

Teacher Education, Quo Vadis? Historical Perspectives on Academic Teacher Education Reform in Flanders, Belgium.

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Abstract

Flemish universities have been educating teachers for more than 125 years. A high-quality teacher education programme needs a stable and powerful environment. In this article we examine whether the universities succeed in giving this stable and powerful locus. What evolutions can we recognise? And what consequences do they have for the image and functioning of teacher education? From a historical perspective, we can distinguish three loci as far as academic teacher education is concerned: dispersed over different faculties, as part of the pedagogical sciences or centrally organised. Academic teacher education constantly moves between these three loci and sees its powers (with regard to curriculum, staff, operating resources) divided over them. At the moment, we cannot conclude that the universities succeed in providing a stable and powerful locus for academic teacher education. This fragmentation also remains in the new system of educational master's programmes, which strongly favours the faculty model.

Keywords: teacher education; academic; university; Flanders

1. Academic teacher education programmes in Flandersⁱ

Teacher education is currently organised in Flanders according to two models (D'hoker and Lowyck 2005). Firstly, there are the three-year integrated teacher education programmes (geïntegreerd lerarenopleidingen, GLOs), which can be situated at the level of the professional bachelor's programmes and which are organised by the universities of applied sciences. In these teacher education programmes, the students are trained both regarding content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge at the same time. Secondly, there are the one-year specific teacher education programmes (specifieke lerarenopleidingen, SLOs). They are offered by universities, universities of applied sciences and adult education centres (Centra voor Volwassenenonderwijs, CVOs). Specific teacher education is based on a division between content- or subject-specific education and pedagogical education. A student teacher is first professionalised in a subject (at a university or in another educational context) and then in teaching (through a specific teacher education programme).

Academic teacher education is (as specific teacher education programmes) currently organised by the five Flemish universities (Antwerp, Brussels, Ghent, Hasselt and Leuven) and focuses on educating teachers for the second, third and fourth level of secondary education (students aged between 14 and 18 years).

An academic embedding of teacher education does not necessarily guarantee quality. Additional conditions must be met for this to happen. In order to focus the available energy on the quality of teacher education, the university needs to provide a stable and effective environment in which subject-specific disciplines and teacher education join forces. The question we want to answer in this article is whether the universities meet these requirements.

We investigate from a historical perspective the structural position of academic teacher education within the university, to which we will refer as the locus. Do universities succeed in providing a stable and powerful locus for academic teacher education? What evolutions become apparent? And what consequences do they have for the image and functioning of teacher education? Flemish universities have been educating teachers for over 125 years. To answer the questions, we build the article around three periods (1830-1890; 1890-1996; 1996-present), each time ending with a brief conclusion, in which we visualize the locus of teacher education within the university and try to progressively answer the questions.

Overall, three ideal loci for the academic teacher education can be distinguished (Meeus et al., 2016): (1) dispersed over different faculties, (2) as part of the pedagogical sciences or (3) included in a central academic department (see figure 1).

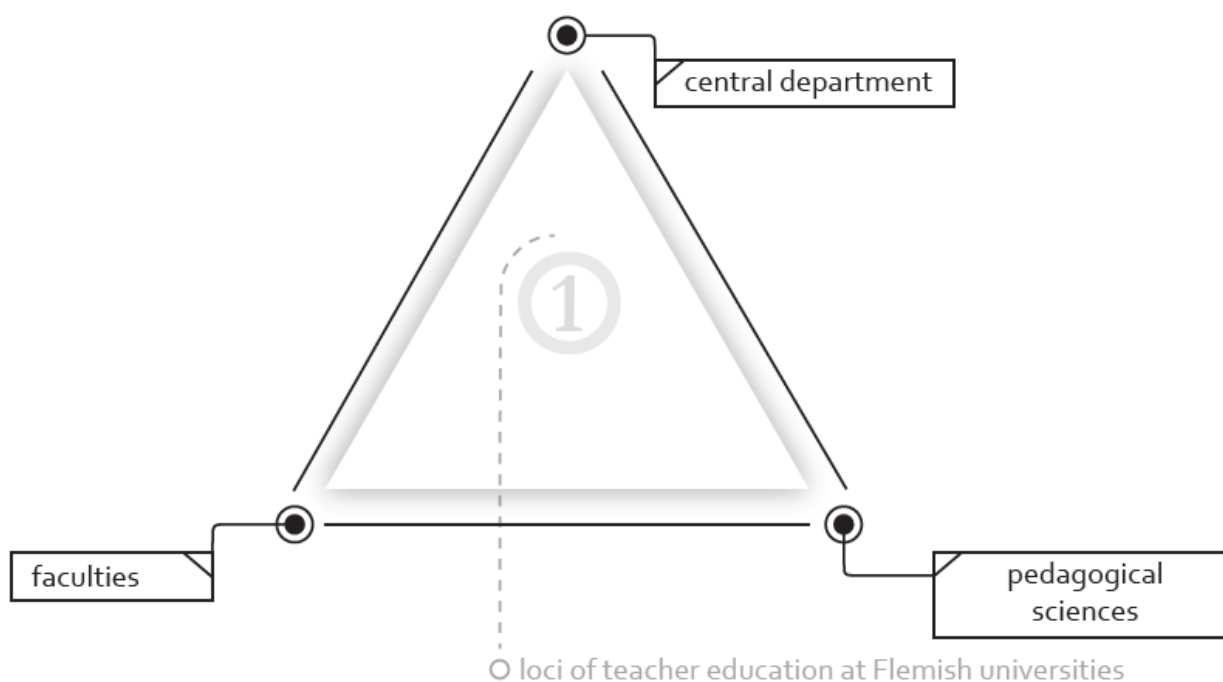


Figure 1. Loci of teacher education at Flemish universities

2. Education teachers: a task for universities? (1830-1890)

The first organic law on university education in 1835 recognized two state universities (Ghent and Liège) and two free universities (Leuven and Brussels); it did not determine anything about teacher education. It was only 12 years later that the government set up teachers' courses (*normaalleergangen*) at the state universities (at the Faculty of Philosophy and Letters in Liège and at the Faculty of Mathematics and Physics in Ghent). This first initiative of the Belgian government in the field of teacher education thus made the faculties responsible for its organisation.

