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The Professional Development of Teacher Educators in Scotland: researcherly dispositions and tensions.

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the professional learning needs identified by teacher educators in Higher Education Institutions in Scotland, with a particular focus on their “researcherly dispositions” (Tack & Vanderlinde, 2016), and identifies some of the implications for the professional learning of teacher educators more broadly. The Scottish data were part of a wider European wide study conducted by the International Forum for Teacher Educator Development (<http://info-ted.eu/>), and were drawn from a survey based research (Czerniawski, Guberman and MacPhail, 2016), and follow-up in-depth interviews with university based teacher educators (MacPhail et. al., 2018).

The data from 61 questionnaire respondents and 11 interviews revealed recognition of the multi-faceted nature of the role, the self-determined nature of professional learning, the need for support in becoming a teacher educator, and disparity and tensions in being research active despite an expectation, although to varying degrees, of research and scholarship being an expected activity within the professional and academic role as a teacher educator in Higher Education.

Keywords: *Transitions; higher education; teacher educators; conceptual models; identity formation*

INTRODUCTION

The quality of teaching and learning in schools, it has been suggested, is linked to the quality of the teacher education provision and by implication, to the quality of the teacher educators (Cochran-Smith, 2005; Darling-Hammond, 2016, 2017; European Commission, 2013; Goodwin & Darity, 2018; Kelchtermans, Smith, & Vanderlinde, 2018; Lunenberg, Murray, Smith, and Vanderlinde, 2016). Darling-Hammond (2017) for example notes that teacher effectiveness is a high priority globally and that “teacher preparation and development” (p291) is a key influence on teacher effectiveness. Teacher educators themselves therefore have a key role to play in the development of teachers.

However, the role of teacher educator is not a singular role or construct but rather involves individuals who have a range of varying professional identities, qualifications, and roles within a multi-faceted profession (European Commission, 2013). This multifaceted nature of the teacher educator is explored by Lunenberg, Dengerink & Korthagen (2014) who identify six roles of teacher educators: teacher of teachers, researcher, coach, curriculum developer, gatekeeper (of who enters the profession), and broker. Studies suggest that new teacher educators are poorly inducted into their role and require additional support and development (van Velzen, van der Klink, Swennen, & Yaffe, 2010). The professional learning and development of teacher educators needs to ensure that teacher educators can undertake this multifaceted nature of the role in order to support the effective development of high quality teachers (accepting that the very notion of 'high quality' is a contentious aspect on which to gain consensus).

In Scotland, teacher educators in universities have often previously been teachers in school contexts, although not all follow that trajectory. This is influenced by the requirements set by the General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS) for the mandatory accreditation of programmes leading to a teaching qualification. The 'Teacher Journey' noted on the GTCS website for example, states: "University staff involved in initial teacher education who are dealing with the Theory, Methods and Practice of teaching must be registered" although this does allow for registration under the 'university category' rather than the general registration. The requirement of previous teaching experience is further reflected within the GTCS evaluative framework (GTCS, 2018) used to accredit initial teacher education (ITE) programmes, which requires evidence from the universities of the GTCS registration of staff who "deliver the university-led elements" or are "involved in the professional placement" (p 4). The registration requirement also means that university-based teacher educators in Scotland must maintain their professional registration with the GTCS through a five-year professional update process, while at the same time fulfilling the obligations of being academic staff in the university.

However, Donaldson (2011) in his report on the review of teacher education in Scotland espouses the view that "all teachers are teacher educators" with a recommendation that all teachers have training in coaching and mentoring skills (p73) which would suggest a view of the teacher educator's role as one of support through professional dialogue rather than a more multi-faceted complex role. The role of a teacher educator exposes the individual to situations and experiences that they will not have experienced as classroom teachers, and for which classroom teaching is inadequate preparation (Williams, 2013). In a small-scale study of higher education teacher educators in England, Murray (2005) highlighted that the support provided for teachers to take on the role of educators in higher education was inadequate, and that a more tailored support was needed to enable the transition from being a first order teacher (teacher in a school context), to a second order teacher (teaching about teaching) in a university context.

Internationally there is an increasing focus on improving our understanding of the role of teacher educators, and their professional development needs (Czerniaswki, 2018; Czerniaswki et. al., 2016; Czerniawski et. al., 2018; Gleeson et. al., 2017; Kelchtermans, Smith, and Vanderlinde, 2018; Korthagen, 2017; Loughran, 2014; Lunenberg et. al., 2014; MacPhail et. al. 2018; Murray, 2014). In a review of the literature on teacher education in the 21st Century, Menter et al.

