Teacher Educators' Professional Trajectories:
Evidence from Ireland, Israel, Norway and the Netherlands

Ainat Guberman , Marit Ulvik , Ann MacPhail & Helma Oolbekkink-Marchand

Introduction

'Teacher educators' as a term captures all those who are formally involved in initial teacher education or in-service teachers' professional development (European Commission, 2013). The current paper deals with higher education-based teacher educators. This group of professionals is expected to perform numerous roles and have multiple skills: content area specialists, pedagogues who specialize in content area didactics as well as general pedagogy, second order teachers (i.e. teaching how to teach), gate-keepers of the teaching profession, researchers and brokers who facilitate collaboration between schools and teacher-educating institutes. Since there is no formal preparation for teacher educators, they acquire the knowledge and skills to perform their work while in the teacher educator post (Lunenberg, Dengerink and Korthagen 2014). Little is known, however, with respect to how teacher educators perceive their work, how these perceptions evolve throughout their career, and how they are influenced by current policies and work contexts (Cochran-Smith, Grudnoff, Orland-Barak & Smith, 2020; Smith & Flores, 2019; White, 2019b). Such information is necessary to prompt critical examination of current policies and (re)planning of professional development opportunities for teacher educators, in order to support their professionalism and provide high quality education to teachers (European Commission, 2013; Snoek, Swennen and van der Klink, 2011).

The current paper explores teacher educators' roles and professional development in view of their work contexts through semi-structured interviews with higher education-based teacher educators across four countries.

We firstly provide a theoretical lens through which teacher educators' work contexts can be conceptualized. We then proceed to a short literature review of teacher educators' professional identities, roles and development. Aligned with both, we present our study, describing how teacher educators perceive their roles and professional development, and how these

descriptions reflect local and national contexts as well as the effects of global trends. We conclude by discussing how future teacher education policies can provide supportive work contexts for teacher educators.

Literature review

Teacher educators' work contexts

Teacher educators' work is positioned within local, national and global contexts (Vanassche, Rust, Conway, Smith, Tack and Vanderlinde, 2015). Studies that looked into their experiences and roles reported that local contexts are very different from each other at a specific time (Lunenberg, Dengerink and Korthagen, 2014) and over time (Swennen and Volman, 2019). There are also marked differences between countries (Cochran-Smith et al., 2020; Craig, 2016; Kosnik, Beck and Goodwin, 2015) as well as similarities across national boundaries (Van der Klink, Kools, Avissar, White and Sakata, 2017). Some of these emanate from global ideologies (Robinson, 2016; Snoek at al., 2003). While some countries seem to privilege scholarship and research, others favour an emphasis on practice (Smith & Flores, 2019; White, 2019b). Other researchers suggest a dialectic approach that challenges the dichotomy between research and teaching (Cochran-Smith, Grudnoff, Orland-Barak & Smith, 2020).

Considering the future of teacher education in Europe, Snoek and his colleagues (Snoek at al., 2003) portray a two-dimensional framework formed by the intersection of two orthogonal pairs of contradictory ideological driving forces: pragmatism versus idealism and individualism versus social coherence. The current paper refers to two quadrants of this framework, 'individualistic pragmatism' and 'social coherent idealism', as two diametrically opposed theoretical conceptualizations of the societal role of teacher education. Both quadrants are prevalent among teacher educators and policymakers in European countries and beyond.

'Individualistic-pragmatism' defines the goal of education as preparing students for the requirements of a knowledge-based economy. Teacher-educating institutes compete for

students, and teacher educators need to continuously improve and update student teachers' skills to be employable. Research is valued only if it has a visible influence on pupils' achievements or student teachers' employability.

'Social coherent idealism' aims at striking a balance between supporting individuals' aims and those of society as a whole. In such societies, heavy demands are placed on teacher educators. They are required to mentor student teachers and support them as they look for their own ways of becoming teachers. Teacher educators are viewed as role models and, in order to live up to this expectation, they need to critically examine their own practices. Research is needed to enlarge the knowledge base on which education relies. Forming partnerships and working in collaboration with diverse stakeholders are highly respected values.

Teacher educators' professional identities and roles

Professional identity evolves as professionals reflect upon the trajectories and meaning of their professional experiences (Wenger, 1998). These experiences are influenced by past traditions and current policies. Thus, professional identity connects individuals' self-perceptions with cultural and societal contexts (Swennen and Volman, 2019). By performing new roles, teacher educators acquire new knowledge and skills, and their sense of professional identity is altered (Swennen and Volman, 2019). During the last decades, the number of roles associated with teacher educators has increased (Lunenberg, Dengerink and Korthagen, 2014; Swennen and Volman, 2019). Some of these roles, such as mentoring and brokering, are aligned with 'social coherent idealism'.

Teacher educators are mainly recruited from schools and universities (Ping, Schellings and Beijaard, 2018). It seems that those who are former teachers strongly identify with the 'teacher' role, while identification with the 'researcher' role varies (Murray, 2014). Some teacher educators embrace the researcher role (Cochran-Smith, 2005; Zeichener, 2005), while others are ambivalent (Griffiths, Thompson and Hryniewicz, 2014) or even resentful (Robinson and McMillan, 2006; Sikes, 2006) towards research. Those recruited to teacher education directly from the university sector tend to view themselves as disciplinary content scholars and

researchers, and not as teachers or teacher educators (Ping, Schellings and Beijaard, 2018).

