Teacher educators’ identities


This article reports a self-study that analyzes my developing pedagogy as a beginning teacher educator and supervisor of practicum field placements. The data consist of my journal entries describing experiences teaching and supervising a group of teacher candidates both at the university and in their host schools. Qualitative techniques of content analysis and coding were applied to examine the data and identify themes and patterns relevant to my professional development as a teacher educator. Engaging in self-study as a new teacher educator is shown to be a productive way to confront my assumptions about how teacher candidates learn to teach. The quality of my relationships with teacher candidates has a direct impact on how I enact my principles of practice. Finally, this article highlights tensions between my developing principles of practice and my assumptions about teaching and learning.


Growth in racial and ethnic diversity among public school P-12 students stands in stark contrast to the teaching population who tend to be monolingual, White females. Secondary social studies teachers defy demographic teacher trends, as they tend to be male, albeit White males who still are not representative of the students they teach. What is missing from the discourse of student–teacher imbalance however is discussion surrounding diversity among social studies teacher educators. The purpose of this study was to examine racial, ethnic, and gender demographics for social studies teacher educators using a framework of critical teacher demography. Findings revealed that social studies teacher educators tend to reflect the population of social studies teachers with many being White males. Furthermore, social studies teacher educators tend to focus their research on concepts such as democratic citizenship with little focus dedicated to critical multicultural issues. The paucity of diversity in demographics and research is critical for social studies teacher educators to consider if we are to reflect multiculturalism in 21st century schools.


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.


Executive Summary:

1. Making sure that Europe’s six million teachers have the essential competences they require in order to be effective in the classroom is one of the keys to raising levels of pupil attainment; providing new teachers with initial teacher education of the highest quality, and encouraging serving teachers to continue developing and extending their competences throughout their careers, are both vital in a fast-changing world.

2. Teacher educators are crucial players for maintaining - and improving - the high quality of the teaching workforce. They can have a significant impact upon the quality of teaching and learning in our schools. Yet they are often neglected in policy-making, meaning that some Member States do not always benefit fully from the knowledge and experience of this key profession. It also means that teacher educators do not always get the support and challenge they need, for example in terms of their education and professional development.

3. Member States increasingly acknowledge the need to define clearly what those who teach teachers should be expected to know, and be able to do; they acknowledge that great care needs to be taken in recruiting and selecting teacher educators, and in facilitating their career-long professional development. By stimulating and supporting the development of explicit frameworks and policies, national and regional education authorities can assist teacher educators to be as effective as possible.

4. This document is intended to inspire and inform policy makers in this endeavour. The guidance and advice it contains stem from a process of ‘peer learning’ between experts on teacher education policy and practice, nominated by 26 countries and by European stakeholder bodies. Peer learning enables participants to compare and contrast different policy approaches, learn from other countries’ practices, reflect critically on current arrangements in their own countries and draw shared conclusions about what makes for effective policies.

5. This document offers policymakers practical advice that is underpinned by evidence from academic research and from the analysis of current policies in participating countries. It identifies key characteristics of successful policies and gives practical examples. Recognising that every education system is unique, it does not make prescriptions about specific policy reforms, but provides a menu of choices, allowing for tailored policy responses to fit each national context. With examples drawn from many countries, it deals with the following aspects:
   • the importance of the profession and the roles it plays
   • policy challenges facing Member States
   • issues of professional competences and quality
   • teacher educators’ professional learning and development
   • research for a better understanding of teacher education and teacher educators
   • the importance of professional communities and associations
• roles and responsibilities of stakeholders.


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.


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.


This book is a review of more than twenty years of international research on teacher educators. It offers a solid overview of what is known about the professional roles, professional behaviour and professional development of teacher educators. A systematic analysis of the focus, methods and data sources of 137 key publications on teacher educators make this book into an important reference work for everyone interested in the work of and research on teacher educators. There is a growing consensus that teacher educators largely determine the quality of teachers and hence, the quality of education. Through this book, Lunenberg, Dengerink and Korthagen provide not only insights into the various roles of teacher educators and the complexity of their work, but they also discuss building blocks for ongoing structured and in-depth professional development. The authors clarify that if we wish to take ‘being a teacher educator’ seriously, it is imperative that we build our understanding on research data. The book shows that although the number of studies on teacher educators is growing, the research in this field is still scattered. The authors highlight the need to create a coherent research programme on teacher educators and provide concrete suggestions for such a programme.