(2010) concluded that, in Scotland “Little attention has been focused on the professional learning of teacher educators and the contribution they can make to curriculum change, whether they are school-based or university-based.” (p3). There are questions then about the professional development required to become a teacher educator with all its multifaceted roles.

TEACHER EDUCATORS’ PROFESSIONAL IDENTITIES

Swennen, Jones, & Volman (2010) citing Cochran-Smith (2003), assert that the identity of teacher educators has to be defined before the professional development of teacher educators can be seriously considered. While there is considerable literature on “teachers’ professional identities” there is considerably less on teacher educators’ professional identities² and even less for teacher educators in Scotland. Swennen, Jones & Volman’s (2010) study of the literature on teacher educators’ professional identities identified four sub-identities which were: schoolteacher, teacher in Higher Education, teacher of teachers (or second order teacher) and researcher. Menter (2011), in his study on teacher educators in Scotland, and the historical trajectory of teacher education institutions in Scotland, concluded that there were four academic sub-tribes, and he suggested that for each of these different “sub-tribes”:

“As they develop their careers as teacher educators, the continuously changing institutional environment may create different pressures on them, some of these emerging as identity conflicts, even though they are all working within the same ‘territory’ of teacher education.” (p 293)

Regardless of the ‘tribe’ of teacher educators and whether university-based or school-based, teacher educators need to be able to be supported in the transitions in identity and into the roles of a teacher educator.

TEACHER EDUCATION IN SCOTLAND

Similar to many international contexts, teacher education in Scotland has been a focus of reform and change leading to, and certainly following the Donaldson (2011) review of teacher education, although as yet, Scotland has not gone down the route of non-university provision such as had happened in England (Beauchamp et. al. 2015; Ellis, 2010) or the USA (Zeichner, 2016).

Teacher education in Scotland began moving into the Universities in the early 1990’s, a process which continued over ten years and, since then, the role and expectations of teacher educators has been changing, influenced by professional requirements set by the GTCS, national (and international) policy agendas and the requirements of being an academic in a university.

Some of the influence of the GTCS has been noted earlier. The GTCS hold a key role as gatekeepers of the provision of the ITE programmes through the mandatory requirement that all teacher education courses leading to a teaching qualification for teaching in Scotland must be approved by the GTCS (GTCS, 2016). The guidelines for these programmes (GTCS, 2013) (currently being rewritten) specify the number of weeks for placements, particular content within the programmes related to meeting the standard for example the expectation of

² E.g. google scholar provides 1550 results for “teachers’ professional identities, whereas only 108 for “teacher educators’ professional identities”)

students meeting the standard for provisional registration (GTCS, 2012a) (also under review). Teacher educators must therefore be able to design curricula that meets both the professional expectations of the GTCS and the academic expectations and degree structures of the universities.

Further influences on teacher education programmes arise through the national policy agenda. For example, the Education and Skills Committee of the Scottish Parliament (2017) made a series of recommendations to the Scottish Government in relation to attracting and retaining teachers as part of an overall teacher workforce planning strategy for Scotland. Within this was a call “on the Scottish Government to work with the teacher training institutions and the General Teaching Council for Scotland to take urgent action to implement the necessary improvements to the teacher training programme in Scotland” (Scottish Parliament Education and Skills Committee, 2017, p 31). Over-looking the fact that there have not been “teacher training institutions” at least since the early 2000s, they were seeking to address retention of teachers through more local solutions - such as attracting potential teachers within the locality to make career changes to become teachers. An earlier report from the Scottish Government (a) (2017) set out reforms to be made in order to close the attainment gap through a ‘relentless focus on improving teaching and learning’ (p 1) (as recommended in the OECD, 2015 report, p11) to address the drop in performance noted in literacy and numeracy identified in different survey metrics (Scottish Survey of Literacy and Numeracy, and the Programme for International Student Assessment, PISA, 2015). Further policy directions from the Scottish Government led to the 2018 national improvement plan which cites evidence of:

“a wide variance in time spent on literacy, numeracy, health and wellbeing, equalities and data literacy across universities and programmes. It raises a question as to whether the level of variance is acceptable and whether steps should be taken in terms of course accreditation/quality assurance” (Scottish Government, 2017(b), p 33).

Their plan is to address this for instance, by tasking Education Scotland to work with the GTCS and universities to develop self-evaluation frameworks for ITE programmes.

The national political context impacts greatly on what is expected of ITE courses, and consequently of teacher educators who design and provide these courses to meet the required GTCS frameworks and other imperatives within Scottish Education. Teacher educators must therefore be able to navigate different professional and academic landscapes and critique the influences on teacher education whether international, national or local.

