

Teacher Educators Working on Their Own Professional Development

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Introduction and research question

For our study about the professional development of teacher educators we used the context of the Dutch project "professional quality of teacher educators", where teacher educators participate in a standards-based procedure of (self)assessment and professional development (see appendix). Since 2001 more than 250 teacher educators participated or participate in this procedure. For this study we used the files of 25 teacher educators who participated in the cohorts 2001 and 2002 and completed the procedure.

We did ask ourselves three questions about the professional development of these teacher educators:

1. What goals did they formulate for their professional development?
2. What kind of professional development activities did they engage in?
3. What were the outcomes of their professional development, according to themselves?

To get an *answer* on these questions, we studied the documents and portfolios of 25 teacher educators who participated in the first two years of our project.

Findings

For answering the first research question, about the goals for professional development, we took the first version of the Dutch standard for teacher educators as a reference. After having analyzed the data we saw that:

1. Most participants have chosen several goals for their professional development, the vast majority of them between 1 and 5 goals, with an average of 3 goals.
2. Only two participants have only chosen goals related

to the foundation area of the standard, which is mainly focused on attitudes and beliefs.

Table 1 Number of Times Participants Chose for Attitudes and Beliefs and/or Knowledge and Skills as Professional Development Goals (n=24)

Combination of characteristics of competency	Number of participants
Only attitudes and beliefs (Areas F.1 till F.6))	2
Only knowledge and skills (Areas C.O till C.5)	13
Combination of attitudes (areas F.1 till F.6) and knowledge and skills (Areas C.O till C.5)	9

Most participants have chosen goals which are related to the competency areas of the standards. These areas mainly focus on knowledge and skills.

So, our main conclusion on the professional development goals of the participants is, that they are more directed towards the improvement of their knowledge and skills than towards the improvement of their attitudes and beliefs.

To analyze the data for answering the second research question, about *professional development activities*, we used models developed for the professional development of teachers and of nurses. Based on these models, we formulated six categories of professional development activities:

1. Learning by doing (non-intentional)
2. Applying or experimenting (intentional)
3. Reflecting on work experiences
4. Learning without interaction
5. Learning through interaction
6. Learning outside work

1. 1. As we take a look at the the participants have undertaken, we see here as well that participants mostly chose a *combination* of professional development

activities. About two thirds of them undertook two to four professional development activities.

2. The professional development activities which most frequently occur and which the participants mostly combine are “experimenting” and “learning from others through interaction.” Examples of experimenting are: contributing to an aspect of curriculum renewal; using new materials or techniques; or, paying more attention to a special group. Activities within the category learning from others through interaction are for instance: following a course; consulting a coach, supervisor or external expert; video-interaction supported by a colleague; or, spending more time with colleagues at lunch.
3. No participant mentioned professional development activities in the categories non-intentional learning by doing and learning outside work.

Table 2: Number of participants engaged in Professional Development Activities per Category

Professional Development Category	Number of Participants who have engaged in Professional Development Activities within this Category
1. Learning by Doing (Non-Intentional)	0
2. Experimenting (Intentional)	18
3. Reflecting on Work Experiences	7
4. Learning without Interaction	14
5. Learning through Interaction	18
6. Learning Outside of Work	0

When we analyzed the *outcomes* of the professional development,

1. we saw that nearly all the participants reported change in cognition on a personal level. Documented outcomes in this category are for example: “I have become more conscious of the moments I stimulate students” or “I know better how I can make use of ICT” or “I have become more aware of the needs of new teacher educators / colleagues during their induction period”
2. Quite a lot of participants reported also results in the second category, change in behavior on a personal level. Examples here are: “I communicate more open, and as a result I get better feedback”; “In my lessons I use a wider variety of pedagogical instruments”
3. We see that about one third of the teacher educators also report results which are related to the professional development of others, for instance colleagues, the institute as a whole, or even the wider professional community. Examples of these results are “I’ve developed a new course together with a colleague”; “I have got more tasks in the field of in-service teacher education and policy-development”; “I have written an article”
4. All participants who reported outcomes within the third category, also reported outcomes on the personal level.
5. Eleven participants reported outcomes which were not directly related to their professional development goals. Mostly these outcomes were related to the (self)assessment and professional development procedure as a whole. Examples here are “It was a tremendous good experience to work on my own development. And not only towards myself and my work, but also towards my personality and values. It broadened my scope”; “It strengthened my enthusiasm for teacher education as a profession”

Some participants formulated new professional development goals as an outcome, which may indicate that the Dutch project stimulates as well the continuous professional development of teacher educators.