This article reports on a recent study of teacher educators in England which aimed to explore teacher educators’ constructions of their own identities in the academic communities within two university schools of education. Findings show that teacher educators constructed repertoires of identities for themselves, deploying these to achieve credibility and recognition or to reflect personal change, depending on the particular context and ‘audience’. Many saw their foundational identity as once-a-school teacher, but entry into the university often triggered changes and the (re)construction of identity around practice as a teacher educator and research engagement. Findings also showed a diversity of identity constructions and resistances around the idea of research engagement and having an identity as an academic. These findings are discussed in relation to the rapidly changing and contested field of teacher education at the beginning of the second decade of the twenty-first century.


The development of a professional teacher educator identity has implications for how one negotiates the duties of a teacher, scholar, and learner. The research on teacher educator identity in the USA has been largely conducted on traditional teacher educators, or those who have started their careers as public school teachers and then went on to the collegiate level as teacher educators. This auto-ethnography considers the professional identity formation of a nontraditional teacher educator, one whose professional career did not include a career as a public school teacher. Although there are common influences on professional development between the traditional and nontraditional teacher educator, such as biography, institutional contexts, and personal pedagogy, there are significant differences in the process as those influences are experienced. This research proposes an extended process for nontraditional teacher educators, including the search for legitimacy and belonging in the community of educators.


In this article we address the question: ‘What sub-identities of teacher educators emerge from the research literature about teacher educators and what are the implications of the sub-identities for the professional development of teacher educators?’ Like other professional identities, the identity of teacher educators is a construction of various aspects or facets, which we prefer to call sub-identities. We are interested to learn what sub-identities might constitute the main identity of what we generically refer to as ‘teacher educators’ and, to achieve this, we set out to analyse the research literature relating to teacher educators to search for ways in which such sub-identities might be explicitly or implicitly described. Based on the research literature we found four sub-identities that are available for teacher educators: schoolteacher, teacher in Higher Education, teacher of teachers (or second order teacher) and researcher. We also found a view on teacher educators as teachers in a more generic way. There seems to be a broad understanding that teacher educators have to transform their identity as teachers to become ‘teachers of teachers in Higher Education’ and (increasingly) to become researchers of teaching and teacher education. The development of these sub-identities depends on the context of teacher education in various national and institutional contexts and the development of teacher educators over time.

The aim of the present study was to explore how Finnish university-based subject teacher educators perceived their professional identity. Several factors related to professional identity were analysed. Subject teacher educators are initially subject teachers who have proceeded to the doctorate level. They form a small academic group within a larger faculty milieu with only partial responsibility for a teacher education programme. The study is based on focus group interviews with 15 subject teacher educators at four of the eight universities that offer teacher education in Finland. The results reveal that these teacher educators have a strong and persistent self-ascribed identity of an educational nature. The close social interplay with other subject teacher educators within the faculty seems to contribute to a confident collective identity. However, the self-identity is not congruent with the other-ascribed identity, which varies depending on the other party’s institutional context. The subject teacher educators examined in this study wished to have research included to a higher extent in their identity as subject teacher educators.


This article reports a literature review of self-studies by beginning teacher educators examining their experiences of the transition from classroom teaching to teacher educator. The authors conclude that becoming a teacher educator involves several complex and challenging tasks: examining beliefs and values grounded in personal biography, including those associated with being a former schoolteacher; navigating the complex social and institutional contexts in which they work; and developing a personal pedagogy of teacher education that enables construction of a new professional identity as a teacher educator. This research provides beginning teacher educators with a reference point for understanding their personal and professional transition to university-based teacher education. It also provides teacher education faculty and administrators with key information about how the transition from teacher to teacher educator can be supported and enhanced within professional learning communities.


