

When Dreams Come True- A National Norwegian Research School in Teacher Education

Professor Kari Smith

Norwegian University of Science and Technology

Kari.smith@plu.ntnu.no



Norwegian University of
Science and Technology



Demand for ‘research based teacher education’

“As with any other higher education teacher education shall be research based. The content of teacher education shall be based on up-dated knowledge.

Research-based teaching also means that the education is characterised by scientific methods and oriented towards new ways of thinking and developing the practice **field**” (Norwegian Ministry of Education and Knowledge, 2014: 44) (author’s translation).

- From 2017 ALL teacher education in Norway at a master level.
- Implication- all Norwegian teacher education students will be required to write a research based dissertation
- Who shall supervise these dissertations?
- Do teacher educators have the research competence to supervise research-based master thesis?

This is the context within which
NAFOL operates.

- Consumers or producers of research?
- Consumers- a built in part of academic education
- Teacher educators & students expected to produce research.
- Publications -a decisive criterion of academic survival and promotion- 'the rule of the game'.
- Cochran-Smith (2005) claims that university teachers, including teacher educators, are both teachers and researchers.
- Empower students in conducting research to be able to integrate research in their own teaching practice, or “to produce pedagogically thinking teachers” (Krokkfors et al. 2011: 11)

What kind of research in TE?

- Mainly (not ONLY) practice-oriented research
- Research relevant for the practice field.
- Practice-oriented research supports decisions/develops new knowledge that contributes to solving a practical problem (Bleijenbergh, Korzilius & Versuchen, 2011).
- Common characteristics for practitioner research :
 - The practitioner is the researcher
 - Close links between knowledge, knowers and knowing.
 - Contexts for study are professional practice (blurred boundaries between inquiry and practice)
 - New conceptions of validity and generalizability- rigour cannot be questioned.
 - Needs to be published beyond the local contexts and become subject to public and academic critique (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009: 39)

Research competence and research facilities

- Many teacher educators with background from school teaching- their first order expertise (Murray and Male, 2005)
- Research required, yet teacher educators are not always supported in developing research competence.
- Responsibility lies with leaders of teacher education to integrate all TEs in research communities
- Main responsibility for providing resources for research lies with policy makers
- In Norway political priorities secure funding for numerous research and development projects (R&D), and the establishment of a Norwegian National Research School in Teacher Education (NAFOL) (Østern & Smith, 2013)

Why NAFOL as a doctoral school?

- To respond to the criticism of the quality of teacher education
- To move teacher education away from the seminar tradition
- To develop teacher education into a more research–informed teacher education linked to practice
- To increase the number of doctoral graduates in teacher education
- To avoid a brain-drain from teacher education



The purpose of NAFOL

- To develop a research informed teacher education
- To strengthen the teacher

To enhance the learning
outcome for Norwegian pupils

- To strengthen the teacher education
and school /pre-school
- To enhance the quality of the teacher profession in pre-
school /school
- To bring knowledge and competence to the field of
practice on different levels



To establish strong international networks

Organisation

- Network of 23 teacher education institutions (7 universities and 16 university colleges)
- Each institution is committed to a self-decided number of doctoral students
- Each institution is represented in NAFOL's *advisory board*
- Governed by a *strategic steering board*
- Hosted by NTNU
- Daily led by a professor supported by three part-time members of administrative staff
- Funding period 2010-2021



Research profile

- Subject teaching methodology (Didactics)
- Teachers' mandate in society
- The teaching profession and professional development

