# Learning from the past to shape the future

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Learning from the past to shape the future

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Abstract

This paper is a personal narrative of a journey from teaching to teacher educator, and researcher. The first part of the paper tells the professional story which at first glance is a rather common trajectory into teacher education, whereas changing contexts has formed development, perceptions and actions. The story is followed by a discussion of the underlying principles that have served as a personal guide throughout my career. Next, the paper briefly presents some of the lessons learned from the long experience before finally some views on future directions for teacher education are mentioned. The main argument throughout the paper is that limiting the discussions to the structure of teacher education is not enough. Building strong relations through collaborations in the near and far context is essential to all working to improve education.

Introduction

My personal journey into teacher education is probably a rather common one, from teacher, to mentor for student teachers, to part time position as a methodology teacher, then full time position, doctorate student and graduate, researcher, and leader. The step from teacher to teacher educator is not easy and has frequently been researched and discussed. Murray & Male (2005) found that it takes between 2-3 years to get used to the new role, and the main challenges were replacing classroom pedagogy with a pedagogy of teacher education and meeting the requirements of being research-active. A pedagogy is, according to Loughran (2013), about the relationship between teaching and learning and goes beyond the mere transmission of information/knowledge. The pedagogy of teacher education is therefore not only transmitting information about teaching to student teachers, but to combine “teaching about teaching and learning about teaching” (p. 3). Its complexity relates to” the interplay of examining, describing, articulating and portraying teaching” (p. 3) to teachers-to-be. Smith
(2005) found that one of the main differences in teachers’ and teacher educators’ professional expertise is the articulation of tacit knowledge. Berry (2007 a) has honestly described the difficult process she went through when starting to work as a teacher educator, and her work points at tensions many teacher educators experience; tensions related to being true to your own beliefs or giving in to the contextual constraints (Berry, 2007 b). The change of identity from being teacher to becoming a teacher educator is a process during which the new identity is being constructed, however, the role as a teacher educator is enacted the first day in the job (Dinkelman, Margolis & Sikkenga, 2006).

In this paper my personal professional journey is presented before I discuss the principles which have guided me as a teacher educator and researcher. Ongoing reflections have led to important lessons learned, and which I find valuable in future planning of teacher education and research, not only within my own context, but hopefully also beyond.

My personal journey

A common trajectory

My own transition from teacher to teacher educator which took place nearly 20 years prior to Berry’s publications, was a gradual process from being a mentor for student teachers for a couple of years before I was invited to teach a methodology course in the same institution from which I myself had graduated about five years earlier. I had these hybrid positions in school and a teacher education institution for more than 10 years with an increasing load at the tertiary level. White (2013) found in a study of seven English teachers holding the dual role of being a teacher and a teacher educator that the participants saw several advantages in the hybrid position such as professional growth in terms of knowledge and skills, strengthened motivation and increased confidence. Challenges were, f. ex., experiencing conflicts between wanting to do the best for the pupils and for the students, and managing the time, how to share it between the two contexts. For me personally, these challenges amounted, and I felt it became difficult to be fully present, physically and mentally in two places, and I constantly walked around with a feeling of not doing a good job in either place. There were meetings I could not attend, extra-curricular and social activities that clashed, and when I became Head of the
English Department, I found it impossible to keep my position in school, and gave it up. Even though it was difficult after 20 years of school teaching to leave the classroom, I still believe it was the right thing to do. However, the school experience has formed the educational views I brought with me into teacher education, and not least, guided my work as a researcher.

Education and career in a foreign country and culture

As much as my story is a common trajectory into teacher education there are still some particulars that might be worthwhile mentioning. Being born and bred in Norway I went to Israel as a volunteer to a kibbutz at the age of 18. The intention was to have a gap year before starting my economics studies in Norway. Well, life is stronger than plans, and after four years in Israel, the kibbutz was in need of an English teacher and I was asked (told) to start my four years BA degree in English language and literature combined with teacher education. I thoroughly enjoyed my undergraduate studies and upon completion started teaching English in upper secondary and elementary school. I had done as the kibbutz wanted, and becoming a teacher became meaningful to me, so there was no feeling of having sacrificed my own plans. When looking at the plentiful literature on motivation to become a teacher (Watt et al., 2012, among others) the most common motifs are internationally found to be altruistic, social utility and intrinsic (Watt, Richardson & Smith, 2017). For me the motif was a kind of social utility related to the society in which I lived, the kibbutz. I became a teacher because it would serve the community. However, I shall be honest enough to say that part of it was purely extrinsic, as English would be easier for me than to study economics in Hebrew.

