

Teacher educators' professional development: A mixed method study on the support of teacher education institutions

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Although there is an urgent demand for high qualified teacher education to prepare the next generation of teachers, it's surprisingly to determine that, worldwide those responsible for the education of future teachers (teacher educators) often have not been formally prepared for their vital role (Buchberger e.a., 2000; Berry, 2007; Smith, 2003). In this respect, major questions have been raised concerning teacher educators' professional development (Bates, Swennen & Jones, 2011; Ben-Peretz e.a., 2013; Lunenberg e.a., 2013). The presented study is part of the EVALO and focuses on the research question: "How do teacher education institutions support the continuing professional development of their teacher educators?".

This study builds on the mixed method design of EVALO, with a focus on the teacher educators as stakeholders. The online questionnaire was administered to a representative sample of university-based teacher educators (lecturers) (n=611). In addition, 103 lecturers were taking part in one of 17 focus group interviews for teacher trainers. Both the survey and the focus group interviews included four parts, which included questions about (1) teacher educators' background, (2) initiatives organised by teacher education institutions to support teacher educators' professional development, (3) collaboration between different teacher education institutions concerning the professional development of their teacher educators, and (4) the international mobility and international exchange possibilities for teacher educators.

Results of the study demonstrate that the support of Flemish TEd institutions concerning the professional development of their teacher educators is rather limited, and strongly varies from institution to institution. Moreover, the results indicate that teacher educators are largely responsible for their own professional development. For instance, they tend to engage in informal discussions with their peers and participate in in-service trainings and seminars based on their own interests and professional development needs. During the focus group interviews many teacher educators stressed the need for more formally organised professional development activities. In this respect, current professionalization activities do not meet their professional needs. Based on the results of this study a promising approach concerning teacher educators' professional development is discussed. More specific, practitioner research conducted by teacher educators in the context of professional learning communities is presented as a possible powerful strategy to support teacher educators' professional development.

Reference list

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