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CONSTRUCTING TEACHER RESEARCH IDENTITY: INSIGHTS FROM ARGENTINA

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this conceptual article is to discuss and illustrate the relationship between teacher research and teacher identity in language education. The main assumption is that teacher research, characterised by systematic reflections and agency, can contribute to cementing teacher identity. To this effect, in this article we discuss teacher research preparation, engagement, and promotion drawing on examples from higher education in Argentina. The examples outline how teacher research is (1) approached and included in initial English language teacher education programmes, (2) promoted among in-service teachers through short courses or postgraduate programmes, and (3) implemented with teacher educators in order to increase agency and engagement in research-based curriculum transformations. It is argued that through the various initiatives described, educational associations, institutions and organisations around the world can help teachers develop their teacher research identity. Through a teacher research identity, teachers may become stronger reflective practitioners, curriculum designers, researchers, authors, and above all generators of situated knowledge and context-responsive pedagogies.

KEYWORDS: teacher research; teacher identity; engagement; reflection; professional development.

1. INTRODUCTION

According to Stapleton (2018), "teachers are the vanguards of learning for subsequent generations, introducing all of us to worlds of new ideas, from the arts and sciences to the humanities and social sciences" (p.1) One road which teachers can take to maintain that status of being vanguards and furthering the legitimacy of the profession is that of research, carried out by them in their educational context. Carvajal-Tapia (2017) suggests that the combination of teaching and researching helps narrow the knowledge gap between countries and regions, and in the current educational rhetoric, teacher-researchers are seen as updated and curious promoters of problem-based learning (Assen, Meijers, Otting, & Poell, 2016).

In the field of language teaching, teacher research has been defined as "systematic self-study by teachers (individually or collaboratively) which seeks to achieve real-world im-

pact of some kind and is made public" (Borg & Sanchez, 2015, p. 1) and it may include different approaches to doing it such as action research (Banegas & Villacañas de Castro, in press; Burns, 2010; Dikilitaş & Griffiths, 2017), exploratory practice (Hanks, 2017a, 2017b), and exploratory action research (Smith, 2015; Smith & Rebolledo, 2018). Teachers who engage in teacher research refer to "their be(com)ing as researchers as a contextualized form of finding recognition (or being legitimated) that is personal, but also collegial, and institutional" (Burns, 2017a, p. 134).

While the literature is robust in terms of discussing the features, benefits, experiences, and links between theory and practice of teacher research through accessible discourse (e.g., Mackay, Birello & Xerri, 2018; Xerri & Pioquinto, 2018), there is a paucity of publications which discuss and document the implications of teacher research preparation, promotion, and engagement in relation to teacher identity. In preparation for this conceptual and reflective article we asked ourselves: How is language teacher identity reconfigured through the processes of preparation, promotion, and engagement with research in the trajectories of teachers? We set out to answer this question by drawing examples and practices from Argentina since it is the context where we, the authors of this article, develop our professional practices.

2. TEACHER IDENTITY AND TEACHER RESEARCH

It is agreed that identity as a concept is complex to grasp and investigate given the multiplicity of factors which gravitate to it (Norton, 2013). In a theoretical article on identity, Esteban Guitart (2014) draws a distinction between identity as a cognitive, personal and individual phenomenon, and identity as a cultural and social process. In language education, identity as an individual phenomenon can be found in definitions such as "a person's sense of themselves as a discrete separate individual, including their self-image and their awareness of self" (Richards, 2015, p. 740). On the other hand, identity understood as a social practice can be illustrated through Abdenia's (2012) definition: "identity is a highly dynamic construct which changes as a result of individuals' interactions with others in the environment" (p. 714). It must be stressed that identity is not an either/or attribution; in fact, Norton (2016) discusses identity in language education as being at the intersection of individual traits and notions of self-image in constant interaction with society. What Norton indicates is that identity is the combination of self-image and perceptions of how others see us. In this regard, Sinha and Hanuscin (2017) define identity not only as an individual's image of oneself but also as "the perception of others and the way one is recognised in any given context" (p. 357).

