Do Teachers Really Need a Master's Degree? Student Teachers' Perspectives

Marta KOWALCZUK-WALĘDZIAK[1]
Otilia CLIPA[2]
Linda DANIELA[3]

Abstract

In recent years, considerable attention has been paid in European debates on teacher education to upgrade teaching qualifications at the master's level. However, still little is known about the usefulness of master's level preparation for teachers' professional practice. This study seeks to add to the existing body of knowledge by exploring student teachers' perceptions of the usefulness of master's studies for their (future) professional practice. The survey questionnaire was completed by 343 student teachers enrolled in master's programs in Polish, Romanian, and Latvian universities. Generally, the surveyed student teachers declared that master's level education was an appropriate and useful type of education for teachers. However, this study also found that some student teachers had unclear or even negative views on this type of education for teachers. Several issues which emerged from the results are discussed, with reference to implications for current efforts in developing teaching as a Master's level profession.

Keywords: Master degree, student teacher, teacher education, teaching as a Master's level profession

Introduction

Over the past two decades, European debates on teacher education have shown a growing interest in moving teaching to an all-masters profession. As is highlighted in many policy documents, this type of education for teachers could be one of the means to address the challenge of developing necessary skills and qualifications for the increasingly complex nature of teaching in the classrooms of the 21st century, and to help teachers become innovators and researchers in their workplaces (see e.g., Council of the European Union, 2007; Eurydice, 2015). In fact, master's level work is clearly

[1]Assistant Professor, PhD, Faculty of Pedagogy and Psychology, University of Białystok, Poland
[2]Associate Profesor, PhD, Faculty of Education Sciences, University of Suceava, Romania
[3]Associate Profesor, PhD, Faculty of Education, Psychology and Art, University of Latvia, Latvia

conceived as a strategy to engage teachers with theory and research in order to improve their practice (Niemi, 2008; Campos, 2010; Teixiera and Menezes, 2012; Gray, 2013, Eurydice, 2015). This, in turn, seems to be directly linked to promoting ideas of "teacher as a researcher", "teacher as a reflective practitioner" or "inquiry-oriented teacher education" (Erixon, Frånberg, and Kallos, 2004). Hence, it is not surprising that governments in many European countries develop policies aim at incorporating teacher education into the university sector and raise the required qualifications for all new teachers to the master's level (17 countries from Europe). Despite the increasing number of national and European debates surrounding the curricula and expected outcomes of Master's studies for teachers, still little is known about the usefulness of this type of education for teachers' professional practice.This paper seeks to add to the existing body of knowledge by focusing on Polish, Romanian and Latvian teacher students and exploring their perceptions of the usefulness of master's studies for their (future) professional practice.

The paper starts by reporting the existing research on the usefulness of master's level preparation for teachers' professional practice and outlying the current teacher education policy in Poland, Latvia, and Romania. We then present the research methodology and the findings. We conclude by discussing several issues which emerged from those findings, with reference to implications for current efforts in developing teaching as a Master's level profession.

Background.
The Value of Master's Study to Teachers' Professional Practice

The results of recent research show that the usefulness of student teachers' enrolment in and completion of a master's programme (both as part of initial and continuing professional development) for their (future) teaching practice is not clear. Several studies clearly indicate that student teachers considered a master's degree as significantly contributing to their (future) teaching, mainly in terms of gaining new knowledge and skills, gathering more confidence in the profession, renewing their vision of the teaching profession, being able to apply the inquisitive approach to research reports and policy documents and new initiatives, becoming a more reflective practitioner, deepening their understanding of what takes place in the classroom

process of teaching and learning, and obtaining a strong theoretical foundation needed in their professional work (Drennan and Clarke, 2009; Arslan and Kara, 2010; Dymoke and Cajkler, 2010; Burton and Goodman, 2011; Dickson, 2011; Brooks et al., 2012; Gray, 2013; Menezes and Sousa, 2013; Tucker and Fusher, 2013; Dixon and Ward, 2015; Ion and Iucu, 2016). According to the findings of studies by Teixiera and Menezes (2012) and Snoek et. al (2017), master's level education can also inspire student teachers to become innovators of practice or generators of changes in their workplaces.

