ENGLISH TEACHER EDUCATION IN SLOVAKIA

Elena Kovacikova – Tomas Pechociak

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Abstract

The paper sheds light on the university preparation of future English teachers in Slovakia. Since the requirements for becoming an English teacher differ around the world, the first part of the paper describes and explains the requirements and career development of English teachers in Slovakia. Twelve Slovak faculties provide university preparation of future English teachers, and this research analyses their curricular offer. The courses offered to future English teachers are firstly categorized into linguistic, intercultural, methodological, and literary groups. As teaching practice becomes an essential part of the teacher preparation, the hours devoted to the teaching practice were counted at each institution. The tables and graphs show the sums of the courses and allocated hours. Thus, this paper brings an overview, comparison, and differences in the university preparation of future English teachers in Slovakia. Even though this survey shows only a quantitative point, this research results can be considered as one of the quality indicators in the university preparation of future English teachers in Slovakia.

Key words

English, teachers, education, Slovakia

Introduction

The requirements for English teachers differ around the world. This paper opens the Slovak context of English teacher training. Twelve faculties in Slovakia provide preparation of future English teachers. This study analyses the programs offered by the twelve faculties in Slovakia. The courses in the programs are quantitatively analyzed from the linguistic, intercultural, methodological, and also literature points of view. The first three categories are taken from the *European Profile for Language Teacher Education - A Frame of Reference* (Kelly et al., 2004). The literary courses, as the last category, were added due to the strong cultural tradition of joining the language education altogether with the language. This is a specific feature of post-communistic countries to connect the language study with the study and overview of the literature written in that language. This paper firstly aims at the description of English teacher career development in Slovakia in order to understand the position of English teachers in Slovakia. Last but not least, the quality of English teachers depends on their preparation, and thus the comparison of the courses and allocated hours at each faculty were carried out in order to find out the balanced approach. The research part works with the data taken from the official websites of the faculties, categorizing the offered courses into categories with the aim to get the sum of the particular courses in each category. Considering the current situation of English teacher

training in Slovakia, this paper pictures the similarities and differences in pre-service English teacher preparation that can reveal the quality of the offered programs.

English teacher career development in Slovakia

The first part of this paper describes the career requirements and development of English teachers in Slovakia. Currently, there are five stages in the career development of English teachers (Pokrivčáková, 2012):

a) Initial Teacher Training (Pre-Service Teacher Training)

English teachers in Slovakia are trained exclusively by universities. The study lasts five years in daily form, and graduates are awarded a diploma and the degree title of “magister” (Mgr.).

b) Novice teacher

After university graduation, a novice teacher starts to adapt to teaching and solving all situations in school, with either students, colleagues, school management, or parents. This stage usually takes two or three years.

c) Independent teacher

An independent teacher is one who, having been trained in teaching practice, has achieved all the special skills and knowledge needed for teaching practice within schooling institutions.

d) Teacher with the first attestation

After successfully defending their thesis and exam, a teacher will hold the first attestation and is now competent to supervise a novice teacher or become a teacher trainer for pre-service teachers.

e) Teacher with the second attestation

This is the highest possible stage in the teacher’s career, and this teacher is competent and able to professionally guarantee a program of continual education. They can become members on the committee for the second attestation exam, as well as members of national and international expert committees.

The system of a life-long learning program for teachers suggested in the 1990s, has changed since the Velvet Revolution. *Act No. 568/2009 on Life-long Learning* adopted as of December 1, 2009 (*Zákony pre ľudí*, 2010) defined life-long learning with the aim of further education and assured formal or informal continuing professional development. The formal one is guaranteed and provided by higher educational institutions or accredited educational institutions. In this case, the graduates are awarded diplomas or certificates such as passing attestation or “rigorosa” exams. Informal studies include reflection of other teachers through observation, self-study in practical training, participation in methodological seminars, and teacher conferences on all the aspects of foreign language teaching.