Trajectories of teacher educators' professional development

Literature on teacher educators' professional development describes their recruitment, induction and further career as crucial stages in their professional development trajectories. Studies based on teacher educators descriptions of their professional development reported they believe their pre-recruitment careers provided them with valuable resources, but not all of the knowledge and skills needed for their complex role. Therefore, they believe that on-the-job professional development is vital (Berry, 2007; Griffiths, Thompson and Hryniewicz, 2014; Murray and Male, 2005; Meeus, Cools, and Placklé, 2018; van der Klink et al., 2017). The term 'professional development' has a broad meaning. It includes learning from experience, informal discussions with colleagues, participation in professional communities, reflection, research, formal academic programmes, and adding professional roles to those already performed (Ping, Schellings and Beijaard, 2018).

During the induction period, teacher educators find they need to adjust to their new roles and work context, and acquire new knowledge and skills that are essential for survival. This phase begins immediately after recruitment, and lasts about two or three years. As highly esteemed teachers become beginning teacher educators, the recruitment phase is often characterized by confusion and loss of status (Berry, 2007; Murray and Male, 2005; Meeus, Cools and Placklé 2018). Later phases are characterized by a stronger sense of professional confidence, and continued professional development (Van der Klink et al., 2017).

Two main areas of teacher educators' professional development are teaching and research (Czerniawski, Guberman and MacPhail, 2017; Griffiths, Thompson and Hryniewicz, 2014; Ping, Schellings and Beijaard, 2018; Van der Klink et al., 2017). Professional development in teaching includes updating and broadening content area knowledge, gaining recognition as effective teachers, and (in some cases) publishing learning materials and being promoted to influential positions. Motivations for professional development in teaching include a sense of responsibility towards student teachers and their pupils as well as professional interest (Ping, Schellings and

Beijaard, 2018). In research, publications are the key to gaining recognition and the ability to influence policies. The motivations for doing research are mixed and include research deriving from teacher educators' keen interest, supporting teaching and constituting an integral part of teacher educators' 'scholar' identity. Motivation can also be external. In some institutes, producing research-based publications is rewarded. In other institutes, refraining from research may have negative consequences such as lower wages and withholding promotion to influential positions within the institute (Griffiths, Thompson and Hryniewicz, 2014; Guberman and Mcdossi, 2019; Ping, Schellings and Beijaard, 2018).

Teacher educators' identities, beliefs and professional development can be either aligned or misaligned with their institutes (Vanassche and Kelchtermans, 2016), as well as their regional or national policymakers' espoused ideologies. This issue can have significant effects on teacher educators' work context and teacher education policies. For example, if leaders of teacher-educating institutes strive for social idealism and teacher educators express individualistic pragmatist attitudes, institutes and policymakers will need to invest much more effort to encourage collaboration and attainment of common goals. Conversely, if teacher educators are inclined toward social idealism while their institutes' stance is individualistic and pragmatist, they may feel frustrated when they attempt to work collaboratively towards shared ideals and, consequently, experience demotivation.

In order to learn about teacher educators' perceptions of their roles and work contexts, this paper explores teacher educators' descriptions of their professional trajectories across four countries: Ireland, Israel, Norway and the Netherlands. The roles they perform will be described and contextualized at institute and national levels before discussing alignment to individual pragmatism and social idealism. We will conclude with the implications of the findings on teacher educators' current work and suggestions for future policies.

Method

The context of the study: The study was conducted by members of InFo-TED (International Forum for Teacher Educator Development), a self-initiated group of experienced teacher educators from

seven national contexts. The group was formed to promote international, as well as national, initiatives to support teacher educators' professional development (Vanassche et al., 2015; Kelchtermans et al., 2018). Previously, the group has conducted a professional development needs survey (Czerniawski, Guberman and MacPhail, 2017). The current study is based on semi-structured interviews with teacher educators who completed the survey and expressed their interest in being involved in a follow up study by supplying contact information for that purpose.

Participants: Forty-one higher education based teacher educators from four countries (10 from Ireland, 10 from Israel, 10 from Norway and 11 from the Netherlands) participated. While the sample is not representative, it consists of a range of demographics across age, gender, qualifications and years of experience (Table 1).

[Insert table 1 about here]

Interviews: Semi-structured interviews were used. The interview guide followed the sections of the previously completed survey, exploring more deeply: (i) background and demographics, including recruitment into teacher education, (ii) professional learning opportunities, activities and needs, and (iii) teacher educators' attitudes towards, and experiences with, research. The interview protocol was first piloted with teacher educators who were not part of the study sample. The interviews lasted between 35 and 90 minutes and were conducted in each teacher educator's native language. Each interview was transcribed in the language in which they were conducted.