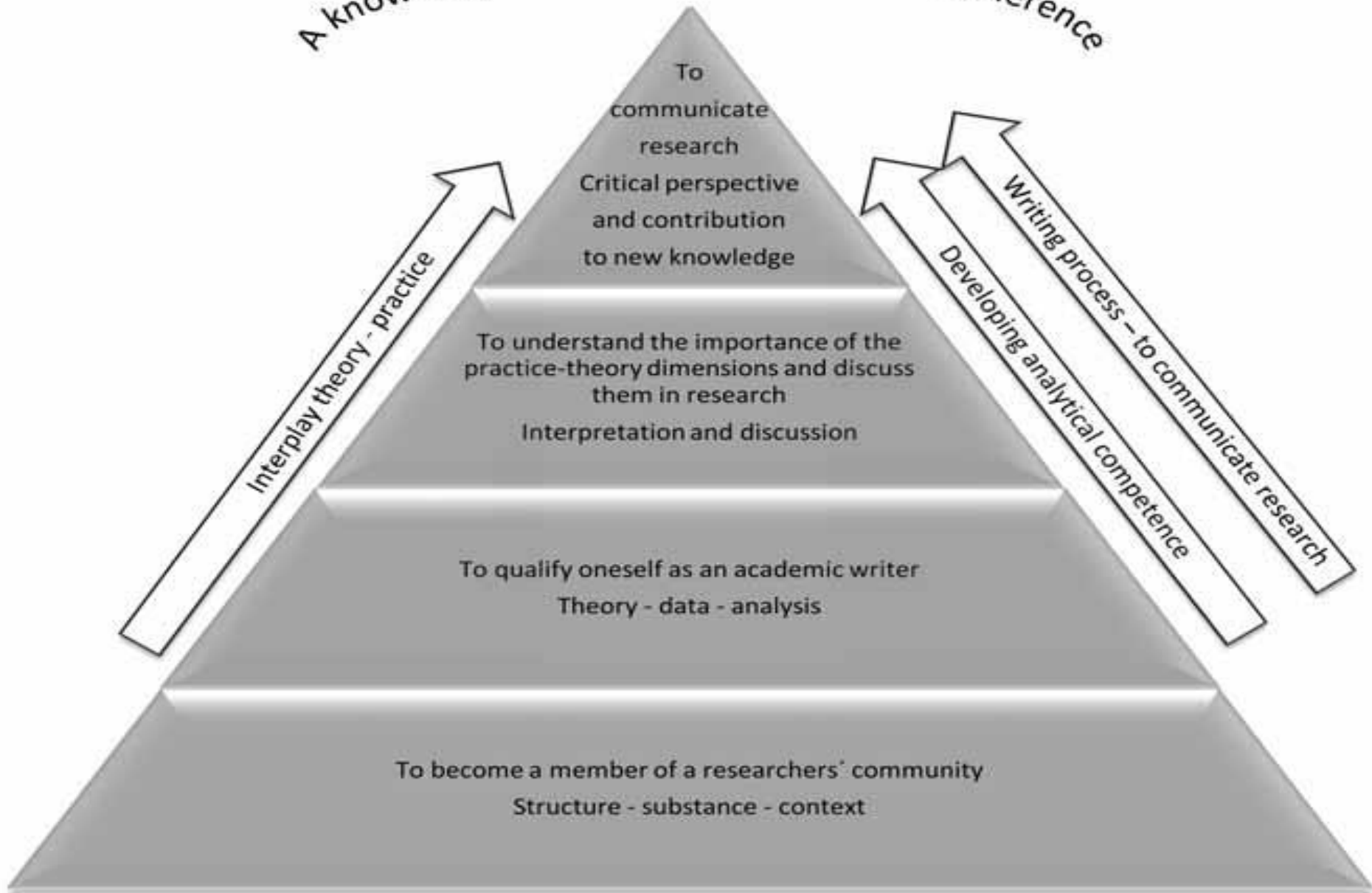


Doctoral Students

- Working in teacher education (at least two years of experience)
- Accepted into a doctoral program at a university
- NAFOL provides additional support
- Accepted as a secondary
- Period for NAFOL support- 4 years



A knowledge horizon with meaning and coherence



NAFOL 2010 - 2021

Activities

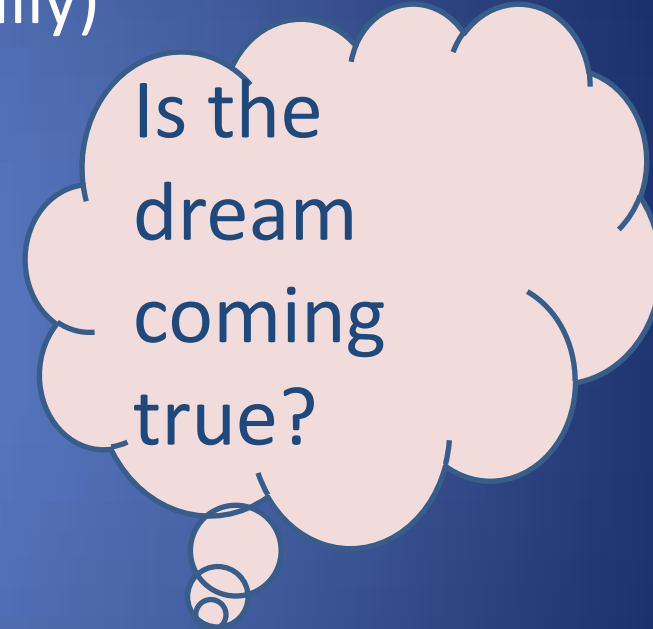
- 4 seminars per year during the 4 year period: elaborating on the research projects, methods, academic writing, teacher educator identity
- feedback from international and national professors and peers
- national and international NAFOL conferences
- 2 week-long seminars abroad for each cohort (visiting another graduate school – international network building)
- financial support for internationalization
- courses
- doctoral and graduate supervision seminars
- general rehearsal for disputation (public defence of thesis)
- supporting TEs' research not aimed at doctorate



Aim: 80 graduates by the end of the 7 year period (2010-2016) = 80 research based dissertations in teacher education = 240 peer reviewed articles (hypothetically)

- Intake 2010: 19 students
- Intake 2011: 23 students
- Intake 2012: 28 students
- Intake 2013: 32 students
- Intake 2014: 14 students
- Intake 2015: 22 students
- Estimated intake 2016, 25 students
- Estimated intake 2017, 25 students
- Estimated intake 2018, 25 students

Revised predictions: about 215 graduates by the end



Achievements so far

- External mid-term international evaluation: Excellent
- Acceptance and respect in Norwegian educational research community
- Network institutions want to continue
- Funding beyond first period (2016) guaranteed
- Around 90% completion from two first cohorts
- Numerous publications and conference presentations
- Two NAFOL books
- Rejection rates of applicants increasing



Challenges ahead

1. NAFOL must deliver; students completing
2. Continuous funding
3. End of supply of candidates in a country of 5 mill?
4. Rest on our laurels? Need to seek renewal, development
5. National and International forum (InFo-TED) for teacher educator development



We had a dream.....



.....and it seems to be coming true!