

## Teacher Education Research: Values-Based Planning in an Uncertain World

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### **Abstract**

The global significance of teacher education has never been greater than it is today. In this world where migration, inequality, climate change, political upheavals and strife continue to be manifest in many locations around the world, governments and scholars alike are increasingly considering what role education systems can play in achieving stability and managed, sustainable economic development. With growing awareness that the quality of education is very closely related to the quality of teachers and teaching, teacher education has moved into a key strategic location in international debate and discussion. This proposition is as true and pertinent in the global south and east as it is in the northern and western worlds. All of these concerns have been amplified by the impact of the global viral pandemic. There are many moral challenges to be faced by teacher educators, policymakers and researchers.

## Исследования в области педагогического образования: ценностно-ориентированное планирование в неопределенном мире

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### **Аннотация**

Педагогическое образование никогда не было столь значимым, как сегодня. В мире, где миграция, изменение климата, вирусная пандемия, политическая борьба наблюдаются во многих регионах, правительства и ученые все чаще задумываются о том, какую роль система образования может сыграть в обеспечении стабильности и устойчивого экономического развития. Растет осознание того, что качество образования тесно связано с качеством подготовки учителей, и педагогическое образование стало ключевым стратегическим пунктом в международных дискуссиях и дебатах. Это утверждение верно как для стран Юга и Востока, так и для северного и западного миров. Перед преподавателями, политиками и учеными стоит множество моральных вызовов.

## Introduction

In previous papers I have talked about the connections between research and teacher education and have referred to the BERA-RSA report from 2014. I have spoken about the vernacular globalisation effects that are evident in looking across teacher education systems in twelve different national settings, and about the twenty-one systems that make up Central and Eastern Europe. I have suggested eight themes that emerged from a consideration of how their approaches to teacher education are responding to the challenges and opportunities created by the process of democratisation.

In this article I want to highlight the importance of values in teacher education. I start by exploring (again) the relations between teacher education and research and seek to draw out the values dimensions in these relationships. I then turn to consider how teacher education has been developing in such an extraordinary way at KFU over the past ten years and suggest a number of underlying values that have informed these developments. In conclusion I suggest a number of questions that may be important to all of us as teacher educators and as researchers as we move forward - we hope - into a healthier and more stable future.

## Research and teacher education

An earlier article (Menter, 2017) discussed different relationships between teacher education and research. It suggested three particular relationships - research **in** teacher education, research **on** teacher education and research **around** teacher education.

### *Research in Teacher Education*

This, the most common approach to teacher education research, remains very important. If teaching itself is viewed as an inquiry-based profession, then it is important that teacher educators model an inquiry approach in their own work. In a major inquiry into the relationship between teacher education and research carried out in 2013–2014 by the British Educational Research Association (BERA) in partnership with the Royal Society for the Arts (RSA) the model of teaching and teacher education that emerged as the most productive is one that is indeed inquiry-based. The report (BERA-RSA, 2014) called for all teachers to be “research literate”—that is, all teachers should be equipped with the appropriate skills to evaluate educational research and also with the capacity to engage in inquiry themselves. The implications of this requirement are that all teacher education programs should seek to provide trained teachers with these qualities. The idea of “teacher as researcher” has a long tradition, not least in the UK, where that phrase was coined by Lawrence Stenhouse who saw teachers as curriculum researchers. However, Stenhouse, like many of those who followed in that tradition, believed that teacher research must be rigorous. One of the common criticisms of much teacher research is that it is not only small-scale but also that it can tend to be unsystematic and therefore of poor quality. In developing the idea of teacher as researcher in the United States, Cochran-Smith and her collaborators endorse the importance of rigour and also introduce the idea of teacher inquiry as stance (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009).

### *Research on Teacher Education*

Research that steps back from the practice and seeks to analyse and understand teacher education in a more “detached” way is still all too scarce. Very often such research is carried out by policy researchers who are interested in how programs are developed and in their effects. This approach to research often overlaps with effectiveness models that were mentioned earlier, but can also be very revealing of motives and values and may well challenge assumptions.

