out in two phases as follows: Teaching practice 1 which takes 2 weeks and pre-service teachers teach 16 lesson (8lessons in each subject when they are double major students); and Teaching practice 2 which takes 5 weeks (divided into winter and summer term) and students are supposed to teach 16 and 32 lessons (see the table below).

Table 1.

YEAR	TERM	NAME	LENGTH	SCHOOL	LESSONS
3 <sup>rd</sup> Bachelor degree	ST	Teaching practice (observations)	1 week	Elementary schools	
1 <sup>st</sup> year Master degree	WT	-	-	-	-
1 <sup>st</sup> year Master degree	ST	Teaching practice1	2 weeks	Elementary schools	2x8/1x16
2 <sup>nd</sup> year Master degree	WT	Teaching practice 2	2 weeks	Secondary schools (college type)	2x8/1x16
2 <sup>nd</sup> year Master degree	ST	Teaching practice 2	3 weeks	Elementary + secondary schools	2x8/1x16 + 2x8/1x16

## ***2.2. Becoming a Teacher in England***

To be able to teach in state-maintained schools in England that prepare pupils up to the age of 16, the initial teacher education course needs to be undertaken that leads to Qualified Teacher Status (QTS). There are different routes that lead to QTS.

*School Direct* courses are full time courses offered to graduates who wish to train directly at a school that enables them practical experience of teaching, while theory is delivered through the partnership with a university. The courses can be based on expecting the graduates to pay tuition fees or can be salaried, if the candidate has at least 2:1 classification for their first degree and three years' career experience.

*School Centred Initial Teacher Training* (SCITT) is run by groups of schools and colleges within a local area and is available for those who have a degree related to a national curriculum subject. It is a school led route too.

University-led route courses have been traditional routes into teaching. After completing their first degree (bachelor) the candidates register for a Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) with QTS at a university that offer either a full-time one year course or a part-time two year course.

The government has been inspired by other strategies to attract excellent graduates, namely by the programme *Teach First*. There also bursaries available for shortage subjects too. For example the graduates with the 1<sup>st</sup> in physics, maths and chemistry can attract as much as £25,000. The American programme *Troops-to-Teachers* has also attracted the government educational agenda, encouraging professional soldiers to become teachers following specific training courses.

In addition, some universities offer an undergraduate degree course attaining a BA (Hon) degree or BSc (Hon) degree with QTS or Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) degree without QTS for those who want to teach at a primary level. It is possible to become a teacher in the UK being an overseas trained teacher; however this might require further training and accreditation of previous qualifications (UoB, 2014).

### **2.2.2 Teaching in the FE and skills sector – The University of Bolton**

The further education sector has been traditionally labelled a post-compulsory sector and teachers and trainers working in it considered themselves predominantly professionals in their vocational specialism while no teaching qualifications were required. The changes were introduced after the World War Two when "one-year, full-time Certificate in Education (Cert Ed) courses were offered" (Simmons and Walker, 2013, p. 354). The initial teacher training has been delivered through universities as well as through awarding organisations, such as City and Guilds and the Royal Society of Arts (Ibid., 2013, p. 354). However, these were considered to be of a "lower" status and teachers were encouraged to "top them up" at a university (ibid.).

From 2001 the teachers in the FE sector were asked to obtain an initial teacher qualification within a specific period. In 2007 new teaching standards for teachers in the FE sector were introduced, the teachers were required to become members of the professional organisation called the Institute for Learning (IfL) and through its professional accreditation programme they could apply for the Qualified Teacher Learning and Skills (QTLS) status. This professional award was established to develop a professional parity with teachers who work for the 5 – 16 sector. The QTLS award is a public recognition of the teachers' progression in their career and evidences their enhanced professional skills and knowledge. Since October 2014 the QTLS can be applied for through a newly established organisation the Education and Training Foundation (ETF) and its Society for Education and Training (SET, 2015). The ETF has overtaken the IfL in 2014, introducing the new professional teaching standards – “Professional Standards for Teachers and Trainers in Education and Training – England” (ETF, 2015) that have become a key document for the re-validation of the new initial teacher education programme offered by the University of Bolton and other universities.

Since September 2013, as the coalition government suggested, the teachers in the further education sector do not need a prescribed teaching qualification or QTLS. FE institutions publicly funded can employ suitable candidates, mainly professionals from chosen specialist areas with a considerable experience in their subject, though when applying for jobs, the candidates have to demonstrate their teaching skills and experience and colleges often ask the candidates to hold a recognised teaching qualification or willingness to gain one.

The School of Education and Psychology at the University of Bolton prepares its trainee teachers to teach in the further education and skills sector, namely colleges, academies, work-based training centres, prisons, centres for adults with behavioural and learning difficulties, community and charity based learning centres and other independent private providers. It offers the initial teacher education awards at three different levels – Level 5, Level 6 and Level 7, and in three different pathways: (1) Generic; (2) Skills for Life – including English, i.e. Literacy, English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), and Mathematics (Numeracy); and (3) Teaching Learners with Additional Needs (TLAN).

The levels 5, 6 and 7 differentiate the level of academic achievement in the theoretical knowledge of trainee teachers that is expected to be demonstrated at the end of their course. The awards are therefore identified according to the educational background of the trainees. If the trainees have a minimum Level 3 Entry qualification, they will be awarded *The Certificate in Education 14 + at Level 5*. These trainees can be vocational teachers specialising in different vocational areas, for example automotive, construction, business administration, beauty, cooking, etc., and their highest qualification is recognised at a level 3 which equals to an A-level.

