

# Some Aspects of the Professional Development of Five Teacher Educators

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## Introduction

This study focuses on the professional development of five teacher educators who work at different teacher education institutes for primary education. The first reason to undertake this study lies in the life history of the first author, who's father has been teaching Dutch at a teacher education institute for primary education for the greater part of his working life. The second reason is that in comparison to the research about teachers very little research has been done about teacher educators. The third reason is the growing attention for the quality of teacher educators. In the United States the Association of Teacher Education (ATE) developed a standard for 'master teacher educators' and in the Netherlands the Association of Teacher Educators in the Netherlands (VELON) developed a standard for average teacher educators. The development of standards for teacher educators gave an impulse to reflect on the position and roles of teacher educators compared to teachers.

There have been published quite some important studies about teachers. Themes like 'becoming a teacher', 'the lives of teachers' and 'the identity of teachers' have been written about extensively (see for example: Ball & Goodson, 1985; Beijsaard, 1995; Van der Berg & Vandenberghe 1995; Day, Fernandez, Hauge & Moller, 2000; Fuller & Bown, 1975; Goodson & Hargreaves, 1996; Kelchtermans, 1994; Lortie, 1975). There is however not much literature about teacher educators. The reason for this may be that teacher educators have long been considered 'just teachers' and only for the last twenty years or so they are actual called teacher educators (Swennen & Beishuizen, 2005). Even nowadays teacher educators are often called and call themselves 'teacher'.

This paper is about primary school teachers who became teacher educators in a teacher education institute for primary education. This means that we did not include teacher educators with a master's degree or teacher educators who did not work as teachers.

The main question of the overall study is: How do teachers become teacher educators? We are interested in the individual development of teacher educators, as well as in the development of teacher educators as a professional group.

We focus on primary teachers who became teacher educators in institutes for primary teaching. Each of the teacher educators is from a different generation; they are born between 1920-1930, 1930-1940, 1940-1950, 1950-1960 en 1960-1970.

Because the study is partly historical it is necessary to introduce some of the words that were and are used for teacher education institutes for primary education during the 20<sup>th</sup> century (see figure 1).

	Dutch	English translation	Abbreviation Usual name
Until 1968	Kweekschool	Colleges of Education	Kweekschool
1968-1984	Pedagogische Academie	Pedagogical Academy	PA
1984-now	Pedagogische Academie voor Basisonderwijs	Pedagogical Academy for Primary Education	PABO

Figure 1: Names for teacher education institutes for primary education in Dutch history

In The Netherlands, like in many other countries in the western world, 'normal schools' were founded in the beginning of the 19th century to educate student teachers. During the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century the normal schools were slowly but surely replaced by what in this paper we call 'Colleges of Education'. In Dutch they are called 'Kweekschool'. They existed in the Netherlands until 1968. To raise the status and the quality of the Colleges of Education they were reorganised in 1968 and renamed 'Pedagogical Academy', in Dutch: 'Pedagogische Academie', normally referred to as PA.

In 1984 both primary education and the Pedagogical Academy were reorganised and the name of the new teacher

education institute now officially became 'Pedagogical Academy for Primary Education', in Dutch: 'Pedagogische Academie voor Basisonderwijs' and the abbreviation PABO became, and still is, the common name.

## Theoretical background

In this paragraph we first discuss the concept 'teacher educator'. What is the definition of 'teacher educator'? We then describe some of the characteristics of the transition teachers undergo when they become teacher educators. In the last part we describe what it means to be a teacher of teachers.