However, not all studies reveal the same positive student teachers' views on the usefulness of master's level education for the teaching profession. There are also studies suggesting that this type of teacher education in some cases did not live up to student teachers' professional goals and expectations. For example, Jacksons' (2009) study found that at the end of the course only 30% of students thought that the master's degree was beneficial on the job market. However, the most common claim reported in those studies is a gap between what happens in university classrooms and teaching classrooms (Zeichner, 2006; Søjle, 2017; Snoek et al., 2017a). In other words, in these studies, respondents reported a 'gap' or 'divide' between theory and practice or educational research and practice. For example, master's student teachers involved in Søjle's study (2017) argued that academic education was too theoretical, and hence not reflecting real work. They also reported considerable struggle connected with literature in their university courses in education, e.g., difficulty in understanding the language of the text and irrelevant literature topics. Besides, they perceived the lack of connection between the university world and the school world, meaning that the students learn one thing on the campus and see something completely different at school. Similarly, authors such as Bevan (2011) and Gore and Gitlin (2004) found that teachers overwhelmingly dismissed academic research on the grounds that it was not practical, contextual, credible, or accessible. As Snoek et al. (2017a, 3) argue with reference to Tsui and Law (2007), this disconnection can be explained by the fact that: 'The school and university can be considered as different worlds that have different expectations, an own culture and a unique discourse using different languages. As a result, the main focus of the teacher education institution often relates to maintaining academic standards of student research projects which are translated to academic criteria regarding the quality of research, while the main focus of the school is on improving the quality of teaching and

learning at the local level.

Context for the study

Poland, Romania, and Latvia, as post-communist countries, have common priorities and tendencies in the field of teacher education. A lot has changed within teacher education systems in those countries as a result of deep transformations in their social, economic and political context. The Bologna Declaration of June 1999 began a series of reforms in all the countries, necessary to make national higher education more compatible and comparable with European countries. This has also led to the reorganization of teacher education. A lot of hard work has been done to develop and improve the quality of teacher education by closer integrating it with the university and research sectors, raising teaching qualification standards, and developing a teacher education curriculum (Iucu, 2004; Wiłkomirska, 2005; Žogla, 2006; Stark and Zoller, 2014; Camelia and Elisabeta, 2014; Geske et al., 2015; Madalińska-Michalak, 2017). Whereas before signing the Bologna Declaration teachers in those countries had been educated both in higher-education sector and secondary education sector (e.g. pedagogical secondary schools, teacher education colleges), now teacher education increasingly takes place in higher education institutions with three cycles of studies. For example, in Poland, since 2015, initial training for teachers of different levels and types of school may only be provided by the higher education sector.

As for the Master's degree in teacher education policies in those countries, in Poland, all teachers working in lower and upper secondary as well as basic vocational schools are required to obtain a Master's degree (MEN, 2009). In Latvia, teachers at all levels are required to have a higher education degree to obtain the right to teach (OECD, 2014). However, there is no formal requirement to hold a Master level degree to be a teacher. In Latvia, teachers can have 5 levels of qualification, but no extra points are given for having a Master level degree (Ministrukabinets, 2014). In most situations teachers enter a Master's degree program voluntarily, to increase their qualifications and acquire more knowledge on education. There are two situations when Master level degree is formally valued in a formal setting – if the teacher wishes to obtain an administrative position or to continue education and get the doctoral degree. In Romania, for preschool and primary teachers it is compulsory to acquire a bachelor's

degree in Science of Education, and for secondary school teachers, it is necessary to acquire a bachelor's and Master's degree in a specific scientific field and attend a didactic module during the study. Teachers who want to pursue a research career or be very well evaluated follow a Master's degree. However, it is worth mentioning that even though in all the considered countries a Master's degree is not a necessary qualification for all teachers, a growing proportion of teachers are getting involved in Master's programs. In Poland for example, at present, teachers who hold a Master's degree account for 92% of all teachers working in the school education sector (ORE, 2015). In Latvia, as TALIS results (Geske et al., 2013) show, 32% of the teachers who have a Master's degree have it in educational science.