THE INFO-TED RESEARCH STUDY

This data presented here is part of a larger study conducted by the International Forum for Teacher Educator Development (InFo-TED, see <https://info-ted.eu/>) a group formed from twelve different Higher Education establishments from nine different countries, with a common goal and shared interest in the support and development of teacher educators. The InFo-TED study focused on the professional learning needs of university-based teacher educators. Czerniawski, Guberman & MacPhail (2016) have commented on the international analysis of the 1158 responses. In this paper, a more detailed analysis drawn from the InFo-TED

Scottish data is presented. This looks at the survey data from the 61 Scottish Higher Education teacher educators about their experiences, perceptions and needs with respect to their professional learning, and further insight from the follow-up in-depth interviews with 11 of the respondents, data which was gathered as part of the larger pan-European InFo-TED research.

METHODOLOGY

The overall study sought to address two research questions:

1. What professional learning activities do university-based teacher educators value?
2. How best can these activities be realized?

The study was a mixed method study consisting of pan-European InFo-TED survey of 1158 Higher Education-based teacher educators, of which 61 respondents were Scottish, followed by more in-depth interviews including 11 respondents from Scotland who had expressed a willingness to be interviewed.

The questionnaire and the follow-up interviews explored four areas: *Life as a Teacher Educator*, *Teacher Education and Research*, *Professional Learning Opportunities*; and *Demographic information*.

In the first section of the questionnaire, *Life as a Teacher Educator*, the respondents were asked to provide information about their professional context: which sector they worked in (University, College etc), length of time working as a teacher educator and whether they had worked as a teacher prior to being employed in teacher education. Following this they were asked to rank terms that they felt best described how they perceived their role.

The second section of the questionnaire, *Teacher Education and Research*, used the eighteen questions developed by Tack & Vanderlinde, (2014, 2016) to provide a profile of teacher educators' researcherly dispositions, in other words, the extent to which the respondents use / are "smart consumers" of research, "actively conduct" research and the extent to which they value their role as a "teacher educator-researcher". In addition a further nine options sought to find out what experience the respondents had of conducting research and scholarly activity.

The third area, *Professional Learning Opportunities*, probed the extent to which the respondents felt satisfied with the professional learning experiences they had had to date; what sorts of professional learning activities they most valued; the extent to which certain factors influenced their engagement in professional learning and to what extent they would like to receive further professional learning. Respondents were, in addition, asked to suggest what their two most important professional learning needs were and which professional learning opportunities would best meet those needs.

The last section of the questionnaire gathered, *Demographic information*, in relation; gender, age, employment status, academic qualification and teaching qualification (if any).

Eleven in-depth interviews were conducted and analysed, looking at the emergent themes in relation to professional needs and researcherly dispositions (based on Tack and Vanderlinde, 2014; 2016) adding insight to the teacher educator's value of research; being a 'smart consumer of research' (uses it in practice); is capable of conducting research into teacher education; and actively

conducts research to be a producer of research. This was conducted through a semi-structured interview which asked the respondents to talk about their pathway to becoming a teacher educator (demographics), their role as a teacher educator in their institution (life as a teacher educator), their engagement with and in research (as smart consumers of research and as active researchers), what their professional learning needs were and how these might best be provided (professional learning opportunities).

RESULTS

The analysis of the results give insight to the demographics / life as an educator, the researcherly dispositions, and the professional learning needs of university-based teacher educators in Scotland.

Demographics of the respondents [Life as a Teacher Educator]

Of the 61 responses to the survey the large majority were female (Male 21% Female 79%), which is probably reflective of, or is close to, the overall proportions in teacher education institutions. However, it is difficult to know exactly how representative this is of all the Scottish university-based teacher educators. The result of a public search on the online GTCS Register shows 129 registered teachers (44 male, 34%, 85 female, 66% female) categorised under 'teacher education institutions', but this may not be up-to-date, registrations may still be as a teacher in another sector, and it does not account for university teacher educators who are not registered with the GTCS.

The age distribution of survey respondents was also heavily skewed to the middle and upper age bracket with only around a quarter of the respondents being younger than 45 years of age and only 1 respondent was less than 35yrs. The largest age bracket was the 45-54 yrs (41%) with 30% of respondents in the 55-64 yrs age bracket. This is likely to be as a result of university-based teacher educators being recruited from staff in schools who will already have had several years of teaching experience before becoming academics in universities.

Nearly all the respondents were employed full-time (87%) on permanent contracts (89%) with fewer on part-time or fixed term contracts. 82% of the respondents were educated to at least Masters level (39%) with 43% of these having a doctorate. Most of the respondents had a teaching qualification (primary 53%, secondary 43% and FE 7%). Some of the respondents gave their teaching qualification as University (15%), it is unclear what this would refer to but it may be referring to fellowship of the Higher Education Academy. Having a response of over 100% suggests that some may have indicated qualifying in more than one sector.