### Teacher educators

Ducharme acknowledges that it is not easy to give a definition of 'teacher educator': "Given the structure of higher education, it is difficult to identify who the teacher educators are. The problems of identification and definition are compounded by the number and variety of individuals involved in teacher education and the reluctance of some education faculty to identify themselves as teacher educators even though they are much involved in teacher education" (Ducharme 1993, 2). In the Dutch context it is likewise difficult to describe 'teacher educator'. In The Netherlands many persons are involved in teacher education and teacher educators have many different roles and tasks: teaching a subject, teaching the pedagogy of a subject, supervising teacher practice or supervising students in the institute. These roles and tasks are sometimes combined in one person, but sometimes one person has only one specific task. Some teacher educators work in a teacher education institute and some work in a school. Are they all teacher educators? For this study the definition of Koster (2003, 7) is useful: "A teacher educator is someone who teaches at a teacher education institute or supervises student teachers in a school and contributes substantially to the development of student teachers to become competent teachers."

### The transition from teacher to teacher educator

Many teacher educators have been teachers. Some of them already had a bond with the teacher education institute when they were a teacher, for example because they supervised student teachers in their former school or because as a teacher they were involved in in-service training together with a teacher educator from the institute. If teachers start working at a teacher education institute they have to make the transition from teacher to teacher educator. This means that teacher educators do not only need knowledge of and experience with teaching their subject in a school, but that they also need to have knowledge of and experience in educating teachers. Murray (2005) speaks about 'first order teaching' and 'second order teaching.' Teachers who teach their subject to pupils and students, on any level, are concerned with 'first order teaching.' According to Murray 'second order teaching' is: "Teacher educators induct their students into the practices and discourses of the school and of teacher education (2005, 5)." It is also important that beginning teacher educators are introduced to the practices and discourses of teacher education.

### Teachers of teachers

More and more teacher educators realise that an important characteristic of their work is that they are teachers of teachers. The idea that teacher educators are the teachers of teachers (and not merely the teachers of a subject) has consequences for the contents and the pedagogy of teacher education. Teachers are always a model for their pupils and students: in the way they treat their pupils, in the way they solve for

instance mathematical problems. But teacher educators are a model for the student teachers in the way they teach. Russell (1997), teacher educator and researcher in Canada says it very clearly: "How I teach is the message."

Many teacher educators will also 'preach' about their views on teaching, but the question is whether they are able to practice what they preach. If teacher educators do not only preach to their students, but also practice what they preach we speak about congruent teaching. But congruent teaching is more than modelling: it also means that the teacher educator is able to explain his or her own teaching and to legitimise it. Being congruent in teaching and supervision is both a characteristic and a challenge for teacher educators (Swennen, Lunenberg and Korthagen 2004).

## Research method

### Life history research

This qualitative study can best be characterised as 'life history research.' Goodson and Sikes (2001) answer to the question "When is life history useful?": "If the researcher wants to know 'why', 'how', 'what's it like' and 'what does it mean to you', then they may be well advised to include life history methods into their modes of inquiry. If they want to know 'who', 'where', 'how many' and 'what kind', then it should probably be unnecessary and uneconomical in terms of time and resources to embark on detailed interviewing, resulting in vast quantitative data which have to be transcribed and analysed (Goodson and Sikes 2001, 22). The aim of this study is also to acquire an in-depth knowledge of the professional development of teachers who became teacher educators.

It is obvious, that the stories of the teacher educators are reconstructions of the reality as they experienced it (Goodson and Sikes 2001, Kelchtermans 2001). These life histories are forms of narratives: "Experiences are transformed into stories, anecdotes, images, metaphors. The stories are told, reflected upon, retold and adjusted. They are no neatly tight, precisely confined or definite described insights or meanings. On the contrary, the stories are personal interpretations that can be worked on again and again (balanced, amplified, revised, ...). On top of that they are embedded in the personal life history, the individual story of the career (Kelchtermans 2001, 89).

### Participants

The study focuses on five teacher educators who studied at a teacher education institute for primary education, have been teachers in primary education and became teacher educators at a teacher education institute for primary education.

The choice of the participants is very important in 'life history' research because in most cases the number of participants is not very high. The participants have to be able to talk about their life for quite a long time and they have to possess the right knowledge and experience to be able to produce relevant data. The participants were chosen because they possess these qualities. There were four other selection criteria: age (five generations), man and woman, regions, religion (see figure 2).