Such complementary views on identity usually inform the notion of teacher identity. Definitions of teacher identity stress the processual nature of developing within the profession and the phases individuals may undergo from being student-teachers (e.g., Sarasa & Solís, 2017) to novice teachers to experienced teachers (e.g., Kanno & Stuart, 2011) taking different roles, such as practitioners, teacher educators, or curriculum developers, over their education career (e.g., Woodward, Graves, & Freeman, 2018). In this article, we conceptualise teacher identity as a dynamic construct, both individual and social (Esteban

Guitart, 2014; Norton, 2016), to refer to the complex, unstable, and always-shifting process which amalgamates personal and professional beliefs and experiences of becoming and being a teacher (Abdenia, 2012; Barkhuizen, 2017; Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Beijaard, Meijer, & Verloop, 2004; Henry, 2016; Reeves, 2018).

In this contribution we are interested in stimulating discussion on how language teacher identity enters a symbiotic relationship with teacher research to help teachers become reflective practitioners. If teacher identity is a process that unfolds during the professional trajectory of teachers, teacher research could be present in pre-service/initial language teacher education, novice teaching, and continuous professional development to systematise reflections on teachers' professional practices. Our point of departure is our belief that the identity of teachers as researchers is concomitant to teachers as reflective practitioners (Bezerra Fagundes, 2016). We believe that by following an approach such as AR, teachers may carry out a self-reflective and systematic approach to analysing their own educational contexts to acknowledge aspects of their teaching and learning process that need to be revised. However, as Edwards and Burns (2016a) assert, while AR can contribute to teacher-researchers' sense of independence and identity as reflective practitioners, it can also be "destabilizing, leading to unpredictable shift in identity as teachers encounter research, often for the first time" (p.736). Thus, to build a teacher research identity, teachers need to be guided and supported from the early stages of their initial English language teacher education (IELTE) programmes into their in- service teacher education.

In such a constellation of definitions and approximations, teacher research may emerge from teachers' own curiosity and reflective inquiry on their own practices (Farrell, 2018; Kostoulas, 2017; Mann & Walsh, 2017). Despite limitations such as lack of time or little exposure to published research (Marsden & Kasprowicz, 2017), teachers who engage in teacher research further develop reflection which contributes to an identity where teachers systematise their reflections through research and exert greater agency in their professional practices.

In the sections which follow, we have selected higher education in the provinces of Chubut and Córdoba in Argentina, to describe and discuss language teacher research carried out with pre-service teachers, in-service teachers, and teacher educators. Drawing on these experiences, we reflect on how language teacher identity may be reconfigured through reflection, research preparation, promotion, and engagement.

3. TEACHER RESEARCH IN THREE IELTE PROGRAMMES IN ARGENTINA

IELTE programmes may include instances of research that promote teacher research engagement among student-teachers (e.g., Abdallah, 2017). Our focus in this section is on teacher research and IELTE in Argentina and we reflect particularly on student-teacher identity construction as (future) teacher-researchers drawing on three different contexts. In order to provide a context for this discussion, we first outline the structure of higher education and recent policies in Argentina. IELTE programmes are offered by tertiary and university institutions. Tertiary institutions offer a four-year programme that allows graduates to teach in primary and secondary school settings. Universities, on the other hand, offer a

five-year programme that provides graduates with the opportunity to teach at all levels of the educational system, from kindergarten to higher education. Research is given space with different levels of importance in both types of institutions.

In 1995 the Argentinian government passed the Law of Higher Education, Law 24,521, in which the identity of the teacher as a researcher was favoured. This law has produced a change in the way teachers who work in higher education perceive their own professional identity in a fast developing and changing landscape. More recently, Article 72 of the 26, 206 National Law of Education establishes that educational research is a function that higher education institutions must include as constitutive of their aims, profile, and actions. The law also encourages the development and implementation of research projects on teaching and learning processes to promote reflection, links between practice and theory, and innovation in different educational contexts. In this context, educational research becomes necessary in order to recognise the professional territory, systematise experiences, create knowledge, influence practice, and develop autonomy as well as professional responsibility (Pievi & Bravin, 2009).

