

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF TEACHER EDUCATORS IN THE 21ST CENTURY: AN ANALYSIS OF THE TEACHER EDUCATORS' PROFILE IN BELIZE

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ABSTRACT

The key players in teacher education (TE) are the teachers who teach prospective teachers, technically known as the teacher educators. Teacher educators, in this context, include those who are involved in developing and supporting teachers in the teacher learning continuum – i.e. across all levels, the pre-service, in-service and continuous professional development (CPD). However, this study does not capture the whole context; it focuses on the teacher educators at the Teacher Education Institutions' level. The task of teacher educators at this level is complex as they are on a journey of preparing teachers to teach effectively at the pre-primary, primary and secondary stages of school education. Currently, emerging is the concept of *pedagogy of teacher education* (Korthagen, 2001 & Loughran, 2014) which implicates that it is not only important that teacher educators be knowledgeable of their subject matter but also of how to make the tacit knowledge of teaching explicit to prospective teachers (European Commission Report, 2013). The data was collected using a modified questionnaire that was originally constructed by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) 2013. Semi-structured interviews were also conducted with 12 teacher educators. A major finding that emerged is the following--The top ranking professional development (PD) need of both full-time (FT) and part-time (PT) teacher educators is the need to be provided with on-line teaching knowledge and skills. The findings lend themselves towards a revisit to the profile of teacher educators where one exist and the development of one where it is non-existent. To conclude, it needs to be mentioned that as the related literature has also shown, Belize is not the only country facing challenges in addressing the need for professional development of the teacher educators significant for preparing the 21st century teachers. So the findings of the present study have implications towards the need for bringing about a change in the profile of teacher educators in other countries as well, as it may be vital for the planning of their developmental programmes.

KEYWORDS: Pedagogy of Teacher Education, Professional Development Needs, Teacher Educators

INTRODUCTION

The quality of teacher educators is a critical factor that contributes to the quality of teacher education (TE). The traditional requirement is that they should be qualified and competent to transact the TE curriculum - content and pedagogy. However, recent studies have indicated that teacher educators' roles go beyond teaching content and pedagogy. The concept of the *pedagogy of teacher education* that Korthagen, (2001) and Loughran, (2014) puts forward encapsulated this move. This reveals what the professional development of the 21st century teacher educators should be. The present study examined the profile of the teacher educators in six teacher education institutions (TEIs) in Belize. Having an overall picture of their current roles can shed light to the way forward.

This study seeks to answer these two main **Research Questions**:

#	Research Questions	Objectives
1	What is the current status of teacher educators in Belize?	To analyze the current status of the teacher educators
2	How do teacher educators perceive their professional development in TE?	To identify the PD needs of the teacher educators as it relates to the pedagogy of TE

RELATED LITERATURE

The question of what teacher educators should know, and how they should be prepared to assume their roles is an issue growing in importance in light of the increasing demand for quality school teachers. Teacher educators, according to Goodwin & Kosnik (2013) should have contextual, sociological and social knowledge in order to be cognizant of the dynamics of teaching teachers. Some argued that the establishment of professional teacher educator standards would express the roles they play in the teaching of teachers (Spencer, 2016 & Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, 2012). In many instances, the standards for teacher educators are developed but are seldom used to guide the development of the teacher educator profile. Where the teacher educator's profile is developed, it is presented as a mere list of knowledge, skills and attitudes which degenerates it into a checklist. It doesn't portray a comprehensive picture of their roles in TE. A well developed profile, on the other hand, gives a solid foundation and common understanding of the teacher educators' role in TE, leading them to recognize their own PD. Having a solid profile can indicate the needs of beginning teacher educators that can be utilized for ascertaining their initial situation and the experienced ones can use it to identify which areas they need to develop. Many a time, the change in the nature of teaching is not fully understood by many teacher educators who start with little or no background in the *pedagogy of teacher education* (PTE). As a result, beginning teacher educators like beginning school teachers are left to learn by trial and error and reverting to the way how they were taught when they were student teachers.

