



YETI Teacher Pathway Report

Country Report Poland

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Becoming a teacher in Poland

From October 2016, teacher education may be organised only by Higher Education Institutions – universities (offering all cycles of education and all types of degrees – BA and MA) or State Vocational Schools/Colleges (offering first-cycle studies and giving opportunities to obtain a BA degree after the studies).

Models of teacher education in Poland

In the system of Polish higher education, a concurrent model of teacher education can be observed as a dominant one (Smoczyńska, 2014). This means that pre-service teachers are educated at pedagogical universities and at all other universities that offer teacher's programmes (in the second case, students are offered at their university, at their field of study, teacher's programme and after graduation they can teach biology, maths, history, etc.). While studying their field, parallelly they learn about pedagogy, psychology and didactics of their subject.

Those students who haven't chosen teacher's programme at University, but want to work as a teacher afterwards, can enrol at postgraduate studies dedicated to teachers or at courses dedicated to future teachers. This model of teacher education is a consecutive model.

Higher Education Institutions educate all level pre-service teachers – from pre-school education to academic teachers.

Graduates of long-cycle or secondary-cycle studies are entitled to teach at all types of schools. Graduates of first-cycle studies can teach at primary schools and kindergartens only.

Postgraduate studies can be a solution of obtaining teacher qualifications only for people who at least have bachelor's or engineer degree and who intend to obtain pedagogical qualifications, prepare to teach another subject, teach special needs students.

HEIs educate pre-service teachers offering them the following study options (based on Eurydice 2018/2019 report):

- **Full-time studies:**
 - **First-cycle studies** (graduates of such studies obtain Bachelor's degree, engineer degree, or equal). Studies take at least three years, during which students can get at least 180 ECTS points. In case of obtaining an engineer degree, studies take 3.5 years and students get at least 210 ECTS points.
 - **Second-cycle studies** (graduates of such studies obtain Master's degree, or equal). Studies take between 1,5 to 2 years and students can get between 90 and 120 ECTS points.

- **Long-cycle studies** (graduates of such studies obtain Master's degree or equal). The studies take between 4,5 and 6 years and students can get between 300 and 360 ECTS points. In case of teacher's programmes, the studies take between 4,5 and 5 years.
- **Postgraduate studies** (graduates of such studies obtain a certificate testifying graduating from postgraduate studies). The studies take at least one academic year (two semesters) and students get at least 60 ECTS points.

Studies are organised by State Vocational Schools /Colleges and by universities. Both types of Higher Education institutions can be public or private.

Teacher education should always be organised as long-cycle studies or first- and second-cycle studies (but in case of first- and-second cycle studies, the education needs to be organised in the same field for both cycles, to become a teacher of a given subject) Pre-school and early-school teacher education, however, should be organised in the form of long-cycle studies, similarly as special needs teacher education. Furthermore, pre-school and early school teacher education should be organised together, so that teachers graduating from such field, are entitled to teach in early education grades in primary school and in the kindergarten.

Postgraduate studies aimed at teachers-to-be should be organised only by Higher Education Institutions entitled to educate pre-service teachers in a given field e.g. biology, history, mathematics, etc.)

Institutions educating pre-service teachers

The following Higher Education Institutions educate pre-service teachers:

- Universities and pedagogical academies
- Physical Education academies (educating future PE teachers);
- technical universities (i.e., educating future vocational teachers);
- artistic universities (i.e., educating future arts teachers).;
- medical, economic and agricultural universities (i.e., educating future entrepreneurship teachers or teachers teaching at medical schools for nurses, etc.).

Pre-service teachers are educated at full-time studies, part-time studies, extramural studies or evening studies. All types of studies lead to similar effects, however students of regular studies have more contact hours with teachers (university staff).

In the past, Higher Education Institutions in Poland educated pre-service teachers in one field only (e.g., to become a biology teacher, a maths teacher, etc.), now, however, they offer two fields, most often combining connected fields like, for instance, biology and environment protection; pre-school education with early school education, etc.

Teachers can also gain qualifications to teach another subject at postgraduate studies (e.g., biology teacher gaining qualifications at postgraduate studies to teach geography, etc.).

Organisation of teacher education

Higher Education Institutions are given autonomy to prepare and develop their own study plans and course curricula, but they are obliged to meet some general standards described by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education (Pl: *rozporządzeniu Ministra Nauki i Szkolnictwa Wyższego z dnia 17 stycznia 2012 roku*).

