

Teacher Education Policy and Practice

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CONCEPTS
SERIES

International Perspectives and Inspirations

Edited by
Michelle Attard Tonna and Joanna Madalińska-Michalak

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Teacher Education
Policy in Europe



Teacher Education Policy and Practice –

International Perspectives and Inspirations

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Abstract

In this chapter we provide a review about the European educational policy regarding teacher competency frameworks. The European Union acknowledges the importance of conceiving the teacher profile based on a framework with the required professional competencies to face the challenges of the new context and strengthen the teaching profession. What we tackle here are the fundamentals of those competency-based patterns from the most recent regulation's review in Europe in the field of education, regarding three key aspects: concept, design and implementation. Firstly, we have to pay attention to the concept. There is a continuing controversy over how to define "competency" as it is a polysemic term. Secondly, we deal with some ways to implement these frameworks across particular European policies. One of the key ideas present in the literature is the difficulty for agreement, because it requires a preliminary discussion about education goals, assumptions about learning, the expectations of society and its demands to teachers, available resources, priorities and political will, and the status of the teaching profession, among others. Thirdly, we highlight the main benefits for their implementation, such as creating a shared discourse about the teaching profession, providing a self-assessment tool or consistency to teacher policies. We also provide

two examples of teacher competency frameworks which have been proposed by important contributors. In conclusion, this framework, as is stated in the European education policy, could interconnect initial training, selection, induction and continued development of teachers. That is, it would allow the creation of a lifelong learning structure for the teaching profession and ensure they further develop them throughout their careers.

—— **Keywords:**

competency

teacher competency framework

European education policy

teacher education

teaching profession

Introduction

There is no European country that in the last two decades has not carried out any reform of different scopes, in order to reach greater levels of quality in their respective educational systems (Eurydice, 2013). This search for improvement has been placing more emphasis on different elements throughout these years: during the 90s, those improvement goals were focused on the curriculum transformation and a bigger regional autonomy regarding education management; at the end of that same decade, it changed to performance assessment systems, and more recently, to the competence development of students and teacher training (Barber & Mourshed, 2007; Marchesi, Tedesco & Coll, 2009).

Therefore, many studies on teaching issues can be found allowing teachers to become the centre of the educational debate in Europe. In fact, as Álvarez conveys (2015), those very international institutions warned of the need for caring about teacher quality in order to improve educational systems, prioritising an already hot topic in the academic and scientific literature (Willms, 2000). In many cases, their initial motivation is justified as teaching performance and achievement have generally been the key levers to reach the desired quality, and more specifically, the fundamental variable of students' academic learning process and success (Hanushek, 2004; Konstantopoulos, 2006; Rivkin, Hanushek & Kain, 2005; Rockoff, 2004).

In any case, the main strength of these studies and research consists of highlighting something already known in the pedagogical discourse, but frequently ignored in practice: teachers count (Darling-Hammond et al., 2005). The fact of placing teachers as the determining element of quality in any educational system has resulted in the revision of its key defining characteristics; that is, their profile, considered as the set of competences needed to carry out their professional activity according to value-based criteria and quality parameters. Referring to a teaching profile is, therefore, to conceive cognitive, skills and attitudinal elements defining teachers as professionals, or, in other words, a reference framework that gathers all their professional competences.

Firstly, in this chapter we will introduce the reasons explaining the expansion of teaching competences that help to contextualise the following sections. We provide an overview of how teacher competences in Europe evolved and the determining factors explaining why teacher

competence has become so relevant today. Secondly, we tackle the basic guidelines from the European legislation related to the design of a teacher profile. It is based on developments in conceptualising, designing and applying teacher competency frameworks. Thirdly, we set out two examples of these frameworks to further illustrate the raised issues in this chapter. Finally, we share some reflections and conclusions about the importance of teacher competences in providing a teacher profile for quality education.

The expansion of teaching competences in Europe: some explanatory factors

The first references available about the expansion of teaching competences were recorded in the 90s in Anglo-Saxon countries like the United Kingdom, Australia, the United States, Ireland or New Zealand (Vandermensbrugge, 2004). In that context, teachers did not receive this approach as expected as it was considered as a way to control their work that did not exist before. Little by little, political pressures focusing on the search of a better teaching quality encouraged the setting of standard systems which included a series of assessment criteria for teaching performance. Some of their predecessors were the American University teacher training programmes, known as *Performance of Competency-Based Teacher Education Programs* ("P/CBTE"). These programmes, which emerged during the 70s at Universities in the United States, are based on the description (at least from the theoretical point of view) of competences stemming from the analysis of teaching-related tasks (*job analysis*) and the skills required. Their incursion in teaching was significant as long as teacher training was "professionalised".