Teacher Education Curriculum

The TE curriculum is the nucleus of a teacher education program (TEP) that guides the work of teacher educators. From a sociologist perspective, curriculum content is the knowledge which gives it its social and political implications. In Bernstein's (1973) words:

“Formal educational knowledge can be considered to be realized through three message systems: curriculum, pedagogy and evaluation. Curriculum defines what counts as valid knowledge, pedagogy defines what counts as a valid transmission of knowledge and evaluation defines what counts as a valid realization of this knowledge on the part of the taught” (p.85).

Does this meaning describe the actual goals of TE in contemporary times? It is seen that the traditional TE curriculum leaves the teacher educators to be concerned merely with the subjects they teach (Korthagen, 2001), which reduces pedagogy to the teaching of methods and data-driven performance indicators (Friere, 1970). Teacher educators must be aware about the fundamental nature of their practice and to continuously question “the taken-for-granted in their own teaching and not succumb to a technical-rational approach to teach teaching” (Smith, 2005). They need to surpass the task of “doing of teaching” (Goodwin & Kosnik's, 2013; Loughran, 2007). With this perspective, an alternative approach to TE is necessary; one that would direct the development and transaction of TE curriculum to shift and one that would empower students as they develop their knowledge, skills and values to become reflective (Macedo, 2013).

Shedding light to this is Korthagen (2001) and Loughran's (2007) notion of "*pedagogy of teacher education*". What is *pedagogy of teacher education* (PTE)? PTE is the understanding of the "two complementary aspects of knowledge and practice: teaching about teaching and learning about teaching" (Loughran, 2007) which is based on three fundamental principles. The teacher educators need to have the knowledge and ability to help the student teachers to: become aware of their learning needs, find useful experiences and help them reflect on those experiences in detail. These principles are based on the perspective that student teachers are learners; ones that are able to create new knowledge about/of teaching. So the teacher educators teach teaching and teach about teaching in an explicit manner (Loughran, 2014 & Murray, 2002) which concurs to Giroux's (1988) proposition that student teachers need to be exposed to recognize the complexity of the real classroom and to be able to understand and reflect upon the nature of their educational experience.

How does PTE develop? Bullock (2009) contends: "The construction of a pedagogy of teacher education requires a sustained systematic and careful inquiry into one's own practice, predicated on the understanding that teaching is a discipline". It is developed over time as the teacher educators engage in re-examining and re-defining their previous assumption about teaching and learning (Zeichner, 2005). Although one may be a school teacher prior to TE, the work of teaching has some aspects in common with the work of teacher education, the positions are significantly divergent in important ways (European Commission, 2013; Smith, 2005). In TE, one undertakes teaching those who aspire to become school teachers; one whose practices, beliefs about knowledge and learning of student teachers and motivation to teach them shape up a student teacher's view of teaching. In this regard, the work of TE requires that teacher educators should be innovative, be curriculum-makers who can transform TE, and emerge as pedagogical authorities who are equipped to be active partners in educational reform and to create new knowledge through research (Snoek & van der Sanden, 2005). This is because they can be "architects of change". Viewing teacher educators in this light gives credence to the fact that TE curriculum should not be rigid and prescriptive. Collectively, these studies provide important insight into the role of teacher educators in contemporary time. It is within this context that the present study attempts to explore the current status of the profile of teacher educators in Belize.

Data Collection Procedure

The data was collected during the first semester of the academic year 2016-17 (August to December). A questionnaire constructed by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) 2013 was modified to collect the data. It is modified to adapt for the teacher educators because it was originally constructed for teachers in general. The questionnaire contains 15 different forms of items which yielded both quantitative and qualitative data. It was emailed to the deans, chairs of the TE department and to all the FT and PT teacher educators in six TEIs. The items on the questionnaire are sub-divided into three main parts: the demographic information, experiences, and area of professional development need. The responses to these items offered an insight of the current conditions of the teacher educators in Belize.