The *Act No. 317/2009 on Teaching Staff and Vocational Training Employees* as amended (Ibid, 2010) recognizes the following types of continual education:

- ✓ Adaptation education – aimed at novice teachers.
- ✓ Updating education –to follow the latest trends in teaching.
- ✓ Innovative education – to improve professional competencies in teaching.
- ✓ Specialized education – for specialized activities.
- ✓ Managerial education – for school management.
- ✓ Qualification education –to gain a higher qualification.

To motivate teachers and pedagogues in updating and acquiring knowledge concerning their teaching practice, the Ministry of Education in the Slovak Republic introduced the possibility of gaining credits for passing the aforementioned types of education. The valid *Act No. 317/2009 on Teaching Staff and Vocational Training Employees (Zákony pre ľudí, 2010)* enabled teachers to get a financial bonus. The Ministry of Education decided the credits are evaluated to teachers only for updating specialized or qualification types of education (Minedu, 2009). As for the requirements for the first attestation: teachers who have gained 30 credits and taken the course of preparatory attestation education, or teachers who have gained 60 credits, are allowed to sit the first attestation exam, which, for their future career, means they get the higher qualification hand in hand with a pay rise. The same happens with the second attestation, as this is the highest stage in the teaching career (Minedu, 2009). However, heated discussions are held on to the quality of the education providing the teaching credits as well as on the inadequate number of credits offered for certain courses. The validity of credits was set initially for seven years; in January 2018, the Ministry of Education in the Slovak Republic announced that they would be valid without any time limits. As Miškolci (2018) states, the financial motivation caused a literal “hunt for credits” in the world of teachers. Worse yet is that teachers started to prefer courses with the highest number of credits achieved in the shortest time regardless of their field of interest or need. *Erasmus+* Program started in January 2014, is the EU program for Education, Training, Youth, and Sport for 2014-2020. Under the *European Union's Erasmus+ Lifelong Learning Program*, grants are available not only for language teachers but also to school leaders and school staff in primary, secondary, and tertiary education. Despite the fact that an Erasmus program does not directly bring career promotion in terms of financial benefits, getting to know other cultures, societies, professional partners, and information and experience exchange, this experience is priceless, especially for language teachers. Apart from governmental support of teachers introduced through formal acts and decrees, there are several teacher associations (non-governmental groups) trying to challenge teachers and provide either tutorial help, workshops, or conferences for teachers in general or from particular and specific fields. The first to mention is the non-governmental organization *Živica* providing activities aimed towards education and eco-consulting. For teachers, they

offer activities in Bratislava, Zvolen, and run an educational center in Zaježová. *Komenského inštitút* fits under this non-governmental organization category. The aim is to point out the crucial problems in Slovak education and show possible ways how to solve them. *SAUA/SATE* – the association of English language teachers, was founded after the initiation of the British Council, and it was officially registered in May 1991 as a non-governmental organization of English language teachers for all types of schools and educational institutions. *Slovak Chamber of English Language Teachers (SCELT)* is an independent volunteer, a non-profit professional association for teachers of English as a foreign language and other English language professionals working in Slovakia. It was established in 2013 with over 280 members, including teachers, teacher trainers, university students, instructors, researchers, and consultants. Among other possibilities for English teachers to become members of language teacher groups, with opportunities to take part in organized events, there are internationally recognized associations or professional groups, for example, the *British Council*, *CERCLES (European Confederation of Language Centres in Higher Education)*, *International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language (IATEFL)*, or *Teaching English as a Second Language (TESOL)*, and many others. Apart from taking part in events, international associations of professionals also provide courses for teaching English recognized beyond the borders of the European Union. These are, for example, *Certificates in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (CELTA)*, or the *Diploma in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (DELTA)* as an advanced TEFL qualification for qualified English teachers with a few years of teaching experience with the aim of advancing their qualifications. These courses take several intensive weeks of training, lectures, and workshops, and they are granted by the *University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate (UCLES)*, and are highly regarded by employers, especially in Asia. TEFL or TESOL are provided by *TEFL Org UK*. Thus, successful participants are allowed to teach English as a foreign language across the whole world. A 2014 survey by the British Council of Slovakia among teachers of English (*British Council*, 2014) showed that they appraised the conditions for teaching English in Slovakia as unsatisfactory. Most clearly felt (by 95% of respondents) was the lack of a structure for additional in-service training and the lack of opportunities for a language stay abroad. Most respondents (93%) perceived the absence of integrated teaching materials (including didactic and digital content supplementing the textbooks) to be the major shortcoming. Most of these findings are identical to those in a number of other European countries where the same need is felt for qualified teachers, for higher standards in teacher training, and for additional in-service courses (Enever, 2011). However, the experiences of non-native teachers within their own state educational systems remain seriously under-investigated (Hayes, 2009), even though their identities have meaningful consequences for their personal as well as professional behaviors (Cowie 2011).