Nowadays, the renewed interest in the study of teacher competences within the European educational context can be explained by several factors, from which two are highlighted: 1) the new education and social demands, which determine teachers' tasks; and 2) the expansion of the competence learning approach in education.

The society we live in has little to do with that of some decades ago. Constant and rapid change processes (social, cultural and pedagogical) occurring in most European education systems have modified work conditions of teachers, specifically increasing the number of functions to be carried out and their complexity (Prats, 2016).

Globalisation, immersion in the digital era and the improvement of ICTs, the extension of learning spaces and lifelong learning, migratory movements, the schooling of all children in primary education, the extension of mandatory education, the heterogeneity of classrooms and the educational integration of diversity, altogether with the loss of authority and the discredit of the teaching role, are some of the continuing challenges in this 21st century (Bernal & Teixidó, 2012). Moreover, reforms in European education systems have affected the management of education centres, as they have given an increased autonomy to local stakeholders and involved teachers in non-teaching tasks, suggesting also a training necessity for these type of roles, long neglected.

These new demands are also gathered in several recent reports by international organisations (Eurydice 2013; OECD, 2011, 2012) and documentation produced by the European educational policy (for example, Education Council, 2001; Commission of the European Communities, 2007).

Thus, and taking as a reference the reports of the Eurydice network from the beginning of the present century, there is an explicit mention of the importance of teachers acquiring new skills as a result of these huge changes. In this sense, it points out the existence of a unanimous agreement on the need to boost the acquisition of those skills, necessary for carrying out the teaching tasks, so that teachers can achieve the aim of a quality education at educational centres. Furthermore, it considers that teachers' roles should not be restricted to the mere transfer of the contents of a subject, and sets some questions related to teacher competences like:

- What is expected of the teaching profession (or should be expected of it) today and to an even greater extent in the future?
- What are teachers themselves taught during their initial training?
- What quality and skills criteria have to be satisfied for teachers to be regarded as qualified for the occupation?
- What arrangements are made to help young entrants to become fully-fledged members of their profession?
- From what facilities may in-service teachers benefit so as to acquire the new skills expected of them?
- What training requirements are teachers expected to fulfil in the course of their careers?

(Eurydice 2002, p. 10-11)

Another example we want to highlight is that suggested by the Education Council, emphasising the importance of improvement and the adaptation of both knowledge and capacities of teachers to the new social context. Improving education and training for teachers and trainers, upgrading the initial education and in-service training of teachers and trainers so that their knowledge and skills respond both to the changes and expectations in society, and to the varied groups they teach and train is a major challenge to the education and training systems over the next 10 years (Education Council, 2001, p. 8).

In both cases, it is agreed that teachers have to assume new functions and competences (or at least an extension of them) due to the background complexity and the changing educational demands in the present century.

Besides the new demands presented, it is also convenient to consider the effect of the expansion of competence learning in the education field on the definition of competency profiles of teachers. These are projects usually emerging from a supranational context and mainly aimed at competence development more from a curriculum approach than that of teachers themselves, although affecting their professional profile. As Caena (2014, p. 326) describes, the focus on teacher competences can be viewed as a consequence of the European shift towards key competences in school education curricula.

Some of the initiatives related to competency learning which have had an impact on the European educational policy in general are the Tuning project, the PISA study and the DeSeCo project, among others¹.

The Tuning project directed the design of university degrees to competences in order to achieve convergence in higher education (González & Wagenaar, 2003). The main reasons given to motivate the adherence to this approach were: 1) transparency of professional and academic profiles of degrees; 2) an education more focused on students and their results; 3) a greater demand of lifelong learning processes and flexibility in learning organisation; 4) the search of higher rates of employability and citizenship; 5) a greater degree of comparability

1. Other projects contributing to the international impetus of competences were, among others, the World Conference on Education for All (WCEFA), and projects CHEERS (Career after Higher Education: a European Research Study) and REFLEX (The Flexible Professional in the Knowledge Society).

among the different European qualifications and the encouragement of student mobility.

For its part, the PISA study has set a periodic evaluation of 15 year-old students' learning through a series of indicators in order to create an international comparison among the different educational systems. As a result of this international evaluation, the DeSeCo project was also launched in order to identify those competences necessary in citizens and to set a possible framework for their assessment.