Of the total population 78% of the FT and 30% of the PT teacher educators completed the questionnaire. Data for the other 22% of the FT was solicited through the annual institutional reports and class schedules. Furthermore, institutional reports for over a 3-year period from 2012-13 to 2014-15 were reviewed for the related work that teacher educators do. Semi-structured interviews with two chairs of the TE department and ten teacher educators were also conducted.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Teacher Educators' Qualification: Full-Time and Part-Time

Having knowledge of the teacher educators' qualifications and experiences is not adequate to sustain a quality TE (European Commission Report, 2013), however, a glimpse of their qualifications would perhaps be an initiating step to gain a deeper understanding of the issues. The current highest qualification is illustrated in Table 1 for FT and PT teacher educators across TEIs.

Table 1: Highest Qualification of FT & PT Teacher Educators

#	Qualification	FT Teacher Educator	PT Teacher Educator
1	Bachelor's Degree in Primary Education	2	
2	Bachelor's Degree in Mathematics	1	
3	Bachelor's Degree in Electro-Mechanical		1
4	Bachelor's Degree in History		1
5	Masters of Teacher Education	6	
6	M. Ed. in educational Leadership	4	2
7	Masters in other educational areas such as Reading and Writing, TESOL, Elementary Ed., Curriculum Development, Language Education, Math Ed., Literacy and Teaching and online instructional design	11	10
8	Doctorate in Higher Education	6	4
10	Ph. D.	3	
11	ABD	2	
12	Unknown (did not complete form)	2	

It can be seen from Table 1 that the minimum qualification for FT teacher educators is a Bachelors degree in Primary Education and the highest is Ph.D. It is also seen that six teacher educators have Master's degree in TE. Additionally, a one-by-one analysis was conducted and the findings revealed that all FT teacher educators in at least 3 TEIs have a Master's degree as the minimum qualification. There were teacher educators who were currently pursuing Masters Degree or ED.D/Ph.D. at the time the data was collected.

Teaching Experiences: FT and PT Teacher Educators

Becoming a teacher educator is a process that requires a thorough understanding of what it means to teach teachers. The fact that many who teach teachers were once school teachers (Snoek & van der Sanden, 2005) does not automatically legitimize one to be a teacher educator. Table 2 demonstrates the early teaching career of those teaching teachers in the TE.

Table 2: Early Teaching Experiences of FT& PT Teacher Educators

	Early Teaching Experiences	FT Teacher Educators	%	PT Teacher Educator	%
1	Primary School Teacher	20	54	5	8
2	High School Teacher	6	16	18	30
3	Tertiary	3	8	9	15
4	Technical/Vocational	2	5		
5	Ministry of Ed. Personnel			12	20
6	Retire Teachers: High School & Primary School			2	3
7	Director of Ed. Institution			1	1
5	Unknown	6	16	12	20

It is apparent from this table that the majority of the teacher educators started their teaching career at the primary school level. Very few made a departmental change and shifted to teach in the TEP. 30% of the PT are high school teachers. Further analysis revealed that these high school teachers taught mostly the general recommended course, some Foundation and Support Core courses, 3 of them were engaged in the supervision of interns at the primary school. Those coming from the primary school taught some of the Foundation and Methods Courses. The retired ones were only engaged in the supervision of interns at the primary school level. The ones working for the Ministry of Education taught mostly the support and methods courses. These personnel were once primary school or high school teachers. Lecturers from other departments within the same institution taught the recommended general and some support core courses. After a one-by-one analysis of an item on the questionnaire, Figure 1 was constructed displaying FT teacher educators' teaching experience prior to TE.