More of this kind of research is needed; it should be theoretically informed and should include work that is both large scale and longitudinal and that uses a full range of methods. One recent example is the SETE study carried out in Australia by a large consortium of researchers from several different institutions (Mayer et al., 2015). This is an important example of research on teacher education—although having been carried out by a team of teacher education practitioners, it also has elements of research in teacher education.

Some comparative education studies of teacher education also may be seen as good examples of research on teacher education. The “home international” study of teacher education policy and practice in the UK and Ireland is an example. It is very valuable to contrast and compare approaches—not least in neighbouring jurisdictions—to identify how different values and understandings of teaching may lead to very different approaches to teacher education. What has not been attempted to a great degree, however, are attempts to ascertain the effects of such different approaches on outcomes (Teacher Education Group, 2016).

#### *Research about Teacher Education*

If research on teacher education is relatively scarce, then research about teacher education is even scarcer. If it is agreed that approaches to teacher education have a deep symbolic significance culturally and sociologically in any social system (as was argued in the introduction to this article), then this dearth of theoretically well-informed and often interdisciplinary work is not only surprising, but a matter of concern. Research about teacher education means research that seeks to understand teacher education in a broader context, for example, taking historical, anthropological, political science, or social theory perspectives. Such work is likely to be essentially interdisciplinary and is designed to explore the relationship between teacher education and the wider society.

In the UK, two examples may be cited. The first is a study that seeks to draw explicitly on sociology, psychology, and philosophy in developing a deeper understanding of how teacher education might be reformulated in the 21st century, through the application of these disciplines. Edwards, Gilroy, and Hartley offer a stimulating challenge to contemporary teacher educators through their multiple disciplinary lens (Edwards et al., 2003). Furlong’s study (Furlong, 2013), though less explicitly interdisciplinary (being mainly sociological), nevertheless steps well outside the usual constraints of the study of teacher education by looking at the institutional and societal setting of teacher education during the 20th century and into the 21st century. This creates a set of significantly deeper insights than are achieved in much teacher education research that simply regards teacher education as a self-contained system.

#### *Summary*

As we have seen, one characteristic of teacher education research is indeed that much of it is often conducted by those who are also its practitioners, whether as teacher educators or as managers. The history of research *on* teacher education is complemented by research *in* teacher education and is intricately related to the trajectory over time of teacher educators as an ill-defined, under-researched, and sometimes beleaguered occupational group within higher education.

In all three cases we can see how important values are in undertaking research. There are values underlying the conceptions of the research, the framing of the questions to be investigated and also the methods to be adopted in undertaking the study. It has long been my contention that teacher educators as a professional community collectively manifest a deep commitment to humanistic values, including profound respect, empathy,

commitment to socially just approaches and to the betterment of society, including children and young people, tomorrow's citizens.

So, whatever the particular focus of the research we may be confident that it will be informed by such values and that the way in which it is conducted will demonstrate these commitments. Whether the methodologies deployed are quantitative or qualitative, large-scale or small-scale, psychological, philosophical or sociological, we can expect that care will be taken to ensure that the rights of those involved in the work will be protected and that the overall purpose of the research is some form of improvement. This improvement may be in policy and/or practice as may be expected from research in or on teacher education, and/or it may be about improvement of our understanding, including our theoretical understanding of teacher education, as may be the outcomes of research about teacher education. In broad terms these are some of the ethical dimensions of teacher education research.