Data analysis: The data were analyzed thematically and based on a data-driven inductive approach (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Initially, each of the four authors identified themes arising from their respective national interviews. They then met to discuss the initial themes. Together, we developed common themes and presented them in a case-by-phase matrix that gave an overview of the data from the time before the teacher educators were recruited into teacher education until the present, including professional learning opportunities and the relation between teacher education and research. Thematic content for each theme was developed. The final step was to conduct an interpretive analysis, constantly moving between the whole and the

parts (Hatch, 2002), discussing our respective interpretations with the intent of arriving at a shared meaning of the data (Guest, Macqueen and Namey, 2012).

As the authors reviewed the trajectories, it became evident that they had to explain to each other local practices that each took for granted but were unfamiliar their co-authors. This experience raised the authors' awareness of their "blindness" in respect to the characteristics of their respective national contexts (Blömeke & Paine, 2008; Penlington, 2008), and highlighted the potential significance of additional characteristics to teacher educators' work.

Results

Following the previously presented stages in teacher educators' professional development trajectories, we have chosen to report the results under two main sections: (i) Early career in teacher education, that includes recruitment and induction, and (ii) later career that includes professional development in research and teaching. Each section captures nuances within countries as well as commonalities and differences across the four countries.

Early career in teacher education

Recruitment

Table 2 denotes participants' previous occupation, academic qualifications and recruitment into teacher education in each country. It is imperative that the reader appreciates that each cohort is not representative of teacher educators in the respective countries. They demonstrate that schools and universities are the main sources from which teacher educators are recruited (and in some cases constituted their previous place of employment). About three quarters of participants had previous experience teaching in schools. However, there is evidence that when there is a need for a teacher educator in higher education institutes, individuals may be recruited with, for example, content knowledge in science, technology or mathematics but not necessarily with teaching experience.

About half of the teacher educators appeared to have been responsible for initiating their transition into teacher education. Some shared insights that they wished to enact in teacher education:

> It [PhD] was a window through which I could see how the educational system can operate in a different manner… I moved to teacher education in order to transform teachers into [people] who understand the profession better. [It's] not just teaching and being authoritative. (Naomi, Israel)

However, the majority of teacher educators had pragmatic reasons for choosing teacher education, such as the need for change in their work practices. There was also some evidence that those who wanted to work in higher education conceived teacher education as a stepping-stone into higher education, particularly in Norway: *'When I worked on my Masters I became interested in conducting more research, and it was because of my research interest I thought about going into pre-school teacher education'* (Ole, Norway).

About a quarter of the teacher educators implied they were head hunted after they had previously worked with teacher education institutes: *'In the 90s I was in charge of all the pre-schools in the municipality. Then I started to cooperate with the university college and was in a way head hunted into teacher education'* (Siv, Norway). Others had been sought for their knowledge and skills in the Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) fields. Serendipity accounted for the remaining cases:

> I was a PhD student… and I really was not looking for a job. But someone from our department … worked at the college's research authority, and they were looking for a research assistant… After a year and a half, that person … had an accident … and she recommended that I should replace her. (Shirley, Israel)

Induction

While there was no evidence of formal induction into the role of teacher educator in any of the four countries, three quarters of the teacher educators reported they were offered some form

of support as beginning teacher educators. However, there was little consensus regarding the form of support that varied across informal and formal mentoring, co-teaching, formal courses, reduced workload and securing research grants. There was evidence of various levels and types of mentoring across all four countries. Three teacher educators stated that they had received formal mentoring (Ireland, Norway) and five (Israel, Norway and the Netherlands) indicated that other teacher educator colleagues were helpful through informal mentoring;

> I have had the opportunity to have worked together for a very long time with a teacher educator from whom I learned a lot. So that has been a very big opportunity for me at the time, professionalization, discussing lectures (…) But that is more informal and a kind of coincidence (…) I mean, it was not organized either, I was not linked to him to do that. (Lynn, the Netherlands)

Three additional teacher educators from Ireland and Norway had the opportunity of co-teaching: *'We were always two teachers in a plenary lecture the first years – a new teacher educator and an experienced one. That was for me an enormous resource for professional development'* (Eva, Norway). These forms of informal induction are aligned with altruistic or social-coherent attitudes of the experienced teacher educators who supported their novice colleagues.

Formal upskilling courses in the general higher education space, rather than specifically in teacher education, were offered in Ireland and the Netherlands. Interestingly, in Norway, some teacher educators were not allowed to attend general teaching in higher education upskilling opportunities because they were already qualified (school) teachers. Others refrained from participation due to time constraints and lack of institute support:

> There are some courses related to teaching in higher education. It is an offer we all have, but I have not used it. You have to participate on top of everything else you have to do and do not get any extra time for it. (Siv, Norway)

Those who had entered teacher education with a PhD, and little experience of teaching in schools or being a teacher educator, had a level of research competence that they wished to develop further and this fit with the mission of universities, in turn helping to legitimize their role as an

academic. Experienced teachers who had not acquired research skills felt pressured to become research involved, more so in Ireland, Norway and Israel than in the Netherlands.

PhD studies appear to be a prominent source from which teacher educators acquire research skills. On entering the profession, a quarter of the teacher educators had a PhD, and since entering the teacher education profession, another half of the sample completed PhDs. These figures attest to the increasing importance teacher educators (and ultimately universities) attach to research.