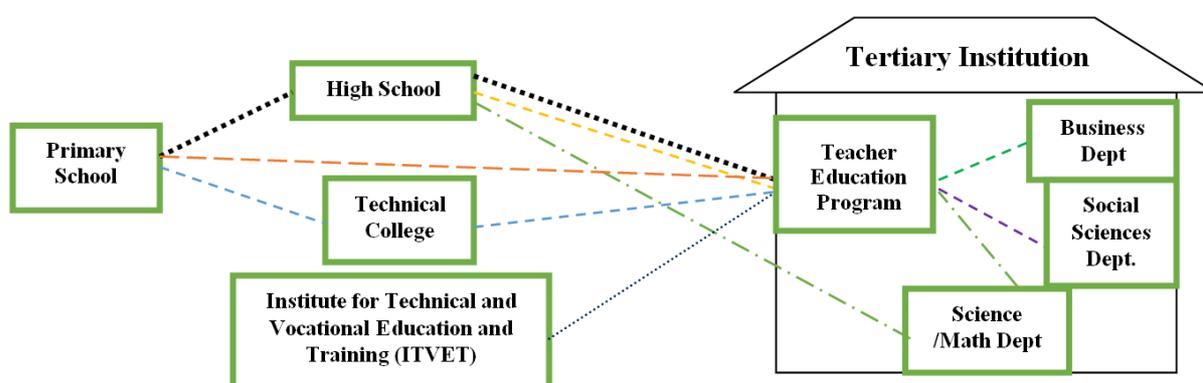


Figure 1: Teaching Routes Prior to Teaching in TE of Full-Time Teacher Educators

Current Role and Functions of Teacher Educators in Belize

In Belize, documents related to the standards and profile of teacher educators were not yet developed, so there was no background document to base the analysis on. Instead institutional reports for the academic year 2012-13 to 2014-15 were reviewed to discover trends over a three year period regarding the teacher educators' related tasks. The findings, however, showed that mostly the FT teacher educators were engaged in teaching the main support core and professional core courses in the Associate of Arts in Primary Education Programme and supervising interns each semester. Besides the main task of teaching and supervising, they are loaded with other tedious tasks of planning timetables and making the yearly action plan; attending meetings and workshops offered by the respected TEI and other organizations. The illustrations exhibited in Table 3 demonstrated the beginning experiences and roles of FT teacher educators.

Table 3: Summary of FT Teacher Educators' Beginning Experience in TE

Task	Illustrations	Roles	Illustrations
Lecture	“At first it was hard for me. We have to demonstrate [and] teach them how to do things. So I still teach more than lecture” (Interviewee 1).	Lecturer Counselor Coordinator Supervisor Advisor	“I am the chair of the program, the field coordinator. ... We have to be lecturers , counselors, supervisors. We have to do everything.” (Interviewee 1).
	“The formal approach to education at this level is that you are expected to lecture and it is not working” (Interviewee 2).		“The supervisor is also a coach...then advises and provides quick little workshops...” (Interviewee 4).
Sharing/modeling	“It was easy for me. I was a primary school teacher/principal over 11 years... I used to volunteer to share/model strategies with the staff” (Interviewee 3).		

In the beginning, two of the interviewees felt uneasy with the change in the nature of their teaching roles and expectations (Loughran, 2014) from teaching to lecturing. The teacher educators expressing uneasiness were primary school teachers who were used to 'teaching' and not 'lecturing'. Moreover, they realized that the lecture method is not effective in teaching teachers. But what does "We have to teach them how to do things" means? Further discussion and observation revealed that it was the preparation of the teaching/learning aids such as charts, manipulative, units/lesson plans and discussion of classroom management plans. The 'teaching' in this teacher educator's perspective is demonstrating and guiding student teachers to prepare themselves with their materials for teaching. Teaching teachers, on the other hand, is exposing them to the complexity of the real classroom and not just having them prepare materials for the classroom. One interviewee did not encounter any challenges in beginning to teach student teachers as she had experienced sharing and facilitating PD workshops for teachers as a school teacher and principal. It is evident that teacher educators are expected to 'lecture'.