Quite a big official change in foreign language teaching and learning in Slovakia happened in September 2019 when English officially ceased to be the first foreign language implemented in the third grade of elementary schools (Minedu, 2020). The aim of this shift was to provide chances also to other foreign languages. In case children start learning another foreign language in the third grade, they will take up English in the seventh grade, and thus, they will reach A2 level within their final two years at elementary school. However, the reality shows that the vast majority of schools stick to English as the first foreign language. Firstly due to the demand of parents who realize that English primes in the world and secondly, the teaching staff in schools has been organized and managed to teach English as in the previous years, it was compulsory.

English Teacher Pre-Service Preparation

Twelve faculties in the following Slovak towns, namely Bratislava (2 faculties), Komárno, Trnava (2 faculties), Nitra (2 faculties), Banská Bystrica, Ružomberok, Žilina, Prešov, and Košice provide English teaching programs as a double major with a combination with another subject, a single major English teaching program, or both (Portál VS, 2020). In particular, there are only four faculties in Bratislava, Nitra, Trnava, and Prešov that offer both a single major and a double major English teaching program. This chapter analyzes and summarizes the courses that are provided at particular faculties within the English teaching programs in Slovakia. The aim of this curricular analysis is to gain an overview of knowledge, skills, and competencies that the graduates of English teaching programs obtain. With the number of courses separated into four categories described below with the related number of hours, the results may reveal the quality of offered study programs in bachelor and master degrees at particular faculty.

The courses in bachelor and master degrees in English teaching programs are categorized with the focus to find out the concordance with the European Profile for Language Teacher Education - A Frame of Reference (Kelly et al., 2004). This research strategy was chosen in order to compare and discover how the courses for future English language teachers in Slovakia are organized and structured following the proposed document (see chapter 1.1). These analyses focus on the twelve faculties that deliver English teaching training, both in single and double major programs. Notably, in the course of the research methodology, the study programs were analyzed according to the information provided on the official websites of the above-mentioned faculties. With reference to the European Profile for Language Teacher Education the courses that are mentioned in the text below are divided into the proposed categories in the document, namely *linguistic*, *literature*, *intercultural* and *methodological* courses. In terms of finding out the quality of the provided English teacher training programs our analyses aim at the number of courses categorized according to their character (linguistic, literature, intercultural, and methodological) and the number of hours per week that are provided by the curriculum. However, it must be mentioned that the courses that are analyzed are a mix of compulsory and elective courses. It means that not all of the courses need to be taken and

completed in order to accomplish the study. Thus, these analyses show the offer of the curriculum at particular faculties that is provided in order to get a quality education and preparation in the course of the English teaching program. Therefore, the following codes within the four categories have been chosen:

Within the bachelor study programs, we searched for:

1. A number of linguistic courses,
2. A number of literary courses,
3. A number of intercultural courses,
4. A number of methodological courses,
5. Types and a number of Teaching Practice hours.

Within the Master Study programs, we searched for:

1. A number of linguistic courses,
2. A number of literary courses,
3. A number of intercultural courses,
4. A number of methodological courses
5. Types and a number of Teaching Practice hours.
- 6.