In order to improve the quality of education, the Law on secondary education of 1850 stipulated that both the headmaster and the teachers of the royal 'atheneae' (state secondary schools) and of the municipal colleges must hold a diploma as a qualified teacher of secondary education of the higher level or as a Doctor of Philosophy and Letters or of Mathematical and Physical sciences (D'hoker and Lowyck2005, 5-8; Planke 1955, 59).

The teaching certificate could be obtained from 1852 at two higher teachers' colleges: the *Ecole normale des Humanités* in Liège and the *Ecole normale des Sciences* in Ghent, which were inspired by the French model of the *Ecole normale supérieure* in Paris.

In response to the foundation of the two higher education colleges in Ghent and Liège, the Catholic University of Leuven set up a counterpart: the *École normale pour les ecclésiastiques qui se préparent à l'enseignement moyen*, which was very much in line with the faculties where trainee teachers took many classes (Dhondt 2011, 150, 154, 161). The *Université Libre de Bruxelles* kept aloof and did not establish a teachers' college. A higher secondary school teacher had to be a scientist, and so a doctoral degree was sufficient, without any additional pedagogical-didactical training (Dhondt 2011, 161-163).

The students received pedagogical vocational training (methodology, pedagogy and didactic exercises) at the teachers' college and general classes at the university. Because in Ghent the students took most of the lessons at the university, the bond with the university was stronger there than in Liège.

It was not only the graduates of higher teachers' colleges who received the qualification to teach in higher secondary education. The holders of a doctorate in Philosophy and Letters and in Mathematics and Physics were also eligible, even though they had not received any special pedagogical training. Hence, there existed two parallel pathways to teaching: one at the higher teachers' colleges with the emphasis on pedagogical vocational training, and one at the universities with a strong scientific, subject-specific approach.

In the context of the school funding controversy (1879-1884) between Catholics and Liberals, the Liberal government put an end to having Doctors as teachers, and teachers in state secondary education were almost exclusively recruited from among the qualified teachers of the higher teachers' colleges. This led to tensions between the higher teachers' colleges and the universities. This policy was fiercely opposed by the Catholics because university graduates of the Catholic University of Leuven had hardly any chance of being appointed as teachers at state secondary schools.

When the Catholics came to power in 1884, the conflict between the higher teachers' colleges and the universities was settled in favour of the latter. The abolition of the colleges resulted from opposing ideas about teacher education: the so-called French and German models. The French model, which was mainly defended by the Liberals, provided for separate specialised institutions for the full vocational training (including pedagogical training) of teachers; the German model, which received Catholic support, advocated scientific, university education.

That is why the law of 10 April 1890, and that of 3 July 1891, fully integrated teacher education into the universities (Brussels, Ghent, Leuven and Liège), viz. the faculties of Philosophy and Letters, and Sciences. The higher teachers' colleges in Ghent and Liège were dissolved and their qualification for higher secondary education was withdrawn; a doctoral degree was sufficient. The reform improved the scientific quality of the trainee teachers, yet not their pedagogical quality as pedagogy and didactics were limited to a few (theoretical) course units (methodology and history of pedagogy).

The requirement of a certificate from either a higher state teachers' college or a university applied to all teachers who wished to be appointed to municipal and provincial colleges or to royal state secondary schools. This rule did not apply to the private ('free') (predominantly Catholic) colleges. The bishop's colleges, preparatory seminaries and institutions depending on a religious order or congregation were free institutions and not bound by this legislation. Because they did not receive government subsidies, they were able to define their organisation and curriculum completely autonomously and determine the conditions of employment for their teachers. The Catholic Church was strong in the field of education. In 1846-1847, it controlled 75% of secondary boys' schools in Belgium and even 83% of them in Flanders (Janssenswillen 2007, 23-24).

The vast majority of Catholic secondary school teachers were clergymen without a doctoral degree, but sometimes with an undergraduate degree. A limited number of young priests and nuns were given the opportunity to embark on university studies (ranging from 13 % to 25 %) (Janssenswillen 2007, 148; Tihon 1970, 365). Catholic pedagogical policy had the Church hold the idea that a seminary training at the priest seminary or within the own religious order or congregation was the best preparation for education. This training offered the best guarantees for a deeply Christian personal education. For a long time, clergymen without a teacher's degree or pedagogical training were the pillars of Catholic education (Lafontaine 1992, 138).

Conclusion period 1830-1890

In 1830 to 1890, the faculties of Philosophy and Letters and Sciences of the universities of Brussels, Ghent and Leuven were given the authority to train teachers (Figure 2).