Moreover, teacher educators were asked to indicate the "current position held". Alarming, majority indicated they are 'lecturers'. Much effort is needed to go beyond the use of the lecture method. Spencer (2016) describes his journey of becoming a teacher of teachers as one where he fought vigorously to move away from the "telling, guiding and correcting approach to skills and knowledge". Has the journey of becoming a teacher educator really started? The findings reveal that in many TE classrooms, the telling, guiding and correcting are still the common practices and overshadow what it means to teach teachers.

Professional Development (PD) Needs

Moving towards an ongoing enhancement of the teacher educators' knowledge and skills is a must. The review of the institutional reports spanning over a 3-year period demonstrated that not much was done in the area of developing and enhancing the teacher educators. Table 4 presents the PD needs relating to TE across institutions for FT & PT teacher educators.

Table 4: Professional Development Needs by FT & PT Teacher Educators

#	Professional Development Needs	FT Teacher Educator	PT Teacher Educator
1	Online Teaching	1 st	1 st
2	Classroom Evaluation & Assessment, Counseling and Advising student teachers & Supervision of field experience	2 nd	
3	Effective Teaching Strategies (Science, Math, Reading Comprehension, Adult Learners, TESOL)	3 rd	
4	Research	4 th	
5	Curriculum Development	5 th	
6	Leadership		2 nd
7	Special Education		3 rd
8	Motivation of Adult Learners		4 th

Table 4 exhibits that the use of online platform to teach teachers ranked first pointing out that it is the most needed preparation for both FT & PT teacher educators. Research ranked in fourth for FT. Interestingly, Research did not come in any ranking for the PT ones instead Leadership, Special Ed. and Motivation of Adult learners were seen to be a need. This reveals that the areas where they perceive that they lack and need 'help' are those of leadership, special education and learning how to motivate their adult learners which may be due to the fact that they directly come from teaching primary and secondary school students.

Interestingly, the review of the institutional reports provided insights that FT teacher educators were routinely engaged with teaching and supervising overlooking one important element of TE, one that would facilitate them in becoming a teacher educator. This critical area is again found to be Research. In an overwhelming response, Research is not viewed as a priority. There is only one TEI that attempts to conduct research but more needs to be done in this area. But there are teacher educators who have the zeal to conduct research; due to heavy teaching load and supervision, they are unable to do so. As one teacher educator said:

“I would like to know and engage in a research to identify these students...I wanted to do quite a number of things but due to work, it just went away” (Interviewee 6). Although TE literature demonstrates that teacher educators conducting research in TE is a need, it is the most overlooked area in the Belizean context. This understanding is perhaps missing among the teacher educators as they find other needs to be more crucial and significant. Perhaps when these pressing needs are met, the Belizean Teacher Educators would be able to perceive that exposure to Research can better inform their understanding of teaching and learning. This is not to say that they are not engaged in reading research-based material. Table 4 provided illustrations of three teacher educators' experiences with reading TE literature.

Table 5: Current PD Activities of FT Teacher Educators

Activity	Purpose	Illustration
Reading current practice	To be informed of best teaching practices	“I keep abreast of the practices that teachers have worked with and have proven to work. Then I would go on different sites and read up about different approaches... and some courses when they do offer them (Interviewee 5)
Subscribing to Journals	To use related articles for student teachers to reflect on	“I belong to the Reading Teacher Association so I always get the monthly journals. I use the short articles from the journals to give my students to do read and reflection. I tell them what part of it I want them to do reflections on” (Interviewee 3)
Sharing ideas	To share new ideas learnt with colleagues	“We share ideas among colleagues and see in which ways the same methodologies used in Science can be used in Math. I keep myself abreast with current findings. I have access to journals that bring across new ideas and research...” (Interviewee 6)

Engaging in reading TE journal articles and sharing ideas with colleagues are some of the ways they become familiar with the current trends and best practices within the field of TE to enhance their growth. One needs to be well-informed for it is not sufficient to pass on the accumulated tips and tricks of classroom teaching. The reality of classroom practice needs to be based on more than just what they (teacher educators) experience when they were school teachers (Loughran, 2014).