Accordingly, further agreements recommend the development of an educational research department in all teacher education institutions through which research is promoted among teacher educators, together with the possible inclusion of a module on educational research in teaching programmes. Considering the IELTE landscape, students' opportunities to become acquainted with research vary depending on the institution where they pursue their course of studies: tertiary institutions or universities. In this section, we will refer to two tertiary institutions located in different provinces of Argentina and one university where we currently teach.

At tertiary institutions, IELTE may include a research in ELT module. For example, in the province of Chubut, IELTE programmes offer, among other modules devoted to general knowledge, content knowledge, and pedagogical content knowledge (Banegas, 2014), two mandatory two-term modules: (1) Educational Research (delivered in Spanish and focused on general education), and (2) Research in ELT (delivered in English and focused on pedagogical content knowledge). For the purposes of this article, we will discuss the second module.

Research in ELT is a module in the fourth year of the programme and it acts as a catalyst or convergence space in which student-teachers reflect and examine issues around the processes of ELT in primary and secondary education as well as their own processes of becoming teachers (Banegas, 2017). The module also articulates with the Practicum; therefore, puzzles, questions, issues, and reflections that arise during the practicum experience are discussed in the Research in ELT module. In this module, student-teachers carry out their first research project, albeit small-scale, in their trajectory as (future) teachers and write a report following the format and style of articles published in the *ELT Journal*. In this module, identity is featured prominently. For example, according to the syllabus at one institution, the main aim of the module is to develop an investigative-reflective attitude to strengthen a teacher-researcher identity. Furthermore, Unit 1 of such a syllabus includes teacher-researcher identity and how to systematise reflections as part of the contents.

The focus on identity as briefly described above appears to indicate that there is an interest in expanding teacher identity (Banegas, 2017). Namely, student-teachers are invited to

reflect on what being a teacher means and that the process of becoming a teacher is not only limited to, for example, planning and delivering lessons, but it can encompass research to inform teachers' situated practices. It should be noted that although teacher research in this module does not emerge from the student-teachers' own interest, the mandatory nature of the module does help them explore uncharted territories and develop an inquisitive attitude to reflecting on and improving their professional practices by selecting one particular issue they would like to examine closely.

So far, we have described teacher research in IELTE in Chubut. The situation in tertiary institutions in Córdoba differs from the one described above since there are no modules devoted completely to research and student-teachers do not have any hands-on experience in this field. The IELTE curriculum delineated in Córdoba at tertiary institutions establishes that research should be taught across different modules. In the case of Teaching Practice, the curriculum suggests that teacher educators should include instances of ethnographic research using different tools suitable to carry out qualitative research. In other modules, namely Teaching Methodology, student-teachers are invited to read research papers with the help of the teacher educator, be able to recognise the sections of a research paper, and establish meaningful connections between the content information presented and successful classroom practice. The curriculum strongly favours the teaching and analysis of qualitative research while there is no explicit mention of a quantitative paradigm or mixed methods. Furthermore, recommendations to work with research are scattered across the curriculum unsystematically and there is no grading of content or skills that student-teachers need to learn as they progress towards the completion of their degree.

The main effect of the way in which these IELTE programmes in Córdoba are built is that they project a narrow conceptualisation of teacher identity (Borg, 2017). Teacher identity is configured in terms of the activities teachers generally perform in the classroom. The lists and description of modules are evidence that pedagogy is at the core of each programme; thus, the main focus of these programmes is on instructional matters such as lesson planning and classroom management. In turn, this restricted focus on pedagogy makes it hard for student-teachers to appropriate the notion of multifaceted teacher identity that not only underpins a pedagogical but also a research dimension. In this scenario, tertiary IELTE programmes in Córdoba are failing to provide future teachers with the possibility of conceiving themselves as generators of knowledge (Borg, 2017; Xu, 2017) by learning about and carrying out research with the help of mentors, and pondering the implications research can have in the development of their teacher identity.