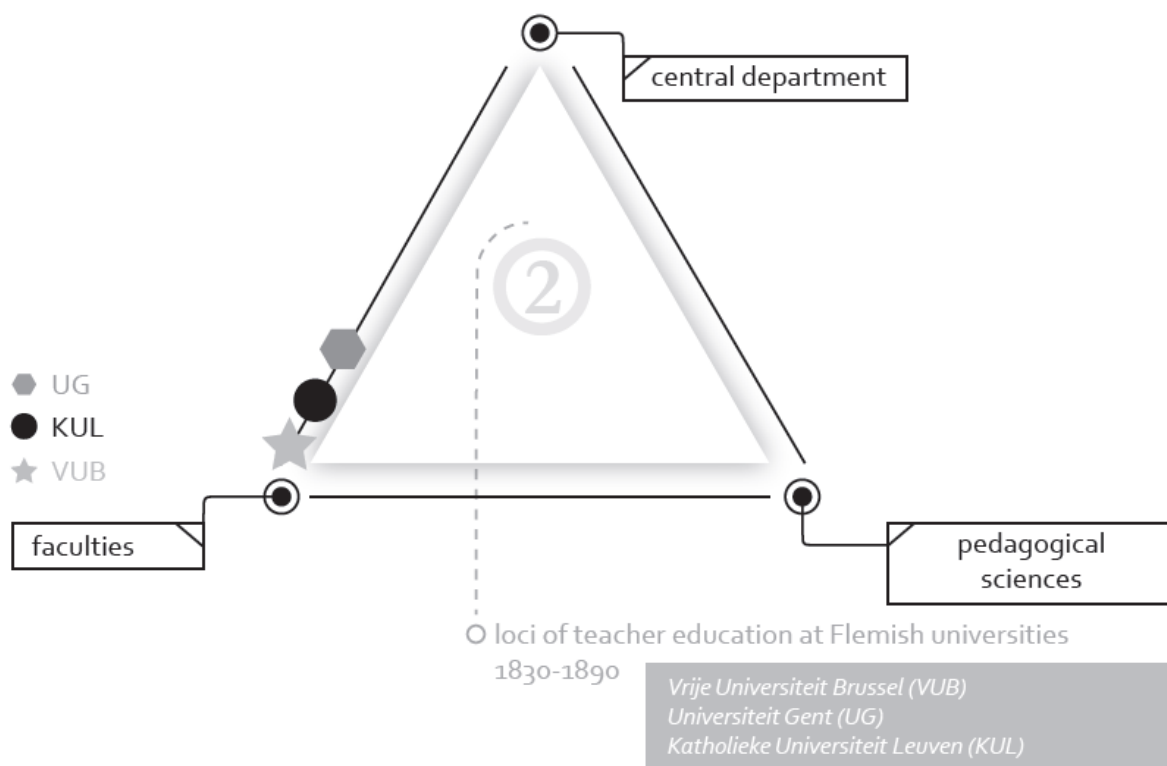


Figure 2. Loci of teacher education at Flemish universities (1830-1890)

At the University of Ghent there was an higher secondary teachers' college that, although officially a separate institution for vocational training, remained strongly connected with the Faculty of Science. The position of the teachers' college at the Catholic University of Leuven is unclear due to a lack of sources. Teacher education was strongly link with the faculties, although the teachers' college with its own director features elements of a central department. The University of Brussels limited teacher education to the subject-specific expertise provided by the faculties.

3. Marginalised pedagogical training (1890-1996)

The law of 1890 thus entrusted teacher education for higher secondary education to the universities. In line with their mission, they placed the emphasis on a strong scientific programme with a very limited pedagogical vocational training, which actually was also highly theoretical. Criticism of this lacunar teacher education came mainly from the world of educational and very sporadically from within academia itself.

The law of 21 May 1929 on university education reformed teacher education for higher secondary education (D'hoker and Lowyck 2005). The title of Doctor was replaced by that of licentiate (~ Master); the doctorate was upgraded to a purely scientific diploma. In addition, a separate title of qualified teacher (*geaggregeerde*) for upper secondary education (for Philosophy and Letters, and Science) was again introduced for all universities. The university teacher education curriculum consisted of a limited theoretical and practical part that student teachers usually combined with their subject. The government did not provide any additional funding for this university teacher education (D'hoker 2007, 71). The concrete implementation of the curriculum was left to the various faculties, which led to major differences in total teaching time, the design of the 'didactic exercises' and the organisation of exam lessons (in front of secondary school pupils or fellow students / professors) between the universities and even between the faculties of a given university (Plancke 1955, 62-63). After the Second World War, the content of the practical part of the programme in particular was expanded to include more seminars and/or internships.

Particularly from the 1960s onwards, changes were made to the content and organisation of academic teacher education, which varied from one university to another and between various faculties within the same university. In order to increase the coordination and image of teacher education, each university set up its own supporting interfaculty centre for teacher education in the 1970s, where educational experts and subject specialists would work together. The starting date, assignment and organisation of these coordinating bodies varied from one university to another.ⁱⁱ

Universiteit Antwerpen (UAntwerpen)

From 1955, graduates in commercial sciences were able to obtain the teaching certificate for higher secondary education; initially via the Central Examination Board, later at the university college itself (D'hoker 2007, 72). In Antwerp, both the *Rijkshandelshogeschool* (State Commercial College) and the *Sint-Ignatiushandelshogeschool* (St Ignatius Commercial College) were given the authority to set up a teacher education programme (Lenders 1991, 15). Following the Law on University Expansion, the two commercial colleges were transformed from 1965 onwards into university faculties of Applied Economics at the *Sint-Ignatiusfaculteiten* (St Ignatius Faculties, UFSIA) and the *Rijksuniversitair Centrum* (State University Centre, RUCA) (Lenders 1991, 45).