All the teacher educators who responded to the questionnaire had posts in universities and had worked for a range of years as a teacher educator: from 1 to 30 years, the largest group having been in post for less than 15 years (47/61: 77%).

The interviewees were a sub-group of the questionnaire respondents, 3 male and 8 female respondents from 5 different Scottish Universities, 8 of whom had previously taught in schools, and one taught in further education colleges prior to becoming a teacher educator. The length of previous teaching in schools or the college settings ranged from 1 year to 15 years, and being a teacher educator /

lecturer in the university ranged from 5 years to 18 years, with teacher education responsibilities spanning across Primary and Secondary ITE programmes, college ITE qualification and in-service programmes such as Masters level CPD courses. Four of the interviewees noted that they had doctoral level qualifications (although not all were education / social science doctorates); one was working towards a doctorate, another had started in a doctoral programme but had to stop; one was working towards a Masters; and one was unknown.

Teacher Educators Professional Identities

The questionnaire respondents were asked to rank the following with respect to how they viewed their role in teacher education.

The percentages ranking the roles as “1” i.e. that which *best* describes their role was: Teacher Educator/Trainer (41%), Academic/Scholar (31%), Teacher (21%), Mentor (3%), Researcher (3%).

If ranks “1” and “2” are combined the rank order remains the same with “researcher” being slightly edged out by “mentor” Teacher Educator/Trainer (71%), Academic/Scholar (52%), Teacher (39%), Mentor (19%), Researcher (18%).

Perhaps what might be seen as an issue is that one in five of the teacher educators identified their role with that of being a teacher. This may reflect some of the difficulties of transition from one identity to another which is sometimes cited as being difficult in teacher education. As stated by Dinkelman, Margolis, & Sikkenga (2006):

“Even if one becomes a teacher educator at the moment one begins working as a teacher educator, one’s professional identity as a teacher educator is constructed over time. Developing an identity and a set of successful practices in teacher education is best understood as a process of becoming. Although the work of teaching has much in common with the work of teacher education, the two positions are significantly different in important ways” (p6).

One of the interview respondents offered further insight as to identifying their role as a teacher:

“I’m a teacher and we are a profession so from my perspective it’s important that we are research-informed... it’s part of my professional identity.” (SP4)

Whilst identifying as a teacher, the respondent also saw this as linking to research and later in the interview spoke of being a contributor to the research and not just a consumer.

Another of the interview responses highlighted some of the complexities or multifaceted nature of the role which may also have influenced the category chosen:

“to me there’s such an overlap between the different facets of my job because being a good teacher educator is tied up with the research that I do with the public engagement, it’s tied up with the practical experience so it’s a whole range of different things so I’ve tended to not particularly compartmentalise these things” (SP1)

Whilst the survey showed that a number of respondents opted to categorise themselves as teachers and not researchers, the interviews add a sense of

perceiving research as an intertwined aspect of different facets of being a teacher educator.

Teacher Educators' dispositions towards research

It would be misleading to suggest that research is not important to the respondents because it does not rank as high as the other options in the survey. While most of the respondents did not actively describe themselves as “researchers”, but saw themselves as “teacher educators”, the research aspect of this role still plays a significant part in their professional roles and identities.

The questionnaire set out groups of questions to ask respondents the extent to which they agreed with a number of questions regarding research (based on Tack & Vanderlinde, 2014, 2016): their experiences with research/scholarly activity; their use of research; whether they conducted research; and to what extent they valued their role as a teacher-educator-researcher. These are examined more closely in the following sections.

Experiences with research / scholarly activity

The *experiences with research* section explored the types of activities that the teacher educators had with scholarly / research activity.

TABLE 1: SCOTTISH TEACHER EDUCATORS' EXPERIENCES WITH RESEARCH/SCHOLARLY ACTIVITY

		%	N
1	I have actively been involved in research (gathering data) and written about my findings	75.4	46
2	As a member of a team I have gathered research data but not been involved in writing up the findings	29.5	18
3	I have no experience of gathering research data	13.1	8
4	I am involved in scholarly research (e.g. reading to prepare for lessons, lectures)	91.8	56
5	I have written book reviews	50.8	31
6	I have edited journals/magazines/books	26.2	16
7	I have written textbooks and/or chapters (e.g. for teachers, students, 'academics')	55.7	34
8	I have written support materials for colleagues (e.g. teaching “tips” and other resources.	57.4	35
9	Other (please specify)	16.4	10

The “other” examples in teacher educators’ experiences of research and scholarly activity were:

- Developed a research-informed postgraduate course for teachers in schools who support their colleagues' professional learning.
- Have written academic journal articles; have designed research projects and led research teams
- I have been in post for such a short time, this is an area of development for me.
- I have used research as a basis for CPD workshops
- International funded research projects
- Journal selector
- online case studies eg for JISC RSC, including short video

Further insight to the engagement with research was given by the interviewees who spoke almost matter of fact about using research as a way ensuring that their teaching was research-informed, drawing from publications as a routine part of preparing learning experiences, and going beyond that to challenge their own thinking.