The tables provided later in the text for Bachelor degree and Master degree show the analyzed courses for each educational institution. It is necessary to add that the courses were divided according to their names from the information available online from official websites of the departments, faculties, or universities. The data was collected and analyzed from October - December 2020.

Research Results

This part summarizes and explains the data collected based on the principles explained above. The findings are divided into three main parts. The first comments on the findings from the curricular analyses from bachelor degrees of all the twelve educational institutions preparing English language teachers for their profession. The second table displays the courses and hours allocated for the courses in the master degree and. Owing to the fact that the qualified teacher of English in Slovakia needs to achieve a Master degree in order to start teaching at schools, we decided to add also the table and respective graphs summarizing the results and findings resulting from the sums of both degrees provided at the educational institutions.

Table 1 Bachelor Degree Courses and Teaching Practice¹
courses/allocated hours

Institutions		No. Courses/no. hours per week		Linguistics (average no.18/41)		Literature (average no. 6/15)		Intercultural (average no. 4/7)		Methodology (average no. 2/5)		Teaching Practice w-week, s-semester	
0		4/7		2/4		3/8		22/37					
1 w/s		2/5		6/13		7/17		10/24					
N/A		5/12		3/7		8/17		11/26					
40/s		4/12		5/15		3/10		19/62				FE	
40/s		2/5		2/6		11/28		16/39				FA	
N/A		3/8		2/2		6/11		19/34					
N/A		1/2		4/8		4/10		26/56				FA	
40/s		3/10		3/10		6/21		14/38				FE	
1 w/s		0/0		3/6		5/10		14/24					
w/s		0/0		0/0		4/8		19/36					
30/s		0/0		7/15		8/20		26/59					
N/A		0/0		10/22		9/21		22/53					

The Table 1 summarizes the findings from the first research. The official websites of the faculties that provide bachelor English teacher training programs show the offer of the courses. These courses in the curriculum of each institution were identified and later on divided into four categories. The focus was to find out the number of the categorized courses and allocated hours per week within the four groups of linguistic, literary, intercultural, and methodological courses. The final category was the teaching practice and the number of hours devoted to the particular type of teaching practice at bachelor degrees. The course of data analyses research was driven firstly to categorize the courses into four directions that are crucial for English teacher training programs. At the same time, these four

¹ FA – Faculty of Arts, FE – Faculty of Education, N/A – not applicable (the information was not found on official websites)

categories were taken from the European Profile for Language Teacher Education - A Frame of Reference (Kelly et al., 2004). The courses were divided into categories according to their titles. Then, the hours allocated to particular categories were calculated and eventually compared among all the 12 institutions that provide the same English teacher training in bachelor and master degrees. In order to compare the data, it was necessary to find out the minimal and maximal values both in the number of courses and also weekly hours allocated for each category at each educational institution. It is important to mention that there is no suggested model of English teacher training program of how to design and balance all the four categories of the courses appropriately and also due to the fact that universities and faculties are autonomous enough to build up the educational programs that are accredited and offered to the students. Therefore we found it important to count also an average value of all the categories from all the twelve schools in Slovakia in order to see the midpoint of the courses and allocated hours in all the Slovak institutions offering the same educational program.

When it comes to linguistic courses the highest number of courses that are offered in bachelor degree is 26 provided by Presov. With the number of 22 courses provided by Kosice and Bystrica within the same number of courses, the Košice bachelor program offers 16 more hours per week for the linguistic development of future English teachers. On the contrary, the lowest number of courses is 10 that are provided by the Faculty of Arts in Bratislava, followed by the Faculty of Education in BA with the number of 11. However, considering the number of hours per week, the lowest allocation of hours is offered by the Catholic University in Ruzomberok. The average number of linguistic subjects is 18 with an average number of hours 41. Thus, the average number of courses with the average number of hours devoted to linguistic development was fulfilled by 4 faculties. Banska Bystrica, Zilina, and Komarno – these 3 institutions fit into an average number of courses. However, the number of hours is lower than the average.