The trainees with a bachelor's degree or equivalent (these could be various professional diplomas at higher levels) in the relevant subject area will be awarded *The Professional Graduate Certificate in Education 14+ at Level 6*. This is designed for those graduates who completed their degree certification with 2.2 and above. Those trainees who have completed their bachelor's

degree with First or 2.1 certification will be following *The Post Graduate Certificate in Education M 14 + at Level 7*, the decision made for the academic year 2015 - 16. This award leads to 60 credits at level 7 which can be transferred to a full Master's award (180 credits including the dissertation) should the trainees decide to continue with the Master's study (Table 2.).

Table 2. Full Awards of the Initial Teacher Education Programme at the University of Bolton

Awards	Length
<b>Teacher Education Level 5</b>	<b>Equivalent to</b>
Certificate in Education 14+	Full-time – 1 academic year Part-time – 2 academic years
Certificate in Education 14+ English (literacy/ESOL)	
Certificate in Education 14+ Mathematics (Numeracy)	
Certificate in Education 14+ Teaching Learners With Additional Needs	
<b>Teacher Education Level 6</b>	
Professional Graduate Certificate in Education 14+	
Professional Graduate Certificate in Education 14+ English (literacy/ESOL)	
Professional Graduate Certificate in Education 14+ Mathematics (Numeracy)	
Professional Graduate Certificate in Education 14+ Teaching Learners With Additional Needs	
<b>Teacher Education Level 7</b>	
Post Graduate Certificate in Education M 14+	
Post Graduate Certificate in Education M 14+ English (literacy/ESOL)	
Post Graduate Certificate in Education M 14+ Mathematics (Numeracy)	
Post Graduate Certificate in Education M 14+ Teaching Learners With Additional Needs	

Though the trainees are working towards different level awards, they are placed in the same groups, organised according to their subject specialism. There are 'generic' groups that consists of trainees of various academic and/or non academic subjects that can have some common academic foundation, for example a 'Language and Communication' group can have participants who will teach subjects such as GCSE English language and literature; drama; dance; music; religious studies; beauty therapy; film media. The groups consist of trainees who have completed their university degrees as well as trainees who have a wide industry experience and a level 3 qualification only. *The Skills for Life pathway* groups specialise on teaching young adult

and adult learners with literacy and numeracy problems or on non-native speakers of English, while the TLAN groups concentrate on teaching learners with additional learning needs.

In order to be able to study on the programme, the trainees need to go through the Enhanced Disclosure clearance procedure to disclose any criminal record they might have; they have to provide two satisfactory references; attend an pre-course interview, undertake an initial assessment of their English and maths skills, and demonstrate their academic and professional experience, knowledge and skills in the relevant subject. The trainees who aim to teach a vocationally oriented subject need to demonstrate their expertise and experience in the industry, for example if they want to teach hairdressing, they need to have several years of experience of working in a salon.

Programme of the ITE has 240 contact hours; trainees attend more hours at the beginning of the course and fewer hours at its end, on average 8 hours per week (full time) or 4 hours (part time). They are also expected to study independently and furthermore, there are modules that require the trainees to take part in the independent online learning with individual and peer supported tasks. In addition to their academic study, the trainees are required to teach for a minimum 100 hours; this is usually from 5 to 7 hours per week for the full-time courses and approximately 4 hours for the time-part courses over the period of the whole programme, starting usually in October and finishing in April or May. Some trainees though teach more than 100 hours as they are placed in institutions with regular groups and teaching programmes and they do not wish to leave their students before they complete the whole academic year or qualification in June. Some trainee teachers may be already in-service, so they usually undertake a part-time course and evidence the required hours to complete it successfully, though in reality, they teach many more hours.

The trainees are assessed on their coursework assignments, professional practice portfolio and professional practice, the classification then illustrates their academic and professional practice achievements. The professional practice portfolio is a module that requires trainees to engage actively with their professional reflective practice online through the virtual learning environment - MOODLE. It also provides evidence of their professional teaching knowledge, skills and attitudes that are mapped against the “Professional Standards for Teachers and Trainers in Education and Training – England” (ETF, 2015).

To summarise, the course is very dynamic, open to regular reviews taking into account the views of all its stakeholders. Each module is evaluated by trainees, lecturers, internal and external moderators and examiners. The quality of the provision is also scrutinised by various quality assurance processes from more general by the QAA (Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, QAA, n.d.) to the more specific, for example OFSTED or through an internal subject review.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, it is possible to suggest that education in both countries has become more influenced by top-down ideology-driven political discourse than by research informed policies, as many researchers point out (Evans, 2011). In England the debate has firm roots in the dominant neo-liberal view of the world, with values such as competition, globalisation, marketisation, privatisation, but also by the need to provide a state controlled quality of education and training provision. In Slovakia the policy reforms aim at modernisation, democratisation and humanisation of education and training, though the critics point at the permanent underfunding of the reforms required and the inadequate professional support of in-service teachers. Moreover, Slovakia similar to England is under pressure to meet the economic demands of the globalised world through changes in its further education sector, encouraging employers, businesses and local communities to be more involved in vocational education and training.

Teacher education in Slovakia still follows a traditional university-led pathway while in England there are steps taken to provide more practical oriented teacher training through direct schools involvement, in some case avoiding a university route altogether. Even though the University of Presov prepares teachers for all levels and the University of Bolton specialises only on the further education sector, it is evident both institutions have shared common interests in the enhancement of the quality of initial teacher education programmes. It would be possible, for example to explore the impact of some of the aspects of the programmes on the trainee teachers' practice, their skills and values. To make the projects sustainable and achievable, the research could be based on small scale practitioner projects focusing on specific outcomes and interventions while using a qualitative methodological approach. It might be interesting to involve other partners to ensure funding through European Union institutions and to make the impact more valuable and innovative.

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