This approach was developed by a team of experts in the European Union (within the Education and Training 2010 work programme), creators of a European reference framework on the key competences for *Life-Long Learning*. This framework describes for the first time in a European level the essential competences citizens need for their personal fulfilment and issued eight key competences which were crucial for their incorporation in our country's mandatory education curriculum (European Parliament & European Council, 2006).

Competency frameworks for teachers: Concept, design and motivations for their application from a European perspective

The picture of social and educational changes analysed and the new curriculum approach aimed at competence learning requires unavoidable challenges for educational systems and, by all means, for teachers (Berns, 2013). The focus of the educational paradigm has moved from the teaching task to students' learning, so that the traditional view of the teacher profile as an academic expert and mediator mastering knowledge does not seem to be enough to give an answer to current demands (Martín et al., 2014). The traditional tasks of teachers have been modified, diversified and expanded and, in the light of this scenario, it is urgent to revise teachers' profiles, redefine both their work and training, and adapt their teaching method (Martínez, 2016).

However, reflecting the essential qualities of a good teacher in a competency list is not an easy task and some questions may arise: How is one to decide the importance of some competences above others? Is it possible to agree on the key characteristics of these competences? Is it possible to find already defined competency frameworks in the international context?

Some of these questions, indeed, have been gathered by the European Union. In fact, the characteristics a teacher must have, and the development of competency frameworks, have been described by European institutions as a key priority in the reform of every educational system to be undertaken, due to their connection with most of the policies in the education field (Caena, 2014).

One of the most important contributions to this matter was given by the expert team working in the programme ET-2010 through the setting of the *Common European Principles for Teacher Competences and Qualifications* (European Commission, 2005). The European principles describe a vision of teaching in Europe with the following characteristics: (a) a profession which requires a high qualification; (b) considered within the lifelong learning context; (c) with a professional development based on mobility; and (d) based on the collaboration between teachers and institutions. Besides these common principles, the EU proposes three environments where teachers from the Member States should be able to operate in: (a) working with others; (b) working with knowledge, technology and information; and (c) working with and within society.

More recently, within the strategic communication framework known as *Rethinking education*, promoted by the European Commission at the end of 2012, Member States are urged to include a revision and consolidation of the professional profiles of all teacher types (teachers from every level, heads of school and teacher educators) in their educational policies. Key actions are reviewing the effectiveness as well as the academic and pedagogical quality of Initial Teacher Education, introducing coherent and adequately resourced systems for recruitment, selection, induction and professional development of teaching staff based on clearly defined competences needed at each stage of a teaching career, and increasing teacher digital competence (European Commission 2012a, p. 15).

Moreover, the above mentioned document is accompanied by other five working papers collecting data on initiatives of the European educational systems and good practices, among which is highlighted the report entitled: *Supporting the teaching professions for better learning outcomes* (European Commission, 2012b), related to the support to the teaching profession, which also devotes a specific section to competency frameworks for teachers. As complements there

are two other documents dealing with the subject of study in detail: *Policy approaches to defining and describing teacher competences* (European Commission, 2011) and *Supporting teacher competence development for better learning outcomes* (European Commission, 2013a).

After an in-depth analysis of these three European reports and the support of other secondary resources, we are now presenting the main ideas which, in our understanding, represent the European legislation guidelines related to the design of a teacher competency profile.

Concept

First, we will briefly deal with the conceptualisation of competency frameworks and the teaching competences stemming from the analysis of the above mentioned documents.

Caena (2014), education consultant at the European Commission and involved in the study of competency frameworks for teachers, considers this professional framework as a structure of descriptors which collects not only the acquired formal knowledge (through accreditation) but also the one extended later on throughout their professional career.

On the other hand, the European Commission assumes that the concept of teaching competency covers (or, at least, it should) the following characterisation: (a) it allows teachers to meet complex demands mobilising resources in a specific context; (b) it empowers teachers to act properly according to the situation, developing tasks in an effective (with the expected results) and efficient way (optimising both resources and efforts); (c) it can be demonstrated up to a certain level throughout their professional career, and (d) it is conceived as an integration of tacit and explicit knowledge, cognitive and procedural skills and provisions (motivations, beliefs, emotions...).

This last characteristic implies an understanding of competences as a dynamic integration of cognitive and metacognitive skills, leading to the concept of the profession in four areas (European Commission, 2013a):

- learning to think as teachers: it implies a critical revision of their own beliefs and the development of a pedagogical thought;
- learning to know as teachers: it refers to different aspects of knowledge, including the one generated by their own practices;

- learning to feel as teachers: it is directly related to the professional identity, including emotional and intellectual aspects like attitudes, expectations, leadership and values;
- learning to act as teachers: it implies the integration of thoughts, knowledge and attitudes in practice and in different contexts.