In contrast to these tertiary institutions, universities offer more opportunities to develop research since university programmes may require student-teachers to pursue two modules related to research. For example, in the IELTE programme at Universidad Nacional de Córdoba, the first module is carried out in Spanish and its main purpose is to inform student-teachers about research design and data collection methods to carry out small scale research. Student-teachers also write a brief report following the format of a research paper set by the National Scientific and Technical Research Council (CONICET in Spanish), in charge of coordinating most of the scientific and technical research done in universities. In some universities, student-teachers are presented with two elective research related modules: research in linguistics and research in literature. Apart from these modules, student-

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teachers can also learn how to carry out quality research by joining a research group. Research groups provide them with a nurturing environment in which they acquire the knowledge and the skills necessary to perform research in the area of linguistics, second language acquisition and literature by working hand in hand with more experienced researchers who guide student-teachers through their readings, the academic writing process, and their selection of high-quality academic events. These research schemes tend to be funded by higher education grants; thus, student-teachers may receive a stipend to attend different academic events as speakers, which opens up their opportunities to have their works published. In turn, participation in research groups and academic events and their publications help student-teachers become strong candidates for scholarships or faculty posts.

The research initiatives implemented in university IELTE at Universidad Nacional de Córdoba could be seen as an attempt to contribute to the formation of a teacher research identity. However, as Borg (2017) points out, those initiatives fail in this pursuit as the focus of most modules revolves around the teaching of technical elements such as research design and research collection instruments. Little is said about the connections between research, reflective teaching, and teaching identity. In addition, research tends to be perceived by student-teachers as restricted to research modules because inquiry-based activities are not consistently included across different modules of the programme. Consequently, the lack of systematicity of research teaching and learning in IELTE does not foster the construction of a teacher research identity but legitimises a reductionist perspective of teacher identity which only see teachers as practitioners or as subjects of research rather than as researchers in their own right. Student-teachers can perceive research as having a utilitarian value such as to ensure that teachers will be able to hold their posts or seize other educational opportunities such as obtaining scholarships. It is likely that, most of the time, the focus of the modules is more on theoretical research than on action research and that few connections are fostered with modules on the teaching practicum. This view may prevent student-teachers from perceiving themselves as researchers in their own classrooms and capturing the transformative potential that research can have to inform their (future) practice.

4. TEACHER RESEARCH WITH IN-SERVICE TEACHERS

Teachers with an initial qualification in English language teaching may continue their studies through continuous professional development opportunities usually framed as short courses, a qualification in English language teaching to adults (DELTA), and MA programme, or even a doctorate degree. A brief glance at the literature shows that experiences and courses around teacher research seem to be more robust with in-service teachers (e.g., Burns, Dikilitaş, Smith, & Wyatt, 2017; Dikilitaş & Mumford, 2018; Smith & Rebolledo, 2018) as they have teaching experience and face specific issues they would like to understand and act upon.

The inclusion of teacher research with in-service teachers seems to assist professional development by encouraging deeper teacher reflection. As illustrative cases, we briefly

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summarise three studies which illustrate how in-service teachers can experience teacher research to systematise reflections. Perrett (2003) reports on an eight-week in-service course with EFL teachers through which they were introduced to AR. The participants assessed the experience as invigorating and valued the potential that reflection could have on systematising their informed decisions. Phipps (2015) reports on the case of an in-service language teacher education programme in which DELTA and an MA course were integrated. The integrated programme included action research, exploratory/reflective practice, and classroom research, all assessed through different assignments throughout the course. Teachers who completed the course pointed out that they had become more reflective and critical of their own teaching practices and beliefs. Kasula (2015) discusses his own journey with AR in an MA programme which combined AR with the practicum experience. The author developed an AR plan triggered by a critical incident in one of his lessons. He found that AR transformed his teaching since through systematic reflection and action he felt more confident in managing, preparing, and teaching a class.