In Ireland, the merger of colleges of education with universities highlights an additional induction phase for those originally working in a college of education (five teacher educators) becoming employees of universities. With this, was the realization that the main way to progress as a teacher educator in the university sector was to pursue research-related activities and not to rely solely on teaching, as had been common practice in colleges of education. There was a clear awareness of an *'(...) ongoing university discourse around the importance of research … institutional expectation'* (Moira, Ireland). Similar expectations were evident in Israel and Norway, where teacher education colleges are expected to produce an increasing amount of research. Special efforts were required from those who were not originally trained as researchers in that field:

> The first three to four years in teacher education felt like a re-education process because I had a discipline PhD. I could analyze texts, but to be able to do educational research took some time to manage as a researcher. (Jon, Norway)

Later career in teacher education

Professional development in research

About half of the teacher educators perceived research as part of their job remit. Others felt that, even though it was not officially part of their job remit, they were still expected to do research. The number of teacher educators who indicated they were actively engaged in research was even higher (about three quarters), with many attending conferences and publishing in peer refereed

journals in English (noting again that this is not necessarily a representative sample for each country). The majority shared positive attitudes towards research, noting that research is the hallmark of academics, supports teaching and helps teacher educators update their knowledge.

Teacher educators' research takes diverse forms. Few teacher educators belong to a stable research group that encourages collaborative self-studies. In Ireland, those who had originally been appointed in colleges of education (and not universities) reported the common practice of researching through action research or practitioner research. This type of research was also described by some of the teacher educators in the Netherlands. Practitioner research with students, as well as supervised self-studies, were also mentioned:

> Yes, we do some kind of research, also with students, halfway each period we study the teaching period together, we call that 'student as partner' and there we study together what this teaching period was like. (Mary, the Netherlands)

Most of the teacher educators, however, conduct research projects independently, in a multitude of disciplinary areas and using multiple methods. In some cases, research questions arise from situations encountered in schools or at the higher education institutes. Other teacher educators tended not to report research that was explicitly related to teacher education: *'Well I think that up till now my research does not focus very much on the things I do with my students'* (Anna, the Netherlands).

There appeared to be a difference across the countries with respect to prioritizing teaching or research professional development. In the Netherlands, professional development related to teaching was a priority with professional development related to research considered as a bonus:

> When I came here they said to me you can do research, we know that you can do that, so focus on becoming a teacher educator. And I totally agreed, because yes, that was completely new to me. And I knew, being a teacher educator is not something you just do. However, I immediately obtained a research grant for all my research time. I would have preferred to use that research time a bit to go to

schools, look at other colleagues, learn to become a teacher educator. (Anna, the Netherlands)

In the remaining three countries, there appeared to be a strong emphasis on professional development in research-related activities. A Norwegian teacher educator alluded to a generational shift in the provision of professional development in research becoming more prevalent than in the past:

There has been a change from 1997 until today. Nobody was interested in my professional development when I started in teacher education [in 1997] (…) When I completed my PhD in 2009 there was a great focus on research and as a result there was support related to professional development connected to research. (Liv, Norway)

Currently, Norway has a research school (NAFOL) that supports teacher educators who study for a PhD degree in teacher education. In Israel, the MOFET institute offers research grants, as well as diverse study and consultation options in research for teacher educators.

In Ireland, Israel and Norway, being involved in research and publishing in peer-reviewed journals is a strong factor in promotion and a pre-requisite for professional recognition:

I told [my college president] that, the bottom line, when you decide on academic promotion, you will take my CV and check how many papers I have, and how many are in English, and that blocked my promotion to senior lecturer this year. (Keren, Israel)

In contrast to institutes' involvement in increasing teacher educators' research productivity, it was apparent that there was minimal micro managing from institute authorities on what was being produced in the name of research outputs:

It [research] is determined by ourselves, really. It's just work that's going on (…) It's quite a flexible environment to work in. You're not discouraged. It's a flexible

environment. We seem to have a bit of space and room to do things if we feel like it, if we have ideas to go with them, and so it's good like that. (Tom, Ireland)

Teacher educators' research seems to be viewed as an individual endeavour and responsibility, as is application of research findings into teacher education practices: '*I rarely receive feedback that [my] research is applied into practice*' (Ben, Israel)

Although most research is undertaken individually, some of the experienced teacher educators shared that by helping less experienced researchers their own knowledge increases. Such help is offered in the form of reviewing other researchers' papers and research grants, as well as mentoring and advising beginning researchers:

Research really makes me grow. Each year I take one or two teacher educators and help them become independent. I benefit at least as much as they do. I learn more and think… It fascinates me to help others develop in these areas and to write. (Naomi, Israel)

Professional development in teaching

Teacher educators contribute to teaching across multiple areas including subject pedagogy, general pedagogy, disciplinary content, education theory, research and supervision of school placement. In some instances, while they welcomed involvement in numerous areas, they were conscious of compromising their area of expertise as a teacher educator:

I do lead so many different modules (…). That's one of the actual lovely things about it, this huge variety. Sometimes the variety can lead to a little bit of an identity crisis in terms of your core area and I suppose the area you see yourself versus where your time is allocated. (Jean, Ireland)

