Teacher competence frameworks in Hungary: A case study on the continuum of teacher learning

Vasileios Symeonidis

Department of Teacher Education and School Research, University of Innsbruck, Fürstenweg 176, 6020, Innsbruck, Austria

Correspondence
Vasileios Symeonidis, Department of Teacher Education and School Research, University of Innsbruck, Fürstenweg 176, 6020 Innsbruck, Austria.
Email: Vasileios.Symeonidis@uibk.ac.at

Abstract
The aim of this article is to examine the development and implementation of teacher competence frameworks in Hungary. Supported by European structural funds, Hungary introduced a teacher competence framework for initial teacher education in 2006 and another for the career promotion and appraisal of teachers in 2013. Employing the process tracing method, the article follows the evolution of teacher competence frameworks over time, based on a document analysis and expert interviews with policy officials and teacher educators. Findings show that the Hungarian teacher competence frameworks evolved as an outcome of a broader Europeanisation process in teacher education, on the one hand, and of internal political priorities, on the other. Strong political commitment was often linked to weak implementation capacities, so that dissatisfaction was created on the side of teachers. Depending on the way local actors use these frameworks, some perceive it as a way of limiting teacher autonomy, whilst others feel it promotes teacher professionalism.

1 | INTRODUCTION

Teacher competence frameworks are considered as an important policy measure to develop teacher quality across Europe and beyond. The European Commission recognised that professional competence frameworks were a transversal measure for boosting teacher quality because they can link the different policies related to teacher...
professionalism, such as teacher recruitment and deployment, teacher education and professional development and teacher appraisal (Caena, 2011; European Commission, 2018). Similarly, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) emphasised the need to establish teacher competence profiles to align teacher professional development and performance with school needs as a key international priority (OECD, 2005). Other international organisations have also promoted teacher competences as a policy intervention for improving the quality of the teacher labour force (UNESCO, 2015; World Bank, 2013). In this context, a shared definition by national stakeholders of what teachers should know and be able to do in the different stages of their career seems to be acknowledged as the basis for quality teaching that contributes to better student learning. To date, there are only a few examples of how European countries define and use teacher competence frameworks to guide teacher education, recruitment and career advancement simultaneously (European Commission, 2018). This article analyses the development and implementation of teacher competence frameworks in Hungary. Hungary has recently developed these frameworks for both teacher education and teachers’ career promotion, as well as for professional development and teacher appraisal. This continuum perspective makes Hungary a relevant case for exploring the application of competences at different stages of teachers’ career.

2 | TEACHER COMPETENCE FRAMEWORKS IN EUROPE

In Europe, most countries have introduced professional competence frameworks that describe expectations for teacher quality (European Commission, 2018; European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2018), but their use varies significantly. Some define learning outcomes for initial teacher education (ITE) programmes or introduce criteria for teacher recruitment and selection, the assessment of teachers’ professional development needs and the provision of professional learning opportunities throughout teachers’ career (European Commission, 2013). Some education systems define competences at the central policy level, whilst others do so at the level of ITE institutions or through professional associations. Moreover, competences in some systems may be defined as professional standards that are precise and measurable, linked to accountability and quality assurance processes, or they can be loosely defined, focusing on principles and codes of practice (Caena, 2011).

The EU has often advised Member States to develop teacher competence frameworks (Council of the European Union, 2007, 2009, 2014) in a way that promotes ‘the agency, empowerment and responsibility of teaching staff, rather than their control and disempowerment’ (European Commission, 2012, p. 28). This approach, which focuses on professional development, is opposed to the bureaucratic or technical approach which emphasises the regulation of individual behaviour. A developmental approach requires the involvement of various stakeholders in designing competence frameworks, as well as the ownership of these frameworks by teachers and their professional associations (European Commission, 2013). The design of teacher competence frameworks has also been inextricably linked to the creation of National Qualification Frameworks (NQFs) which European countries established to improve the comparability and understanding of professional qualifications (European Commission, 2018). NQFs in Europe are developed on the basis of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) for lifelong learning which has eight reference levels defined as learning outcomes in order to align qualifications across different countries and systems.

Since the launch of the EQF in 2008, the notion of competence has been linked to the learning outcomes approach, meaning that competences are often articulated as ‘statements of what a learner knows, understands and is able to do on completion of a learning process’ (Cedefop, 2014, p. 165). The European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop) understands competences as ‘the ability to apply learning outcomes adequately in a defined context (education, training, work or professional development)’ (Cedefop, 2014, p. 47). In this sense, they can be perceived as achieved learning outcomes, validated by an individual's ability to apply them in practice, in society and at work (Cedefop, 2017, p. 31). The learning outcomes approach aims at shifting the perspective from mere content knowledge towards skills and competences that individuals need for
the labour market. Competences, formulated as learning outcomes, have found widespread applications among European countries in the design and delivery of initial teacher education programmes, although progress has been uneven (Halász, 2017). To support the development of learning outcomes in teacher education, several countries have used the European Social Fund (ESF) and other structural and research funds provided by the European Commission (Symeonidis, 2018).