In Argentina, teacher research is included in in-service teacher short courses, *licenciaturas* (university programmes aimed at upgrading degrees from tertiary institutions to university level), and post-graduate opportunities such as MA programmes and above. Short courses which promote research in ELT are usually offered by teacher associations and ministries of education and they range from four weeks to blended courses over a complete academic year. Their aim is to help teachers develop research literacy and academic writing skills for publication and to submit abstracts for conferences in the country and region. These opportunities reinforce the notion that teachers can develop research skills which come to invigorate reflective practice, innovation, and context-responsive pedagogies. They also emphasise the social nature of the profession and that a research culture may add cohesion to professional communities of practice in ELT. Nonetheless, Burns (2017b) is cautious about supporting teachers' action research solely through short courses. The author recalls a teacher saying that teacher development programmes should be "long term, interactive, and suitable to our needs" (p. 33). Thus, we agree that longer initiatives should be developed in order to support teachers meaningfully and with sustainability in mind.

While such courses may be superficial or recipe-like, they may encourage teachers to pursue a teacher-research identity under the conviction that their practices will be updated and critically informed. However, there are no formal incentives to sustain their research engagement. In Argentina, teachers are not provided with a budget or bibliographical resources; neither are they allowed to reduce their teaching load to engage in research. In relation to identity construction, the underlying philosophy is that teachers interested in doing research should employ their own resources and personal time to expand their professional identity. In other words, teacher research is formally encouraged by employers but they do not support that encouragement with tangible resources, extra salary, or time. It seems to be believed that research depends on teachers' willingness, commitment, and devotion outside their teaching contract. Thus, it could be concluded that institutional authorities believe that teaching is a purely vocational activity and that teacher identity is purely driven by vocation.

In the case of *licenciaturas* in Argentina, teachers have to complete a mandatory module on educational research which provides them with knowledge about research methods

framed in relation to qualitative and quantitative paradigms, and which usually includes the design of a research project but not necessarily its execution. Students can also complete licenciaturas as a five-year university programme. This programme has as its main focus the development of research skills in different sub-fields such as literature or linguistics. Through these courses, students learn how to carry out research in their chosen field. These modules encourage students to perform research rather than action research because this course is not necessarily related to the field of teaching. Research in the field of education is a possibility but not the main aim. Thus, the development of the notion of teacher as a researcher is not necessarily included.

Some universities offer in-service teachers opportunities to further their education by pursuing a specialisation, a masters or a PhD. Specialisations related to the field of second language teaching have emerged from the need to provide teachers with short term courses that allow them to improve their teaching skills, as well as to learn about the basic tenets of action research. Within these programmes, students have to complete one module of research methodology that will help them write their MA or PhD dissertation. These programmes are chosen mainly by those teachers who wish to improve their research as well as their teaching skills, but do not seek to embark on a long programme such as an MA. In most MA programmes, there is a mandatory module on research methodology. Some MA tracks also offer further research-related methods courses as electives. In some MA programmes, research courses are blended together with academic writing courses to elaborate a final dissertation. In the case of the PhD programme, students have to choose and complete certain modules that will help gather enough credits so as to obtain their degree. Currently, at a university level, there is a programme to strengthen teacher researchers' knowledge of methodology in order to improve the quality of the research being performed.

In 2008, universities created *Carrera Docente,* a policy that regulates, following certain criteria, who can hold or keep a teaching post at a university (Palacio & Martin, 2016). As a consequence, more teachers have felt the need to continue with their education obtaining MA and PhD degrees. Also/Furthermore, this means that the state is interested in promoting research incentives by funding research schemes, groups, and scholarships, while promoting academic events within its educational establishments.

Apart from the programmes and policies described, teacher associations also have a role to play in promoting such teacher research identity change. Kuchah and Smith (2018) state different ways in which associations can promote research work among their members and elevate the status of research. Teacher associations' contributions can be varied: a) identifying shared topics of research interest among their members, b) creating an intricate series of networks in which university researchers work in tandem with teachers to guide them in the research endeavour, c) providing teachers with a journal to publish their findings and d) developing academic events where they can provide scholarships or other financial incentives. In this way, seasoned teacher researchers can create a nurturing research environment for novices. With reference specifically to Argentina, the Argentine Federation of Associations of Teachers of English (FAAPI in Spanish) publishes the *Argentinian Journal of Applied Linguistics* (AJAL), an online open-access journal with two issues a year. The

journal promotes the publication of local experiences of conducting research through special calls.