In this article, I examine my evolving practice and identity as a teacher educator in the context of supervision of student teachers on practicum in schools. As a classroom teacher with approximately 25 years’ experience, including mentoring student teachers in my own classroom, I had assumed that when I began working as a teacher educator in the area of school-based professional experience programs it would be a relatively easy and unproblematic transition. This was not to be the case. As I became increasingly involved in practicum supervision, I encountered many situations that challenged my understanding of my work as a teacher educator compared to my work as a classroom teacher. This self-study documents my practice in the so-called third space between schools and universities, for the period of one academic year. I analyzed my journal entries of visits to student teachers on practicum using a theoretical framework of the learning that takes place within boundary spaces between different communities of practice. Results of the study suggested that, in this boundary space, I experienced dynamic and shifting identity construction and re-construction in relation to my former professional identity as a classroom teacher and my relatively new professional identity as a teacher educator. The study also highlighted my changing perspectives on what learning to be a teacher is all about and on the delicate negotiation of relationships that is central to this work.
This article examines a variety of work currently going on across the country in newly created hybrid spaces to more closely connect campus courses and field experiences in university-based preservice teacher education. It is argued that the old paradigm of university-based teacher education where academic knowledge is viewed as the authoritative source of knowledge about teaching needs to change to one where there is a nonhierarchical interplay between academic, practitioner, and community expertise. It is argued that this new epistemology for teacher education will create expanded learning opportunities for prospective teachers that will better prepare them to be successful in enacting complex teaching practices.


This study examines how my practice changed over three semesters as a beginning teacher educator. Teaching the undergraduate course, Diversity in Elementary Education, I worked to uphold and maintain my democratic ideals while more fully accounting for the larger context of authoritarian teaching to which my students were accustomed. The findings suggest that seeking few solutions to the problems being negotiated, prescribing purposes regardless of mutually perceived relevance, and imposing predetermined experiences and outcomes helped to construct a class climate that was more directly aligned with what students were ready to experience while compromising with the larger educational context. By making less discernible the differences between my practice and those with which my students were familiar, I reframed my underlying focus from clashing tales of triumph and tragedy to a complex tapestry of interwoven layers of self-informing my evolving pedagogy of teacher education. Doing so helped illuminate the personal, pedagogical, and philosophical challenges of cultivating classroom democracy in an era of increased emphasis on high-stakes testing, standardization, and transmission-based teaching. Such knowledge is important for expanding our understanding of democratic teacher education practices and informing efforts to cultivate democratic dispositions in teachers.


The shift towards school-led teacher education steered by the government in England challenges the ‘traditional’ model of experienced teachers leaving school and entering the higher education sector to become teacher educators. More teachers are undertaking the dual role of teacher and teacher educator, leading the professional learning of teachers. This paper investigates the perceptions of seven experienced teachers who take on the role of leading the development of subject knowledge of new and experienced teachers through a case-study approach. The findings reveal that leading professional development has an impact on the professional identity of these teachers. This new role has changed the way that they view themselves as teachers, and their practice as teachers, and for others it has contributed to their leadership role and career progression. Not all of the participants embraced an identity as a teacher educator. The findings are compared with teachers making the transition from school teacher to teacher educator in higher education institutions in the literature, to discover commonalities that could guide the planning of professional development opportunities. The research revealed insights into experiences of becoming a teacher educator; the impact on them as teachers and leaders; and how they see their own identities developing.

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.


This paper explores the complex processes involved in the self-construction of academic identity in a UK School of Education. Building on seminal literature in this field and drawing on the research of four academics, it begins by discussing teacher educators’ varying perceptions of the need to re-configure their identity to meet the expectations of a twenty-first-century higher education workforce. The article proposes the formation of this identity to be a dynamic, career-long process. Diverse scaffolds for the development process are proposed, including opportunities for new teacher educators to be apprenticed into an academic role, the centrality of communities of practice and the importance of the supported development of academic skills such as writing for publication.


This article reports on a qualitative study that investigated the identity construction experiences of one group of beginning English language teacher educators in Hong Kong. Drawing upon a theoretical framework that incorporates both identity in-practice and identity-in-discourse, and using in-depth interviews, a narrative approach was adopted to examine participants’ identity trajectory as they crossed multiple boundaries from language learners, to language teachers, to language teacher educators. The study suggests that the challenges teacher educators faced at different stages of their professional identity construction reflected the negotiation of past experiences, future ideals, competency, agency, and marginalization. Implications for schoolteachers, teacher educators, and educational authorities, as well as for both future applied research and for understandings of identity, are discussed.


This paper investigates the experiences of secondary teachers within their workplace as they take on the role of leading subject knowledge development days for small groups of student-teachers through a case-study approach. Semi-structured interviews, the reflective journals of these teachers and the evaluations of the days by the student-teachers were used as the data-gathering methods; the teachers involved were ‘conversational partners’ in the research. Themes were recognised that characterised the developing perceptions and practices of these new teacher educators. The findings
reveal a number of professional development needs of new teacher educators situated solely in school, some similar with those situated in higher educational institutions, including fostering an understanding that modelling needs to be made explicit to student-teachers. This has important implications with the introduction of Teaching Schools with responsibilities for educating student-teachers in England. Suggestions are shared for nurturing teachers taking on this additional role as they develop their new identity and professional knowledge and skills whilst not situated geographically within a local community of practice.