The policy drive to define and implement teacher competence frameworks at the national level can also derive from international commitments to the Bologna Process in higher education (Caena, 2014) which was launched as an intergovernmental initiative in 1999 to create a European Higher Education Area through a common restructuring of higher education systems by introducing a two-cycle structure of Bachelors and Masters degrees. Because of Bologna reforms in teacher education the field has been increasingly ‘universitised’ in Europe (Zgaga, 2013) and some of the main consequences include changes in the structure of ITE programmes, the introduction of the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS), quality assurance processes and the application of the EQF (Iucu, 2010). The impact of Bologna on teacher education has also been interpreted as a process to legitimise and enforce reform initiatives at national level (Kuhlee, 2017).

3 | THE HUNGARIAN TEACHER POLICY CONTEXT

Hungary belongs to the group of Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries which experienced a rapid transformation following the fall of the Iron Curtain and of Communism. Like in other CEE countries, an important aspect of the educational transition in Hungary was the intention to catch up with Western Europe (Falus & Kotschy, 1999) and, hence, a particular feature was keeping the balance between the goals of restoration and modernisation (Halász, 2003). By the early 1990s, Hungary had become one of the most decentralised education systems in the world (Halász, 2018), but after almost 20 years of decentralisation, the neo-conservative government, in office since 2010, restored a centralised approach in all aspects of the education system. The Ministry of Human Resources became responsible for the overall management of the education system, including teachers’ salaries and career development. Education governance is currently shared between the central government and 58 school districts. In 2011, new education acts changed the organisation of public and higher education. A major systemic change included the transfer of school maintenance from the local governments to the State with the establishment in 2013 of the Klebelsberg Institution Maintenance Centre (KLIK) (Act CLXXXVIII, 2012). KLIK became responsible for teachers’ employment and the provision of professional development, whilst the Education Authority, a government organisation responsible for student examinations and the register of higher education institutions, coordinated teacher promotion and evaluation (OECD, 2015). Despite this centralisation wave, schools retained a certain level of decision-making authority related to pedagogy and teachers continued to have a relatively high level of autonomy (Halász, 2018).

Teacher education in Hungary also experienced major transformations following the changes in the political system. In 1997, the content of ITE was standardised for both universities and colleges (Government Decree 111/1997), whilst the Bologna structure was applied to ITE in 2005, organising teacher education according to two-cycle Bachelor and Master studies (Act CXXXIX, 2005). However, the recent government revoked the Bologna structure in 2011 and restored an undivided ITE model, including elements of the pre-Bologna fragmented structure that differentiated the preparation of lower- and upper-secondary school teachers (Act CCIV, 2011). In 2013, a new model for the promotion of teachers was introduced, classifying teachers as ‘Novice Teacher’, ‘Teacher I’, ‘Teacher II’, ‘Master Teacher’ and ‘Researcher Teacher’, according to their professional performance (Government Decree 326/2013). It linked teachers’ salaries to teacher appraisal, a connection that was reinforced following the launch of a reformed external school evaluation in 2015 (OECD, 2015).

Teacher competence frameworks are related to the above-mentioned policies by providing both a guiding compass and a regulatory foundation. The first comprehensive list of teacher competences to guide the development
of ITE programmes was introduced in 2006, whilst a similar list for monitoring teacher career promotion was established in 2013. The development of these competence frameworks was financed by the ESF, which had a significant impact on modernising school education in Hungary by supporting social integration and the spreading of competence-based teaching (Fazekas, 2018).

4 | THE DESIGN, TOOLS AND METHODS OF RESEARCH

This article was developed as an outcome of a three-year comparative case study on Europeanisation in teacher education which analysed how and to what extent teacher education policies and practices in three European countries, including Hungary, had been influenced by European developments. A descriptive case study approach was used to examine the development and use of teacher competence frameworks (Merriam, 1998). Data for the case study were collected through semi-structured expert interviews (Flick, 2009) and a document analysis of official policy texts and relevant policy studies (Bryman, 2012). Eight policymakers and ten teacher educators were interviewed as experts in Hungary. According to Flick (2009, p. 165), experts are particularly competent in a certain field and, in this study, they included those with sophisticated knowledge on teacher policies and those who design and enact policies. For ethical reasons, the anonymity of the participants was ensured and reference to their input was coded in the text according to their professional expertise, namely national policy expert (NPE) and teacher educator (TE). To complement the interview data, the analysis also included primary and secondary document sources produced in the last 20 years when the notion of competences started to appear in Hungary. Data were analysed using process tracing, a research method that is often employed by social scientists who conduct case studies to access their descriptive dimension and detect causal processes which do not necessarily appear in a linear way (George & Bennett, 2005; Vennesson, 2008). This method shares some basic features of historical explanation and uses qualitative data for a detailed description of the studied case. In this article, process tracing followed the policy development and implementation of teacher competence frameworks in Hungary, analysing the period between 1997 and 2018.

5 | CASE STUDY FINDINGS—TRACING THE POLICY PROCESS

5.1 | 1997–2003: First steps towards a comprehensive framework of teacher competences

In the early 1990s, shortly after the democratic transition in Hungary, increasing efforts to decentralise the education system led to the need to replace the previous centralised curriculum by one that would allow for greater school autonomy. The new National Core Curriculum (NCC), the first version of which was published in 1990, aimed to determine the contents of basic education by means of a general framework and allow schools to design their own local curriculum (Stéger, 2014). This shift from a highly prescriptive to a more flexible approach meant greater responsibility for teachers, requiring the development of new skills to plan their pedagogical programme.