Despite these increasing measures, there is no compelling body of evidence around the usefulness of Master's studies for teachers' professional practice. Thus, there is, even more, relevance in considering what student teachers involved in Master's programmes think about teacher's preparation at the Master's level and how they perceive the usefulness of Master's studies for their (future) professional practice. The study presented in this paper is a part of broader research effort into master's students in the field of education in five European countries (Poland, Portugal, Latvia, the UK, and Romania) leading to examining their (1) motivations for choosing master's studies in Education; (2) perceptions of the contribution of master's studies to their (future) professional practice; (3) experiences of the process of preparing their final dissertation/thesis; (4) perceptions of the usefulness of their final dissertation/thesis work for their (future) professional practice; and (5) differences/similarities across national contexts, students' age, gender, field of study programme, type of master's studies, and professional work experience. For the purpose of this paper, we used data collected only from Polish, Romanian, and Latvian student teachers to answer the following research question:

How do student teachers perceive the usefulness of master's studies for their (future) professional practice in terms of

(a) developing the capacity to apply theory to practice;

(b) gaining the ability to use and conduct research in professional workplace settings?

Method

A descriptive, survey research design was used in order to obtain student teachers' views into the usefulness of master's level work for their (future) professional practice.

Participants

The sample group for the purpose of this paper included 343 student teachers participating in master's programmes with a thesis/dissertation as the final assessment at public universities in Poland (n=134, 39,1%), Romania (n=141, 41,1%) and Latvia (n=68, 19,8%). The participants were selected by convenience sampling (Creswell 2008). All student teachers registered in the 2015/2016 and 2016/2017 academic year at universities where the researchers work were asked to participate. The response rate was 87% in Poland, 77.9% in Romania, and 98% in Latvia. Most of the respondents from Poland are going to become primary school teachers, with no or little professional work experience, while most of the respondents from Romania and Latvia are active teachers with advanced professional work experience. The detailed profile of the participants is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Profile of the participants (N=343)

Gender	Men:4.4%
	Women: 95,6%
Age	M_{age}= 29.44(SD=8.35 range 22-54 years)
Years of professional work experience	$M_{professional\ work\ experience}$ = 8,61years (SD=8.72; range 1-37 years)
Type of study programme	Full time:81.6%
	Part-time: 18.4%

Data collection, analysis, and ethical considerations

The student teachers were asked to complete the questionnaire instrument. The questionnaire was prepared in English, translated into respective languages by the authors, and composed of four main parts: (1) a section on students' demographics; (2)

a section on students' experience of their master's degree programme in general; (3) a section on students' experience of the process of completing the thesis; and (4) a section on students' suggestions for improving the quality of master's degree programmes to better prepare them for their future job. The questionnaire included multiple choice questions, forced choice, and Likert scales, as well as open-ended questions. Findings that will be presented in this paper refer to some questions included in the second section of the questionnaire.

The questionnaire was administered to student teachers by the researchers themselves during the classes sessions. Prior to the start of data collection, all the participants were informed about the aims of the study, ensured about anonymity, voluntary participation, and guaranteed the possible feedback of research findings via email after the conclusion of the study.

Quantitative data were analyzed using RStudio and Microsoft Excel. The frequency of the answers was calculated for multiple-choice answers and descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations, minimum and maximum values) were obtained. Qualitative data from open-ended questions were analyzed in the following way: first, the researchers analyzed student teachers' responses independently in order to identify initial categories and themes emerging from the responses to each open-ended question; second, the main categories found by the researchers were translated into English by the authors, and then they were compared and discussed within the research team to reach the common list of categories for each open-ended question.

In the following sections, we report the findings, which are inevitably limited as they do not include the comparison of student teachers' views between the participating countries. In future publications, in-depth analysis of data obtained as part of this study from student teachers in each of the countries will address the national specificities of their views.

Findings

For better understanding student teachers' views on the usefulness of master's level education for their (future) professional practice, firstly, there is a need to describe their motives for choosing a master's program. The results show that the most frequent motive to choose the master's program among the student teachers was to gain deeper

knowledge and skills in the field of education (70.3%), along with enhancing personal development (65%). Other important motivational factors were related to enhancing professional development (56.3%) or enhancing professional status on the educational job market (52.2%). Nearly half of the participants (45.8%) indicated that a master's course was the obvious next step after bachelor's studies. Other motivational factors reported by student teachers were related to employer's demand (27.1%), the need for intellectual challenges (26.2%), enhancing remuneration (19.2%), the desire to apply for Ph.D. studies in the future (16.6%), and gaining research-related skills (16.6%). A small proportion of the respondents indicated the following factors as motives for choosing a master's program: a passion for doing research (10.5%), the influence of friends/family (8.7%), and the lack of better opportunities in life (4.4%).