Literature courses vary from 2 in Banská Bystrica to 14 (Faculty of Arts in Nitra), with a number of hours allocated to teaching literature per week from 4 (Banská Bystrica) to 27 at the Faculty of Education in Trnava. The average number of courses for teaching literature is 6.6, with 15.6 hours per week. Thus, 7 institutions follow the average number of literary courses and hours for the development of future English language teachers.

Following the courses directed to intercultural development, the lowest number of courses is 0 in Žilina. On the opposite, the highest number of courses is provided in Košice with 10 courses. Košice also beats the number 22 as the highest number of hours devoted to intercultural development. With 4.3 as the average number of courses and 10.3 number of hours allocated to intercultural education, there are only 4 institutions that fit in.

Methodological development is not very significant in bachelor degree ranging from 0 to 5 courses within the bachelor degree. The number of hours ranges from 0 to 12 in Nitra (the Faculty of Education and the Faculty of Arts). There are 7 institutions that follow the average number of courses 1.7 and only 6 that follow the average number of hours, i.e. 5.25 allocated to methodological development.

The final category of teaching practice is difficult to summarize as it is evident from the table that some institutions state the number of hours of a particular type of teaching practice, whereby the other institutions declare only the weeks of teaching practice with an unknown number of hours. Secondly, some of the websites do not contain information on the teaching practice. Therefore, it is difficult to compare them. However, the interesting finding is the fact that there are 5 institutions out of 12 that introduce no teaching practice in a bachelor degree of English teacher training programs. The highest number of teaching practices in bachelor degree is obvious in Nitra at both faculties, the Faculty of Arts and Education and Trnava, the Faculty of Education.

In the course of this research, it is important to see also the limitations. The courses were divided into four categories according to their titles and thus, some of the courses, as for example, *Text and Visual Culture* (Faculty of Arts, BA) can be considered as both the literary and intercultural category as well. In these cases, we decided to count it only in one section. It is also important to reflect on the fact that the higher number of courses or allocated hours does not necessarily mean a higher quality of education. This research analyzed the upper layer of the teacher training program providers that are responsible for future English language teachers. For more detailed information, it would be needful to analyze the information on the detailed content of a particular course. These results were summarized from the external sources available online by each institution. Another important fact is that this analysis summarizes all the courses, compulsory and elective ones. Therefore, not all of the courses need to be taken in order to accomplish the degree.

Master Degree

This shows the results of the data gathered in master degree of English teaching programs of twelve faculties. The aim was to find out the number of courses, in particular, categories as well as the hours weekly allocated to these subjects. The separate part was the available information on teaching practice provided by the educational institution.

Table 2 Master Degree Courses and Teaching Practice

Institutions	No. courses/no. hours per week	Linguistics (average no. 11/21)	Literature (average no. 5/11)	Intercultural (average no. 2/4)	Methodology (average no. 6/15)	In total types (t)/hours(h) or weeks(w) NA – not applicable
	BB	15/25	5/8	3/6	9/14	3t,2w
	BA FA	8/16	4/8	2/4	3/10	2t,5w
	BA FE	15/31	8/16	5/10	7/14	2t, NA
	NR FE	12/25	4/17	2/4	12/29	3t,200h
	NR FA	11/25	5/13	0/0	5/12	3t,70h
	KN	7/14	5/9	1/2	4/6	3t, 80h
	TT FA	10/20	3/6	1/2	5/11	3t, 6w
	TT FE	7/14	3/7	4/9	8/20	3t, 128h
	RK	8/15	2/4	0/0	2/4	3t, 6w
	ZA	8/14	2/4	0/0	3/15	2t,2w,30h
	PO	16/28	13/26	2/4	14/33	3t,4w
	KE	17/30	4/8	5/10	3/6	3t,36h,10w

Similarly to the above Table 1 that summarizes bachelor, the Table 2 analyses and summarizes the data collected from the Master degree of the English teacher training programs in Slovakia provided by 12 educational institutions. The same principle of analysis was followed, starting with categorizing the courses and calculating the final allocation of weekly hours, with the aim to find the midpoint and the lowest and highest value in the number of courses and hours.