“If I’m looking for something ... I’ll quickly go on the internet to see if somebody is writing about something I’m interested in or have workshop materials” (SP1)

“everything is based on reading of research because nothing is a whim ... google scholar is aflame most of the time as I just have to keep knowing more and more” (SP 7)

“I follow quite a lot of people online apart from reading journals etc okay I think I take that as a given I keep myself up-to-date with what is current....I like reading people who make me think sociologically and philosophically about the professions and about my behaviours and why I behave the way I do” (SP4)

This supports the high percentage (91.8%) involved in scholarly research (table 1) indicating the ways in which teacher educators engage in research.

Users of research (smart consumers of research)

Looking at the degree to which a teacher educator uses research, a group of questions (table 2) were used to categorise using research as “smart consumer of research (behavioural and cognitive dimension” and assessed the degree to which a teacher educator uses existing research to inform his/her practice (on a score from 0 to 5).

TABLE 2: THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS CONCERN THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE RESPONDENTS USED RESEARCH.

	[Strongly Agree]	(Agree+Strongly agree)
I am familiar with research concerning the education of future teachers	47.5	86
My teaching is informed by research	62.3	93
I often read research articles in educational journals	57.4	82
I am inclined to use research literature to solve problems in my teaching practice	29.5	69
I know how to use research as a teacher educator	59	88
I attend research conferences and seminars and keep up to date	37.7	69

One of the interview respondents cited key authors: Marilyn Cochran-Smith, Linda Darling-Hammond and Jean Murray when talking of the research that was used to inform practice but most spoke more generally of using research from journals, or other sources, to inform their teaching. There was strong sense of being “smart consumers” of research.

Actively conducts research

Another group of questions (table 3) related to the extent to which the teacher educator conducts research (behavioural and cognitive dimension), assessed the degree to which a teacher educator is actively conducting research, and the extent to which a teacher educator thinks he/she is capable of conducting research into teacher education.

TABLE 3: THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS CONCERN THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE RESPONDENTS ACTIVELY CONDUCTED RESEARCH.

	[Strongly Agree]	(Agree+Strongly agree)
I am capable of presenting and sharing my own research results with other teacher educators	44.3	72
I conduct research in order to develop knowledge relevant to other teacher educators	32.8	68
I see myself as someone who is capable of conducting research	41	80
I have experience with conducting research to improve my own teaching practice	29.5	79
I present at conferences and seminars to share my own research results	39.3	60
I conduct research to improve my own practice	31.1	74

Whilst 80% of the questionnaire respondents agreed / strongly agreed that they were research capable and 79% agreed/strongly agreed that they had experienced conducting research to improve their own teaching, the interviews highlighted that this was not without contention. At least two of the interviewees raised questions over what the employing university *counted* as research.

“what I’d like to do is start with how the university defines research and at the moment what it looks for in research is people to hold grants from research institutions or people to be writing for educational journals which are a three or a four-star rating now that’s quite a high bar for research ...” (SP8)

“I have written fifteen or sixteen textbooks but that is not valued in terms of publication output.” (SP6)

The survey and the interview responses suggest that many were capable of research, and indeed got involved in research in different ways, but that this did not always translate to research output expected of an active researcher in the university. The interviewees commented on the tensions between the teaching elements of their role and the time to be research active. This lack of opportunity to be an active researcher was quite a contentious aspect, with barriers to creating research identified as a result of the expected teaching workload or the role for which they were employed by the university. This was a clear source of frustration. For example, when asked about being encouraged to engage in research the workload or other priorities became a constraint:

“Well we are not at all actually, we are simply not, ehm we don’t actually ...I’d like to research but I’m unable to do because of the restraints placed on me by management

and my colleagues” (SP7)

“I have gathered data and not written it up so I’m quite good at actually gathering but I’m not so good at actually doing something with it.... I just had to prioritise teaching and because on the teaching contract that we had here – they’ve changed the name but I think they haven’t changed the contract - we are expected to do a much higher percentage of teaching than anybody else and a more limited number of hours in scholarship and because of the way in which our full-time staff permanent numbers have gone” (SP3)

“Virtually not really supported very much in that respect we tend to have a very high teaching / administration” (SP6)

However, this contrasts with other interviewees SP2, and SP1, who considered that they were clearly expected to have research:

“there are expectations from the university management ... I have to research.” (SP2)

“it’s in my job descriptor, and it’s fundamental... It’s there in black and white, I have a responsibility to carryout research and write it up”. (SP1)

This difference in opportunity of being active in research will relate to the type of role contribution that an individual has as a university-based teacher educator.