5. TEACHER RESEARCH WITH TEACHER EDUCATORS

Borg (2017) suspects that when teacher research is included in IELTE, it is in the hands of academics or lecturers who lack first-hand experience in research, thus offering declarative and technical knowledge about research but providing few implications for professional practice and identity construction of teachers as knowledge generators. Where this may be the case, curriculum developers and educational authorities may encourage teacher educators to engage in teacher research by investigating their own IELTE practices so that, as Bartels (2002) has pointed out, there are no double standards whereby language teachers are expected to do research but the same is not expected among teacher educators. Below, we discuss initiatives in process in the province of Chubut, southern Argentina.

In 2015 a new IELTE curriculum was implemented in Chubut as a result of a democratic process in which all institutions and teacher educators participated (Banegas, 2014). In 2017-2018 the Ministry of Education reiterated the process in order to discuss future curriculum reforms. In a bottom-up move, teacher educators from the IELTE programmes expressed the view that curriculum reforms should be based on research studies which explored impact among student-teachers, rather than evaluation surveys run by ministerial technical teams. Thus, IELTE teacher educators have embarked on investigating their own practices through small-scale case studies within one institution and linked case studies across institutions. Their investigations examine the impact of the modules they teach (e.g., Introduction to Linguistics, English Grammar, Professional Practice, Didactics, Research in Education, Comprehensive Sexual Education) on student-teachers' pedagogical content knowledge and subject-matter knowledge. Within a teacher research perspective in language teaching (Borg & Sanchez, 2015), teacher educators have adopted diverse approaches, including case studies, ethnography, mixed-methods, and action research. Data collection instruments include: survey questionnaires, journals, focus group interviews with student-teachers, classroom observations, student-teachers' completion of in-class tasks, assignments and examinations, interviews with fellow teacher educators and teachers at the schools where the practicum experience takes place. Those teacher-educators who have engaged in action research usually design between two and three cycles so that their findings feed into the development of a module before it finishes. Teacher educators have also ensured that, following an ecological view of teacher research (Edwards & Burns, 2016; van Lier, 2010), their research activities are an inherent part of their classroom practices in order to avoid incurring extra time for their student-teachers and themselves and integrate research across teaching and learning processes. So far, findings are being collected and shared with ministerial authorities and at inter-institutional meetings. An online platform has been created to share syllabi, activities, and reading material, and to discuss preliminary findings and challenges through forums. The ultimate aim is to collect evidence that will support the 2019-2020 curriculum changes in IELTE in Chubut.

The endeavour of conducting teacher research to inform curriculum reforms in IELTE in Argentina has brought about synergistic experiences which in turn have produced two

major benefits: (1) professional development through reflection and research, and (2) participation in teacher education policies. In sum, teacher educators have added a new layer to their professional identity, that of curriculum co-developers through research. Many of the teacher-educators engaged in researching their own lessons have become involved in research for the first time. In this context, several of them are learning about research by doing research derived from systematising their reflections. It should be mentioned that many of them have declarative knowledge of research methods and epistemology, but few have experience in doing research or disseminating their findings through presentations or publications. This may be due to the fact that conference presentations or publications do not count to secure teaching posts or are not part of teaching position profiles.

Within this landscape, collaboration has consolidated across institutions so that more experienced teacher-educator-researchers support and guide less experienced colleagues in their undertakings and reflective practices. To scaffold research processes, those less experienced teacher-educators have engaged in exploratory practice (Hanks, 2017) as a door to other educational research paradigms and methods. Research engagement to inform policy has also given teacher-educators a new sense of autonomy since they can introduce changes in the modules they teach without the need of approval from ministerial authorities. Changes are agreed by the institution as the logical consequence of the findings collected. Therefore, research engagement has promoted further professionalism through the development of research experience, reflection, collaboration, and autonomy.

