Stages of professional development


This article suggests that part of the task of the teacher educator is functioning simultaneously as both researcher and practitioner. However, there are sharply diverging viewpoints about the worth of this kind of research. On the one hand, there is now more research about teacher education being conducted by teacher educators themselves than at any previous time. On the other hand, in certain contexts, this research is discounted because it is judged not rigorous or because it does not generalize across contexts. The article considers the deliberations about practitioner research by the AERA Panel on Research and Teacher Education as an illustration of how these competing viewpoints can play out.


A universal lack of attention to the professional learning needs of teacher educators is the driver for this study, which considers the most effective ways to support the professional learning of higher education-based teacher educators. At a time when many industrialised countries are engaged in systemic educational reform, this study provides an international and comparative needs analysis through a survey of 1158 higher education-based teacher educators in the countries participating in the International Forum for Teacher Educator Development: Belgium, Ireland, Israel, the Netherlands, Norway and the UK. Our results suggest that while teacher educators are only moderately satisfied with their professional development experiences, a strong desire exists for further professional learning. This desire, influenced by their professional context, relates to their current beliefs concerning ‘best practice’ in teacher education, the academic skills required to further their professional careers and knowledge of the curriculum associated with their fields of expertise.


Common sense reasoning says that quality teacher education relies on quality teacher educators. Yet, there is minimal attention to what teacher educators should know and be able to do. Unquestionably, teacher educators cannot teach what they do not know; but what should they know, and should they be prepared? This study of 293 teacher educators investigated the following: What do current teacher educators consider to be the foundation elements of their practice? How do they evaluate their own preparation in these areas? How can their experiences inform the preparation of teacher educators? We use Cochran-Smith and Lytle’s theorizing about “relationships of knowledge and practice” to understand knowledge essential to teacher educating (a term we use to differentiate teaching teachers from teaching students). Our findings reveal that practicing teacher
educators often feel unprepared to assume their role but can offer helpful insight into how we should think deliberately about quality teacher educator preparation.


This paper focuses on the professional and academic development of mid-career teacher educators from two universities in England. The objectives of the study were to analyse and compare the career experiences of teacher educators; in particular, to identify stages of development, landmark events and contextual factors affecting professional learning and academic identities. In-depth biographical interviews were carried out with 12 teacher educators, together with living graphs of their career paths. Clear landmarks were identified in both contexts, with development in teaching seen as largely positive, while research development was much more varied. Teacher educators who were further on in their careers saw research development as transformative personally as well as academically. In analysing the findings within a sociocultural learning framework, the authors draw in particular on Swennen et al.’s model of teacher educators’ sub-identities, Akerlind’s categorisation of an academic identity and Eraut’s contextual and learning factors.


There is growing interest in the professional development of teacher educators as the demands, expectations, and requirements of teacher education increasingly come under scrutiny. The manner in which teacher educators learn to traverse their world of work in the development of their knowledge, skills, and ability is important. This article outlines some of the crucial shaping factors in that development, including the transition associated with becoming a teacher educator, the nature of teacher education itself, and the importance of researching teacher education practices. Through a careful analysis of these features, a framework for better understanding what it might mean to professionally develop as a teacher educator is proposed. The framework is designed to draw serious attention to the major aspects of teaching and learning about teaching that are central to shaping scholarship in teacher education and offer insights into the ways in which teacher educators’ professional development might be better understood and interpreted.


In this article, we focus on an analysis of critical issues in supporting teacher educators conducting a self-study. As data, we have used the digital logbooks written by the participating teacher educators, the outcomes of the interviews we held at the end of the support process, and of a follow-up questionnaire answered by the participating teacher educators six months later. We have found seven issues critical to enhancing the chances of self-studies being beneficial to the practice of teacher education as well as to the further development of a knowledge base for teacher education. In addition, our study points to four themes for further attention and research.


This article addresses an under-researched area of teacher education by analysing teacher educators’ constructions of their professionalism and the constituent professional resources and senses of identity on which that professionalism draws. The research is an embedded case study of 36 teacher
educators in two Schools of Education in England, using questionnaires and interviews. The study is framed by a broadly sociological concern with the (re)production of social patterns and relations through teacher education. The findings show that three modes of professionalism were constructed by educators within the sample group, with each deploying professional resources and senses of identity in varying ways to position individuals as credible and legitimate practitioners within the field of teacher education. The paper argues that professionalism may well be influenced by the complex interrelationships among individual biography, institutional setting, and national imperatives for teacher education.