When the Antwerp University Institution (UIA) started in 1972 with graduate studies (*licenties*), it established a separate and independent Department of Didactics and Critique, under which the teacher education programme was subsumed (De Clerck 1976, 81, 83; Lenders 1991, 61; Vermandel 1985, 11-17). The economics teacher education, linked with the Faculty of Applied Economics, remained separate. The Department of Didactics and Critique was on an equal footing with other departments (Daems 2003, 19). Each faculty was represented in its department council. It also had its own budget and, like the other departments, was represented in all university participation bodies (De Clerck 1976, 83). It acted autonomously with regard to personnel policy and curriculum. Professors were appointed for the (general) educational subjects and (usually part-time) for the teaching methodology subjects. Skilled teachers were employed as teaching assistants (Daems 1998, 36). This model of a separate department for teacher education was partly adopted by the universities of Brussels and Ghent.

Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB)

On 16 July 1974, the VUB Board of Governors decided to set up an Interfaculty Department for Teacher Education (*Interfacultair Departement voor Lerarenopleiding*, IDLO) (De Clerck 1976, 71; UVUB, (5)). However, the official installation of IDLO did not take place until January 1976. IDLO was part of the university's central office. From 1989 on, IDLO was managed by the Bureau with both the Rector and the President of the Education Council, assisted by three persons in charge (one for education, continuing teacher education and research). Between the IDLO Council and the Bureau came an Expanded Bureau that was given the day-to-day management of the department (UVUB, (5)). This structure did not function so well due to a lack of decision-making power on the part of IDLO, unclear agreements on (inter)faculty powers and limited visibility in the VUB structures (UVUB, (6)). Staff matters were primarily a faculty matter. Savings in the various faculties often led to reduced deployability of staff in teacher education.

Universiteit Gent (UGent)

In 1975, an Interfaculty Commission for Teacher Education was set up. (Verbruggen-Aelterman 1981, 182). In 1977 this body was renamed the Interfaculty Centre for Teacher Education (*Interfacultair Centrum voor Lerarenopleiding*, ICL) (URUG, (14)). In ICL's Council, the staff involved in teacher education discussed pedagogical and didactical aspects of the curriculum. The main task of the staff members was in the different faculties. For the follow-up of in-school training, 15 employees were recruited in 1979, seven of whom were engaged on a full-time basis. As teacher education was not included in the funding of universities, these staff members were paid from the central university resources (URUG, (13); Verbruggen-Aelterman 1981, 185-187). ICL was an advisory body, not an autonomous institution: it could only formulate proposals and stimulate innovation. The organisation of the teacher education programme remained a competence of the various faculties. Consequently, teacher education was heavily dependent on faculty goodwill (URUG, (16)). Not everyone in the faculties was convinced that teacher education should be given a professional status. The view that a good scientific education was sufficient to be a good teacher, still lived on for a number of them. When the rector, due to the precarious state of the central university resources, demanded personnel for other duties, the ICL protested,

and that was it (URUG, (15)). This changed in 1989 when a Department of Teacher Education was established as an autonomous academic entity with full faculty powers over education, research and service provision (Heene and Aelterman 1989, 7-8). The opportunity to save on central university resources by changing the status of some of the staff played a part in this (URUG, (20)).

Universiteit Hasselt (UHasselt)

The Limburg College of Economics (*Economische Hogeschool Limburg*), which was founded in 1968, organised an economics teacher education programme from 1971 onwards (De Clerck 1976, 99; Degraeve 1973, 124-142; Even voorstellen 1996, 14-15; De faculteit TEW 1997, 4-6). When the Limburg University Centre was founded in 1973 with six disciplines (mathematics, physics, chemistry, biology, dentistry and medicine), there was hope that the Limburg College of Economics would be integrated into it. It was not until 1991 that the Limburg College of Economics became part of the Limburg University Centre. Economics teacher education was a purely faculty matter because the Faculty of Applied Economics in Limburg was the only faculty with a teacher education programme.

Katholieke Universiteit Leuven (KULeuven)

In 1978, an Interfaculty Commission for Teacher Education (*Commissievoor Aggregatie*, ICA) was established with advisory authority to the university board on faculty proposals concerning the teacher education programme (Verbruggen-Aelterman 1981, 182; UKUL, (24)). The members were appointed by the rector and recruited from various faculties. The commission had a representative function in consultation with other universities, the ministry and school organising committees. The faculties retained responsibility for the teacher education curriculum; the committee acted in a co-ordinating manner.

Conclusion period 1890-1996

The Law of 1890 gave university faculties the exclusive competence to train higher secondary teachers; higher secondary teachers' colleges were abolished (Figure 3). The 1929 Act determined the program of academic teacher education for almost 70 years. The latter remained very theoretical, with the emphasis on scientific expertise.