With a set purpose to modernise the content of teaching, the NCC provided a new teaching structure by replacing traditional subjects by broader ‘cultural domains’ (Falus & Kotschy, 1999, p. 29), that is, an integrated range of subjects (e.g., Man and Society, Our Earth and Environment, etc.). These changes in the curriculum, combined with changes in the school structure, required the reform of initial teacher education (ITE) which came with Government Decree 111/1997 on the Qualification Requirements of Teachers. Before this decree, teacher education reflected the fragmented structure of the school system, meaning that teachers were educated differently depending on the various school types and had a different social status. The 1997 decree unified teacher education for secondary school teachers at university level, creating a standardised structure and leading to the integration of teacher training colleges in universities. It is in this context that an early reference to teacher
competences can be traced, although rather indirectly. The 1997 decree defined the main study areas of ITE and their proportion, including the following statement about teachers' knowledge and skills in the area of pedagogy and psychology:

Skill development related to the planning, organisation, management and assessment of learning and teaching process: motivation, activation, differentiation, individualisation; design, implementation and development of local curriculum, subject programmes; use of education technology tools; supervision, assessment, grading, measurement (Government Decree 111/1997, Annex, Paragraph 3.1., Item c).

Although the word ‘competence’ is not explicitly mentioned in the decree, there is a reference to the general skills that teachers are required to possess. The novelty here lies in the fact that the specific list aimed to define general skills for all teachers, independent of the level of training. The skills related to school level curriculum development also indicate a connection between the broader curriculum reform and the specific list of teacher requirements. As an interviewee explained, the expert committee that drafted the decree consisted of key players in the field of teacher education whose main interest was to strengthen their position in the fragmented training environment dominated by the university subject faculties (Interview, NPE-6). Indeed, the main impact of the decree was to strengthen the role of teacher education in the higher education framework and increase the significance of pedagogical and psychological components in teacher education.

This first attempt to define general teacher skills was informed by the work of teacher educators and education researchers with expertise in curriculum teaching and learning. Studies about teacher beliefs and teaching practice began at that time in Hungary, but the teacher policy remained narrowly focused on how teachers could design and implement lessons without considering the whole spectrum of teacher activities in schools (Interview, NPE-2, NPE-6). Other initiatives to elaborate teacher competence frameworks emerged bottom-up in the second half of the 1990s, but had little impact on policy. For example, a research group at the University of Pécs developed ‘professiograms’ for each teacher specialisation, based on the analysis of teachers’ work in schools (Kocsis & Zsolnai, 1997).

After the turn of the millennium, competence-based education appeared as a fundamental requirement in Hungary, following pedagogical trends in Europe (Stéger, 2014). The Bologna Process and the country’s accession to the EU gave an impetus to this orientation. Hungary had already joined as a full member of the Bologna Process in 1999, but it was not until 2003 that the strategy for accession to the European Higher Education Area was launched by the Ministry of Education. This strategy was met with resistance by several universities which criticised Bologna for its ‘pedagogical radicalism’ (Interview, NPE-6). However, the government considered that the structural and organisational changes in higher education would provide an opportunity to benefit from the country’s accession to the EU in 2004 (National Report on the Implementation of the Objectives of the Bologna Declaration in Hungary, 2003).

5.2 | 2003–2013: Teacher competence frameworks in the context of the Bologna Process

The Bologna reforms fundamentally restructured teacher education in Hungary. The main outcome of the professional debate that took place in the teacher education subcommittee of the national Bologna committee, led by the dean of the Faculty of Education and Psychology at the Eötvös Loránd University (ELTE), was to create a single ITE programme at the master level. This new structure, influenced by the teacher education model developed at ELTE, was legislated by the 2005 Act CXXXIX on Higher Education. In parallel, a research committee at the ELTE Faculty of Education and Psychology started to develop standards and competences for teacher education, using European structural funds. The first step was to analyse the international literature with regard to competence
development in other countries, especially England and the US. Based on the model of standards for beginning teachers developed by the Interstate Consortium (1992) in the US and the standards for subject teachers developed on that basis during the 1990s, the research committee defined standards that could apply to the Hungarian context. The next step involved asking the employers to evaluate the system of competences before the research committee could proceed to describe the content of each competence. For technical reasons, however, the researchers first described the content of competences and only afterwards were 15 school principals, mentor teachers and other stakeholders asked to assess the competences in the form of an essay or in-depth interviews (Falus & Kotschy, 2006).

At the higher education institution level, the work of the research committee continued in two directions. At first, a system of courses was developed, including requirements and content for each course, in order to help student teachers to acquire the different competences. Thus, each competence was supported by different courses and it was possible to monitor the number of courses according to the significance attached to a specific competence. Parallel to content planning, another task included the description of standards for Bachelor and Master levels on the basis of which assessment instruments were developed. The final step of the process was the compilation of a guideline for students consisting of the requirements, the standards, the forms of assessment and the course descriptions. According to Falus and Kotschy (2006), such competence-based planning for teacher education aimed at a better organisation of courses, a more goal-oriented approach and more opportunities for students to plan and be responsible for their studies.

In the meantime, the Bologna subcommittee had finalised the theoretical work on the structure of teacher education and used the competence system produced by the ELTE research committee to describe the outcome requirements of the ITE programmes. Specifically, Government Decree 15/2006 regulated the accreditation process in teacher education and defined general standards, the so-called Training and Outcome Requirements (TORs) which included nine competences which were generally disaggregated in professional knowledge, professional skills and professional attitudes (Government Decree 15/2006, Annex 4, Paragraph 7). This outcome-oriented approach, influenced by the broader European trend in learning outcomes, was introduced in a top-down way in order to adhere to Bologna, although the value of competence-based teaching was not always clear for policy-makers (Interview, NPE-5). The idea of shifting the focus from content teaching to student learning was also not widely understood by teacher educators at the time (Interview, TE-1, TE-4). A survey with higher education programme designers revealed that most were not aware of what the learning outcomes approach implied (Fischer & Halász, 2009).