Higher Education Institutions offer education for teachers in the form of teaching modules, where usually:

- **Module 1: *preparation to teach the first subject (teaching)***
There are no standards setting the minimal number of ECTS points, because it depends on the specificity of the subject taught and cycle of studies.
- **Module 2: *psychology and pedagogy***
This module comprises three compulsory components that together equal 180 hours and 10 ECTS points: general psychology and psychology (90 hours), psychology and pedagogy dedicated to certain age group teaching (60 hours) and teaching practice (30 hours).
- **Module 3: *didactics***
This module comprises fundamentals of general didactics (30 hours), didactics of a given subject and level/levels (90 hours), teaching practice (120 hours). In total, in module three students have 240 contact hours which equals 15 ECTS points.
- **Module 4: *preparation to teach another subject (teaching)***
This module comprises preparation in the area of the second subject (with no fixed number of ECTS points as it depends on the specificity of the subject chosen), didactics of a given subject (60 hours), teaching practice (60 hours). In most cases this module comprises between 10 and 15 ECTS points.
- **Module 5: *special needs pedagogy***
This module comprises psychology and pedagogy of teaching students with special needs (140 hours), special needs didactics (90 hours), teaching practice (120 hours). In total it equals 350 hours and 25 ECTS points.

For students who want to become teachers, modules 1, 2 and 3 are compulsory, whereas modules 4 and 5 are non-obligatory and may depend either on students, or on a given university, offered programme, etc.

Postgraduate studies for pre-service teachers - offer:

- **Preparation to teach another subject – module 4**
- **Psychology and pedagogy and didactics of a given subjects for University graduates who didn't study on teacher's programmes – modules 2 and 3.** It should be noted, however, that in case of graduates of first-cycle studies, after the postgraduate studies they can only teach in primary school or in a kindergarten.
- **Special needs pedagogy for in service teachers.**

Teaching standards

There are teaching standards that give general characteristics of the content of all modules, content to be learnt by students and objectives and rules of organising teaching practice. All those standards take into consideration levels of education.

Teaching practice is usually organised along with classes (in majority of cases one day per week is assigned to teaching practice) and it comprises visits in kindergartens, schools, etc. Students at first observe how in-service teachers conduct classes and then they assist those teachers, and, finally, teach themselves under the supervision of those in-service teachers. Such teaching practice entails preparing lesson plans, setting teaching objectives and discussing classes conducted by other trainee teachers.

The knowledge and skills of teachers programmes graduates

Teaching standards (based on Somoczyńska, 2014) define the same teaching and learning effects for educating pre-service teachers at regular and postgraduate studies.

After graduating from teacher's programme, the graduate should:

- Have knowledge in the area of psychology and pedagogy allowing them to understand processes of development, socialisation, upbringing, teaching and learning,
- have knowledge and experience in the area of didactics, pedagogy and methodology of a given subject teaching;
- have competence and skills to teach and take care of students, to prepare lessons and modify programmes to adjust them to the needs of students;
- have abilities of learning in order to develop in professional context and have skills necessary to perfect their own teaching and organise resources and process information;
- have good communication skills comprising varied communication techniques and communication along with all the students and colleagues;
- be empathetic, open, reflective, ethical and responsible;
- be prepared to perform teacher's roles and all tasks associated with being a teacher.

Teacher qualifications

HEIs don't grant „teaching qualifications” as such. Diplomas of teacher's programmes and postgraduate studies' certificates testify that a given person is prepared to work as a teacher.

The needs of novice teachers and their preparedness for the teaching profession

According to report of Supreme Audit Office (Pl: NIK - Najwyższa Izba Kontroli) (31st March 2017), only just over a third of students graduating with first and second degrees in the 2015/2016 academic year indicated that they felt prepared for the teaching profession. In contrast, nearly a quarter (24 per cent) said that they had acquired 'negligible' and 'low' practical preparation for the role of a teacher.

In the opinion of the investigated students, changes are needed in the process of educating teacher candidates. Students indicated as the most urgent first of all:

- extending the dimension of practical classes at the expense of theoretical classes (31.5%)
- directing study programmes towards practical competences (28%) and
- improving psychological and pedagogical preparation for work at school (14%).

Students also stressed the need for support by practitioners both at school and during classes at the university (9.4%). Another important issue was the preparation of teacher candidates for continuous improvement (self-development), as well as the need to select candidates for the teaching profession.

The research by Gołębniak and Krychała (2015) indicates that the role of pedagogy is marginalised in teacher education, so we can conclude that more pedagogy-related classes conducted at university is another need of pre-service teachers.