Teacher educators wished to develop their teaching and view it as a form of professional development: '*I think we should have high ambitions for teaching in teacher education*' (Jon, Norway). Another teacher educator added: '*Developing my teaching in higher education is also something I have done on my own initiative. I have developed more dialogue based teaching and*

allowed the students to be more active' (Liv, Norway). Reading, going to conferences and doing research are acknowledged as valuable resources for professional development in teaching:

> Research interests would be a huge one [influence] in terms of the way I teach and the way I want to teach. I want to ensure that my teaching is both research informed and evidence based. In order to do that, I need to do whatever I can to try and keep abreast of any recent developments (…) I suppose I use evidence and research hugely to inform my practice. I also obviously use research to actually assess my own practice in terms of how I as a teacher [educator] perform, so research is very much built into my teaching. (Jean, Ireland)

Teacher educators also wanted to collaborate with colleagues and learn more about teaching and mentoring. Formal opportunities to meet with colleagues and share experiences was a popular request, simply shared as having *'space for us to sit down and engage with our work as teacher educators'* (Fiona, Ireland) and:

> Yes, talking with others actually, just talking about how you look at it, how would you assess this? We had another meeting this morning about doing research. That was about assessing a (student teachers') research plan. We just got an anonymous piece and you look at that as preparation and then talk about it in a group of three and then plenary - I just really like that. (Richard, the Netherlands)

Teacher educators also take part in courses and workshops, for example on implementing Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in teaching. Two countries (the Netherlands and Israel) have specific programmes for teacher educators' professional development, but neither is compulsory. In the Netherlands, some of the teacher educators had followed the registration process of the Dutch Teacher Educator's Association (Velon). As part of this peer-coached process, teacher educators engage in self-assessment and professional development activities using the association's standards as a frame of reference that defines high professional quality. Three of the participants followed the registration process. Another professional development programme by the Netherlands Free University targets 'second order teaching'. In

this programme, teacher educators are encouraged to articulate their teaching deliberations explicitly, thus reducing the apparent theory-practice gap, and modelling good practice to student teachers as they teach. Sometimes this programme is combined with the registration process previously described. At least two teacher educators participated in the Velon professional development programme. In Israel, The MOFET Institute is an inter-collegiate institution responsible for providing and supporting teacher educators' professional development. Two teacher educators took part in MOFET's bi-annual study programmes in the beginning of their career. One of them had even been granted reduced teaching hours by her institute to encourage her participation. It is noteworthy, however, that both of them chose to undertake the academic leadership programme designed for more experienced teacher educators in favour of the teaching and mentoring programme. This choice resonates with feelings expressed by teacher educators across all four countries that teaching is not sufficiently acknowledge and appreciated as an academic endeavour. It was evident that, while effective teacher educators' teaching may receive some attention, especially from students, exemplary teaching carries no real weight: '*What counts is to publish articles. Those who write good textbooks get no points even if it takes a lot of time*' (Ole, Norway):

> There is a contradictory message. On the one hand, go ahead, develop in your teaching. We [i.e. college administration] provide you with a multitude of preparations, specializations and help (…) and prizes for excellent lecturers, vey respected ceremonies and publicity (…) But in the end, if you are a bad lecturer… that will not compromise your academic profile, [but if] one paper is missing (…) that is decisive. (Keren, Israel)

At the institute level, professional development in teaching may take the form of sustainable curriculum development. A teacher educator from Norway introduced changes that enabled peer collaboration to improve teaching, '*and since I got the responsibility for the Master's programme, we've been arranging courses and discussion groups among all the supervisors, where we discuss our supervising, dilemmas, cases (…) things that are important' (*Anna, Norway). Another teacher educator took part in developing a new academic programme:

Over these years I saw the need for a Master's degree in the field [of special education] for teachers who wanted to study in a teacher education college and not at a university, and I devised it [a Master's degree programme] with some of the staff. (Sara, Israel)

There are several factors that impede professional development in teaching. On a personal level, one teacher educator was apprehensive that spending time at a higher education institute removed them from the reality of teaching in school:

But what I miss is the possibility to go back to school for some time. Some weeks, or maybe some months, or maybe for a year! To practice as a teacher, to get in touch with the profession again, because now it's been a long time since I worked as a teacher. (Anna, Norway)

Another teacher educator, when providing professional learning to experienced teachers, felt frustrated by experienced teachers' lack of motivation, which she believed resulted from compulsory participation in professional learning activities delivered by external experts:

In school, we always said about lecturers "What can I learn from her?" Later, I understood how ignorant it was (…) I stopped doing in-service professional development. I'm happy to teach them [in-service teachers] if they come for their Master's degree on their own initiative and wish to develop. If they feel that compulsory studies are enforced upon them again, they come bored. I felt I was working too hard yet failed to connect with them… (Naomi, Israel)

At the institute level, curricular changes require collaboration. One Israeli teacher educator complained that her curriculum reform initiative was blocked by lack of collaboration between colleagues and by the college administration. On a more general level, individual research activity is not accumulated and does not result in improved teacher education practices:

I can see the value of more research-based knowledge. Knowledge becomes more nuanced and understanding heightened. However, I am not sure that teacher education has benefitted from it. (Liv, Norway)

One Irish teacher educator suggested that teacher education as a discipline appears to be 'sidelined' in favor of other university subject areas, with a hint that teacher educators are somewhat to blame in not coming together to advocate for the subject at university level or nationally.