SUMMARY

This study set out with the aim of analyzing the current status of teachers in Belize and to identify their perception of their PD in relation to TE. Together the findings provide important insights into the need to have clarity of the roles and functions of teacher educators in Belize. Articulating these in the form of Standards and Teacher Educator Profile would not only indicate the distinct differences of being a school teacher and being a teacher educator but would also be able to indicate to both beginning and experienced teacher educators the area that they need to develop further (Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, 2012). The education policy of improving access, quality, and governance of education in Belize is inclusive of all the different educational levels from pre-school to tertiary. When inclusiveness is fully realized, the professional development of those who teach at this level would also be reality. Thus the need for Continuous Professional Development (CPD) of teacher educators emerges as they need to be equipped to handle their day-to-day

tasks in preparing effective school teachers. The European Commission Report (2013) propounds that the selection and professional development of those who educate teachers is a requirement for raising the quality of teaching and improving learning outcomes.

It is overwhelming that in the present study very few teacher educators had realized that the lecture method is not working in teaching teachers. Now the need to support this realization has to be established conceptually and practically in a meaningful manner so that those who have not yet made a conscious realization may do so. The findings also illustrate that the PD needs indicated is concerned with the integration of technology in their teaching and the effective teaching strategies in a specialized area. With this perception, the move towards constructing the *Pedagogy of Teacher Education* would be challenging. Notably, there are two aspects that point towards initial stage of becoming a teacher educator: reading current TE research findings and sharing ideas with colleagues. Zeichner (2005) posits that one can go beyond the reading of TE literature by re-examining one's practice and re-conceptualizing one's approach to the teaching of teachers. This is the beginning of the long journey that of becoming a 21st century teacher educator.

CONCLUSIONS

The work of TE is an ongoing process of learning, development, and change driven by the key players -- teacher educators (Loughran, 2014). Thus developing a collective understanding of the roles, competencies or qualification requirements of teacher educators is a must to establish clarity of what is expected of them. It should not be taken for granted that because one was once a teacher, that one can teach teachers. Rather becoming a teacher of teachers is the beginning of a new journey and a new learning process. Therefore, continuous professional development is required one that must be "purposefully conceptualized, thoughtfully implemented and meaningfully employed" (Loughran, 2007) to facilitate the process of becoming. It is time to bring the teacher educators to the forefront if quality TE is to be accomplished. They have stayed behind the scene for so long where little or no consideration was given to them in terms of their PD needs.

IMPLICATIONS

The finding has important implications for developing Standards for teacher educators that can be used as a guide to develop the 21st century teacher educator profile. These can provide a common view and understanding of teacher educators' role in TE and facilitate them to envision their own professional development. Then it is important to sensitize the stakeholders – teacher educators – to make use of the standards and profile in order to move forward in developing PD plan whether individually or group. Having them take charge of their own learning is granting them the autonomy and trust over what they do.

Another issue that emerges from this finding is the absence of the *Pedagogy of Teacher Education*. More conscious effort needs to be made by those who teach teachers to engage in self-study transcending the reading of TE literature. Teacher educators need to continuously engage in research – action research-, self-reflection and self-evaluation, practice what is expected of student teachers taught and move away from lecturing, telling, and correcting the learners. To realize such endeavors, policy measures to support the professional learning of teacher educators can include setting formal requirements and regulations about CPD, stimulating self-directed activities, creating incentives and addressing the issues of time -teaching loads, research and administrative tasks- and condition of employment - part-time positions or split jobs between school and university (European Commission Report, 2013).

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