The linguistic category reveals that the lowest number of courses is 7 and is offered by 4 institutions with 14 weekly hours allocated to the linguistic development of future English teachers in Slovakia. The highest number of courses (16) is offered by Banská Bystrica; however, the highest number of hours is provided by the Faculty of Education in BA within 15 linguistic courses. The calculated average number of courses and hours

shows that 5 institutions fit in the average number of linguistic courses (15) with an average number of hours (20) per week allocated to the linguistic development in the master degree.

The lowest number of literary courses (2) with the lowest number of allocated hours (4) for literary development is provided by Ružomberok and Žilina. On the opposite, Prešov offers 13 literary courses with 26 hours per week as the highest value for literary development out of all institutions. The average number of literary courses is 5, with 11 hours per week. Thus, 4 institutions follow both values in the number of courses and hours, and the Faculty of Education in Nitra also fits in with the number of hours, however with minus one course.

Intercultural courses are not provided at all in three institutions. The highest number of courses aimed at building up intercultural competencies is 5 offered in BA, the Faculty of Education. Košice follows with 4 courses and 8 hours per week. The average number of courses for intercultural development is 2 with 4 hours and these values are followed by 6 institutions out of 12 in total.

Methodological courses should be the core courses in teaching professions as their contents teach and develop the competencies on how to transmit the linguistic, literary, and intercultural knowledge further on pupils and students. It is obvious that the number of methodological courses increases in a master degree in comparison with the bachelor's one. The average number of methodological courses out of all the 12 institutions is 7, with 16 hours allocated to the methodological development every week. Thus, only 3 institutions (Nitra, Faculty of Education, Prešov, and Košice) out of 12 fit with both values. Banská Bystrica, with the Faculty of Education in Bratislava, follows the average number with the number of courses. The Faculty of Education in Trnava follows the average number with the number of hours allocated for methodological development of future English teachers in Slovakia. Prešov leads the table with 13 methodological courses with 33 hours per week. On the opposite, the lowest number of courses, as well as the hours, are provided by Ružomberok.

Similarly to the Table 1, the teaching practice in the master degree was also difficult to analyze and compare as the information provided by the sources varies in allocated hours and/or weeks. Our findings show that there is a range of teaching practice types from 2 to 3. In case that we compare the institutions that provide teaching practice in hours, the highest number of hours is offered at the Faculty of Education in Nitra with the number of 200 in a single major and 100 in a double major teaching program. Then, it is followed by the Faculty of Education in Trnava with 3 types of teaching practice and 128 hours. If we compare the institutions that state their teaching practice in weeks, Košice has 10 weeks of teaching practice in a master degree and that is the highest number compared to the rest of the listed institutions.

Bachelor and Master Study

The research of this paper collected, analyzed, and quantitatively compared the number of courses and allocated hours within the linguistic, literary, methodological, intercultural areas altogether with the teaching practice covered by the English teacher training provided at the twelve faculties in the Slovak Republic. Due to the fact that a fully qualified English teacher needs to accomplish a Master degree in order to teach at public schools, the following table summarizes the courses and allocated hours that are offered during the bachelor and also master degrees of teacher preparation at universities.

Table 3 Summary of BA and MA courses/allocated hours

Institutions	No. courses/ hours per week	Linguistic	Literature	Intercultural	Didactic/methodology
	BB	37/62	8/16	5/10	13/21
	BA FA	18/40	11/25	8/17	5/15
	BA FE	26/57	16/33	8/17	12/26
	NR FE	31/87	7/27	7/19	16/41
	NR FA	27/64	16/41	2/6	7/17
	KN	26/48	11/20	3/4	7/14
	TT FA	36/76	7/16	5/10	6/13
	TT FE	21/52	9/28	7/19	11/30
	RK	22/39	7/14	3/6	2/4
	ZA	27/50	6/12	0/0	3/15
	PO	42/87	21/46	9/19	14/33
	KE	39/83	13/29	15/33	3/6

Table 3 shows the number of courses and allocated hours within bachelor and master degrees at all the educational institutions. The blue color highlights the highest number in both numbers, courses, and weekly hours. As it is evident from the table above, Prešov leads in the linguistic and literary category, Košice in intercultural and Nitra, Faculty of Education guides in the methodological courses and weekly hours. On the contrary, the grey number suggests the lowest number of courses in particular educational

institutions. Thus, Ružomberok has the minimum number of courses focused on methodology. Žilina scores the lowest with intercultural and literary courses, and the Faculty of Arts in Bratislava provides the lowest number of linguistic courses and weekly hours allocated to them.