Within the broad theme of this special issue, the current article describes a turbulent Norwegian teacher education context in which two new teacher educators start work in a university. Like other nations, Norway is affected by international educational trends, some of which have a reductive impact on the teaching profession and on teacher education. The article discusses the many roles teacher educators have to hold and presents what the local context, a university’s teacher education department, does to support new colleagues in developing individual roles and identities as teacher educators which enable them to fit into the local culture and requirements. The article examines some of the many frustrations that teacher educators often feel are rooted in local, national and international movements, before it concludes with a quest for developing program identity that builds on the strength of having a diverse staff of teacher educators.


The aim of this meta-synthesis is to deepen the understanding and knowledge of qualitative research focusing on education for mentors of newly qualified teachers. Altogether, 10 studies were included and synthesised. Four common themes emerged in the initial analysis: School and mentoring context, Theory and practice, Reflection and critical thinking and Relationships. Furthermore, three overarching dimensions were found as a final synthesis guiding the further development of mentor education: 1) Contextual dimensions, 2) Theoretical-analytical dimensions, and 3) Relational dimensions. The synthesis stresses the importance of a systematic, long-term and research-informed mentor education that develops mentors' (self-)understanding of teaching and mentoring.


This article reports on a one year, mixed methods study of 13 teacher educators at work in English and Scottish higher education institutions. Framed by cultural–historical activity theory, itself a development of a Marxian analysis of political economy, the research shows how, under conditions of academic capitalism, these teacher educators were denied opportunities to accumulate capital (e.g. research publications, grants) and were proletarianised. The reasons for this stratification were complex but two factors were significant: first, the importance of maintaining relationships with schools in the name of ‘partnership’ teacher education; and, second, the historical cultures of teacher education in HE.


Research suggests that the development of a teacher educator identity is a central process in becoming a teacher educator. Recently, there has been an increasing interest in the concept of
teacher identity. However, teacher educator identity seems to be still under-researched. In this article, a review of literature on teacher educator identity is provided. Fifty-two research papers were analysed to identify challenges and tensions teacher educators experience during their induction, factors which influence the development of their professional identity, and the features that induction programmes should have. The findings suggested that new teacher educators generally develop negative self-views about their abilities and professional identities. Self-support and community support activities were found to facilitate teacher educators’ transition and enhance their identity development. Key features of academic induction were identified as acting as a learning community, cultivating supportive and professional relationships, encouraging self-enquiry and research and involving teacher educators in reflective activities.


To gain a deeper understanding of mentor preparation, which is still an underdeveloped area, the current paper focuses on a formal mentor education programme offered to teachers in secondary school at a university in Norway. The research questions in this qualitative study examine why teachers participate in the programme, how they perceive the education and which parts of the programme they value. The underlying question is whether mentor education matters. The findings show that the mentor students in the programme moved from a practical towards a more conceptual understanding of mentoring. They developed ‘a mentor language, a mentor network and a mentor attitude’. There is, however, a limited understanding of mentor education in schools, and being a mentor is not recognised as a profession.


The profession of teacher educators is substantially different from the teaching profession. The transition from being a teacher to becoming a teacher of teachers and a researcher is considered to be a key element in the development of a teacher educator. Therefore, it is not surprising that the professional roles «teacher of teachers» and «researcher» play a prominent role in the results of a literature review we conducted on the profession of teacher educators. This review also shows that four other roles of teacher educators can be identified: «coach», «curriculum developer», «gatekeeper» and «broker».


This study reports on what 13 teacher educators going through a procedure to become registered as a teacher educator in 2011–2012 learned, what goals they formulated for their further professional development and what activities they planned to achieve these goals. The methods used in this study are mainly the same as were used at the time the first cohort went through the registration procedure in 2002. The 2012 cohort participated in a supportive programme, whereas the 2002 cohort did not. This enables a comparison of the results of both studies and thus some insight into the possible benefits of integrating a registration procedure with a supportive programme for the professional development of teacher educators.