The next question included in the second part of the questionnaire investigated what student teachers thought about the appropriateness of master's level education for teachers (see Figure 1). More than 50 per cent of the respondents (59.7%) agreed that master's level education was an appropriate type of education for teachers (M=3.65; SD=0.96). However,24.2%of the surveyed student teachers were not sure about the appropriateness of this type of education for teachers and 13.1% disagreed with the statement.
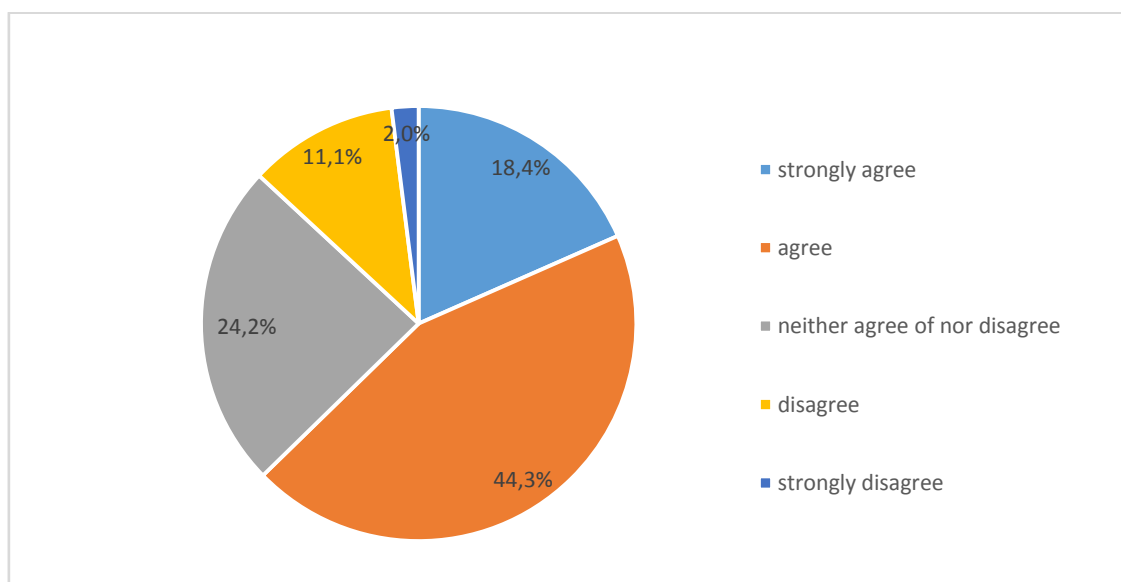

Figure 1. The appropriateness of master's level education for teachers

In addition, the participants were asked to explain their responses. 70.0% of all the respondents decided to do this. Table 2 provides lists of categories with example

quotations emerging from the responses provided by three groups of student teachers: those with a positive view (n=167), those who neither agreed of nor disagreed (52) and those with a negative view (n=21).

Table 2. Student teachers' views on the appropriateness of master's level education for teachers

	Categories	Example quotations
Agree (n=167)	- It allows me to gain deeper professional knowledge and skills (81.1%); - Professional development (52.1%); - Personal development (43.7%); - Providing new professional opportunities (27.5%); - Employers' demand (19.2%); - Complementing bachelor's studies (18%); - Collaboration and meetings with new colleagues (16.2%); - Necessary type of education of high quality teachers (10.2%).	- Acquiring in-depth knowledge in the subject matter; - Master's studies enhance professional and personal development; - Master's degree is needed in the school; - The studies help organize, consolidate and deepen the knowledge acquired during bachelor's studies; - Teaching profession is so important for the society, so teachers need advanced research training.
Neither agree of nor disagree (n=52)	- Lack of/limited practical experience (96.2%); - Too many subjects unconnected with teachers' everyday reality (86.5%); - Depending on student teachers/teachers/schools (69.2%); - Gap between theory and practice (61,5%);	- Too many subjects unconnected with the teaching profession; - Not enough practice!; - Skills, not just diplomas; - It mainly depends on the teacher and the school; studies alone will not help much if the teacher does not want to introduce changes; - Too much theory, too little practice.
Disagree	- Lack of practical experience (95.2%);	- Theory without practice – it is impossible to prepare teachers in this