In my own work, including that which I have been undertaking with my colleagues in Kazan, I have always aspired to maintain principles such as these. In taking a broadly sociological approach to the study of teacher education, working with colleagues, collaboration and joint development of projects has been crucial. In addition to the sociological dimension, the work has sought to recognise the significance of history and culture, thus the terms 'socio-historical' and 'socio-cultural' have been important. Certainly, in our book on teacher education in Russia (Menter, 2021), the socio-historical viewpoint has been the dominant one which we have adopted in trying to make sense of the past, present and future of policy and practice here. In my collaborations with Maria Teresa Tatto, as well as taking cognisance of the historical dimension, we have also been seeking to develop the cultural dimension. So, in our collaborations for the WERA-IRN work (Tatto & Menter, 2019) and in our two-nation study of policy and practice in teacher education in England and the US, we have sought to develop a distinctive methodological framework, which draws on Vygotskian theory, as well as the sociology of Basil Bernstein (Tatto et al, 2018). The approach is also informed by an ecological perspective, acknowledging the important interaction of processes at different levels, usually termed the macro, meso and micro. In a forthcoming paper written with one of the Oxford team, Katharine Burn, we have sought to demonstrate how such an approach may make a distinctive contribution to understanding the impact of processes of globalisation in teacher education in specific contexts (Burn & Menter, forthcoming).

### **Research as a dimension of professionalism in education**

The first part of this article established the significance of values in underlying and informing teacher education research, whatever its particular form. Now I want to try to link this with a wider conception of teaching and professionalism in education. Here I draw on work undertaken last year with our colleague Maria Assuncao Flores (Menter & Flores, 2020).

Research has been identified as a key dimension in enhancing the teaching profession and teacher education. However, this idea is controversial as it depends on political, institutional and ideological aspects. It depends for instance, on how the teaching profession is defined by governments and on how the professional profile of teachers is defined in teacher education programmes.

The importance for all beginning and early career teachers to become 'research literate' and to be provided with opportunities for engagement in research and inquiry has been advocated (for example, see BERA-RSA, 2014 and Beckett 2020). However, the place of research in teacher education continues to be contested and is seen by some as controversial. For instance, the emergence of an inquiry-based culture in the practicum

was seen as both innovative and controversial, incorporating tensions and challenges in regard to visions of teacher education, as well as (mis)matches between curriculum rhetoric and implementation. As Flores et al. (2016) have noted, the integration of an inquiry-based approach to teaching in teacher education faces a number of challenges. First of all, inquiry demands time and the condensation of initial teacher education in a two-year master programme represented a reduction of time allocated to school-based practice with implications for the opportunity to engage in pedagogical inquiry. Along with this is the risk of making the practicum more academic and less profession-oriented, for instance, by conceiving practicum reports as theoretical monographs or descriptions of empirical research unrelated to pedagogical action (Flores et al. 2016).

As mentioned earlier, Marilyn Cochran-Smith, several years ago, talked about 'inquiry as stance' in teaching and teacher education. This, I suggest is in essence a value position. It has implications for teaching and teacher education, for policy and practice in both.

### **The case of Kazan Federal University**

At Kazan Federal University there is a deep commitment to developing a research-based model of teacher education and drawing on the relevant chapter study included in our book on teacher education in Russia I wish to consider this case (Gafurov & Kalimullin, 2021).

The merger of seven higher education institutions and the creation of KFU in 2010 created the third largest teacher education centre in the Russian Federation. Given that two of the seven institutions were pedagogical universities it is no surprise that the potential for significant development in the field of teacher education was there from the start. However, it took a great deal of moral and professional courage to establish teacher education as a key focus of strategic development, given the competition from other important areas including medicine, information technology and earth sciences. In the decade that has passed since these mergers we have not only seen the quantitative growth of teacher education at KFU, we have also seen the creation of a distinctive, indeed unique approach to teacher education. KFU has indubitably become a centre of excellence for teacher education.

It is important to stress that the success of the emerging approach at KFU does draw on great traditions across the predecessor institutions - and there is much more detail on this in the chapter I referred to (Gafurov and Kalimullin, 2021). Furthermore, such progress would not have been achieved without the considerable backing of resources provided by Federal programmes, such as the Modernisation of Teacher Education, which is analysed in another chapter in the book (Revyakina, 2021).

We might single out four particular factors for comment. When we consider all four in combination, I suggest it begins to become clear why KFU has made such a distinctive contribution, not only regionally, but in the context of the wider Russian Federation and it reveals the values which inform this approach.