In which areas and domains do individual teacher educators prefer to work on their professional development? What kind of learning activities do they want to take on and with whom? Are there significant differences in these preferences between teacher educators? This article reports on a recent survey (N = 268) about the professional development of teacher educators and differences in learning preferences between less and more experienced teacher educators and between university-based and school-based teacher educators. Findings show, for example, that while most university-based teacher educators were mainly interested in improving their teaching, less experienced school-based teacher educators were more focussed on aspects such as coaching skills. In this study, ‘learning profiles’ have been developed for four categories of teacher educators. These profiles may help to create more meaningful arrangements for teacher educators’ initial education and further professional development in a context where teacher education is required to have a more school-based as well as a more research-based orientation.


At a time of increasing public and government focus on the quality of teacher education, little is known about the professional development needs of those who teach teachers in further education (FE). Yet they are crucial players. Efforts are intensifying across a significant number of countries to promote the professional development of teacher educators, but there is little support for new or experienced practitioners and no substantive professional standards regarding this role in English FE. This has an impact on the professional practice and career trajectories of teacher educators themselves. Based on a series of semi-structured interviews, an online survey and focus groups, this mixed-methods study uses a sequential exploratory design. The study captures the voices of English FE teacher educators who identified mentoring, induction and a choice of continuous professional development sessions as important strategies to improve the effectiveness of their role over time. This article will propose flexible models of professional development, following an analysis of new and experienced teacher educators’ needs in FE in England. The article recommends that new professional standards for teacher educators could be written collaboratively by practitioners, within a policy and institutional framework which supports the scholarship and research requirements of teacher educators.


The context of the present paper is a school of professional development for teacher educators. One of the school’s unique features is the employment of tutors/mentors, who are colleagues of their tutees in different study programmes. It has been established that many teacher educators enter the profession ‘accidentally’, whether from school teaching or from academia, without any prior training. Therefore, they require lengthy periods of time to consolidate their new professional identity. This paper presents a model of professional development that involves tutoring/mentoring, and focuses on the interaction between tutor and tutee as perceived by the tutees. There are four tutors assigned to each of the two-year specialization programmes offered at the school. All of them are staff members from various teacher training colleges. The research reported employed a mixed-methods design methodology comprising a questionnaire that was drafted especially for this research and was based on semi-structured interviews and pilot sampling. Six graduates were interviewed and 231 (out of the 500) graduates responded to the questionnaire. They were asked about the required properties of a tutor and about the elements they perceived to be most beneficial to the tutees’ professional development. The findings point to the benefits of tutoring. The terms ‘tutor’ and ‘mentor’ are used in this paper interchangeably.

While studies have shown that mentoring is essential to the development of new teachers, fewer investigations have examined what mentors learn about themselves and about mentoring through this role. In this study, the conversations between 13 mentors and their mentees were analysed, along with mentor self-evaluations and focus group data, over two years. Three questions framed the study: Is there a shift in mentor learning and development? How do conversations compare with the intended goals of mentors? How do professional development opportunities reflect in mentoring practice? Outcomes indicated that: professional growth was evidenced but varied among mentors; and a difference existed between the planned goals and actual content of mentors’ conversations. Although professional development appeared to benefit mentors, shifting practice was by no means assured. Implications of the study for future research and for mentoring practice are considered.


This study explores the tensions and challenges experienced by new teacher educators in higher education in England, large numbers of whom are coming directly from posts as schoolteachers. Although traditionally an under-researched group, recent studies have confirmed that this transition from schoolteacher to teacher educator is fraught with difficulty, and that the new professional identity is hard-won. This has been variously linked to the differing demands and culture of the two workplace settings, as well as the shifts in role, some of which are subtle but fundamental in terms of impact. Although, to an extent, the findings of this small-scale qualitative study of a group of recently appointed teacher educators do mirror those of previous studies, they also indicate that there may be an underlying key theme which has received less attention thus far; that is, the development of an understanding of the pedagogy of initial teacher education. The study suggests that new teacher educators may inevitably default to an impoverished pedagogical model in the early stages of their practice, and argues that this is an area which warrants further consideration by the teacher education community as a whole.


Teaching assistants are often the constant adult in classrooms in England today and find themselves working closely with student-teachers. This paper explores the role of teaching assistants in the training and assessment of primary initial teacher education students and considers their continuing professional development (CPD) needs in relation to this. It has arisen out of a research project funded by the government’s Training and Development Agency for Schools, from which a mentor training package was developed and implemented, aimed specifically at teaching assistants. Elements of this CPD are delivered to a discrete cohort; others are multi-professional and as such develop collaborative practice. This paper reflects on this CPD initiative and considers its future development.