	Age	(wo)man	Region	Religion of the institute	Subject
Peter	70 - 80	man	Eindhoven	Catholic	English/Dutch
Thom	60 - 70	man	Helmond	Catholic	Pedagogy
Bjorn	50 - 60	man	Zwolle	Protestant	History
Hilde	40 - 50	woman	Rotterdam	Non-religious	Dutch
Ilisa	30 - 40	woman	Arnhem	Non-religious	Music

Figure 2: Characteristics of the participants

## Interviews

The most usual technique to collect data in life history research is the interview. Goodson en Sikes (2001, 28) have a preference for "relatively unstructured, informal, conversation-type encounters."

We developed a list of open-ended questions based on three general phases in the development of the teacher educators, that functioned as a checklist.

- A. The choice for the teaching profession, influence of school and social environment/background of the teacher educator
  - Experiences in the social environment of the teacher educator that played a role in the choice to become a teacher: family, playing school etc.
  - Experience at the primary school or secondary school that played a role in the choice to become a teacher: teachers, subjects, etc.
- B. The choice to become a teacher educator
  - Events and developments during the period that the teacher educator was a teacher that influenced the choice to become a teacher educator.
  - Experiences in the social environment of the teacher educator that played a role in the choice to become a teacher educator: family, partner, head of the school, etc.
  - Studies, courses etc., their contents and the motivation to do them.
  - Motives to apply for a job as teacher educator.
- C. Experiences and professional development during the time as teacher educator.
  - Contents of the work: positive and negative aspects.
  - Developments and changes in teacher education and in the work of the teacher educator and the way the teacher educator experienced this.
  - Schooling and professional development of the teacher educator.

This list and the research plan were sent to the participants before the interview. The participants had the opportunity to tell their own story. The questions of the interviews are based on the interview questions of Lortie (1975) and Ducharme (1993). All interviews are recorded on tape and transcribed. The transcriptions are the basis for analysis.

## Analyses

Everyone who is involved in qualitative research knows that one of the difficulties is to analyse the huge amount of data. The transcription of the interview of Thom, for example, is as large as 18384 words. (In comparison: this paper is about 4000 words). To reduce the amount of words and to be able to understand the teacher educators we developed the following procedure as a start of the analysis. Each transcript is divided into segments. A segment is a meaningful unit. All useless information (like remarks that have nothing to do with the interview (do you want more coffee?) or remarks meant to encourage the teacher educator (yes, no, repeating what the participant said, etc.) were removed from the text. After this procedure the interview of Thom was divided into 198 segments. On the basis of these segments we made a 'script' of each of the teacher educators. A script is the comprised story of a teacher educator, written as a narrative.

## Results

The analysis of the interviews is still on its way and will continue for a while. We present here some results and even these results are still subject to reflection. We will give some results about the courses the five teacher educators undertook to become a teacher educator, the amount of training and courses they took while working as a teacher educator and the description they gave of themselves: teacher, teacher educator etc. (see figure 3).

### Studying to become a teacher education

While working as a teacher all five teachers studied for a diploma for secondary education. These diplomas were called in Dutch: Akte Middelbaar Onderwijs (commonly called MO). There was a course for lower secondary education (MO-A) that was compulsory for the second course for higher secondary education (MO-B). The MO-courses were open to everyone, but most students were primary school teachers who wanted to get a degree to teach in secondary education. The courses took many years and the students went to school in the evenings and on Saturday and worked very hard for their diploma (Vos, 2004).

When we asked Peter whether his MO-A course was of any use to him when he started at the 'Kweekschool', he answered:

*Absolutely, MO-A was in that respect very practical.*

*Did you learn anything about how you could teach your students?*

*Never, not one word was said about that subject.*

The MO-courses, both MO-A and MO-B (teacher education institutes for secondary education), but also the teacher education institutes for primary education were very subject centred. The main view on teachers was that a good teacher was someone who had a thorough knowledge of his or her subject.