In parallel to the Bologna process, the EQF began to be implemented in Hungary. While the two processes remained largely separate, the adoption of the Bologna process created various opportunities to tailor the design of ITE programmes according to the evolving framework of teacher competences, the implementation of the NQF and the learning outcomes across ITE (Interview, NPE-1). The participation of Hungary in the Tuning programme with three universities, including ELTE, also helped to link the Hungarian qualification framework to EU-level requirements (Interview, NPE-3). The project resulted in the development of methodological guidelines for a learning-outcomes-based programme in pedagogy.

Despite fierce reactions against the Bologna structure for teacher education, especially by representatives of subject disciplines, teacher competences remained a less controversial issue. Tensions were mainly caused by the redistribution of work time and resources, but, according to key policy players, the competence framework had little to do with it (Interview, NPE-6). When the new government revoked the Bologna structure and restored the undivided ITE programmes with Act CCIV of 2011 on National Higher Education following the demands of subject discipline lobbies (Symeonidis, 2017), little change took place with regard to the competence framework for ITE. The training and outcomes requirements (TORs) for ITE were only slightly modified in Annex 2 and Annex 3 of Government Decree 8/2013 which reduced the number of competences to eight instead of nine and introduced separate TORs for the subject disciplines. It also moved closer to the EQF by defining knowledge, skills and attitudes for each of the competences, formulating them as learning outcomes. In this respect, ITE is considered
to be a pioneer in the application of the learning outcomes approach compared to other higher education areas (Interview, NPE-3).

However, the rapid introduction of the undivided system, the limited social dialogue and the lack of comprehensive professional consultation in setting up the common requirements for ITE reinforced the inherited fragmentation in teacher education and caused difficulties in integrating competences in the different institutional ITE programmes. In several institutions, these were integrated in the curricula because of the accreditation requirements, but in a superficial way—that is, programme development remained limited to producing curriculum plans and course descriptions, rather than a coherent programme based on common professional goals (Pesti, Rapos, Nagy, & Bohán, 2017). Moreover, the lack of a common vision on how to interpret the training and outcome requirements seems to have hindered the collaboration between teacher educators of the different ITE components and has led to substantial differences in how pedagogy and psychology experts and subject discipline experts deal with learning outcomes (Interview, TE-1, TE-4). According to a policy official:

The learning outcomes approach is still evolving. If I ask university lecturers, coming from other fields than education, they often think that learning outcome is what we ask students at the exams. (Interview, NPE-3)

For several teacher educators who were interviewed for this study, the competence list presents high expectations for student teachers, whilst the description of competences seems to be a representation of an ideal teacher rather than a realistic outcome profile of ITE graduates (Interview, TE-1, TE-3, TE-6). Although the teacher competence framework is generally considered to be progressive, there were concerns that the content might be too detailed and the language too academic so that its implementation became more challenging (Interview, TE-2, TE-3). The strictly regulated character of the training and outcome requirements means that only what is included in the official decree can be part of ITE programmes and this was also perceived as a sign of mistrust towards teachers (Interview, TE-3). It was interpreted by some interviewees as yet another government policy instrument to regulate teachers’ work in a top-down way (Interview, TE-1).

5.3 | 2013–2018: Teacher competences as tools for the appraisal and career promotion of teachers

In 2010, with the neo-conservative government came the political will to install a national teacher appraisal system which had been missing in Hungary since the middle of the 1980s, based on which teacher salaries would be increased. The connection between teacher salaries and teacher performance was seen as a way to allocate the funding in a more effective way (Interview, NPE-6). This is because a previous effort of the Socialist-liberal government in 2002 to raise the salary of teachers by almost 50% without additional requirements had had little impact on the quality of the education system and failed to improve teachers’ performance (Interview, NPE-8). However, whilst teachers were granted the salary increase they had long sought, when inflation hit the Hungarian economy in 2006, wage gains were wiped out. A teacher career model was thus introduced with Government Decree 326/2013 which established a new career ladder and a new wage scale, linking teachers’ salaries to teacher appraisal. Teacher competences played an essential role in this career model, since teachers advanced in the career ladder according to a competence-based evaluation. At the time of development of the model, two competing views regarding teacher appraisal were debated: one was that it should be linked to the teacher career model and the other was that it should be based on a bureaucratic model and consider years of service without any reference to demonstration of competences (Interview, NPE-6). Eventually, policy actors who supported the competence-based approach prevailed. Despite initial concerns about the feasibility of such a policy measure, with appraisal linked to teacher competences, the winning argument was that competence-based standards could provide ‘a reasonable degree of objectivity’ (Falus, 2012, p. 296) for deciding on teachers’ career promotion.
The policy actors who were in favour of the competence-based approach were the same as those who influenced the development of the competence framework for ITE. The ELTE research committee that started developing teacher competences in 2005 and continued its work between 2009 and 2011 set out the framework of the teacher career model by providing a competence list, as well as levels of competence which could be used for appraisal. The teacher competence frameworks for ITE and the framework for teacher appraisal and career promotion seem to be almost identical, as shown in Table 1. Analysing the respective government decrees, one can observe that the original competence list for ITE, regulated in 2006 and amended in 2013, was transferred to the competence framework for the teacher career model which was regulated in 2013, the difference being that the latter enriched the description of some competences and changed the original order of presentation.