Despite the differences in expectations of roles or what counted as research, the interviewees spoke of creating research, engaging in research in relation to aspects of their role or expertise and looking to create a publication *“but it might not be a three star level”*. One spoke of working with a colleague in another area of the university, *“a leading expert”* in a particular field to explore and share at a conference aspects of the curriculum that were being taught incorrectly, and another who worked with the local authority to explore innovative practices in using digital spaces, which was taken to a wider international audience. The teacher educators created opportunities to undertake research and scholarship that related to, and contributed to, practice in and around their domains of interest. They spoke of being capable of research, being research active, at times, but noted that the type of research activity might not be in alignment with the university requirements of active researchers.

VALUED THE ROLE AS A TEACHER-EDUCATOR-RESEARCHER

A further group of questions in the questionnaire concerned the extent to which the respondents valued research as a teacher educator (affective dimension) and assessed the degree to which a teacher educator esteems research-oriented approaches towards his/her daily practice, to recognise his/her role as a researcher. The questionnaire responses (table 4) had a high level of agreement with the statements related to valuing research as part of the role which echoes the interview responses of engaging in research as a given part of the job. However, this was not without some tension in the role, as previously indicated. One of the interviewee’s responses highlights the tension between the expectations and the reality of engaging in research which impacted on the sense of value.

“Well, I would value it a lot more if the university valued it, if you weren’t asked to do so much work as administration and teaching, if there actually was realistic amounts

of time for you to do that sort of thing, I think in an ideal world it's a fantastic idea, there's nothing to beat it ...I'm a bit neuralgic about the world of research because it's something held over you that you've got to do but it's not always easy to say that you've been given the time to do it" (SP8)

TABLE 4: THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS CONCERN THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE RESPONDENTS VALUED THEIR ROLE AS A TEACHER EDUCATOR-RESEARCHER.

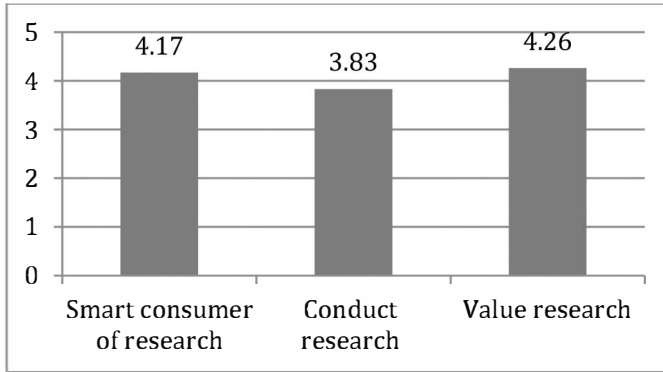
	[Strongly Agree]	(Agree+Strongly agree)
Teacher educators should regularly conduct research to improve their practice	45.9	80
Research is essential for the teacher education profession	57.4	87
Teacher educators should conduct research to contribute to the wider knowledge base on teacher education	49.2	82
Teacher educators should conduct research to investigate their own beliefs and practices about teaching, learning and education	47.5	84
Teacher educators have a responsibility towards their students to study their own practice	60.7	92
I understand why teacher educators are expected to conduct research	50.8	85

The groups of questions within the questionnaire provide an indication of the teacher educators' researcherly disposition, as defined by Tack & Vanderlinde (2014):

“our definition of ‘teacher educators’ researcherly disposition’ is the habit of mind to engage in research and thus to produce both local knowledge and public knowledge on teacher education. This researcherly disposition embodies three interrelated aspects: an ability to conduct research; a sensitivity to research occasions; and an inclination towards research.” (p.301)

Analysing the data as described by (Tack & Vanderlinde, 2016), from which the questionnaire items were derived, the researcherly dispositions of the respondents indicates a high level of understanding and acknowledgement of the importance of research in their role see fig 1.

FIG.1 THE RESEARCHERLY DISPOSITIONS OF SCOTTISH TEACHER EDUCATORS.



