

# 1

## The professional development of teacher educators

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### This chapter covers:

- who teacher educators are and what they do;
- what we know about the early stages of professional development of teacher educators;
- how you can use this book to chart a pathway for your personal and professional development as a teacher educator.

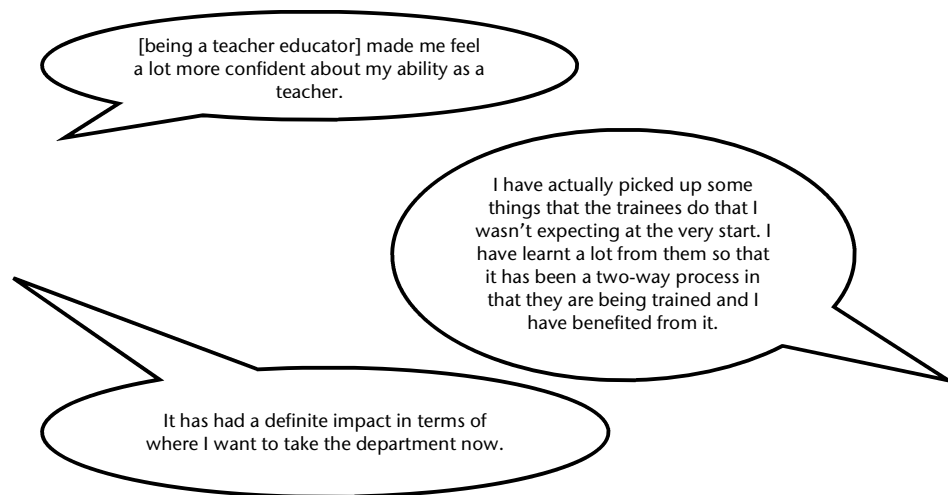


### What is a teacher educator and who takes on this role?

Teacher educators facilitate the professional development of teachers by providing learning opportunities for teachers through a variety of means and in a range of contexts. The teachers may be at any stage of their teaching career; however, within this book we are focusing on nurturing trainee teachers and newly qualified teachers in particular. Teacher educators can be involved in the preparation, leading, facilitation and evaluation of a multiplicity of activities, some of which might include:

- leading sessions on pre-service training programmes;
- carrying out observations and giving feedback;
- encouraging teachers to reflect on and evaluate their own teaching;
- providing on-going support as and when needed;
- facilitating training opportunities such as observations and team teaching;
- leading professional development sessions;
- providing resources and guidance;
- research into aspects of education.

Many initial teacher education programmes are situated in higher education institutions with university-based teacher educators. Experienced teachers in schools also work as teacher educators, supporting the learning of trainee teachers and newly qualified teachers in the classroom by taking on roles as mentors or tutors in partnership with providers of initial teacher education. In addition, the growth of school-led initial teacher training routes means that there are teachers who take on extended teacher education roles while working within schools. Additionally, subject specialists and advanced skills teachers who are helping trainees and new teachers develop their teaching skills have a role as teacher educators. Leaders of professional development in school and in further education colleges who have responsibility for the initial and continuing professional development of teachers may have this role alongside an organisational overview. In summary, there is a diverse group of individuals who we would view as having this privileged role of being teacher educators.



**Figure 1.1** The voice of new teacher educators

Although there are clearly benefits from undertaking this role (see Figure 1.1), it can be extremely challenging and teacher educators need to look after themselves first in order to take better care of others later. This is why Part A is focused on you as a teacher educator and the community in which you work, rather than on your practice. It is helpful initially to reflect on what we know about the development of teacher educators.

## The early stages of professional development of teacher educators

Teacher educators who are teaching about teaching are often referred to as second order practitioners in the literature about their professional development. This term was originally used by Murray and Male (2005) to distinguish the work of teacher

educators from that of first order practitioners, i.e. teachers, who are working in the original field. These terms help us to appreciate the layered nature of the teacher educator's role. Teacher educators are increasingly undertaking the dual role of teacher and teacher educator. In this case these professionals are working both as first and second order practitioners. Whether you are working as a second order practitioner for a little, some or most of your time, and whether this is in one or several workplaces, much of the research about the early stages of professional development of teacher educators will have some useful messages even though most of these teacher educators were in higher education institutions.

Becoming a second order practitioner does not happen automatically and may involve a period of de-skilling while moving from expert in one field to novice in another (Berry and Loughran, 2002; Harrison and McKeon, 2008; Clemans et al., 2010; White, 2011). This research indicates that new teacher educators initially rely on classroom experience. After a time they realise that first order practice is not sufficient and additional knowledge and practices of teacher education are needed. This occurs with a growing understanding of the needs of their learners and through involvement with the professional community of teacher educators.