The resemblance between the two indicates a broad understanding of teacher professional tasks and strengthens the lifelong learning perspective of teacher education. On the other hand, teacher competences are not necessarily adapted to the different stages of a teacher’s career in an upgrading manner so that teachers can deepen their professionalism. Moreover, the alignment of the frameworks appears to be more of a coincidence, since the main actors who developed the two competence frameworks were present throughout the process. As a policy official explained:

At the policy level, there should have been attention given to aligning the two teacher competence frameworks, but no one ever thought about it. They were not interested about how these could be glued together. So now there are competences required for ITE and competences required for the career scheme. But they are not really linked, not very well thought out. Actually, competences seemed to be something you do for the ESF funds, but not something deeply understood in Hungary. (Interview, NPE-1)

### Table 1: Teacher competence frameworks for ITE and teacher career promotion in Hungary

| Training and Outcome Requirements (As amended by Government Decree 8/2013. (I.30.)) | Teacher competence framework for teacher appraisal and career promotion (Government Decree 326/2013. (VIII.30.)) |
|---|---|
| 1. Developing the student’s personality together with tailor-made treatment, based on individual needs; | d) Developing the student’s personality together with tailor-made instruction, appropriate methodological preparation for the successful education of disadvantaged students, students with special needs or integration, learning and behaviour difficulties together with other children, students |
| 2. Helping and improving the development of students’ groups and communities; | e) Helping and improving the development of students’ groups and communities, creation of opportunities, openness to different social and cultural diversity, integration activities, classroom activities |
| 3. Having knowledge of the special methodology and the special subject; | a) Professional tasks, scientific discipline-specific, subject-specific and curriculum-specific knowledge |
| 4. Planning the pedagogical process; | b) Planning the pedagogical process and activities, and the self-reflection related to their implementation |
| 5. Supporting, organising and managing the learning process; | c) Supporting learning |
| 6. Assessing pedagogical processes and the students; | f) Continuous assessment and analysis of pedagogical process and personality development of students |
| 7. Communication, professional cooperation and career identity; | g) Communication and professional development, problem-solving |
| 8. Autonomy and responsibility. | h) Commitment and professional responsibility for professional development |

Sources: Government Decree 8/2013 (I.30.) and Government Decree 326/2013 (VIII.30.).
The development of competences for the teachers’ career promotion was supported by the EU-funded TÁMOP (Operational Programme for Social Renewal) 4.1.2-08/1/b 13 programme. It could be argued that EU policy documents influenced the outcome of the competence development process if one compares the above-mentioned competences with the key competences for teachers identified by the EU. According to Kárpáti (2009), teacher competences for ITE overlap with EU teacher competences as defined in the EU working group on teacher training, with the exception of social and civic competences which are missing from the Hungarian set of requirements. Although references to equity are evident in the knowledge, skills and attitudes of the competence for personal development, competences for learner support and learning organisation, social justice and intercultural aspects seem to be missing (Kopp, Szivák, Lenárd, & Rapos, 2015).

The operationalisation of teacher competences as an evaluation tool for teachers’ career promotion included the use of a teacher portfolio and the breaking down of competences to measurable indicators of performance. Since 2013, teachers who want a promotion along the career ladder must upload an e-portfolio which documents their lesson plans, professional activities and reflections in a platform operated by national authorities and used by evaluators as part of the evaluation process. Despite initial reactions to the introduction of the portfolio, younger teachers seem to be using it for reflection purposes (Interview, TE-7, TE-10). For some teacher educators, however, the portfolio proves to be a measurement tool rather than a professional development activity:

“When they arrive to the evaluation, teachers have to present their best work, but what actually happens, because this is a measurement tool, is that they collect everything quickly, connect them to different competences, and that’s all. (Interview, TE-3)”

The limited flexibility and adaptability of the competence list also poses a challenge for the effective implementation of the portfolio (Interview, TE-1). Shortly after the teacher career model was introduced, the list of eight teacher competences was broken down into 62 indicators, evaluated with a scale from zero to three. Indicators are defined as ‘signals of knowledge, skills and attitudes in a way that can be described as activities and can be observed by an external observer’ (Education Authority, 2013, p. 23). Each competence has a number of indicators which allow the evaluator to see if a teacher possesses the expected knowledge, skills and attitudes. Table 2 presents the indicators defined with regard to the first competence of the framework for teacher appraisal and career promotion, namely knowledge of the professional tasks, of the discipline and particular subject to be taught and of the curriculum requirements.

Interviewees expressed ambivalent views regarding the indicators. For some, the list seemed overdeveloped and difficult to implement (Interview, TE-6, TE-7), whilst others felt disappointed because it did not hold badly-performing teachers accountable (Interview, TE-8). With the policies that strengthened external school evaluation in 2015, the government introduced a new system of inspection that connected external school evaluation and teacher appraisal. The inspections are organised by the Education Authority and carried out by experienced teachers who need to be ranked as Master Teacher in order to obtain a licence to act as inspectors (Interview, NPE-8). Teachers are externally appraised every five years or if they are seeking promotion to a higher level of the career model. At the same time, schools should conduct internal evaluations and teachers are asked to undertake self-evaluations.