Discussion

Looking into teacher educators' professional trajectories, our study across four countries revealed common themes relating to three main stages: recruiting, induction and further professional development in later career. Serendipity often has a significant role in teacher educators' recruitment. Lack of selection criteria for teacher educators (other than PhD) may attract teacher educators for pragmatic reasons in addition to those who are committed to educating teachers, and has been criticized as a practice that negatively affects teacher educators' professionalism (Cochran-Smith et al., 2020). In the current study, schools and universities were the two main recruitment sources for teacher educators, thus supporting findings from a previous study (Ping, Schellings and Beijaard, 2018). Appreciating that these two sources do not provide teacher educators with all the knowledge and skills they require, it was suggested in the literature to provide beginning teacher educators with pre-service preparation and induction (Murray and Male, 2005; Goodwin et al., 2014; Kosnik, Beck and Goodwin, 2015). Furthermore, instead of expecting each teacher educator to be competent to perform the numerous roles expected of teacher educators, teacher-educating institutes could form heterogeneous teams that work collaboratively, and build upon each other's fields of expertise (Ulvik and Smith, 2019; Meeus et al., 2018; Smith and Flores, 2019). The current study found that, on being recruited, some support (mainly informal mentoring) was offered in all countries to some of the beginning teacher educators. However, teacher-educating institutes were not involved in consolidating their staff into support teams. None of the teacher educators received formal induction, and there was no evidence of institutes' attempts to adapt the help they

provided to beginning teacher educators' diverse backgrounds and learning needs. The result in many cases is that teacher-educating programs are fragmented: each teacher educator works in isolation instead of offering coherent and cohesive educational experience to student teachers (Flores, 2016; O'Connell Rust, 2019).

Teacher educators' professional development activities involved two main areas, teaching and research. Professional development in teaching is described as an individual endeavour by some teacher educators and as a collaborative effort with colleagues by others. None of the teacher educators noted that professional development in teaching is highly valued by their institute. As Avidov-Ungar and Forkosh-Baruch (2018) show, institute support is vital for professional development and innovation in teacher education. The need for active institute support may explain why teacher educators do not take advantage of available learning opportunities that could have helped improve their teaching. Such opportunities include Velon teacher educators' registration process in the Netherlands and MOFET's bi-annual study programme in Israel. Cochran-Smith and her colleagues (2020) noted that the responsibility for teacher educators' professional development is divided between higher education institutes that support their academic staff and other stakeholders that provide professional development to schoolteachers. Our study shows that such a division characterizes the professional development of higher education based teacher educators too. Some stakeholders, such as MOFET and teacher educators associations, try to support teacher educators' professional development in teaching, whereas higher education institutes have other priorities. Collaboration between teacher educators, higher education institutes, schools and other stakeholders are vital for high quality teacher education (Snoek et al., 2011). Although this idea is gaining recognition in initial teacher education, our study shows that it is not widely accepted in relation to teacher educators' professional development. Teacher educators agree that teaching and research are complementary, and that their teaching is informed by their own, as well as others', research. Institutes support research in diverse ways such as learning opportunities, secured time for research, and academic promotion. In three of the four countries (Ireland, Israel and Norway), teacher-educating institutes appear to value research to a larger extent than teaching, whereas a more balanced support is provided in the Netherlands. Nonetheless, in all four countries,

teacher educators' descriptions imply that they view their institutes' attitudes toward their research as individualistic and pragmatic. Teacher educators' research contributes to their institute's reputation, and teacher educator researchers are individually rewarded primarily through academic promotion. In our study, some teacher educators reported that the need to produce research comes at the expense of teaching. Cochran-Smith and her colleagues (2020) are worried that some teacher educators conduct self-studies and other forms of practitioners' research for the "wrong reasons". Institutes' pressure to publish, combined with lack of funds, time and collaboration among colleagues are the motivating power behind teacher educators conducting small-scale research projects. Recruiting teacher educators who join teacher education out of pragmatic motivation may exacerbate this phenomenon.

Knowing that the way they teach is the message to beginning teachers (Russel, 2002), teacher educators stress the need to critically examine their own practice through research (cf. Cochran-Smith, 2005; Murray and Male 2005; Vanassche and Kelchtermans, 2016). Practice- oriented research is necessary to improve current practices in schools and in teacher education programmes (Flores, 2016; O'Connell Rust, 2019). However, since there is no pressure to undertake pedagogy- or didactics-oriented research in many institutes, teacher educators' research tends to cover a diversity of areas and topics. This somewhat limits teacher-educating institutes' contribution to the knowledge base in teacher education.