By responding to ministerial calls to have a say in teacher education policies in Chubut, teacher-educators and tertiary institutions at large feel a new sense of identity, responsibility and engagement. Participation in co-constructing a new curriculum and engaging in research to inform future reforms have given teacher-educators and student-teachers the opportunity to exercise agency. Participation of this nature has also allowed institutions to enter collaborative dialogues within the framework of a common denominator: student-teachers' trajectories. Although this process may face challenges at times due to perceptions of a lack of autonomy or impositions of one institution over others, in a geographical region with long distances and, at times, difficult climate conditions, the notion of a shared purpose and the recognition that action can be accomplished with little funding has empowered teacher-educators to pursue their goals and open their classrooms for research explorations. For some this has been a daunting task since research findings may indicate that the issue to be tackled is not the curriculum as such but a teacher-educator's own practices or knowledge of the module being taught. In such cases, their professional identity has been contested. Notwithstanding, and in line with recent literature (e.g., Wyatt & Dikilitaş, 2016) other teacher-educators have become more aware of their fluctuating professional identity, devoting more time to preparing their lessons since their performance is also under formal scrutiny.

The hope is that the future curriculum in Chubut will be informed by research carried out by teacher-educators who will, in turn, enact the curriculum transformations. In this matrix of educational processes, teacher educators become not merely implementers of top-down decisions, but knowledge generators about IELTE.

6. CONCLUSION

Drawing on the literature on teacher research identity and the experienced shared above, we put forward three main conclusions around (1) conceptualising teacher research, (2) implementing teacher research, and (3) promoting teacher research engagement and identity. These aspects synthesise the implications of teacher research preparation, promotion, and engagement across different settings.

First, if (future) teachers are to construct a broad conceptualisation of their identity (Borg, 2017), the selection of content and pedagogy for instruction needs to be revised and broadened. Student-teachers should be guided in considering inquiry-based activities as a means to inform and transform their practices. Furthermore, they should be encouraged to see research as something achievable (Borg, 2017) and necessary for making decisions based on reflective practice and their own research (Xu, 2017). Carrying out research should be seen as a process of teacher empowerment and reflection since through research prospective teachers gain the necessary competence to legitimise and justify their pedagogical practice (Xu, 2017). In turn, this empowerment may have a positive impact on teachers' autonomy, self-esteem and self-efficacy (Dikilitaş & Griffiths, 2017; Dikilitaş & Mumford, 2018; Smith & Rebolledo, 2018; Wyatt & Dikilitaş, 2016).

Secondly, by implementing teacher research, learning and assessing research needs a change in its focus. Assessment of research courses or courses that include a certain degree of research should not only focus on the technical aspects of research (design and instruments) but also on the implications that research has on the development of reflective teaching and teacher identity. To achieve this aim, it is important that the teaching of research is performed in a consistent way within the programme (Borg, 2017) such as the inclusion of a specific module which synthesises language teaching research that may be employed in other modules. Thirdly, student-teachers should receive support from teacher educators and experienced teacher researchers to become familiarised with different types of research apart from ethnographic or theoretical research.

For those interested in implementing teacher research across international contexts, research related modules in language teacher education should be contemplated in the national and state curricula of all the teaching programmes. It is important that these modules aim to construct and expand the notion of teacher- researcher identity. These modules should be understood as a precondition to promoting quality research. Research groups also allow student-teachers to learn about research. Thus, it would be worth allocating a budget for such groups, together with a research incentive scheme to lure more people into the field. Incentives for young researchers can adopt several forms: monetary rewards as well as extra credits or certificates.

Last, it is crucial to explore the supporting role of professional associations in teacher research engagement and identity. Teacher associations can encourage, sponsor, and train teachers in doing research and implement channels for disseminating findings (Kuchah & Smith, 2018). Through the various initiatives described here, educational associations, institutions and organisations around the world can help teachers develop their teacher identity through teacher research. Teachers can exercise multiple identities and thus become reflective practitioners, curriculum designers, researchers, authors, and above all generators of situated knowledge.

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