Overall, the introduction of the teacher career model provided significant financial incentives for teachers to improve their career development, since promotion in the career ladder implied a higher salary. Although teacher salaries in Hungary remain among the lowest in the OECD countries, the statutory salary of lower secondary education teachers was raised by 46% between 2013 and 2015, one of the largest increases among countries with available data (OECD, 2017, p. 4). However, the first steps towards the implementation of the teacher career model took place in haste and led to widespread disappointment on the part of teachers. In 2013, all teachers were classified as Teacher I and experienced teachers faced a salary loss because of the reclassification. To be promoted to Teacher II, experienced teachers had to prepare a portfolio. This policy measure was generally perceived as
‘unfair’ and ‘degrading’ because it included everyone in the same classification, overlooking the years of work experience (Interview, NPE‐5, NPE‐7). In an effort to resolve the existing tensions, the government introduced amendments to the law in 2015, allowing experienced teachers to move more rapidly in the career ladder, whilst teachers who were five years before retirement were automatically upgraded to Teacher II (Interview, NPE‐5).

The top–down implementation of the reform also overlooked the involvement of social partners. The teacher career model and the definition of competences were developed by a restricted expert panel consisting of representatives from various professional backgrounds who were selected by the government (Interview, NPE‐8). This strong political control was also reinforced by the absence of collective bargaining with teacher unions (Interview, NPE‐6). Like most changes introduced by the government after 2010, there was no piloting nor impact evaluation with regard to teacher‐related reforms, with the exception of the inspection system reform which included a pilot project before becoming compulsory by law (Interview, NPE‐8). The introduction of special arrangements for the categories of Master Teacher and Researcher Teacher in the teacher career model was also preceded by research undertaken by a consortium of universities and research centres (Interview, NPE‐6) that can be described as quasi ex-ante evaluation.

### 6 | DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Teacher competence frameworks evolved in Hungary as the result of external policy pressures and internal political priorities. On the one hand, their development was required by the Bologna reforms and materialised through EU development interventions. European structural funds were a significant policy incentive for promoting competence-based teaching, whilst the learning outcomes approach influenced the design of ITE programmes and the formulation of competences and indicators for teacher career promotion. The Hungarian teacher competence frameworks can thus be seen as an outcome of the Europeanisation process that has emerged in teacher education in the last 20 years (Symeonidis, 2018). On the other hand, the shift towards teacher competences is the accomplishment of key policy players who influenced the change process in the domestic teacher policy arena. Although the issue of teacher competences was not among the most controversial, it required strong political commitment to connect teacher competences and the teacher career model. However, research on implementation makes a clear distinction between what is intended as policy and what is realised in practice (Sabatier, 2005) and this proves to be the case in Hungary. Haste in the implementation process, lack of consultation with teachers’ professional organisations and strong political control were among the main factors that led to resistance at

| TABLE 2 | List of indicators for teacher competences |
|---|---|
| 1. Competence: Professional tasks, scientific discipline-specific, subject-specific and curriculum-specific knowledge |
| 1.1 His/Her pedagogical activity reflects sound scientific discipline-specific knowledge |
| 1.2 He/She is familiar with the curriculum-regulating documents that define and organise the content for the pedagogical activities in the institution, issued by the Government and the minister responsible for education, as well as with the major contents of his/her institution's pedagogical programme related to his/her disciplinary field |
| 1.3 He/She has knowledge on and consciously applies the connections of his disciplinary field, subject to other educational fields, subjects |
| 1.4 He/She knows and consciously applies cognitive processes, educational, teaching methods, and tools that are tailored to the specificities of his/her disciplinary field, subject |
| 1.5 He/She knows the important sources of information, the opportunities of their pedagogical application, reliability, and ethical application related to his/her disciplinary field, subject |
| 1.6 He/She uses terms in a professional manner that is adapted to the pedagogical situation |

Source: Education Authority, 2013, p. 24.
the micro level. In addition, according to Halász and Michel (2011), in countries where political commitment is not linked to high level implementation capacities, successful implementation is possible but unlikely, at least in the short term.

The development of teacher competence frameworks for both ITE and career promotion has the potential to interconnect the different phases of teachers’ lifelong learning continuum. Although the design of the two frameworks followed different pathways aiming to address different needs, their use at different stages of teachers’ learning and development shows the multifunctionality of the policy tool. Teacher competences can be used for initial preparation, induction and professional development, as well as for teacher appraisal and career promotion. In the Hungarian case, teacher appraisal has been placed at the centre of the government’s latest reforms, creating ambivalent views among teacher educators and teachers as to the purpose of such competence frameworks. Some perceive this as a way of controlling teacher autonomy, whilst others feel that it promotes teacher professionalism. It thus greatly depends on how local actors use these frameworks and how professionally the evaluators perform their job.

Both the development and the implementation of teacher competence frameworks require sensitivity to the national and institutional contexts. Their successful implementation implies overcoming several hurdles and requires investments in capacity-building so that key actors at the local level can use them as a foundation to guide professional development. This study focused on the evolution of teacher competence frameworks based on policy documents and the perceptions of the main stakeholders. Their impact on teacher quality and, indirectly, on student performance could be examined in future research.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The article is part of the European Doctorate in Teacher Education (EDiTE) project that received funding from the EU’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement number 676452. The author would also like to thank his colleagues at the ELTE Faculty of Education and Psychology and especially Csilla Pesti for her valuable support in reviewing this manuscript.