Table 3 Number of Participants who Mentioned Outcomes from Professional Development Activities Related to Goals on a Personal or Collective Level.

Outcomes of Professional Development Activities	Number of Participants
1 On a Personal Level: Change in Cognition	24
2 On a Personal Level: Change in Behavior	17
3 On a Collective Level: Shared with Others	10

Issues for discussion

But, despite all these outcomes, which seem to be positive for the teacher education profession, we still have some issues, which we want to share with you.

1. The issue of development of knowledge and skills versus the development of attitudes and knowledge Internationally, more and more emphasis is being placed on the influence the teacher educator’s personality has on his or her students. From this perspective, it is remarkable that the majority of the 25 participants in this study elected to improve their knowledge and skills over their attitudes and beliefs. So our dilemma is: should teacher educators work more on their knowledge and skills or on their attitudes and beliefs?
2. The issue of professional development by experimenting and sharing with others versus professional development by research and reading activities. Other studies (Raina 1997, Ducharme and Ducharme 1996, Turney and Wright 1990) have indicated that research and reading activities, without interaction, were considered as the primary methods of professional development in teacher education. In our research, the knowledge base of professional teacher educators seems to be more based on practical knowledge than on theoretical knowledge. Does this possibly relate to the values inherent to a national teacher education system? In the Dutch system of teacher education for example, where teacher education is mostly part of colleges of education, most teacher educators are not obliged to conduct research or to publish. So our dilemma is: should teacher educators professionalize themselves mainly by experimenting and sharing with others, or by reading and conducting research?
3. The issue of intentional versus unintentional professional development. The Dutch procedure of standards-based (self)assessment and professional development seems (unintended) to include that teacher educators focus on intentional learning. In our research no participant for instance reported on the influence of events in their personal life, like watching a movie with educational aspects, such as *Dead Poets Society* or *Être et Avoir*, or experiences with their own children, while these experiences may be very influential for their professional behavior. This brings us to our third dilemma: should teacher educators professionalize themselves by making a professional development plan, or should they professionalize themselves more implicitly, with a continuous open mind to new experiences and unintended learning, not only within their work, but also outside work?

Appendix 1

The first version of the professional standard of Dutch teacher educators

The foundation: basic attitudes and beliefs for teacher educators

- F1 A teacher educator can work at *three levels*:
- has insight into his/her pupils' development
 - facilitates and supervises the student teacher's development
 - takes charge of his/her own professional development.
- F2 Teacher educators formulate their own *educational vision*, one linked to the reality. They are able to adapt this vision to the pedagogical views of their institute, and to communicate this clearly to colleagues and students. Their educational vision must therefore be outward looking
- F3 A teacher educators *attitudes* are:
- is open to others and is a good listener
 - dares to take risks and be initiative
 - can offer feedback and is synonymously open to receiving it
 - stands by his/her views and can argue them convincingly
 - is dedicated, committed and involved
 - strives to solve problems with tact and diplomacy.
- F4 A teacher educator uses in his/her work the following criteria for *realistic teacher education*:
- takes, as a starting point, the specific practical problems and concerns experienced by teachers and student teachers, including those of the subject matter being taught
 - is oriented towards the stimulation of systematic reflection (NB: this reflection is directed towards acquiring subject knowledge, establishing routines, seeking professional growth, etc.)
 - makes deliberate use of both interaction between the educator and individual students, as well as between the students themselves
 - works in an integrated manner, both with regard to the integration of theory and practice and to the integration of different disciplines
 - acquires and maintains knowledge from a variety of sources.
- F5 These attitudes and beliefs mean that the teacher educator must be prepared to take and develop initiatives together with his/her *students* in all competency areas. The educator considers the student as a partner qualified to contribute towards the development, implementation, and evaluation of his/her own education and development.
- F6 Teacher educators must also be a *model* in all five competency areas. This means, for instance, that they must implement what they consider to be important into their own pedagogical behavior.