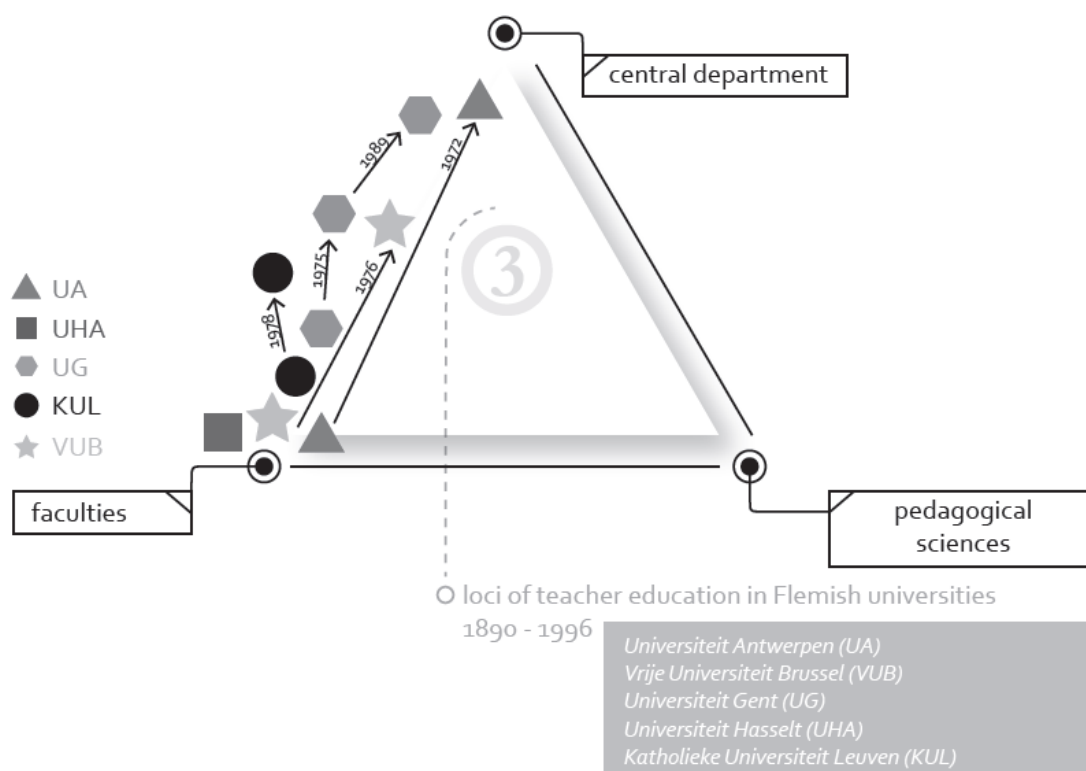


Figure 3. Loci of teacher education in Flemish universities (1890-1996)

From the 1970s, each Flemish university established its own centrally organised interfaculty centre for the coordination of teacher education. This first happened (1972) at the Antwerp University Institution with a separate Department of Didactics and Critique with full faculty competence over personnel, education, research and service provision. It subsumed academic teacher education completely, except for economics teachers who remained attached to the Faculty of Applied Economics. That is why, in the Antwerp model, the locus of the teacher education programme was a combination of a purely faculty model (economy) with a strong central department (the other subjects). The central department model for teacher education was adopted by VUB (1976), but the office could not act autonomously vis-à-vis the faculties that retained decision-making powers. Nor was this the case with ICL in Ghent (1975).

This changed in 1989 when it was replaced by a Department of Teacher Education as an autonomous academic entity with full faculty powers. The education of economics teachers within the Limburg University Centre was organised by the Faculty of Applied Economics (1991), which was the only faculty with a teacher education programme. In 1978, the University of Leuven set up an Interfaculty Commission for Teacher Education with purely advisory powers; the organisation of teacher education remained a matter for the faculties.

4. Enhancing the value of academic teacher education? (1996-present)

In 1989, the three Belgian language communities, the Flemish, French and German-speaking Community, were given power over their own educational policy. As a result, the organisation of teacher education differs to a greater or lesser extent between different communities. In the following, we will limit ourselves to the regulation and organisation of academic teacher education in Flanders.

The Flemish Decree on teacher education of 16 April 1996 recognised the social obligation of universities to provide teacher education in all disciplines for which they offered scientific teaching (Daems 1998, 35). The programme of the academic teacher education programme (*academische (initiële) lerarenopleiding*, A(I)LO) determined a study load of approximately half an academic year (30 credits). The internship package in particular was expanded. Prospective teachers also had to take a number of 'bridge courses' (9 credits) intended to bridge the gap between their own discipline and the teacher education programme. (Daems, 1998 35-41; Van Petegem 1999, 34-35; Daems 2003, 20). For the first time, some funding was provided for teacher education (€1,750 per graduate). The funding covered only a small part of operating and personnel costs. It was still possible to combine teacher education with graduate studies (*licenties*), because extending the duration of academic studies was considered antisocial and was not granted. The real argument against this extension was probably rather the extra cost it would have meant for the government.

Until then, universities had had a monopoly on educating teachers for higher secondary education. At the end of the 1990s, the adult education centres (*Centravor Volwassenenonderwijs*, CVOs) emerged as a competitor. Initially, CVO study programmes were intended to provide teaching qualifications, i.e. the Certificate of Pedagogical Competence (*Getuigschrift van PedagogischeBekwaamheid*, GPB), to adults switching from industry to education to teach technical, artistic and practical subjects; not for general subjects. An Administrative Circular of 19 July 1999stated – without the universities having been consulted – that the GPB was equivalent to the university degree. The de facto absence of course units on subject-specific teaching methodology and of a structural link with scientific research, which had been expressed as the main shortcomings of the GPB programmes, did not prevent them from attracting more and more university graduates. Practice-orientation and flexibility (extensive regional range, modularly organised in weekend and evening classes), which made it easier to combine studying and working, were major assets of CVO teacher education programmes in this respect.