ORCID

Vasileios Symeonidis https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3173-3560

REFERENCES

Act CCIV of 2011 on National Higher Education. Retrieved from www.mab.hu/web/doc/hac/regulations/Ftv2012_Eng.pdf
Act CLXXXVIII of 2012 on the takeover of municipality-maintained schools by the state. Retrieved from https://net.jogtar.hu/jogszabaly?docid=A1200188.TV
Act CXXXIX of 2005 on Higher Education. Retrieved from www.oktatas.hu/pub_bin/dload/nyelvvizsga_honositas/elismertetes_honositas/english/act_cxxix_2005.pdf
Bryman, A. (2012). Social research methods (4th ed.). Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
Caena, F. (2011). Literature review. Teachers’ core competences: Requirements and development. European Commission ET2020 Thematic Working Group ‘Professional Development of Teachers’. Retrieved from http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/repository/education/policy стратегический-фреймворк/doc/teacher-competences_en.pdf
Caena, F. (2014). Teacher competence frameworks in Europe: Policy-as-discourse and policy-as-practice. European Journal of Education, 49, 311–331. https://doi.org/10.1111/ ejed.12088
Cedefop. (2014). Terminology of European education and training policy: A selection of 130 terms (2nd ed.). Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.
Cedefop. (2017). Defining, writing and applying learning outcomes: A European handbook. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.
Council of the European Union. (2007). Conclusions of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council of 15 November 2007, on improving the quality of teacher education. Retrieved from https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX%3A42007X1212%2B01%29

Council of the European Union. (2009). Council conclusions on the professional development of teachers and school leaders. Retrieved from https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TEXT/?uri=CELEX:52009XG1212(01)

Council of the European Union. (2014). Conclusions on effective teacher education. Retrieved from www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/educ/142690.pdf

Education Authority. (2013). Útmutató a pedagógusok minősítési rendszerében a Pedagógus I. és Pedagógus II. fokozatba lépéshoz [The procedure to qualify teachers to enter the Teacher I and Teacher II grades]. Retrieved from www.oktat as.hu/pub_bin/dload_unios_projektkek/kiadvanyok/utmutato_a_pedagogusok_minositesi_rendszeraban_3.pdf

European Commission. (2012). Supporting the teaching professions for better learning outcomes. Accompanying document to the rethinking education: Investing in skills for better socio-economic outcomes. Retrieved from http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/repository/education/policy/school/doc/teachercomp_en.pdf

European Commission. (2013). Supporting teacher competence development for better learning outcomes. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

European Commission. (2018). Boosting teacher quality—Pathways to effective policies. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice. (2018). Teaching careers in Europe: Access, progression and support (Eurydice Report). Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

Falus, I. (2012). Characteristics and functions of the standards of teacher development. In A. Nemeth & S. Ehrenhard (Eds.), Lehrerbildung in Europa. Frankfurt am Main, Germany: Peter Lang Internationaler Verlag der Wissenschaften.

Falus, I., & Kotschy, B. (1999). Towards democracy in Hungary. In H. Niemi (Ed.), Moving horizons in education. Helsinki, Finland: Helsinki University Press.

Falus, I., & Kotschy, B. (2006, October 21-25). Characteristics of the social, economic and political changes in Hungary. Presented at the 31st ATEE Conference Co-operative Partnerships in Teacher Education, Portorož, Slovenia.

Fazekas, Á. (2018). The impact of EU-funded development interventions on teaching practices in Hungarian schools. European Journal of Education, 53, 377–392. https://doi.org/10.1111/ejed.12295

Fischer, A., & Halász, G. (2009). A tanulási eredmények alkalmazása a felsőoktatási intézményekben [The use of learning outcome in higher education]. Tempus Public Foundation. Retrieved from https://tka.hu/kiadvany/2841/a-tanulasi-erdemenyek-alkalmazasa-a-felsokotatasi-intezmenyebken

Flick, U. (2009). An introduction to qualitative research (4th ed.). London, UK: Sage Publications.

George, A. L., & Bennett, A. (2005). Case studies and theory development in the social sciences. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Government Decree 111/1997. (VI. 27.) Korm. rendelet a tanári képesítés követelményeiről [Government Decree on teacher qualification requirements]. Retrieved from www.art.pte.hu/sites/www.art.pte.hu/files/files/menuk/dokument/admin/szabalyzatok/torveny/111-1999.pdf

Government Decree 15/2006. (IV. 3.). OM rendelet az alap- és mesterképzési szakok képzési és kimeneti követelményeiről [Government Decree on the outcome requirements of the bachelor and master programmes]. Retrieved from http://cdn.felvi.hu/bin/content/dload/jogszabalyok/15_2006_alap_mester_kkk_20080201.pdf

Government Decree 326/2013. (VIII. 30.) Korm. rendelet a pedagógusok előmeneteli rendszeréről és a közalkalmazottak jogállásáról szóló 1992. évi XXXIII. törvény köznevelési intézményekben történő végrehajtásáról [Government Decree on the system of promotion of teachers and on the implementation of the XXXIII. Act of 1992 on the status of civil servants in public education institutions]. Retrieved from https://net.jogtar.hu/jogszabaly/id=1300326.kor

Government Decree 8/2013. (I. 30.). EMMI rendelet a tanári felkészítés közös követelményeiről és az egyes tanárszakok képzési és kimeneti követelményeiről [Government Decree on the common requirements of the preparation of teachers and the specific requirements of teaching fields related studies]. Retrieved from https://net.jogtar.hu/jogsz abaly?docid=A1300008.EMMI&celparam=*

Halász, G. (2003). Educational change and social transition in Hungary. In E. Polyzoï, J. P. Anchan, & M. Fullan (Eds.), Change forces in post-Communist Eastern Europe: Education in transition. London, UK: RoutledgeFalmer.