The outcomes of an international collaborative project are presented, involving experienced teacher educators and researchers from eight different countries, who engaged in a series of structured discussions on the professional development of teacher educators. We start with an overview of the needs in practice and policy, as well as the research interests, making structured opportunities for teacher educator development necessary. As a first outcome, we present a model to conceptualise teacher educator development, grounded in a study of the international literature and the systematic critical discussion of its findings by the participants in the project. The model facilitates international (research) collaboration, mapping and guiding initiatives in policy and practice by providing both an overview of the complexities of teacher educator development and a language to discuss them. The second –structural- outcome is the establishment of InFo-TED – the International Forum for Teacher Educator Development.

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Teachers need professional development to keep current with teaching practices, although costs for extensive professional development can be prohibitive across an education system. Mentoring provides one way for embedding cost-effective professional development. This mixed-method study includes surveying mentor teachers (n = 101) on a five-point Likert scale and interviews with experienced mentors (n = 10) to investigate professional development for mentors as a result of the mentoring process. Quantitative data were analysed through a pedagogical knowledge framework and qualitative data were collated into themes. Survey data showed that although mentoring of pedagogical knowledge was variable, mentoring pedagogical knowledge practices occurs with the majority of mentors, which requires mentors to evaluate and articulate teaching practices. Qualitative data showed that mentoring acted as professional development and led towards enhancing communication skills, developing leadership roles (problem-solving and building capacity) and advancing pedagogical knowledge. Providing professional development to teachers on mentoring can help to build capacity in two ways: quality mentoring of preservice teachers through explicit mentoring practices, and reflecting and deconstructing teaching practices for mentors’ own pedagogical advancements.


Four novice teacher educators working at different universities in the USA and Canada used online journaling and dialoguing combined with feedback from their students to explore their practice and new roles as teacher educators in new contexts. Their priorities included modeling critical reflection and enacting democratic practices. They chronicle their struggles and successes over the course of an academic year. The authors’ online community provided a viable and valued venue for self-study. Findings include insight into their taken-for-granted assumptions, how their instructional efforts were interpreted by others, and the impact that their collaborative efforts had on each researcher’s professional development. The authors include implications for universities and colleges regarding the format and structure of mentoring of junior faculty.

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Although teacher educators are often regarded as models of lifelong learning for the teachers, their professional development has been the object of meagre research and discussion in the literature.
This study raises awareness on issues pertaining to teacher educators’ professional development in the Greek-Cypriot context. Data from semi-structured individual interviews, conducted with a group of six educators – seconded to teach teachers – outline their notions of professional development, the formal and less formal routes they take towards this endeavour, perceived outcomes as well as problems they encounter. Findings indicate that teacher educators are involved not only in formal but also informal learning, both through and without interaction. Learning through interaction involves participation in seminars as well as informal conversations with colleagues, but not structured forms of peer learning. Learning without interaction resembles self-study and reflection, but not intentional experimentation with practices. These findings reflect the individualized character of educators’ professional development, while systemic opportunities for peer learning remain scarce. The article discusses exploitation of professional development opportunities within teacher education institutions. In particular, the authors argue towards more systematic approaches for teacher educators’ professional development in the individual and collective domains.


The purpose of this study is to explore the knowledge demands of teacher educators as they teach disciplinary content to preservice elementary teachers, specifically in mathematics, and to understand how such knowledge is different from that used by K-12 teachers. Drawing from a database including teaching and learning artifacts from five iterations of a content course for preservice teachers, the authors illustrate different forms of knowledge observed across different mathematics teacher educators’ practice and discuss how the observed knowledge forms are different from knowledge used by K-12 teachers in their practice. Finally, the authors discuss how the process used in this study can identify potential components of a knowledge base for teacher education.


This longitudinal case study examines whether a school-based training scheme that brings together different categories of teacher educators (university supervisors and cooperating teachers) engenders true collective training activity and, if so, whether this collective work contributes to pre-service teacher education. The scheme grew out of a recent French reform policy. The study is based on an original theoretical conception of teacher education that borrows postulates from a theory of learning and collective action (Wittgenstein 1996). Illustrated by excerpts from post-lesson meetings and self-confrontation interviews, the results suggest that the training scheme does not always lead to collective training activity. The difficulties are notably due to disagreement between the educators about attributing meaning to the pre-service teacher’s classroom activity, which hampers professional development. On this basis, proposals are made to contribute to an effective and authentically shared supervision process and to reposition training activity at the heart of the processes of pre-service teacher professional development.