First, has been the significance attached to subject expertise. The collaboration between the Institute of Psychology and Education with other faculties across the university has been a key element in the development of enormous strength in the preparation of subject specialists. In this I am reminded of the Donaldson review of teacher education in Scotland, in which he called for much wider involvement of a range of university departments in teacher education (Donaldson, 2010).

Second, we have seen how the relationships with schools in the region have progressed. The importance of effective partnerships in successful teacher education

has been stressed by scholars around the world for many years now. At Oxford we saw the creation of the Education Deanery as the way forward or, in the USA, the model of Professional Development Schools. KFU's relationships with schools where beginning teacher undertake their practicum may be seen as a parallel development. Furthermore, the creation of KFU's own schools - the Lobachevsky grammar school with a focus on physics and mathematics; the IT boarding grammar school; and a secondary school under the patronage of the Elabuga Institute of KFU, as well as a kindergarten specialising in provision for children with Autism Spectrum Disorder - as sites of teacher education practice is exemplary and may be seen as a version of the practices adopted in Finland (or less wholeheartedly in England), in the creation of university schools.

Third, the recognition of the significance of the lifelong continuum of professional learning is demonstrated in the commitment to the provision of continuing professional development opportunities for teachers across the wider Volga region. The connections between initial (pre-service), induction and in-service training - the three Is as they were called in Northern Ireland - are more important today than they have ever been as our societies change and develop ever more rapidly.

Fourth I would draw attention to the importance that is attached at KFU to a research orientation in the approach to teacher education. Earlier in the talk I referred to the three key relationships between research and teacher education. It is clear to me that all three of these have a strong place in KFU's understanding of how the highest quality may be achieved in the creation of new teachers and in the support of serving teachers. In the BERA-RSA report from 2014, which I have referred to in previous talks at KFU, there was a model of the teacher that emphasised three dimensions. In my view what is happening at KFU reflects this kind of understanding of teaching and teacher education. It is a fundamentally 'research literate' approach, very much aligned with the model of teacher professionalism spelled out in the BERA-RSA (2014) report (see figure 1).



Figure 1. Dimensions of teacher effectiveness and teachers' professional identity

Given these four commitments and given the quality, skills and expertise that have underpinned the developments here, at all levels in the University and across all faculties, it is no surprise to me to see how KFU has rapidly risen through the international quality

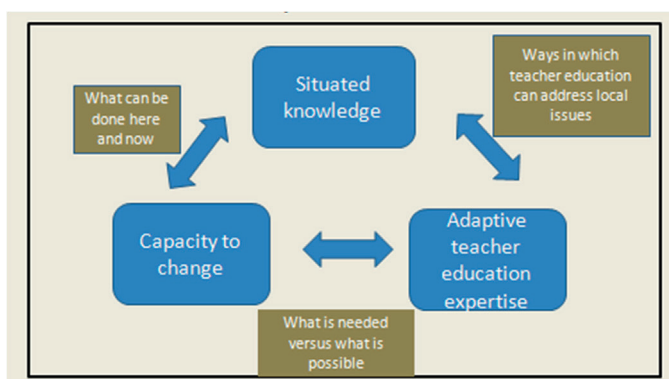
rankings in its provision in the field of education. I could also have referred to other aspects of the infrastructure that has been developed at KFU to support this work, examples include the Centre of Master's Studies, the Engelhardt Astronomical Observatory and Planetarium as well as the provision of cutting-edge information technology.

However, each of the four elements manifested in the KFU approach to teacher education to which I have chosen to draw attention, demonstrates a commitment to a particular value base. The commitment to subject expertise shows how teachers' knowledge base for their teaching is seen as of crucial importance. The importance of the relationships with schools and teachers in those schools demonstrates how there is deep respect for the professional community of teaching. That is also shown by the third element, recognition of the continuum of professional learning. Teaching is seen as a dynamic profession in which teachers are continuously needing to develop and adapt to changes - as has been demonstrated so clearly over the last months through the impact of the pandemic. And fourthly the commitment to research, or more broadly to an enquiry-oriented approach, shows how the drive for continuing development and improvement is an intellectual as well as a professional challenge.