The aim of the present study was to explore how Finnish university-based subject teacher educators perceived their professional identity. Several factors related to professional identity were analysed. Subject teacher educators are initially subject teachers who have proceeded to the doctorate level. They form a small academic group within a larger faculty milieu with only partial responsibility for a teacher education programme. The study is based on focus group interviews with 15 subject teacher educators at four of the eight universities that offer teacher education in Finland. The results reveal that these teacher educators have a strong and persistent self-ascribed identity of an educational nature. The close social interplay with other subject teacher educators within the faculty seems to contribute to a confident collective identity. However, the self-identity is not congruent with the other-ascribed identity, which varies depending on the other party’s institutional context. The subject teacher educators examined in this study wished to have research included to a higher extent in their identity as subject teacher educators.


This research explores the identity construction of two pre-service language teachers through their interactions with school mentors and university supervisors during their teaching practicum. Informed by self-discrepancy theory and possible-selves theory, the findings demonstrate how negative mentoring dismantled the student teachers’ ideal identities (e.g., “a communicative teacher” and “an active learner”) and created different ought (e.g., “a follower”) and feared (e.g., “a controlling teacher”) identities, which impinged on their professional learning and growth. This study concludes with practical implications on how to promote the effectiveness of mentoring to facilitate pre-service teachers’ learning to teach.


This study connects to the international call for research on teacher educator professionalism. Combining positioning theory with the personal interpretative framework, we examined the relationship between teacher educators’ positioning and their teacher education practices. The interpretative analysis of qualitative data from twelve experienced Flemish teacher educators revealed three teacher educator positionings: a teacher educator of ‘pedagogues’, a teacher educator of reflective teachers, and a teacher educator of subject teachers. Each positioning constitutes a coherent pattern of normative beliefs about good teaching and teacher education, the preferred relationships with student teachers, and valuable methods and strategies to enact these beliefs.

There has been an increasing trend to promote partnerships for inclusive education that share responsibility for teachers’ and students’ learning. Yet, the complexities of collaborating across institutions and professions as well as the identity work that goes with it has been under theorized in inclusive education partnerships. Drawing from Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) and the literature on boundary practices, this paper advances theoretical tools to examine and further understand the work of inclusive education partnerships. We conceptualize partnerships as a fertile ground for learning and identity development as professionals work across institutional boundaries and face tensions and contradictions created by the overlap of different communities of practice and their respective policies and mediating tools. We illustrate theory with examples from our own work in a professional learning school for inclusive education and provide recommendations for teacher learning in teacher education programs.


This study aims to define the roles of cooperating teachers as mentors in the context of distance-learning teacher education. The participants included 358 cooperating teachers who mentored 4th-year student teachers in a Distance English Language Teacher Training Program in Turkey. To determine the roles that were perceived as mentoring roles by the cooperating teachers in the distance practicum, an inventory of 10 primary mentoring functions was constructed. These functions included five primary mentoring roles: ‘self-trainer’, ‘networker’, ‘social supporter’, ‘academic supporter’, and ‘psychological supporter’. The results will contribute to an increased understanding of how cooperating teachers perceive their mentoring roles during distance practicums.


This article reports a self-study of multicultural identities in a public high school ethnic studies class and a university multicultural education course in Hawai‘i, a unique multicultural setting in which no ethnic group is in the majority. Participants are the two authors and 117 of their high school and university students. Three important findings emerged from constant comparison analysis of students’ and authors’ personal multicultural narratives, reflections, and coursework. First, a personal-constructivist collaborative approach to self-study in an intellectually safe classroom environment provides both students and teachers with a context for challenging their socially constructed assumptions about race, culture, and ethnicity and supports the unpacking of previously held stereotypes and biases. Second, the students’ narratives are transformational teaching texts. The formal and informal sharing of personal stories helps students and teachers to be more thoughtful about the complexity of identities, develop new understandings of their own and others’ multicultural identities, and gain a critical consciousness about the connection between self-understanding and prejudice reduction. Third, self-study is a multicultural pedagogy that promotes social perspective taking, tolerance, and understanding of diversity through personal transformation. The article concludes by encouraging multicultural educators to transform traditional classroom pedagogies so that the journey to understand other people begins with the self.