General competencies

The five competency areas are:
Content competencies
Pedagogical competencies

Organizational competencies
Group dynamic and communicative competencies
Developmental and personal growth competencies

The last competency area listed is a prerequisite for the first four; it is a 'meta-competency' which the first four competencies depend on.

C.0. As in all professional walks of life, teacher educators must also be capable of integrating ICT into all their activities. This applies, for instance, to the creation of a digital learning environment for students (see C.2.2), maintaining a network of contacts (see C.3.1) and staying current on developments taking place within their profession. (see C.1.2 and C.5.1).

C.1. Content competencies

The teacher educator is able:

- 1.1. to acquire and maintain knowledge and skills that encompass his/her own discipline (e.g. the content being taught, content pedagogy, educational theory)
- 1.2. to integrate the complexity of teaching practice and the content of one's own discipline in conjunction with elements from various other disciplines, such as pedagogy, educational theory, learning and developmental psychology, and subject matter pedagogy and subject content.
- 1.3. to translate developments taking place in one's own discipline and in the field of education into the vocational preparation of students and the continuous professional development of prospective teachers

C.2. Pedagogical competencies

The teacher educator is able:

- (design)
- 2.1. to collaborate with colleagues on the preparation, implementation, evaluation, modification and renewal of course curricula
 - 2.2. to create a stimulating learning environment for students and course participants
- (action)
- 3.3. to differentiate between different student teacher and course participants, and monitor them along specific developmental routes towards teaching competence
 - 3.4. to link different teaching situations with appropriate pedagogical insights
 - 3.5. to make the implemented pedagogical approach transparent for students, and to discuss the pedagogical options with them
- (evaluation)
- 2.6. to develop and implement assessment tests of vocational skills, offer students feedback on their study progress, and assess students' capabilities for the teaching profession
 - 2.7. to stimulate students to reflect on their experiences, to self reflexively assess themselves on their capabilities for the teaching profession

C.3. Organizational competencies

The teacher educator is able:

- 3.1. to maintain a network of relevant professional contacts, both inside and outside the world of education

- 3.2. to actively contribute towards the development and implementation of the organization's vision and policy
 - 3.3. to work with others in multi-disciplinary, self-directed teams
- C.4. Group dynamic and communicative competencies

The teacher educator is able:

- 4.1. to deal with young adults and accomplished teachers
 - 4.2. to cope with procedures within groups of students, teachers and colleagues
 - 4.3. to empathize with those he/she works with; to provide free rein, monitoring, or confrontation, according to their needs
- C.5. Developmental and personal growth competencies

The teacher educator is able:

- 5.1. to evaluate new developments with colleagues in the field of education and in the area of teacher education and further incorporate these into his/her educational behavior repertoire
- 5.2. to reflect systematically on his own pedagogical approach and teaching behavior, towards students, colleagues and others important to the teacher education institute
- 5.3. to make his/her own learning process visible to colleagues and students

Appendix 2

Procedure of Self-Assessment and Professional Development

The standard is used as a reference point by teacher educators who go through the procedure of self-assessment and professional development. They are asked:

1. to analyze their strengths and weaknesses by using a structured standards-based score form and describe authentic situations which demonstrate good practice examples from their own work.
2. to discuss these products with a peer coach who is also a participant in the procedure.
3. to assemble feedback from colleagues and student teachers by giving them a structured standards-based score form to be filled out by at least 30 students and 5 colleagues.
4. to formulate goals and develop a plan for professional development.
5. to construct a portfolio containing a description of how they worked on their professional development and of the outcomes of their professional development.

Participants must first come together for an introductory meeting. In this meeting, the procedure is explained and participants select a peer coach. Participation in the procedure is on a purely volunteer basis. Frequently, their institute will cover the participation fee of 1900 Euro and partly compensate their time which is 40 hours for the first four steps of the procedure, and another 40 hours for the fifth step, which consists of the professional development activities and construction of the portfolio.

Every participant gets two peer assessors. The assessors are selected by the Dutch Association of Teacher Educators. Peer assessors are paid and trained for their work. They evaluate the

products and portfolios of the participants, and judge whether a participant shall be allowed to receive registration.

In the end, successfully completing the procedures of self-assessment and professional development allows the participant to register as a certified teacher educator. After four years of being registered, the certified teacher educators will go through a re-registration procedure.

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