Table 4 Number of courses for 5 years in each category

SUM	Methodology	Intercultural	Literature	Linguistics	Category	INSTITUTION
63	13	5	8	37	BB	
42	5	8	11	18	BA FA	
62	12	8	16	26	BA FE	
61	16	7	7	31	NR FE	
52	7	2	16	27	NR FA	
47	7	3	11	26	KN	
54	6	5	7	36	TT FA	
48	11	7	9	21	TT FE	
34	2	3	7	22	RK	
36	3	0	6	27	ZA	
86	14	9	21	42	PO	
70	3	15	13	39	KE	
54.6	8.25	6	11	29.3	average	
53	7	6	10	27	median	

As indicated above in the text, the table 4 shows the sum of the courses and hours from the bachelor and master degrees and thus compares all the schools that prepare future English teachers from the point of view of curricular offer.

The number in **red** highlights the minimal number of courses in each category, and the **blue** color indicates the maximal number of the courses. This graph displays the comparison of the number of courses at each educational institution preparing future English teachers. As it is evident from the graph, the highest offer of the courses provides Prešov. Quite the contrary, the lowest number of courses is provided by Ružomberok, followed by Žilina.

Graph 1 Sum of courses for 5 years for each category

The second part of the findings shows the results of the weekly hours allocated in the curriculum for each category. The number in **red** highlights the minimal number of courses in each category, and the **blue** color indicates the maximal number of the courses.

Table 5 Weekly hours within 5 years for each category

INSTITUTION															average	median
	Category	BB	BA FA	BA FE	NR FE	NR FA	KN	TT FA	TT FE	RK	ZA	PO	KE			
Linguistics		62	40	57	87	64	48	76	52	39	50	87	83	62	60	
Literature		16	25	33	27	41	20	16	28	14	12	46	29	26	26	

SUM	Methodology	Intercultural
109	21	10
97	15	17
133	26	17
174	41	19
128	17	6
86	14	4
115	13	10
129	30	19
63	4	6
77	15	0
185	33	19
150	6	32
121	20	13
122	16	14

As it is obvious from Table 5, Prešov and the Faculty of Education in Nitra provide the highest number in a linguistic category. Prešov again leads in the literary category, and Košice rules in an intercultural. The Faculty of Education in Nitra offers the most weekly hours also in the methodological category. Quite astonishing is the fact that all of these faculties prepare students for the same profession in which methodological preparation for teaching a foreign language plays an essential part, and this table shows remarkable differences in the offer of the hours allocated to such preparation. The gap between the lowest number and the highest number of hours triples. As it is clear from the theoretical background, the methodological courses focus on the practical preparation and thus bridge academic grounds of scientific theories with the real educational institutions. Therefore, 4 hours per week allocated for methodological preparation compared with the 41 seem to be insufficient and too little. When we look at the average number or median as there is a minimal difference (121 and 122), these two numbers can be taken into consideration as the borderline for acceptable and sufficient preparation from the point of view of the hours.

Graph 2 Overall number of weekly hours at each faculty within 5 years

This graph shows the comparison of all the educational institutions preparing future English teachers in Slovakia with the focus on the number of hours allocated to all four categories.

The higher number of courses and hours does not guarantee the quality of the curriculum provided by each faculty. However, it can be considered that the higher number of courses or at least the balanced values in each category may refer to the adequate and agreeable offer, and thus it can point to a higher standard of curriculum provided for pre-service teachers of English.