Teacher-educating institutes can bridge the gap between teaching and research by prioritizing pedagogy- or didactics-oriented research, forming research teams and implementing research findings. Such actions would amplify the impact of studies conducted by teacher educators, help improve current practices and expand the knowledge base in teacher education (Guberman and Mcdossi, 2019). However, we found no evidence that higher education institutes strive to align their policies concerning teacher education with research findings. This may suggest that teacher-educating institutes are not fully aware of such findings or supportive of research-informed practice. The teacher education profession needs to remain cognizant of the possibility that those determining policies may not believe teacher educators' research to be significantly rigorous and

trustworthy to justify introducing substantive changes to practice (Furlong and O'Brien, 2019; Murray, 2014; White, 2019a).

In all four countries, participants' descriptions imply that they view their institutes' attitudes toward their research as individualistic and pragmatic. Teacher educators of the current study are responsive to their institute's perceived expectations. Similar to other findings (cf. Willemse, Boei and Pillen, 2016), some of them develop their teaching and research with colleagues, and more of them wish to do so (MacPhail, Ulvik, Guberman, Czerniawski, Oolbekkink-Marchand and Bain, 2019), in alignment with 'social coherent idealism'. However, such collaborations are not characteristic of the sample.

A limitation of the study is the small, self-selected sample from each country. Nonetheless, we believe that our findings reveal common themes that are suggestive of general trends. Future research will focus in more detail on the interplay between global trends, national and local policies in shaping teacher educators' professionalism, and reveal ways in which teacher educators can participate in determining these policies.

Conclusions

Across four countries, this study found that teacher educators' recruitment is incidental, with no pre-planned policy to form well-balanced teams that provide coherent teacher education programmes. Although some support is provided to beginning teacher educators, there are no formal induction arrangements, resulting in 'on-the-job' learning being crucial.

Teacher educators view professional learning in teaching and research as complementary activities that potentially support and develop each other. However, in Ireland, Israel and Norway, teacher-educating institutes appear to value research more than teaching, whereas in the Netherlands, there appears to be a more balanced value across research and teaching. In all four countries, practice-oriented research is not prioritized. Consequently, teacher educators' involvement in professional learning activities in teaching is limited, both at the institutional and national levels.

Teacher educating institutes' policies appear to align with individualistic pragmatism. This does not necessarily align with teacher educators' preference to develop teaching and research in tandem with each other, in communities of research with their colleagues, and in collaboration with decision-makers. Each of these preferences aligns with social coherent idealism. This paper calls teacher-educating institutes to support teacher educators' professional communities and collaborate in formulating teacher education policies that support the roles and professional development of teacher educators in view of their work contexts.

References

Avidov-Ungar, O., and A. Forkosh-Baruch. 2018. "Professional identity of teacher educators in the digital era in light of demands of pedagogical innovation." *Teaching and Teacher Education* 73: 183-191.

Berry, A. 2007. "Reconceptualizing teacher educator knowledge as tensions: exploring the tension between valuing and reconstructing experience." *Studying Teacher Education* 3(2): 117-134.

Blömeke, S. and L. Paine. 2008. "Getting the fish out of the water: Considering benefits and problems of doing research on teacher education at an international level." *Teaching and Teacher Education 24*: 2027-2037.

Cochran-Smith, M. 2005. "Teacher educators as researchers: multiple perspective." *Teaching and Teacher Education* 21 (2): 219-225.

Cochran-Smith, M., L. Grudnoff, L. Orland-Barak and K. Smith. 2020. "Educating teacher educators: international perspectives." *The New Educator 16*(1): 5-24.

Craig, C. J. 2015. "Structure of teacher education". In *International handbook of teacher education*, edited by J. Loughran and M. L. Hamilton, Vol. 1, 69 – 135. Singapore: Springer.

European Commission. 2013. *Supporting teacher educators for better learning outcomes*. Brussels: European Commission.

Czerniawski, G., A. Guberman, and A. MacPhail. 2017. "The professional developmental needs of higher education based teacher educators: an international comparative needs analysis." *European Journal of Teacher Education* 40(1): 127-140.

Flores, M. A. 2016. "Teacher education curriculum." In *International handbook of teacher education*, edited by J. Loughran and M. L. Hamilton, 187-230. Singapore: Springer.

Furlong, C., and M. O'Brien. 2019. "An exploration of teacher educator identities within an Irish context of reform." In *International research, policy and practice in teacher education: Insider perspectives*, edited by J. Murray, A., Swennen and C. Kosnik, 47-61. Cham, Switzerland: Springer.

Goodwin, L., L. Smith, M. Souto-Manning, R. Cheruvu, M. Y. Tan, R. Reed and L. Taveras (2014). "What Should Teacher Educators Know and Be Able To Do? Perspectives from Practicing Teacher Educators." *Journal of Teacher Education* 65(4): 284 – 302.

Griffiths, V., S. Thompson, and L. Hryniewicz. 2014. "Landmarks in the professional and academic development of mid-career teacher educators." *European Journal of Teacher Education* 37(1): 74-90.

Guberman, A., and O. Mcdossi. 2019. "Israeli teacher educators' perceptions of their professional development paths in teaching, research and institutional leadership". *European Journal of Teacher Education* 42(4): 507-522.

Guest, G., K.M. Macqueen, and E. E. Namey. 2012. *Applied thematic analysis*. Los Angeles: Sage.

Hatch, J. A. 2002. *Doing qualitative research in education settings*. NY: State University of New York.