Although in 2003, with the introduction of the Bachelor-Master structure in higher education, there was hope that academic teacher education would also be included as a fully-fledged master's programme (Master of Education), nothing came of it (Daems 2003, 21-27).

The Decree of 6 December 2006 extended the teacher education programme organised by the universities (from then on referred to as Specific Teacher Education (*Specifiekelerarenopleiding*, SLO)) to a full academic year, half of which reserved for practice training.

In the various educational reforms, each university once again gave its own interpretation to the obligations determined by decree.

Universiteit Antwerpen (UAntwerpen)

In October 2003, the university institutions UFSIA, RUCA and UIA were merged into one University of Antwerp. The entire teacher education programme (including those programmes of Applied Economic Sciences faculties that had remained separate until then) were grouped in the Institute for Education and Information Sciences (Instituut voor Onderwijs- en Informatiewetenschappen, IOIW), starting on 1 January 2005. It included also the new discipline of Training and Education Sciences (*Opleidings- en Onderwijswetenschappen*, OOW).

In the context of a rationalisation of university institutes and centres, the academic authorities decided to transfer academic teacher education from 2015-2016 to the Antwerp School of Education (ASoE), together with the In-Service Teacher Training Centre (CNO), the Centre for Andragogy (*Centrum voor Andragogie*, CVA) and the Expertise Centre for Higher Education (ECHO) (UUA, (3)). ASoE reports directly to the university's Education Council and faculties are represented in it. Dispersing the different subject-specific teaching methodology courses and their staff across the respective faculties was not considered appropriate because teaching methodology might have a lower priority there (UUA, (4)).

Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB)

On 17 December 1996, the Board of Governors decided that the Interfaculty Department for Teacher Education (*Interfacultair Departement voor Lerarenopleiding*, IDLO) should be given faculty powers in non-personnel-related matters. The faculty of Psychology and Education was entrusted with the decision-making authority for human resources and has to approve IDLO's proposals when academic staff is appointed (UVUB, (8)). When VUB switched to the system of departments as academic units in 1998, IDLO remained an autonomous entity attached to the Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences as a 'teacher education department'. In 2004, a four-level structure was established: a central level, i.e. the Central Commission for Teacher Education (*Centrale Commissie Lerarenopleiding*, CCL), chaired by the Vice-Rector and responsible for quality control of teacher education; the Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences (*Psychologie en Educatiewetenschappen*, PE), with the IDLO department; the eight different faculties responsible for the subject-related part of the curriculum and the IDLO research group (UVUB, (11)). On 1 July 2009, the Board of Governors decided that IDLO would once again become a centralized academic entity (UVUB, (12)).

Universiteit Gent (UGent)

Ten years after the autonomous Department of Teacher Education was established, the decision of the Board of Governors of 3 April 1998 allotted teacher education to the Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences (URUG, (23)). The latter became responsible for the coordination and organisation of the Specific Teacher Education programme (*Specifieke Lerarenopleiding*, SLO), which is spread over 20 courses of study in line with the various master's programmes. In this way, SLO remains recognisable for students from the various fields of study and the faculties are made accountable, particularly for teaching methodology and the appointment of teaching assistants to supervise internships, for which the departments receive extra funding from the central university authorities (URUG, (21)).

Universiteit Hasselt (UHasselt)

In 2005, the Limburg University Centre was renamed Hasselt University (or UHasselt). Hasselt University only offers Specific Teacher Education in Applied Economics. The study programme falls under the Faculty of Applied Economics that appoints an education management team. This is responsible for the development and organisation of the curriculum and for monitoring the quality of the programme. (De onderwijsinspectie, 261).

Katholieke Universiteit Leuven (KU Leuven)

At KU Leuven, the Academic Training Institute for Teachers (*Academisch Vormingsinstituut voor Leraren*, AVL) was set up at the end of 1993 with various sections: teacher education, continuing education, induction for starting teachers, and research (UKUL, (26)). Management was in the hands of the AVL Council. All staff remained attached to the faculties that set up 31 different initial academic teacher education programmes (*academische initiële lerarenopleidingen*, A(I)LO) (UVUB, (7)).

In 2007-2008, A(I)LO was renamed Specific Teacher Education (SLO). The 31 different ALO courses were grouped into 11 SLO courses and four clusters (D'hoker 2007, 77). From the 2011-2012 academic year, the AVL's management was in the hands of a committee of deans and the operational management was carried out by steering committees for education, research and continuing education (De onderwijsinspectie, 93). But it did not function well as it did not fit within the organization of the university, where only the faculties have the right to set up courses, as the student administration was too far beyond the reach of teachers and students, and as the faculties hardly invested in teacher education. That is why the university administration chose to place teacher education entirely under the competence of the faculties. In 2014, AVL was disbanded as a central department. Within the Education Policy Office, a Teacher Education Unit was set up.

AVL was transformed into an interfaculty consultative body. This made joint decision-making more difficult. By taking into account the specificity of the faculties, the curricula of the various SLO courses grew more apart.

Conclusion period 1996-present

Since the Flemish Community became competent for education in 1989, teacher education has been reformed twice: in 1996 and in 2006. Each time the programme was expanded, mainly with practice and internship. The 1996 Decree provided for a modest funding of teacher education for the first time. Flemish universities lost their monopoly of teacher education for university graduates in 1999: as a result of an administrative circular, the adult education centres were also given the authority to train educate graduates as teachers.