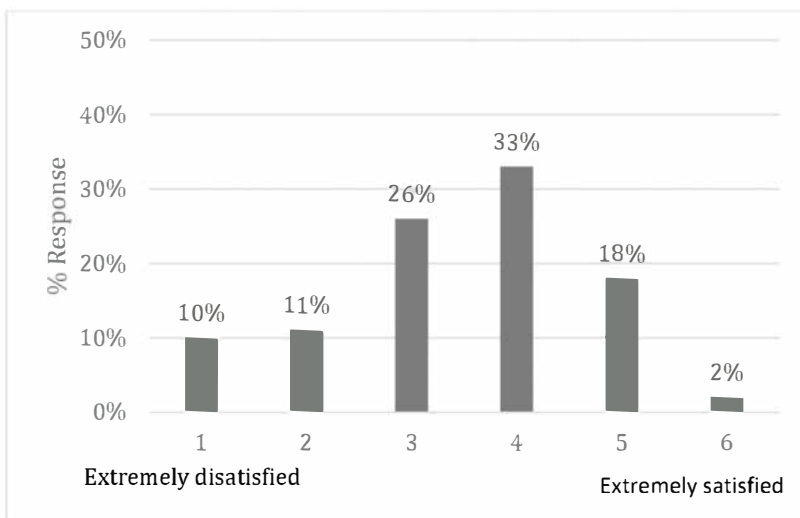
Whilst the Tack and Vanderline (2014) looked at the researcherly dispositions of Scottish teacher educators, the survey also sought their views on their professional learning needs.

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING NEEDS

Professional Learning Opportunities

Figure 2 below shows the summary responses to the question “As a teacher educator, to what extent are personally satisfied with their professional learning opportunities you have experienced to date”. Responses reveal that there is room for improvement as 21% opted for the low end of the satisfaction scale (1 or 2) and 20% at the upper end (5 or 6). The level of dissatisfaction was echoed in the interview responses where when asked about the level of satisfaction: “most dissatisfied”, “very dissatisfied” whilst other responses were “fairly satisfied” or “quite satisfied” with higher levels of satisfaction being related to self-determination of professional learning opportunities.

FIGURE 2: LEVEL OF SATISFACTION



The professional learning activities that were most valued (rated 5 or 6) were personal reading (89%) and informal learning conversations with other colleagues (75%), with around 56% also valuing other activities such as action research, having a secondment or sabbatical, or visiting other schools or teacher education institutions or 'other forms of research' although in the questionnaire responses very little was offered to exemplify what 'other forms' would be (one respondent noted co-researching with students). Whilst conversations with peers were highly valued, the least valued activities were related to peers - observations by colleagues (30%) and peer coaching (31%) and award bearing courses also seem to be less favourable as a professional learning option (32%).

The questionnaire result draws attention to the self-determined professional learning of teacher educators. One of the interviewees highlighted different ways in which self-determined professional learning is enacted, and reflected responses given by others:

"My own professional learning opportunities are the ones that I seek for myself. So the trips I take to the library, ... the conversations I have with people interested in my own field... so they are not given to me, I go out and create them for myself, that's my professional development. I read other people's papers, the one's that I admire, the people that I like the way they write, the people that I have respect for and I try to engage with them as much as possible, keep the relationships going because there is an element of exchange with those people. So that's what I do, my professional learning is in terms of the networks that I have created so I go out of my way to try and keep them going." (SP2)

When specifically asked about which areas they would like to receive further professional learning, specialism in academic administration received the lowest response (11%) whilst only 20% indicated that they would like further professional learning in presenting and participating at conferences, and 23% on reviewing journals or conference abstracts etc. Of more interest was to have further professional learning in relation to current developments in teacher education (54%); "researching my own practice" (48%); academic writing (40%) with less than a third of respondents identifying coaching and mentoring of student teachers as an area for development (29%).

When contrasted with the researcherly dispositions discussed above, there is an indication then that whilst the participants valued their role as a teacher educator-researcher (table 4) there is still a need for further professional learning relating to knowing more about teacher education and researching practice as a teacher educator. This is confirmed by the open responses of participants when asked to note two "most important research needs" when the largest responses referred to the need for professional learning related to publishing or academic writing (21 responses) and research skills (15 responses). Specific examples were given such as "develop my writing for publication", "turning interesting initiatives ... into research 'output'", "developing research skills" or "advanced research methods" being requested.

A potential constraint to this is the need to secure time to focus on developing and engaging in research activities with respondents noting the need for "more time to focus on research" and "further time to engage in scholarly activity" or "time to read and time to write". The interviewees highlighted the tensions in finding this

time, particularly where the emphasis on the work-load was for teaching, rather than scholarship or research.