Kosnik, C., C. Beck, and L. A. Goodwin. 2015. "Reform Efforts in Teacher Education." In *International handbook of teacher education*, edited by J. Loughran and M. L. Hamilton, Vol. 1, 267 – 308. Singapore: Springer.

Lunenberg, M., J. Dengerink, and F. Korthagen. 2014. *The Professional Teacher Educator: Roles, Behaviour, and Professional Development of Teacher Educators*. Rotterdam: Sense.

Meeus, W., W. Cools, and I. Placklé. 2018. "Teacher educators developing professional roles: frictions between current and optimal practices." *European Journal of Teacher Education* 41 (1): 15-31.

Murray, J. 2014. "Teacher educators' constructions of professionalism: a case study." *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education* 42(1): 7-21.

Murray, J., and T. Male. 2005. "Becoming a teacher educator: evidence from the field." *Teaching and Teacher Education* 21 (2): 125-142.

O'Connell Rust, F. 2019. "Redesign in teacher education: the roles of teacher educators." *European Journal of Teacher Education*, *42*(4): 523-533.

Penlington, C. 2008. "Dialog as a catalyst for teacher change: A conceptual analysis." *Teaching and Teacher Education 24*(5): 1304-1316.

Ping, C., G. Schellings, and D. Beijaard. 2018. "Teacher educators' professional learning: A literature review." *Teaching and Teacher Education* 75: 93-104.Robinson, W. 2016. "Teacher education: a historical overview." In *The Sage handbook of research on teacher education*, edited by J. Husu and D. J. Clandinin, Vol. 1, 49 – 67. Thousand Oaks, Cal.: Sage.

Robinson, M., and W. McMillan. 2006. "Who teaches the teachers? Identity, discourse and policy in teacher education." *Teaching and Teacher education,* 22(3): 327-336.

Russell, T. 2002. "Teaching teachers: how I teach IS the message." In *Canadian perspectives on the self-study of teacher education*, edited by J. Kitchen and T. Russell, vol. 2, 9-21. Ottawa, Canada: Canadian Association for Teacher Education (CATE).

Sikes, P. 2006. "Working in a 'new' university: in the shadow of the research assessment exercise?" *Studies in Higher Education* 31(5): 555–568.

Smith, K. and M. A. Flores. 2019. "The Janus faced teacher educator." *European Journal of Teacher Education 42*(4): 433-446.

Snoek, M., G. Baldwin, P. Cautreels, T. Enemaerke, V. Halstead, G. Hilton, T. Klemp, L. Leriche, G. R. Linde, E. Nilsen, and J.R. Rehn. 2003. "Scenarios for the future of teacher education in Europe." *European Journal of Teacher Education* 26(1): 21-36.

Snoek, M., A. Swennen, and M. van der Klink. 2011. "The quality of teacher educators in the European policy debate: actions and measures to improve the professionalism of teacher educators*." Professional Development in Education* 37(5): 651-664.

Swennen, A., and M. Volman. 2019. "The development of the identity of teacher educators in the changing context of teacher education in the Netherlands." In *International research, policy and practice in teacher education: Insider perspectives*, edited by J. Murray, A., Swennen and C. Kosnik, 107-121. Cham, Switzerland: Springer.

Ulvik, M., and K. Smith. 2019. "Preparing for Professionalism in Teaching – A Norwegian Perspective." In J. Murray, A. Swennen, and C. Kosnik, edited by. International Research, Policy and Practice in Teacher Education: Insider Perspective. Cham, Switzerland: Springer; p. 123–137.

Vanassche, E., and G. Kelchtermans. 2016. "Facilitating self-study of teacher education practices: toward a pedagogy of teacher educator professional development." *Professional Development in Education* 42(1): 100-122.

Vanassche, E., F. Rust, P. F., Conway, K. Smith, H., Tack, and R. Vanderlinde, R. 2015. "InFo-TED: Bringing policy, research, and practice together around teacher educator development." In *International Teacher Education: Promising Pedagogies*, edited by S. Pinnegar (Series Ed.), J. C. Craig, and L. Orland-Barak (Vol. Eds.), Vol. 22C, 299-316. Brinkley, UK: Emerald.

Van der Klink, M., Q. Kools, G., Avissar, S., White, and T. Sakata. 2017. "Professional development of teacher educators: What do they do? Findings from an explorative international study." *Professional Development in Education* 43(2): 163-178.

Wenger, E. 1998. *Communities of practice: Learning, meaning and identity.* New York: Cambridge University Press.

White, S. 2019a. "An insider look at the implications of 'partnership' policy for teacher educators' professional development in Australia." In *International research, policy and practice in teacher education: Insider perspectives*, edited by J. Murray, A., Swennen and C. Kosnik, C., 31-45. Cham, Switzerland: Springer.

White, S. 2019b. "Teacher educators for new times? Redefining an important occupational group," *Journal of Education for Teaching 45*(2): 200-213.

Willemse, T. M., F. Boei, and M. Pillen. 2016. "Fostering teacher educators' professional development on practice-based research through communities of inquiry." *Vocations and Learning* 9(1): 85–110.