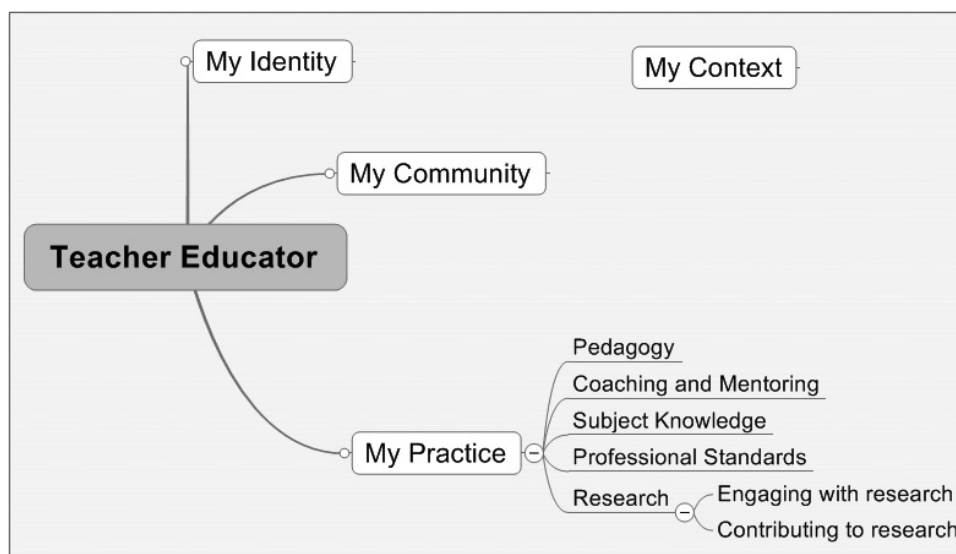
The process of becoming a teacher educator may initially involve identifying transferable skills and strategies from teaching; bringing your credibility as a first order practitioner and reconstructing your pedagogy to meet the learning needs of your trainees (Boyd and Harris, 2010). The literature reports that initially teacher educators appreciate the need to model good practice but do not appreciate the need to be explicit about modelling. The importance of making hidden professional knowledge explicit to trainee teachers is explored in Chapter 4.

There are many examples in the literature of new teacher educators in higher education institutions learning from formal and informal practices in their workplace, e.g. McKeon and Harrison (2010), and of early professional learning being facilitated by participation in a community of teacher educators. When new teacher educators work alongside experienced teacher educators they move towards full participation in the community of practice and gain confidence and expertise. Lave and Wenger (1991) propose that professional identity is formed in a community of practice. Swennen et al. (2008) also suggest that the professional identity of teacher educators is built through socialisation within this community. This means that the new teacher educators who are involved in their own workplace, remote from a wider community of teacher educators, may find it difficult to develop this identity, and may not even see themselves as teacher educators, since this is one role among many that they have in their workplace. Chapter 3 looks at ways of developing a new identity as a teacher educator and you may need to look for opportunities for becoming part of a community of teacher educators locally or online.

Another theme in the literature regarding the professional development of teacher educators is their need to have an over-riding enquiry perspective on their work (Cochran-Smith, 2003) rather than seeing enquiry as a separate activity among many. This means that teacher educators educate themselves and each other by regarding the work of others as developmental and open to interrogation. New teacher educators do not need rigid induction programmes for their early development but creative ways to explore and work together with prospective

teachers and experienced teachers in communities of learners. Teacher educators develop through integrating research and practice (Murray and Male, 2005). This is explored further in Chapters 9 and 10.

## Charting a pathway for your personal and professional development as a teacher educator



**Figure 1.2** Aspects of the professional development of teacher educators

The background of Figure 1.2 represents the **context** within which you are working. As a teacher your immediate context is your whole school setting. Chapter 2 looks at you as a teacher educator within this setting to help you identify how your role fits into the wider picture.

As you take on the role of teacher educator and start to develop your **identity** as a second order practitioner, you will need to consider the changing aspects of your role. Chapter 3 will focus on helping to develop your identity as a teacher educator and suggests you integrate into a **community** or develop your own community with practitioners undertaking similar responsibilities. When you have looked at this chapter for your own personal development you will also find it useful to consider how you will nurture your trainees as they develop their identity as teachers and find appropriate communities in which they can share their professional learning with others. It may even be that you are responsible for ensuring that there is an enquiring community in which your trainees can learn together with other staff.

As a first order practitioner you will already have a wealth of knowledge and skills for your professional **practice**. This is now the foundational knowledge that you will be bringing to your new role as a second order practitioner. In Part B of the book we will explore how you can enhance and extend your knowledge and skills.

In Chapter 4 you will be invited to examine your own beliefs about learning and teaching as a basis for your work in enabling trainees to recognise how their beliefs impact on their teaching. You will be able to identify key aspects of your first order practice that you will be explicitly modelling, i.e. demonstrating approaches and discussing the thinking that underpins their use.

In your role you will be having professional conversations with beginning teachers. In order to make these conversations effective, Chapter 5 will suggest ways of focusing and deepening these conversations to enhance learning.

As a first order practitioner your subject knowledge for teaching is a significant feature of your practice. Teacher educators often have the role of nurturing the development of subject knowledge for teaching of their trainees. This is the focus of Chapter 6. Ways to develop a deep understanding of subject knowledge for teaching are suggested, which enable teachers to transform their knowledge in a variety of ways to make it accessible to their pupils.

The last four chapters focus on specific aspects of second order practitioner work and may therefore take you into new territory. Developing the professional knowledge and skills of trainees to become outstanding teachers is the aim of all teacher educators. This will help them to meet and go beyond the professional standards. Chapter 7 will enable you to identify the right mix of support and challenge to facilitate your trainees to be the best they can be. Chapter 8 helps you to nurture trainees as they face the demands of becoming a teacher.

Finally, in the last two chapters the role of research is discussed in developing high quality teacher education. In Chapter 9 you will be able to consider how you can help your trainees to draw on current research and educational theories as you develop your own practice in this field. Chapter 10 identifies arguments for research-informed practice and for developing teachers as change agents in their classrooms by undertaking small-scale research projects.

### **For your reflection**



**Figure 1.3** Reflecting on your professional development

**Further reading**

- Bates, T., Swennen, A. and Jones, K. (2010) *The Professional Development of Teacher Educators*. Abingdon: Routledge.  
This is a special edition of the journal *Professional Development in Education* containing a collection of papers about the professional development of teacher educators.
- Boyd, P., Harris, A. and Murray, J. (2011) *Becoming a Teacher Educator: Guidelines for Induction*. Subject Centre for Education, ESCalate: The Higher Education Academy.  
These are useful guidelines for teacher educators based mainly in higher educational institutions or further education. Included is a useful list of references relating to the professional development of teacher educators.