Halász, G. (2017). The spread of the learning outcomes approaches across countries, sub-systems and levels: A special focus on teacher education. European Journal of Education, 52, 80–91. https://doi.org/10.1111/ejed.12201

Halász, G. (2018). Teacher learning and innovation: The case of Hungary. Prepared in the framework of the “Belt and Road Education Research Project”.

Halász, G., & Michel, A. (2011). Key competences in Europe: Interpretation, policy formulation and implementation. European Journal of Education, 46, 289–306. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1465-3435.2011.01491.x

Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium. (1992). Model standards for beginning teacher licensing, assessment and development: A resource for state dialogue. Washington, DC: Council of Chief State School Officers.
Iucu, R. (2010). Ten years after Bologna: On the way towards a European teacher education area. In O. Gassner, L. Kerger, & M. Schratz (Eds.), The first ten years after Bologna. București, Romania: Editura Universității din București.

Kárpáti, A. (2009). Teacher training and professional development. In K. Fazekas, J. Köllö, & J. Varga (Eds.), Green book for the renewal of public education in Hungary. Budapest, Hungary: Ecostat.

Kocsis, M., & Zsolnai, J. (1997). Egy pedagógiai akciókutatás‐sorozat megoldásiskéreltei az ezredforduló válságzind‐drómáira. 3. rész: Akciókutatással megalapozott koncepció a magyarországi pedagógusképzés radikális megújításához [A pedagogical action research series as an attempt for solving the millennium’s crisis syndromes. Part 3: An action research-based concept for the radical renewal of the Hungarian teacher education]. Modern Nyelvoktatás, 3, 25–41.

Kopp, E., Szivák, J., Lenárd, S., & Rapos, N. (2015). The position of social justice in the teacher education curricula in Hungary. In G. Mészáros & F. Körtvélyesi (Eds.), Social justice and diversity in teacher education: Proceedings of the ATEE Winter Conference. Budapest, Hungary: Magyar Pedagógiai Társaság.

Kuhlee, D. (2017). The impact of the Bologna reform on teacher education in Germany: An empirical case study on policy borrowing in education. Research in Comparative & International Education, 12, 299–317. https://doi.org/10.1177/1745499917730737

Merriam, S. (1998). Qualitative research and case study applications in education. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

National Report on the Implementation of the Objectives of the Bologna Declaration in Hungary. (2003). Retrieved from www.ehea.info/Upload/document/members/hungary/National_Report_Hungary_2003_576372.pdf

OECD. (2005). Teachers matter: Attracting, developing and retaining effective teachers. Paris, France: OECD Publishing.

OECD. (2015). Education policy outlook: Hungary. Paris, France: OECD Publishing.

OECD. (2017). Hungary—Country Note. In Education at a Glance 2017: OECD Indicators. Paris, France: OECD Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1787/eag-2017-50-en

Pesti, C., Rapos, N., Nagy, K., & Bohán, M. (2017). Analysis of learning outcome‐based teacher training programmes—Development experiences in Hungary. Acta Paedagogica Vilnensis, 38, 58–76.

Sabatier, P. (2005). From policy implementation to policy change: A personal odyssey. In Å. Gornitzka, M. Kogan, & A. Amaral (Eds.), Reform and change in higher education. Analysing policy implementation. Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Springer.

Stéger, C. (2014). State of play in teacher education in Hungary after the Bologna reforms. Budapest, Hungary: ELTE Eötvös Kiadó.

Symeonidis, V. (2017). Weaving the threads of a continuum: Teacher education in Hungary from the perspective of European developments. Studia Paedagogica, 22, 131–149. https://doi.org/10.5817/SP2017-4-7

Symeonidis, V. (2018). Revisiting the European Teacher Education Area: The transformation of teacher education policies and practices in Europe. Center for Educational Policy Studies Journal, 8, 13–34. https://doi.org/10.26529/cepsj.509

UNESCO. (2015). Teacher policy development guide: Summary. Paris, France: Author. Retrieved from https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000235272

Vennesson, P. (2008). Case studies and process tracing: Theories and practices. In D. della Porta, & M. Keating (Eds.), Approaches and methodologies in the social sciences: A pluralist perspective. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

World Bank. (2013). What matters most for teacher policies: A framework paper (SABER Working Paper Series No. Number 4). Retrieved from http://wbgfiles.worldbank.org/documents/hdn/ed/saber/supporting_doc/Background/TCH/Framework_SABER-Teachers.pdf

Zgaga, P. (2013). The future of European teacher education in the heavy seas of higher education. Teacher Development, 17, 347–361. https://doi.org/10.1080/13664530.2013.813750

How to cite this article: Symeonidis V. Teacher competence frameworks in Hungary: A case study on the continuum of teacher learning. Eur J Educ. 2019;54:400–412. https://doi.org/10.1111/ejed.12347