| (n=21) | - Lack of practical relevance (95.2%);
- Provided artificial picture of teachers and school world (66.7%);
- Bachelor's studies are much better (61.9%);
- The gap between theory and practice (47.6%). | way;
- Master's studies provide a completely different image of the teaching profession and teachers' problems than in the reality;
- Bachelor's studies gave me much more skills useful in teaching than master's studies. |

The majority of the respondents who agreed that master's level education was an appropriate type of education indicated that it allows gaining deeper professional knowledge and skills (81.1%), and enhance professional (52.1%) and personal development (43.7%). Those participants also stressed that master's training provides new professional opportunities (27.5%) and complements bachelor's studies (18%). The participants who were not sure about the relevance of this type of education for teachers mainly emphasized the lack of or limited practical experience and too many subjects unconnected with teachers' everyday reality. They also reported that the potential of master's studies depends on student teachers/teachers/schools (69.2%) and pointed out a gap between theory and practice (61.5%). Similar categories emerged from the responses of student teachers with negative views. They mainly highlighted the lack of practical experience (95.2%) and lack of practical relevance (95.2%), providing an artificial picture of teachers and school world (66.7%), the advantage of bachelor's studies over master's studies (61.9%), and the gap between theory and practice (47.6%).

Master's level education is recognized as a strategy to engage teachers with theory and research to improve their practice. Participants' were asked to answer three questions by using a 5-point Likert scale to express their views regarding the usefulness of master's studies for their (future) teaching practice, as well as the usefulness of educational theory and research-related skills gained during their master's studies (see Table 3).

Table 3. The usefulness of master's studies, educational theory and research-related skills for student teachers' (future) professional practice

Item To what extent …	Extremely useful n (%)	Somewhat useful n (%)	Usefulness not clear n (%)	Not very useful n (%)	Extremely useless n (%)	M	SD
is doing **master's studies** useful for your educational practice (or how useful could it be for your future practice)?	124(36.2)	103 (30.0)	62 (18.1)	42 (12.2)	12 (3.5)	3.83	1.15
is the **educational theory** gained during your master's studies useful for your educational practice (or how useful can it be for you future practice)?	103 (30.0)	120 (35)	71 (20.7)	36 (10.5)	13 (3.8)	3.77	1.11
are **research-related skills** gained and deepened during your master's studies useful for your educational practice (or how useful can they be for your future practice)?	114 (33.2)	111 (32.4)	75 (21.9)	29 (8.5)	14 (4.1)	3.82	1.14

Data from these three questions showed that the respondents similarly rated the usefulness of master's studies, the theory, and research-related skills gained during master's studies for their (future) professional practice (M=3.83; M=3.77, M=3.82, respectively). Although a relatively high proportion of the respondents had a positive view on the usefulness of master's studies, educational theory and research-related skills for their (future) professional practice (66.2%; 65.0%; 65.6%, respectively),there were also some student teachers who did not have a clear opinion about the usefulness

of master's studies, as well as theory and research skills gained during master's level education for their (future) professional practice (18.1%; 20.7%; 21.9%, respectively) or had negative views on these issues (15.7%; 14.3%; 12.6%, respectively).

In addition, the participants had the opportunity to further elaborate on their answers by explaining their choices in each of these three questions. A relatively high proportion of the surveyed student teachers decided to do this (67.6%; 52.2%; 58.6%, respectively). The categories emerging from the responses of those participants who explained their views on the usefulness of master's studies for their (future) professional practice seem to be very similar to those emerging from the answers to the question about the appropriateness of master's studies for teachers' professional practice. The participants with positive views who provided the explanation on the usefulness of master's studies for their professional practice (n=181) mainly stressed that the studies allowed to gain deeper professional knowledge and skills (90.1%) ('It provides a lot of useful knowledge and skills for my professional practice'), and enhance personal (66.9%)and professional development (65.7%). Also, those participants indicated that master's studies helped them understand the relation between theory and practice (24.8%) and between educational research and practice (13.3%) ('Studies help to get a deeper understanding that theory and practice are closely interrelated'). The respondents with no clear view (n=38) mainly emphasized a gap between university classroom actives and classroom practices (92.1%) ('What we are taught by university teachers is different from what I see at school on a daily', Poland). Those participants who had negative views (n=13) stressed the gap between theory and practice (84.6%) and the lack of practical experiences during master's studies (84.6%) ('Too little practical experience').