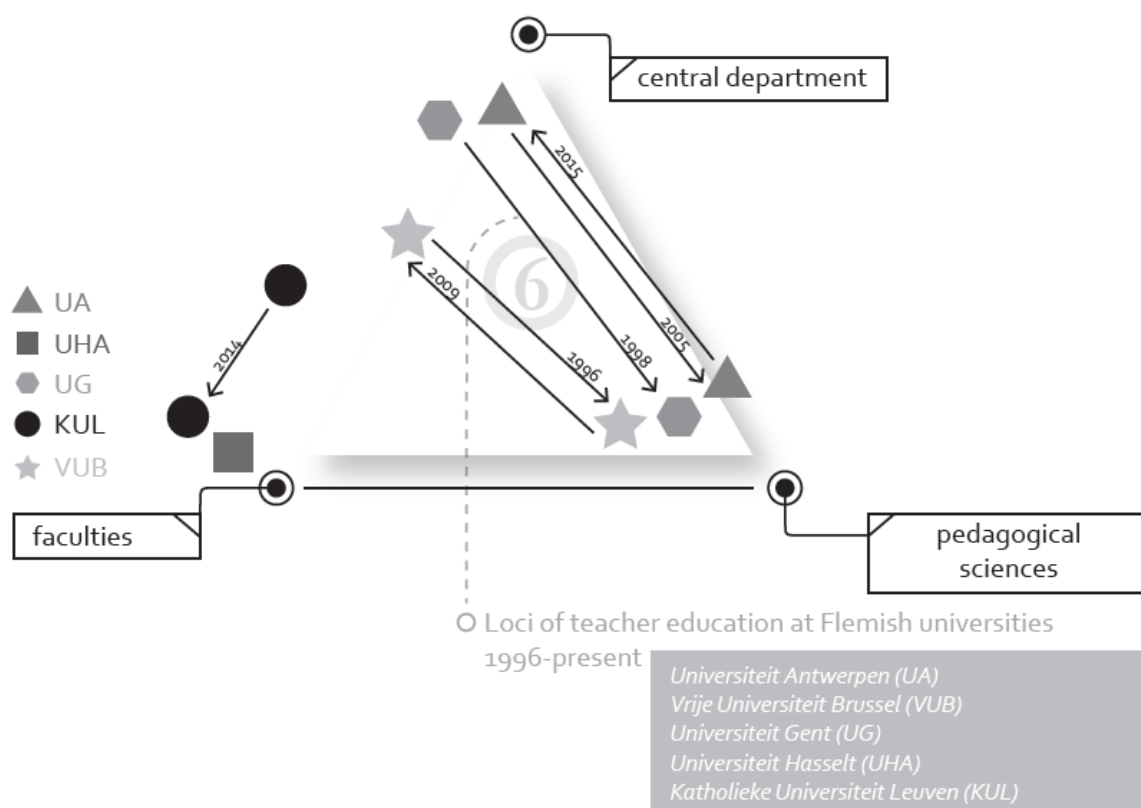


Figure 4. Loci of teacher education at Flemish universities (1996-present)

As in the previous period, significant diversity further emerged in the locus of academic teacher education in the various universities. A new central entity (Institute of Education and Information Sciences) was established at the University of Antwerp in 2005 to replace the Department of Didactics and Critique (Figure 4). As a result, the locus of the teacher education programme moved up to the educational sciences. This changed in 2015 with the establishment of the Antwerp School of Education, in which all faculties are represented. At VUB, the locus of teacher education gradually moved in the direction of the pedagogical sciences from 1996 onwards, but returned to its previous place in 2009.

When the autonomous Department of Teacher Education in Ghent was disbanded in 1998, teacher education was attached to the Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences. The faculties provided its teaching staff for teaching methodology. In Leuven, the locus of teacher education mainly remained with the faculties, and the Academic Training Institute for Teachers, established in 1993, acted as a co-ordinator. In 2014, the University of Leuven brought teacher education almost fully under the competence of the faculties. This faculty model also remained the locus for economics teacher education in Hasselt.

5. Discussion and conclusions

In this article we adopted a historical perspective to look into the position of academic teacher education at Flemish universities. We distinguished three loci: dispersed over different faculties, as part of the pedagogical sciences, and organised centrally.

Traditionally, there has been discussion as to whether educating teachers is a task of universities. Although they have played a role in teacher education since Belgium's independence in 1830, it was not until 1890 that they were given the 'definitive' authority to train teachers for higher secondary education. During the period 1890-1996, each university embedded academic teacher education in its own way. The aforementioned three possible loci clearly stood out, each with their own advantages and disadvantages. After the Flemish Community became competent to set out education policy, two decrees (1996 and 2006) hesitatingly upgraded academic teacher education by extending the credit load and, for the first time, providing its own (limited) funding. The shady side of the new regulations was the competition from adult education centres, which were also allowed to enrol university graduates for their teacher education courses. This has broken the universities' monopoly on teacher training for the senior forms of secondary education. The teacher education reform recently approved by the Flemish Government will put an end to this as of September 2019. The draft decree confirms the role of the universities as academic teacher educators.