Bjorn and Hilde also told us that little time and effort was spent on courses related to teaching. Thom reports that the MO-A (for lower secondary education) had no practical use for him, but that the MO-B study, in pedagogy, had more practical value. Ilsa said that her study of school music (she studied to be a music teacher, not a musician, although she is now part time teacher educator and part time musician and singer) prepared her well to be a teacher, both in primary and secondary education.

The five teacher educators did not receive a lot of in-service training while working as a primary teacher. This was more so when Peter worked as a primary teacher than when Ilsa and Hilde, the youngest two, were primary teachers. Peter, Thom and Bjorn remember that there had been courses of some kind, and that it was good to be away from school and meet other teachers, but sometimes they had forgotten what the courses were about:

*"Did you follow courses or something like that during the short time that you worked as a primary teacher?"*

*No, but I went to two times to a kind of day of the Inspectorate and I liked that; you were away from school. But I have no idea what they were about and I had no idea at that time either, really. I was not very inspired" (Bjorn).*

While working as a primary teacher the teacher educators developed themselves like many of their colleagues did: by studying for their MO-diploma. It was a route into secondary education, but also an accepted study to start working at a teacher education college (both primary and secondary).

	To become a teacher educator	Professional development as a teacher educator.	Identity as teacher educator
Peter	MO-A English language MO-A Dutch language	Hardly any schooling. MO-B Dutch language.	Teacher (Leraar)
Thom	MO-A, MO-B pedagogy	A lot of schooling. Courses in innovation of both primary education and innovation of the Pabo. Supervision, curriculum development, assessment, etc.	'Pedagoog'
Bjorn	Full time MO-A MO-B history	Some schooling. Management course. Courses in innovation. Courses for history teachers.	I teach (doceer) history at the Pabo. (not: teacher educator)
Hilde	MO-A en MO-B Dutch language	A lot of schooling. Innovation Pabo. ICT. LOPON (Association for teacher educators in the Dutch language). Working in projects. Supervision. Curriculum development..	To others: teacher (docent) For myself: educator Pabo (opleidingsdocent Pabo)
Ilsa	Education in school music	A lot of schooling. Innovation Pabo. Courses based on Fröbel. VELON congress (Association of Dutch Teacher educators) Participation in research group (kenniskring).	Teacher, educator Pabo (opleidingsdocent Pabo)

Figure 3: Overview of the results

None of the teachers went on to study for a university degree. Such a degree was and is not necessary to teach in secondary education or to teach at a teacher education institute for primary and secondary teaching. Only Bjorn considered studying for a university degree, but he decided not to do so, because it would take quite some time and he wanted to start working.

**Professional development as a teacher educator**

In figure 3 we do not mention all the studies, courses, workshop, study days, etc., etc., of the five teacher educators. One thing is very clear though. The oldest participant, Peter, did not spend a lot of his time on professional development as a teacher educator. He started to teach in teacher education with two MO-A diploma's (English and Dutch language) and at that time, 1963, this was the minimum requirement to teach at a teacher education institute for primary education. Peter studied for his MO-B while working as a teacher educator and he did this because he liked to study and because "The other Dutch language teachers also had their MO-B." Peter worked until 1984, the year the Colleges of Education became Pedagogical Academy. Thom on the contrary presented a long list with courses, workshops, study days, etcetera. Thom worked at one of the best and most innovative PA's and he was very active to renew and improve his teacher education institute. Bjorn also developed himself. Among other things he followed courses in management, because he had been a head teacher for quite some time. Bjorn, who is still working as a teacher educator, also attends the study days of the association of history teachers. He is also present at the study days of the Pabo and his 'hogeschool' (professional university) about themes like competence based teaching and student centred teaching. Hilde and Ilsa are both busy with their professional development and it is typical for both of them that they develop themselves as teacher educators. Hilde visits the meetings of the Association of teacher educators of the Dutch language and Ilsa visits the conference of the Dutch Association of Teacher Educators.