Regarding the usefulness of educational theory gained and deepened during master's studies, the majority of the respondents with positive views who provided the explanation (n=111) argued that it provides a tool for reflection on experiences (82.9%) and a strong foundation for understanding pupils' behaviors (78.4%) and classroom practices (65.8%) ('Without theory you can't understand your pupil's behaviors'; 'If you learn Bronfenbrenner theory, you know that children's behaviors depend on family, peer group and local environment'). Besides, they emphasized that educational theory helps in choosing teaching methods (54.9%) and improving teachers' effectiveness

(42.3%). The student teachers without clear views who decided to explain their answers (n=32) mainly pointed out that the language of theoretical consideration is too difficult (96.9%), and a lot of articles read by students are not relevant to teachers' problems (75%) ('Most of the articles read during the studies are irrelevant to teaching practice and do not provide practical implications'). Also, they emphasized that they did not have ideas 'how to transfer theory into practice' (65.6%). The participants who explained their negative views (n=36) argued that the educational theory is completely different from the teachers' real life (94.4%).

As for as the usefulness of research-related skills gained and deepened during master's studies from the point of view student teachers' (future) professional practice (n=201, 62.2%), the study participants with the positive views on the issue (n=133) mainly stressed that contemporary teachers should not only be users of educational research but also should do research in their workplaces (91.7%) to examine the effectiveness of their teaching practices (75.9%) ('You have to do research on your practice, so you should have research-related skills'). Those student teachers who declared unclear usefulness (n=52) most often argued that teachers do not have time to do research because of a lot of bureaucracy, so these skills are not very useful (80.7%), and those with negative views (n=16) mainly claimed that didactic skills are more useful in teachers' work than research-related skills (87.5%) ('Teachers need, first of all, didactic skills').

How student teachers evaluate the usefulness educational theory and research-related skills from the point of their professional practice does not necessarily mean whether they are going to use it in their work or not (Gall, Gall, and Borg 2007 cited in Ion and Iucu, 2016). Hence, the next three questions investigated student teachers' intentions of using educational theory (see Figure 2) and the results of educational research (see Figure 3) as well as doing research in their (future) professional practice (see Figure 4).
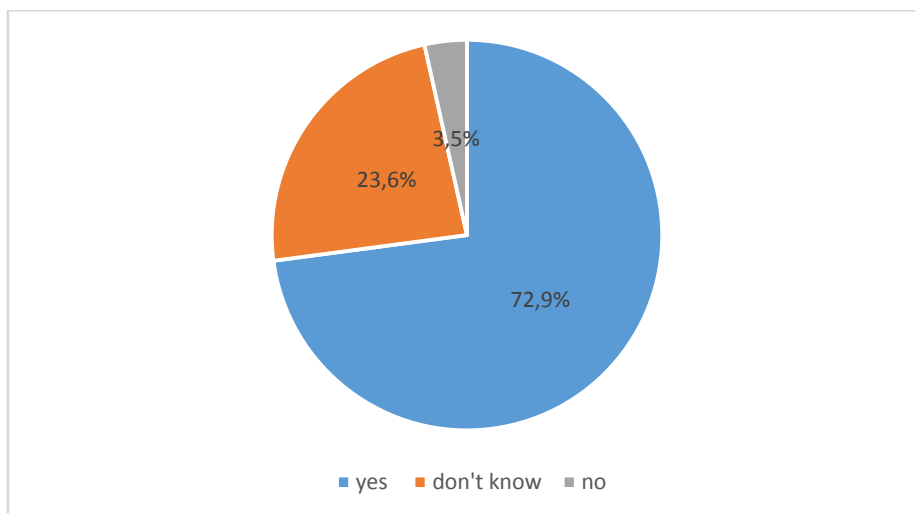
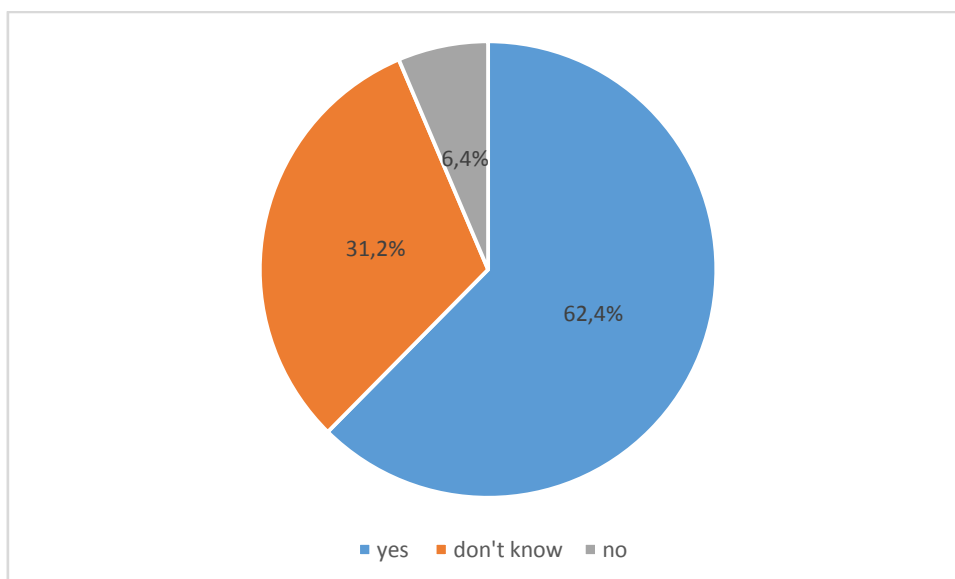**Figure 2. Using educational theory gained during master's studies in (future) professional practice**