However, before concluding I would want to suggest that underlying all of these particular values, applied to teacher education, is a broader set of values, a set of universal human values which imbues the approach at KFU. This set of values includes deep respect for human life. This applies to children, their families, to colleagues and the wider professional community. It also includes a recognition of difference and the need to respond positively and creatively to difference, for example in relation to ethnicity, language and culture, as well as differences in intellectual and physical capacities. And finally, I would suggest that these values of respect for humanity and for celebrating difference demonstrate the commitment to social justice and to developing a socially just approach to education generally and teacher education in particular.

## Conclusion

In a very recently published book, Clare Brooks from University College London, examines what she calls 'teacher education at scale'. Examining provision at five locations around the world she identifies five quality conundrums, what we might more conventionally call challenges, that face those of us seeking to ensure that large scale provision is of the highest quality. These she suggests are the conundrums of practice, research, knowledge, teacher educator and governance. She draws out a model of ITE practice based three particular forms of knowledge: situated knowledge; adaptive teacher education expertise; capacity to change (Brooks, 2021:204). See figure 2:



It is the ability to promote the interaction between these three, which makes the contribution of universities to teacher education so fundamental. And I should add, although Brooks did not take a Russian case in her study, that is what is so clearly demonstrated at KFU.

We have seen how the relationships between teaching, teacher professionalism, teacher education and educational research have been developing in many contexts over recent years, including here at KFU. It is my contention that these relationships can now provide key indicators for the evaluation of the condition of teaching and teacher education in any particular context. I wish to conclude (again drawing on my paper with Maria Flores) by offering a series of questions that might be used as the basis for such an evaluation.

- How is teacher professionalism defined and by whom?
- What is the nature of the relationships between the respective communities of policy, practice and research in teaching?
- To what extent is an enquiry approach embedded within, respectively, initial teacher education, teacher induction, continuing professional development?
- Who undertakes research into teaching and teacher education and what is its nature? Is a broad range of research methodologies employed? Is there evidence of independence and criticality in the research undertaken? How is such research disseminated and made use of?

If we can pursue answers to questions such as these within a particular context, we may then be able to offer an assessment of the state of health of the profession of teaching in that context. It is certainly not intended that such an approach will be in any way constraining. Indeed, we would expect to see great variation between the approaches taken in different settings, relating to the national specificities of the context, including historical trajectories and distinctive cultural characteristics. As I argued two years ago, the forces of globalisation have led to a certain degree of convergence at least in educational policy - if less so in educational practices - leading to forms of vernacular globalisation. In a world where education is still mainly organised at a national level - albeit with some regional elements, as in the European Union - it is desirable that such diversity continues. It is through comparative analysis that we may come to understand better both our own approaches and the approaches taken by others.

The second important rider to my conclusion is to remind ourselves of the dynamic and diachronic nature of teaching as a profession and of the interactions between research, policy and practice. The years 2020 and 2021 have shown dramatically how events can change expectations and experiences. The rapid move to online learning in response to the viral pandemic (see Breslin, 2021), the increasing urgency in addressing educational in/equality in the light of the Black Lives Matter movement, the desperate need to ensure a sustainable future for our planet in response to dramatic and damaging climate change - all of these are matters that have enormous implications for education. And, if they have implications for education systems, then they clearly have dramatic implications for teacher professionalism. Teaching is after all a profession concerned not only with knowledge and cognition, crucial though these are, but also with values and morality. It is challenges such as these that require a full recognition of the need to imbue teaching - and teacher education - with a sustainable enquiry orientation, indeed a base in education research. Through such an orientation teachers may be in a much stronger position to respond positively to the challenges they face on a day-to-day basis, but also to take a continually developing approach to their own capacity and skills over the lifetime



of their careers. This I suggest must be the basis of contemporary teacher professionalism and should shape our approaches to all aspects of teacher education.

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