The final interpretations of the above-mentioned data in the course of this research can reveal quite different conditions provided for the same profession in one country. Considering the fact that 12 institutions in Slovakia educate future English teachers, it is more than interesting to see the differences in the nature of courses and hours allocated to the categories out of which three were defined in the Profile, and the literary one was added due to the historical background of language teacher training. However, there are limitations that can influence the real optics on the matter. The first one is the mix of compulsory and elective courses. The second is dividing the courses according to their names only without a closer look at the deeper course content. Another limitation might be not updated information of the courses and hours taken from the official websites and also the fact that not all the courses are to be offered every year. All in all, for the purpose of this study, these findings served as the initial base for further research carried out in the direction of one of the listed institutions.

Conclusion

This paper compares the curricular offer of the faculties that provide education for future English teachers in Slovakia. In order to set the research

into the relevant context, it was essential to describe the historical and current situation of English language teacher training in Slovakia. The shift was remarkable after the Velvet revolution as a historical and political milestone. It caused that teaching and learning western foreign languages to become popular and, most of all, allowed and pushed forward. The professional development of English language teachers is also discussed in this chapter.

After the recognition of the categories based on the core document of *European Profile for Language Teacher Education - A Frame of Reference* (Kelly et al., 2004), the existing study programs in Slovakia were identified. Currently, the twelve Slovak educational institutions provide English teacher training programs in single or double major. The curricular analyses aimed at finding out the offer in four categories, i.e. linguistic, literature, intercultural, and methodological ones. The number of courses within a particular category with the number of hours provided weekly were summed and compared. The graphs above in the text show the differences in the curricular offer of the institutions that produce English language teachers, i.e. the same qualifications. In order to get an overall view of the curricular offer, also the category aimed at teaching practice hours in bachelor and master degree was created. All the data were collected from the official internet websites of the departments or faculties. However, the teaching practice was difficult to evaluate as the programs provided the teaching practice in hours or in weeks. The surprising fact was that some of the programs did not include any teaching practice in the bachelor degree even though the graduates achieved the same teaching degree. The graphs show particular results in bachelor and then in master degree. Considering the fact that the teaching profession is completed and an independent English teacher according to the law in Slovakia is a person who acquires master degree in English teaching program. Therefore, this study shed light on the analyses and comparisons of curricular summary of courses and hours within all four categories at all the twelve educational institutions. Surprisingly, it revealed the great variety and vast differences between the number of courses and hours provided by particular faculties.

Graph 1 in Chapter 1.4.2 shows that FE NR (KLIS department) takes fifth place out of twelve in the number of courses within the chosen categories. When it comes to the number of hours, it takes the second place in providing the second-highest number of hours for the development linguistic, intercultural, literary, and didactic competencies of pre-service teachers during their university study. Thus, the initial position of the KLIS FE NR was found to be in a favorable light when it comes to comparison with other educational institutions producing English language teachers. The curricular ground of courses and hours allocated within particular categories was evidently in the more extensive offer out of all the English teacher training programs in Slovakia. Even though it cannot be directly uttered that the preparation at the FE NR is of a higher quality but it may be concluded that there is a higher chance of a better teacher preparation than in the institutions that offer a lower number of courses and hours.

The inquiry into the curricular offer of Slovak educational institutions regarding English teacher training for their professional achievements, this

study revealed that the curricular preparation of English pre-service teachers at the KLIS, FE in Nitra is adequate from the point of view of the linguistic, literary, intercultural, didactic categories, including the teaching practice. These categories were chosen in accordance with the above-mentioned core document *The European Profile for Language Teacher Education - A Frame of Reference* (Kelly et al., 2004).

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Elena Kovacikova

Faculty of Education

Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra

Dražovská cesta 4, 949 01 Nitra

Slovakia

ekovacikova@ukf.sk

Tomas Pechociak

Faculty of Economics and Managment

Slovak University of Agriculture in Nitra

Tr. A. Hlinku 2

Slovakia

tomas.pechociak@uniag.sk