Figure 3. Using the results of educational research gained during master's studies in (future) professional practice
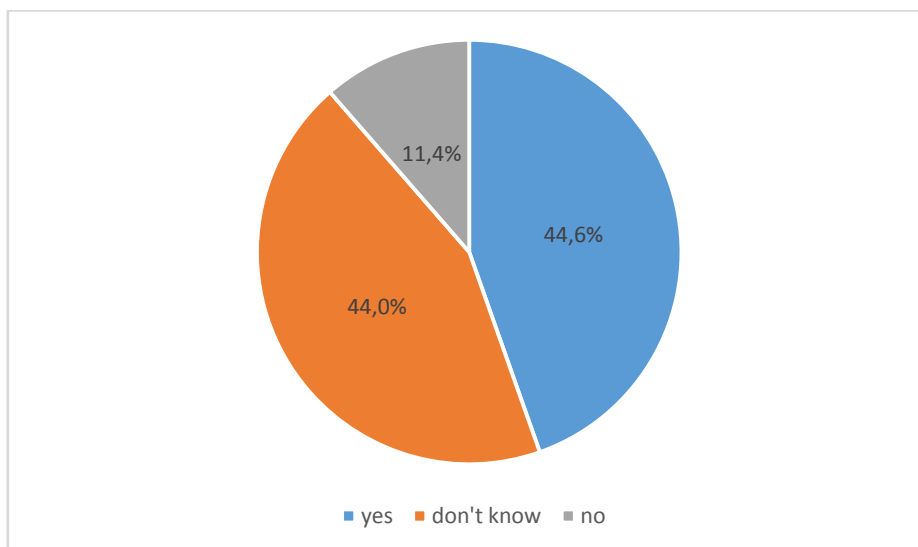
Figure 4. Doing research in (future) professional practice

Data obtained from these three questions showed that 72.9% of the respondents are going to use educational theory gained during their master's studies in their (future) educational workplace settings. Fewer student teachers are going to use the results of educational research gained during their master's programs (62.4%). However, there were also some participants who were not sure about this (23.6%; 31.2%, respectively). Few of the respondents declared that they are not going to use educational theory or results of educational research in their (future) practice (3.5%; 6.4%, respectively). Whereas there were relatively many student teachers who were going to use educational research results in their professional practice, the data presented in Figure 4 indicates that only 44.6% are going to do research in their (future) practice. Nearly half of the questioned student teachers (44.0%), in turn, were not sure about this, and 11.4% are not going to do so.