Design: implementation characteristics

One of the key ideas present in the literature consulted is the difficulty for agreement on a competency framework for teachers. It is also not static, neutral or universal, so a preliminary discussion and agreement on broader subjects like the education goals, assumptions about learning, the expectations of society and its demands to teachers, resources available, priorities and political will, the teaching profession status, or the existing traditions and culture, among others (FIER, 2010), is necessary.

Therefore, an observation to be noticed is that this framework may change depending on the education systems from different countries. So much so that one of the analysed reports shows the existing heterogeneity in the design of competency frameworks in Europe. Through a survey study (European Commission, 2013a) it is concluded that the differences among countries are due to the following variables:

- the detail level (or lack of it) in the description of teaching competences;
- whether competences are just described for initial training or as a project to be developed throughout the whole teaching career;
- the political tools in which they are used: legislation, regulations, guidelines, university curriculum, or teachers' accreditation, among others;
- the actors in charge of implementing the education policy (government organisations, training institutions or professional organisms);
- the aims and uses given to them by political education strategies.

In any case, those reports provide some guidelines for the design and later implementation of frameworks which deserve to be highlighted and which we are presenting now (European Commission, 2011; European Commission, 2012b; European Commission, 2013a).

First, and in its early design phase, the competency framework for teachers should cover the following variables: taking into account the culture of the country, resulting from an agreement on key subjects (for instance: the purpose of education, the meaning of proper teaching, etc.), including all the dimensions of the teaching work, being coherent with the expected students' learning results (but not just limited to that), and combining stability, duration and flexibility attributes.

Some of the key questions used as guidelines in this phase can be: What its purpose is going to be (students, teachers, management teams, trainers, employers...)? What philosophy underlies its outline (educational, learning, professional...)? How is it going to be structured? Will the competency descriptors be applied to every stage of the teaching career or will specific ones be designed for each stage? Will they be applied to every education level (pre-school, primary, secondary...)? Are they aimed at the present or at future desirable characteristics?

Secondly, every country has to find its own way and schedule to design the first draft on competences for teachers. In fact, two stages of development for competency frameworks have been identified, in which Member States can be grouped, and there is a specific action proposed for each of them. On the one hand, for those countries at the beginning of the implementation, the framework must focus on its first design with the help of taxonomies, some of which are included in that very same report (European Commission, 2012b). On the other hand, those countries for which a description of competences already exists should focus on debugging them and setting them for each stage of the teaching career (initial training, induction...) and each educational level (pre-school, primary, secondary...).

Regarding the contents and style of the professional framework, competence descriptors should be written in terms of learning results and aimed at action, teacher motivation towards professional growth, reflecting the culture and context they are going to be used in, and providing adequate, specific and clear information (so that every agent involved can understand them). Besides, competences should be constantly updated to meet new pedagogical, sociological and technical demands.

Finally, and once designed, its implementation phase is equally important. In this sense, consistency with the development, use and purpose of the competence scheme design is essential. Therefore,

a commitment with a long-term process on the part of the educational administration is necessary. Secondly, roles of every party involved must be defined and, at the same time, discussion spaces must be created throughout the implementation process. It must be clear it is a process carefully planned and agreed by every party involved, especially by teachers. The participation of this group in its design is necessary, so that it is not perceived as an imposition or a control mechanism. Some of the questions that can act as guidelines in the process are: To what extent are teachers involved in the process? Are their perspectives included in the proposal? Which other groups could be consulted (educational institutions, teacher trainers, families, students...)? How could they be involved? Moreover, implementation should be carried out according to a realistic schedule, allowing enough time for its correct execution.

A lesson learned that can be observed through the European texts consulted is that the existence of competency frameworks for teachers does not ensure teaching quality by themselves; the most important thing is their purpose and the way they are applied. On the other hand, they also stress that the development of these common frameworks does not necessarily mean a significant financial investment for Member States.

Motivations for their application

Despite the complexity at the hour of betting for a competency framework for teachers, its application can help strengthen their profession within the educational system according to the following terms:

- creating a shared discourse about the teaching profession, allowing the involvement of all the key agents (administration, employers and teachers themselves);
- supporting teachers creating a clear and transparent image of their role in society while enhancing their professionalism, and favouring a greater prestige of their work;
- becoming the starting point to encourage teachers (present and future) as a self-assessment tool, reflection about their practice, and their possibilities of professional development;
- guiding the design of teacher related policies, which is something essential from our point of view.