**Identity of teacher educators**

We asked the teacher educators how they describe themselves professionally in order to obtain information about their identity as teacher educator. Again the reader needs some information about words that are used in the Dutch languages to identify different kinds of teachers for different educational levels (see figure 4). This overview is a simplification. The reality is more complex and the words are often used indifferently. In primary and secondary teaching the word 'leraar' is used, and students and teachers in higher education will use this word also. The word 'docent' is used both in (higher) secondary education and in higher education. 'Opleidingsdocent' is mostly heard in teacher education for primary teaching and may also indicate that a teacher is working in higher education. It is not used in secondary teacher education. 'Opleidingsdocent' is less specific than 'lerarenopleider'. 'Lerarenopleider' has the same meaning as teacher educator and therefore has the same definition that we used earlier in this paper.

In a conversation a teacher educator in primary education could call him- or herself 'leraar', 'docent'. Lately the words 'lerarenopleider' and 'opleidingsdocent' have come in use to indicate that a teacher educator does not only teach his or her subject but has a wide range of educational tasks and roles.

Peter is very clear in his answer: he always called himself 'leraar' and he also thought about himself as 'leraar. He and his colleagues did not use words like 'opleidingsdocent' or 'lerarenopleider'. Thom calls himself 'pedagogue'. In Dutch it is normal to call someone who studied pedagogy 'pedagogue' (pedagoog). He resents the word 'educationalist' (onderwijskundige) that was more in fashion for someone who studied 'pedagogy' when he worked as a teacher educator. Bjorn is more hesitant to answer the question. Ultimately he says that he would say that he teaches history at the Pabo. (He uses the Dutch word 'doceren', which is commonly used for teaching in higher education). Hilde calls herself 'opleidingsdocent', but if someone would ask her at a party what she does for a living, she would say: I work as 'docent' at the Pabo and I teach Dutch language. Ilsa makes it even more complicated. She says: You could also say I feel myself 'leraar', I feel myself 'docent', I feel myself musician'. She adds that 'opleidingsdocent' is one of her professions. None of the five teacher educators uses the Dutch general word for teacher educator: lerarenopleider.

	Onderwijzer	Leraar	Docent	Opleidingsdocent	Lerarenopleider
	Teacher (primary education)	Teacher (general)	Teacher (secondary and higher education)	Educator (higher education)	Teacher educator
until 1954	X	X			
1954-1984		X	X		
1984-now		X	X	X	X

Figure 4: Names used for teacher educators in primary education

**Conclusion**

**What did we learn so far?**

Four teacher educators that we interviewed all studied for their MO-A or MO-B diploma. Ilsa studied at the College of Music to become a teacher; this study has the same status. These teacher educators all socialised in a traditional way for primary teachers who wanted to work in secondary education. Their studies focussed on the contents of their subject, hardly on the pedagogy of teaching and certainly not on the pedagogy of teacher education. In this respect there is no difference

between the generations.

When working as a teacher educator, Peter professionalised himself mainly by studying for his MO-B diploma. Bjorn took some courses and workshops, but remembers best the course about management. Thom did, and Hilde and Ilsa do, spend a lot of their time on professional development. Their development is aimed at learning the contents and pedagogy of teaching and, more and more, to improve themselves as teacher educators. In this respect there seems a development over time from little to much professional development and from professional development as a teacher to professional development as a teacher and teacher educator.

We see this same development in the development of the identity of the teacher educators. Although the answers to the question 'How do you call yourself professionally?' can only give limited information about to the identity of the teacher educators, their answers do indicate that there is a development from being a teacher to being both a teacher and a teacher educator, and sometimes even more than that, like being a musician. At this moment it seems that teacher educators have a complex identity. We hope to learn more about this complex identity during the research.

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