However, a further constraint could be in the transition to becoming a teacher educator. As two of the interviewees noted:

“I think there is still a problem with recognition that teacher education is something that you need to learn how to do rather than it being something that you can do if you are a teacher.” (SP8)

“I think there are some quite significant issues in teaching in Higher Education that are different from teaching in schools and that was a I think that was something we had to get our heads around as ex-teachers becoming teacher educators” (SP3)

The multifaceted nature of a teacher educator probably requires greater surfacing and exploration in order to fully address the professional learning needs of teacher educators.

DISCUSSION

There is supportive evidence that Teacher Educators in higher education settings in Scotland are minimally ‘smart consumers of research’ and that there is a desire to be doing more in terms of conducting research. The researchly dispositions are evident, yet there is still an identified need to consider how the professional learning opportunities can be created to further enhance the research skills and confidence to support conducting research, including getting the research to the public domain through output.

Tack and Vanderlinde (2014: 314) assert that developing the researcherly disposition requires “teacher educators to intentionally study their practice and make explicit the developed knowledge on a local and public level”. Whilst there was an implied lack of confidence in their research skills, including writing for publication or output, and a lack of time for research, there is a need to ensure that there is no disassociation between being a consumer and a producer of research to further inform practice.

In the Scottish context, there are clear expectations of teachers engaging in and with research within the GTCS professional standards for teachers, and whilst the use of standards as a measure of competency is contested (Torrance & Ford, 2016) these are the standards to which teacher educators need to adhere if they are to maintain their professional registration with the GTCS. For example, the Standards for Registration (GTCS, 2012a) has the expectation that teachers:

“Read, and critically engage with professional literature, educational research and policy.” (p 18)

and the Standards for Career-long Professional Learning state a key area of “enquiry and research” which requires all teacher to:

“develop and apply expertise, knowledge, understanding and skills to engage in practitioner enquiry to inform pedagogy, learning and subject knowledge; lead and participate in collaborative practitioner enquiry.” (GTCS, 2012b: 10)

However, research capacity building around practice is only one aspect of being a teacher-educator-researcher. There is a need to ensure that teacher educators are enabled to critique the professional, academic and political landscapes of teacher education and to contribute an informed voice to the various communities that influence and shape teacher education.

The opportunities that arise from being involved in other networks or communities, and learning from others' experiences and perceptions is something that is valued by the teacher educators in their self-determined professional learning. Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner (2015) build on the earlier work of Lave and Wenger, in and around communities of practice.

“The social body of knowledge is not a single community of practice..... the ‘body of knowledge’ of a profession is best understood as a landscape or practice consisting of a complex system of communities of practice and the boundaries between them.” (Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner, 2015: 13).

In a professional learning context – this social theory of learning within and at the boundaries of communities of practice offers a way of considering the spaces required, and travelled through, for teacher educators as they engage in their different networks and communities. If we can consider educators as multiple communities of practice, which by design and by chance, get to meet at the boundaries to reshape and inform new practice, then these networks afford opportunities for working with others and can become key aspects of professional learning.

However, this study has uncovered some of the professional learning needs and tensions for teacher educators in higher education, with a particular focus on researcherly dispositions. A large area for further research is the professional learning needs of school-based teacher educators, and their support in becoming teacher educators, which most likely will need to go beyond mentoring and coaching or having researcherly dispositions. At a time when there are many different pathways to becoming a teacher, and a wide range of people involved as teacher educators, there is also then an imperative to take a closer examination of the varying facets of the role of teacher educators in different contexts and the professional learning needs that this will entail.

CONCLUSION

The interview participants added further insight into the earlier survey. The desire for professional learning is strong, the willingness to engage with research (which goes beyond the ‘mandatory GTCS professional standards) and the professional learning benefits of being in networks with others is surfaced. However, there are barriers to be addressed such as the real tension between different facets of the role, the angst of trying to meet competing demands between teaching, administration and research / scholarly activity, or having contributions that are not perceived as valuable (from some perspectives). Whilst there is recognition that a teacher educator requires a different skillset and knowledge to that of a class teacher, how this might best be developed requires further careful consideration. There are benefits from engaging with others and developing professional insights, skills and practice, but these are often self-selected opportunities that arise

by chance.

How then do we identify and shape new professional learning landscapes that can remain fluid, flexible and as dynamic as possible for all communities of teacher educators to gain from these, especially if all teachers are teacher educators? Lunenberg et. al. (2016) highlight that professional learning of teacher educators is impacted by the teacher educator's professional stance (their own belief), the local contexts (the school or educational setting that they are in), the national context and international contexts and imperatives. For teacher educators in Scotland, whether university-based or school-based, we still need to know more about how best to create the opportunities to research our practice as a public endeavor, challenge our personal professional stance, and critique the landscapes that shape our practice.

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