In fact, in one of the reports mentioned above (European Commission, 2012a), it is specified that every Member State must undertake the definition of those competences and qualities required in teachers through a competency framework as a priority action, as a starting point at current selection processes and training procedures and for professional development.

Regarding teacher selection, it is affirmed that it is not clear that current selection procedures in many Member States attract the best candidates. Therefore, one of the first measures should be the creation of an effective recruitment system based on a clear competence profile including key, measurable indicators.

As far as initial training is concerned, the competency framework for teachers is considered vital to ensure that every initial training programme provides students the use of key competences and the capacity and motivation to keep on renovating them throughout their careers.

On the other hand, no doubt a competency scheme could be included in induction programmes and teacher assessment processes. In fact, one of the measures considered is the monitoring of teachers' progress so that feedback about their performance is provided regularly by an assessment system according to those standards in the competency framework.

Two proposals at a glance

In this section we propose two examples of teacher competency frameworks made by institutions involved within the context of the European Union that have most contributed to this topic.

First, we present the initiative developed by the Finnish Institute for Educational Research (FIER, 2010), which was developed as an outcome of the research sponsored by the European Commission itself and in which 27 member countries participated.

They established eight groups of competences (called *clusters*, according to the terminology that the FIER uses) with some examples of items that help to describe them (see Table 1):

Table 1. Teacher competency framework proposed by FIER (2010)

Competences	Description
Subject competence	Managing, structuring and restructuring subject knowledge, integrating subject knowledge and pedagogic skills, applying constructive strategies in subject knowledge processing
Pedagogic competencies	Employing a range of teaching and learning strategies, supporting students' autonomous learning, using diverse teaching methods, stimulating students' socio-emotional and moral development, encouraging multicultural respect and understanding, teaching heterogeneous classes, guiding and supporting learners
Integrating theory and practice	Integrating study and practicum, using research-based learning, using guided teaching practice, learning the acquisition of information and development of knowledge, supporting research orientation, carrying out research
Co-operation and collaboration	...between students, colleagues, parents and schools, working effectively with the local community, with work-based training providers and stakeholders, supporting communication skills, using collaborative learning methods, promoting safe, respectful school environment
Quality assurance	Understanding and applying the principles of assessment, contributing to systems of quality assurance, using the results of assessment to evaluate and improve teaching and to improve standards of attainment
Mobility	Supporting students' and teachers' European and international contacts, encouraging student exchange, learning and using European languages, learning and understanding different (European) cultures
Leadership	Supporting leadership competencies so as to develop the institution and the learning environment, collaboration between institutions and communities, regional collaboration, staff development, strategic, pedagogic and economic leadership, encouraging teachers to career development)
Continuing and Lifelong Learning	Supporting and preparing students for lifelong learning, understanding the importance of self-development to continue their professional development throughout their careers

The second proposal is carried out by the European Commission (2012b) from the strategy "Rethinking education", which has already been mentioned. The European Commission defined an exhaustive list (up to 28) of *core competences*, as they are called in the original text,

broken down into three main areas: a) knowledge and understanding, b) skills, c) dispositions: beliefs, attitudes, values and commitment (see Table 2). In addition, of the main competences required for effective teaching in the 21st century, it is pointed out that teachers require a series of specific competences according to the subject they teach or the stage in which their students are, although it is not specified which ones.

Table 2. Teacher competency framework proposed by the European Commission (2012b)

COMPETENCES	DESCRIPTION
Knowledge and understanding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Subject matter knowledge → Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK) → Pedagogical knowledge → Curricular knowledge → Educational sciences foundations → Contextual, institutional, organizational aspects of educational policies → Issues of inclusion and diversity → Effective use of technologies in learning → Developmental psychology → Group of processes and dynamics, learning theories, motivational issues → Evaluation and assessment processes and methods
Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Planning, managing and coordinating teaching → Using teaching materials and technologies → Managing students and groups → Monitoring, adapting and assessing teaching/learning objectives and processes → Collecting, analysing, interpreting evidence and data for professional decisions and teaching/learning improvement → Using, developing and creating research knowledge to inform practices → Collaborating with colleagues, parents and social services → Negotiation skills → Reflective, metacognitive, interpersonal skills for learning individually and in professional communities → Adapting to educational contexts characterised by multi-level dynamics with cross-influences
Dispositions: beliefs, attitudes, values, commitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Epistemological awareness → Dispositions to change, flexibility, ongoing learning and professional improvement, including study and research → Commitment to promoting the learning of all students → Dispositions to promote students' democratic attitudes and practices, as European citizens → Critical attitudes to one's own teaching → Dispositions to team-working, collaboration and networking → Sense of self-efficacy