Discussion

The aim of this study was to explore student teachers' views on the usefulness of master's level education for their future professional practice. Although this data is not representative of student teachers in all the countries considered (as convenience sampling was used), the views of these 343 student teachers can contribute to national

and (to some extent) to European debate around the usefulness of teacher education at the master's level.

The results of this study showed that the student teachers in our sample had quite positive views on the appropriateness and usefulness of master's education for teacher' professional practice. They argued that master's studies help obtain deep professional knowledge and skills, and enhance personal and professional development. The participants also stressed that this type of teachers' training provides new professional opportunities and possibilities to collaborate and meet new colleagues. This seems to correspond to their motives for choosing Master's studies. The main motives for choosing the Master's program expressed by the student teachers were to gain deeper knowledge and skills in the field of education, along with enhancing personal development and professional development.However, there were also some student teachers who questioned the appropriateness and usefulness this type of education of prospective teachers. Their responses suggest some areas of concern. The student teachers reported the lack of practical experience during master's studies and inadequacy of subjects included in master's curricula to teachers' everyday practice. These responses clearly reveal the tension between teaching practical skills and the theoretical background provided in master's programs in teacher education. Besides, some of thestudent teachers indicated that bachelor's studies are a more relevant form of training for teachers. Hence, it seems that student teachers expected to raise specific learning outcomes during the next stage of their education, not simply to change the name of the program (master's instead of the bachelor's) (Campos, 2010). On the other hand, student teachers stressed that even holding the best quality master's program did not promise that they would be able to apply what they learned because it depends on the school climate, headmasters, and colleagues. This finding is in line with previous studies indicating that teachers are more likely to use knowledge and research if they feel support from their workplace settings (Ion and Iucu, 2016).

The results of our study also revealed that student teachers had quite positive views on the usefulness of educational theory and research-related skills in their (future) educational practice. Many respondents rated their usefulness highly, with the general view that theory and research are important tools in understanding teaching practices, enhancing critical reflection on teaching process, being more confident in the

classrooms setting.However, it should also be noted that some of the surveyed student teachers did not have a clear opinion about the usefulness of the theory and research skills gained during master's level education for their (future) professional practice. This group of respondents stressed the irrelevance of theoretical consideration to teaching practice and even an artificial view of the teaching profession presented in university classes (Sava, 2015). In addition, they claimed that academic papers are written in a difficult language without practical implications. Besides, as was highlighted by some participants, during master's studies they did not develop strategies of transferring theory or research into practice (Ion and Iucu, 2016). The gap between theory and research and educational practice reported by the study participants seems to dominate in the discussion about teachers' training at the master's level (Søjle, 2017; Sava et al., 2014). Therefore, as is suggested by some researchers, universities should make more effort to reduce this gap by providing 'relevant resources and examples from the outset' (Brooks et al. 2012, 365) during the courses or 'integrate research with a coherent and transversal approach along disciplines, rather than as isolated subjects' (Ion and Iucu 2016, 613). This skepticism towards educational theory and research-related skills may weaken student teachers' desire to conduct their own research in their workplace settings. This seems to be confirmed in our study, as the findings show that nearly half of the surveyed student teachers were not sure about doing research in their workplaces.

Conclusions and further research

The results of this study seem to add to positive views in the national and European debate on the appropriateness and usefulness of master's level education for teachers. They are important not just for student teachers considering Master's programs or currently involved in them, but also for politicians, policy-makers, and university staff who believe that the quality of teacher education influences the quality of teaching. Hence, the student teachers' negative view on this type of education should be taken into account by policy makers and university staff members in order to improve or redefine teaching education curricula at the Master's level to better meet (future) teachers' professional goals and expectations. From this research, it is clear that a policy requirement for a Master's degree for teachers implemented in isolation, without addressing other needs and expectations of different school-related

stakeholders, would be insufficient to foster the benefits of advanced academic training for teachers.

As this study is part of a larger research project that is still ongoing, further analysis of these results is needed, including demographics of the sample and views of student teachers from two other countries (Portugal and England) in order to gain more insight on the usefulness of masters' level studies for the teaching profession.

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