This article reports on a narrative analysis of one teacher educator’s learning journey in a two-year professional development project. Professional development is conceived of as the complex learning processes resulting from the meaningful interactions between the individual teacher educator and his/her working context. Our analysis indicates that the capacity to manage such interactions contributes strongly to teacher educators’ experience of vulnerability. We analytically describe three
strategies (building positive self-esteem, sustaining moral commitment and purpose, and strategical compliance) to cope with this vulnerability and their impact on processes of professional development as well as the outcomes of it. Understanding the role of the working context – and vulnerability as a structural characteristic of that context – in professional development processes adds to existing knowledge of teacher educators’ professional lives and development.


This study explores the factors that influenced the transition made by three participants from primary class teacher (or first-order practitioner) to Teacher Education (TE) lecturer (or second-order practitioner) in a Scottish Teacher Education Institution. The self-study case study methodology explored the factors that encouraged, and potentially inhibited, this career change. Data collection utilised auto-ethnographic narrative and findings were reviewed using a thematic analysis. Results are considered using a theoretical framework provided by Deci and Ryan’s Self-Determination Theory. The study identified three common, key themes leading to the participants’ career change: exploration and reinvention, key figures and lifelong learners. The findings suggest the participants were largely intrinsically motivated to make the career change. The results provide an insight for teachers considering this move and administrators within TE. The personal development implications for the participants are also considered.


Using data in a professional learning community is a promising form of professional development. In this study, we followed a data team of teacher educators, who systematically tried to improve the education of student teachers (by decreasing first year drop-out). By conducting a single case study, we investigated the data team participants’ learning in depth. We analysed the team’s conversations and investigated the role of the data coach. The results of our observations and interviews showed that the conversations in the data team (1) provided a context for learning; (2) were relevant and slowly reached a higher level of inquiry as the meetings continued; (3) were focused on teaching and learning, although the action plan developed involved general actions and was not so much related to their own teaching and learning; (4) could reach greater depth when the conversations were informed by data.


This study investigates the sources of mentors’ knowledge about teaching. A mixed-method research design combining quantitative and qualitative data collection methods was used to examine this area. The findings of the study suggest that: mentors’ knowledge about teaching is practice orientated and emerges from their professional experiences, their teaching skills, their pre-service teacher education and, to a considerable extent, from their own personal experiences. The authors argue that mentors require support to reflect on their early socialisation experiences and their attachment to practice-based experience as a source of professional knowledge, in this way they can better understand and carry out their role as mentors.

Coteaching provides opportunities for teachers to collectively share responsibility for student learning. This paper reports on findings from a longitudinal study in which cooperating teachers cotaught science classes with student teachers. Through coteaching with student teachers, teachers expanded their teaching practice and developed new insights about their teaching. Coteaching served as professional development for the cooperating teachers. The experience provided them with renewed energy toward practice, opportunities to develop and implement curriculum, reflection as a catalyst for changing practice, and an expansion of professional roles into new arenas.


This article focuses on the quality of instructional networks in different stages of professional development. Drawing theoretically from social capital theory and literature on teacher interaction, we conducted in-depth interviews with 30 instructors at the university level. Using qualitative social network analysis to capture and analyze networks, we found that the quality of instructors’ interactions varied across developmental stages (novice, experienced non-expert, and expert instructors), both in terms of interdependence and opportunities for value creation. These findings offer valuable leverage for shaping educators’ everyday professional development and increasing teaching capacity through quality interaction.


This self-study documents the transformations of a doctoral student and her major professor as they collaborated during a semester-long internship in a graduate literacy education course. Analysis of dialectic journals and reflections based on these journals showed that the intern's experiences in the course changed her instructional philosophy and attitudes toward the role of teacher educators. Participating in a course that emphasized critical pedagogy during this important time in her development as a teacher educator led the intern to see the value of forming learning communities and encouraging teachers to take action to improve schools and society. The professor also changed through teaching with her doctoral student. In attempting to be a model of critical pedagogy, the professor added a social issues assignment to the course and asked more probing questions than in previous classes. Mentoring a teaching intern for the first time, the professor also found much to critique in her own course planning and communications with the doctoral student. Both participants found that change was enhanced through the processes of self-study.