Teacher induction in Poland

Becoming a teacher is a difficult, multifaceted and, above all, long-term process, which does not equal obtaining a diploma formally certifying professional qualifications. It is a dynamic process that takes place not only in the course of acquiring scientific knowledge, perfecting skills in practice and developing personality traits in pedagogical experience. It is also, and perhaps above all, about educating oneself, one's identity and perspectives of perceiving and interpreting the world (Grochowalska, 2014).

In Poland there is no formal induction understood as an official, national, support programme that is similar in all schools. Formally, a graduate of HEI teachers programme who defended diploma and has MA degree is qualified to work as a teacher. Various reports (as the one by Supreme Audit office), however, show, that novice teachers very often do not feel prepared for teaching, although at HEIs they have teaching practice organised at first as peer teaching during teaching methodology-related classes and practice at schools (around 120 hours in total during BA and MA programmes).

The process of teacher professional development may be treated as a form of induction as novice teachers are offered support of more experienced colleagues during

the first year of professional life. One experienced colleague selected usually by the head teacher, assists the novice on their way of obtaining their first promotion grade.

The audit findings indicate that many teachers appointed by school directors as supervisors of internship of junior colleagues lack professional preparation for this function. Only 30 out of 151 supervisors examined had completed forms of in-service training in the field of professional advancement; as a rule, classes concerning the tasks of a supervisor were in the form of several-hour training sessions. On the other hand, 23% of the internship supervisors had no experience or significant professional achievements taking into account the entire period of work at the school. In the NIK's opinion, the only criterion resulting from the provisions of the law, namely holding the degree of appointed or certified teacher, when appointing an internship supervisor, is far from sufficient. The NIK also points out that the Polish system of teachers' professional development creates the risk of apparent involvement of school institutions in the adaptation of new people to the teaching profession. It definitely lacks the position of a teacher-mentor who, having a specialist background, could professionally direct the career path of a newly employed teacher.

Changes to teacher education implemented in 2019

Significant changes to teacher education are in place from 1 October 2019. The introduction of new education standards is designed to improve the quality of teaching education. Let's take a look at the changes introduced.

The changes were introduced by the Act of 20 July 2018. Law on Higher Education and Science (Journal of Laws of 2018, item 1668, as amended) and the regulation of the Minister of Science and Higher Education of 25 July 2019 on the standard of education preparing for the teaching profession (Journal of Laws of 2019, item 1450).

The regulations contained in the aforementioned provisions state that:

- teachers may be educated only by universities fulfilling the conditions specified in the Act on Higher Education and Science,
- the education of teachers always covers a 5-year cycle (as single master studies or studies of the 1st and 2nd degree realized in the same scope),
- education of teachers of early childhood education shall be conducted only during one-cycle MA studies,
- education of teachers of special educations may be conducted only during:
 - in the course of the uniform master's degree studies, and
 - in case of teachers, who already have qualifications for teaching the subject or conducting classes - during postgraduate studies,
- postgraduate programmes providing teachers with teaching qualifications may be provided only by a higher education institution providing teaching staff for first- or second-cycle studies or long-cycle studies in a field of study corresponding to the scope of education provided during postgraduate programmes

- the role of pedagogical and psychological preparation of teachers according to new teaching standards

The new teaching standards, similarly to those previously in force, stipulate that teacher preparation for the profession includes both factual and pedagogical preparation, but from 2019, the scope and dimension of classes in psychological and pedagogical preparation and classes in didactics of teaching the first and subsequent subjects (teaching) have been extended.

According to new teaching standards, a minimum of 210 hours is provided for psychology, pedagogy and professional practice (in this group of classes), in particular:

- 90 hours for psychology,
- 90 hours for pedagogy,
- 30 hours for professional practice.

What is more, emphasis is also placed on classes in basic didactics and voice emission. Since 1st October 2019, classes in this area have been conducted for at least 60 hours.

The number of classes in didactics of subject-matter teaching has also been increased. In the case of classes in didactics of teaching the first subject, HEIs are obliged to provide at least 150 hours of such classes, and in the case of teaching the next subject - 90 hours.

Standards of teacher education specify the minimum number of hours foreseen for the preparation of teachers for their profession, including psychological and pedagogical preparation and didactic preparation. The actual number of hours accepted for study, however, shall be decided by a given HEI itself, so it means that some HEIs offer even more opportunities for pedagogy- and psychology-related education and teaching practice.

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- Journal of Laws of 2018, item 1668
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- Rozporządzenia Ministra Nauki i Szkolnictwa Wyższego: Konstytucja dla nauki (Ministry's document „Constitution for the Science”, describing i.e. how teachers should be educated and how Higher Education Institutions are organised):



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