A competency framework for teachers to strengthen the profession

Now that we have introduced some general guidelines about competency frameworks for teachers in the context of the European educational policy, we consider it pertinent to dedicate some words in this chapter to reflection as a prelude to future complementary studies to enrich the subject, both from a descriptive and an evaluative perspective.

First, when designing teacher competency frameworks, every country or organisation can identify specific competences, organised according to their own taxonomy and a unique naming. As Perrenoud reminds us (2006), the identification of competency frameworks is not neutral in any case, as they imply a range of theoretical and ideological options designed by each organisation to represent the profession (their particular point of view on education and teachers). Therefore, the lack of agreement we can find in proposals done at Member level seems reasonable, as each of them is unique, and it can be stated that there is no single European teacher profile (FIER, 2010).

Nevertheless, these frameworks should share one common characteristic at least: the necessity to understand the teacher profile beyond that of an expert in knowledge. The following insists on this fact: (...) we can no longer afford to build education systems on the outdated notion that the teacher merely 'transmits' existing knowledge into the heads of passive learners (European Commission, 2012, p. 19). Thus, it is important to denote a greater emphasis on other type of characteristics beyond the cognitive for a good teaching performance: cooperation with the education community (teachers, families and other agents), participation in the educational centre or management of diversity, among others.

Secondly, it is worth focusing on the fact that it would sound pretentious to deduce the existence of mere teaching competences, as it is true that some statements from frameworks could be applied to other work environments (for instance, teamwork, ICTs training...). Anyway, and according to Perrenoud (2006), it is equally valuable to count on their proposals as they are carrying out a competence transfer process to the teaching background.

Furthermore, and even though content here has been focused on the professional profile of teachers, it is no less important to cover competences pertaining to teacher trainers (university teachers,

internship monitors, induction phase mentors, among others), usually ignored in both research national and international educational policies, but, however, with a decisive impact on education quality (European Commission, 2012b). In fact, the European Union has started to acknowledge their relevance and right now there are research papers about them in the different European educational systems and an approach on what a competency profile could be (European Commission, 2013b).

Thirdly, the complexity of competences is such that it is very unlikely for a teacher to achieve all of them or, at least, to be able to develop them to the same extent. Therefore, the European Commission suggests taking competences into account within an educational system or teacher team, emphasising the importance of conceiving teaching as cooperation among professionals (European Commission, 2013a).

Moreover, it can be deduced that we cannot expect that all competences needed are achieved during the initial training period, as is highlighted by the European educational policy (European Council, 2009). It follows the idea that their development during the induction stage and the ongoing exercise of the profession is unavoidable, the mentoring process being a key factor (OECD, 2005).

Finally, despite the evidence of the growing importance of teachers and the advance in the study of competency frameworks for teachers in the European policy, the documental analysis carried out invites us to consider the need to move from discourse to practice; what Caena calls "a shift from policy-as discourse to policy-as-practice" (2014, p. 311). In this sense, it is urgent to establish the necessary mechanisms to design a competency profile for teachers which help the development of competences along the professional career, as it is considered in the European Union educational policy.

No doubt this is a very demanding effort, as the articulation of a competency framework for teachers through an agreement implies the reconstruction of the teacher profile and, accordingly, a turn in teaching policies in European educational systems, which should undertake far-reaching measures (Manso & Valle, 2013).

But, on the other hand, this opportunity should not be missed, as this framework would allow the creation of a lifelong learning structure (OECD, 2005). A structure which could interconnect initial training,

selection, induction and continued development of those who teach, especially taking into account that these policies, as they are currently set, do not generate the necessary trust to develop a reserve of quality teachers (Martínez, 2016), or as the European Commission indicates (2012b, p. 28): "(...) the description of the competences required by teaching staff is, in itself, only useful if it is embedded in a wider systemic strategy to select the right candidates, develop their core competences in initial teacher education, and ensure they further develop them throughout their careers."

In other words, the aim for this new scheme is to become, in the first instance, a vehicle to open a dialogue among the different stages of the teaching career going a step further in the way to quality and the strengthening of the profession.

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