The draft decree also puts an end to another problem, i.e. the funding of academic teacher education. Separate, limited and incomplete public subsidization has been in place since 1996. Due to the integration of academic teacher education into the Bachelor-Master structure, separate funding of teacher education students will be cancelled as they will be included in the regular funding mechanisms. The lack of funding for academic teacher education was one of the reasons for its diffuse organisational structure within Flemish universities. After all, it was required to constantly search for additional funding, often by means of a central advance from general university resources. Throughout history, administrators at different levels within universities have often adopted an ambiguous attitude, viz. on the one hand, alleged recognition of the importance of academic teacher education and, on the other hand, step motherly treatment of teacher education when it comes to means and authority. Stakeholders wanted to have a say in exchange for their financial support. The structures set up for this purpose led – as the figures demonstrate – to increasingly complex organisations. Moreover, the number of stakeholders is so large and diverse (faculties, pedagogical sciences, central governing bodies) that powerful decision-making authority is often withdrawn from the teacher education system itself.

We saw that academic teacher education is constantly shifting between the three loci and that its competences (in terms of curriculum, staff, financial means) are often divided between them. With the exception of the small programme in economics at the University of Hasselt (faculty locus), it is not possible to determine a single locus for the other four Flemish universities. Usually, the organisational embedding involves a variant of mixed forms between the three loci. At KU Leuven, the faculty model is the most dominant locus for teacher education. In the other universities we see shifting movements in which one time the locus tends towards being patronized by the pedagogical sciences, and another time is being controlled by a central body. If we look at the structural embedding of academic teacher education over time, we see increasing instability: reorganizations are happening in an ever more rapid succession. At the same time, restructuring is becoming more complex: more and more parties are gaining control of ever more fragmented powers. At the moment, we cannot conclude that the universities succeed in creating a stable and powerful environment for academic teacher education.

It is uncertain whether the new decree will consolidate the locus of teacher education within the universities. After all, a major cause of instability lies in the nature of academic teacher education itself. It is intrinsically a multidisciplinary issue as it is always a combination of the discipline 'education' with the various disciplines of the respective 'subjects' that are being taught.

It appears difficult for universities to arrive at a stable locus for this multidisciplinary. In any reform of teacher education, including the current one, this translates into tensions between advocates of strong scientific content knowledge (some still feel that a well-trained scientist will automatically be a good teacher) and those who focus on pedagogical-didactical teacher education. This explains the pendulum movement that academic teacher education programmes make between the various faculties on the one hand and the pedagogical sciences on the other. It should be added that the locus of the 'faculties' by definition leads to a fragmentation of energy, because each university will not have one teacher education but rather as many as there are faculties within the university. A teacher education programme in which the forces are combined can only prosper within the loci of the pedagogical sciences or a central body. Within the pedagogical sciences, for their part, it is difficult to get the professionally-oriented special status of teacher educators acknowledged and considered equivalent to that of educational scientists. The inequitable treatment of subject-specific teaching methodology remains another painful issue. A central body is often seen as a way out of the tension between the other two loci, but it positions teacher education outside the faculty structures. This confirms teacher education as an outsider and complicates, among other things, access to research funding and representation in the many academic forums.

The announced reforms appear to confirm universities in their role as academic educational institutions for teachers. A solution also seems to have been found at last with regard to the funding of academic teacher education. However, this does not guarantee that teacher education will be stable and vigorous. The system underlying the Master of Education seems to be driven at the various faculties as the locus for teacher education, although other, mainly hybrid, loci remain possible. As already stated, the choice of faculties as locus implies structural fragmentation of the teacher education programme. Teacher educators will have to wait and see what creative solutions will be thought up that can offer a stable and empowering academic embedding. Only then will it be possible for them to fully focus their energy on the quality of teaching.

Future follow-up research could address the historical evolution of the position and status of academic teacher education in other countries and regions in the world. In Belgium's neighbouring country the Netherlands, for example, recent government reports also point the finger at the unclear positioning as well as at obscure decision-making structures of various teacher training programmes. This can lead to quality risks (Franssen 2016, 17-18). As in Flanders, the eight Dutch universities that currently provide teacher education can be situated within the three loci mentioned: (1) dispersed over various faculties, (2) part of the pedagogical sciences or (3) included in a central body. Utrecht University uses the faculty model (1) after previously experimenting with a central institute. Tilburg University, which has only been offering a teacher education programme since 2011, also does so in accordance with the faculty model. In four universities, teacher education is organised under the heading of pedagogical sciences (2): University of Amsterdam (Faculty of Social Sciences and Behavioural Sciences), Free University of Amsterdam (Faculty of Psychology and Pedagogy), University of Twente (Faculty of Behavioural, Management and Social Sciences) and University of Groningen (Faculty of Behavioural and Social Sciences). The remaining two universities (University of Leiden and Radboud University Nijmegen) manage their teacher training programmes via a central body (3).ⁱⁱⁱ

The fundamental question as to whether teacher education belongs at university at all also remains. In the United States, for example, where it wasn't until the 1970s when universities started to offer teacher education, the relationship between academia and teacher education is not unproblematic (Fabaree 2008). Universities do not always see teacher education as fully academic, while teacher education believes that its vocational character is put under pressure by overly theoretical approaches. This is particularly the case at so-called top-ranked universities, which profile themselves more as graduate schools or educational studies than as schools or teacher education. Here, too, teacher education remains a plaything in the academic field.

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ⁱAlthough, until the regionalization of education policy in 1989, the regulations governing teacher education applied to all Belgian universities, we shall confine ourselves in this contribution to Flemish universities.

ⁱⁱWe discuss the developments per university in alphabetical order of the places where the university were founded.

ⁱⁱⁱThe most recent reports on the Dutch university teacher education programmes are available at:
www.nvao.net/actueel/nieuws/accreditebesluiten-universitaire-lerarenopleidingen-afgerond