After about six years of teaching, I became thirsty for more knowledge and started my graduate studies in a large university about 100 km away. At this time I enjoyed being a mentor for student teachers of English, and the studies and the teaching mutually drew on each other, as practice and theory jointly enriched my professional knowledge as a teacher and a very beginning researcher. I started teaching in the same teacher education institution where I was educated, and I became more and more caught by research, to learn more, especially about assessment, and how to encourage learners to take responsibility for their own learning.
through self-assessment. At the same time I became Head of the English Department, and I felt it would be right to have a doctorate to hold a leadership position in teacher education. Therefore, the increased research interest and the job responsibility drove me to start a Ph.D. at yet another university. During my Ph.D. studies, I accepted the position as Head of the Education Department, which meant a rather busy life on all fronts for some years.

My personal trajectory contains multiple and rather frequent shifts of professional identities, from planning to become an economist, then teacher, school-based teacher educator, university-based teacher educator, researcher and academic leader. Clarke, Hyde & Drennan (2012) claim that a person’s professional identity is complex and dynamic and shaped by contextual factors. This seems to be relevant to my personal narrative, the different contexts formed my professional self, and as I shifted context, the identity developed. As I analyse my professional journey, the professional identity did not completely change, I would rather say that it expanded as layer after layer was added to the basic identity as a teacher. Similar reflections are presented by Henkel (2000) who suggests that the personal story of the professional interacts with the person’s moral and values and the extent to which they are acknowledged by the professional community. Thus, professional identity entails individual as well as social aspects which underpin the professional practice and performance (Kogan, 2000).

Research interests

My research was first focused on assessment in teaching English as a foreign language, and my doctorate entailed an examination of self-assessment in relation to teacher and external assessment in Arab and Jewish schools in Israel. At this time I was active in the International Association for Teachers of English as a Foreign Language (IATEFL) and served as the coordinator of the testing and assessment special interest group (Smith, 1989; 1991; 1998). I became interested in portfolio as an assessment tool, not only in English, but more as a means for professional development in teacher education and school leadership. Much of this work was done jointly with a Dutch colleague, and in retrospect we have often discussed our shared journey as researchers of the value of portfolio which accumulated in a book, Portfolios for
professional development: A research journey (Smith & Tillema, 2006) including most of our joint published papers on portfolio. Our perception of the function of professional portfolio mainly as a professional development tool and the teacher or teacher educator decided on the content of the portfolio, was challenged by the summative function which we noticed when it became a frequently used assessment tool. The content of the portfolio was often decided without involvement of the portfolio composer, and we found, in our last studies, that the focus was more on meeting external requirements for summative assessment purposes and less a dynamic development artefact. This is yet another example of the extent to which assessment seems to drive learning (Boud & Falchikov, 2006).

As the Head of the Education Department I had the possibility to introduce new courses in the teacher education programme, Assessment as a Pedagogical Tool and Teacher as Researcher. There was a need to provide student teachers with a solid understanding of, and possible tools for practicing assessment for learning, or what I at that time called complementary assessment, not accepting the more common term at that time, alternative assessment. My view was that formative assessment tools should not be an alternative to summative assessment (tests), but that formative as well as summative approaches to assessment need to complement each other to promote individual learning, and at the same time serve as quality assurance for certifications at the end of an education program. My interest in and understanding of the role of assessment in education was, and still is, strongly influenced by the work of the Assessment Reform (ARG) group in UK. I support the directions in which some of ARG’s earlier members have taken assessment forward, e.g. Louise Hayward in her 2015 paper in which she argues that assessment is learning, and that we should dispose of the prepositions as in assessment of and for learning. In the practice of assessment, I learned, however, that unless the formative component is given a stronger weight than the summative component, summative assessment is likely to dictate learning as well as teaching. I found good dialogue partners in the special interest group on Assessment and Evaluation (SIG 1) in the European Association for Research in Learning and Instruction (EARLI) where I had the honour to serve as the SIG 1 coordinator for four years. It has been, however, a lost fight of mine during the years to persuade policy makers that increased accountability does not support learning at any level of education.
(Smith, 2007; 2009; 2011; 2015). In Norway assessment for learning is, indeed, an educational focus, and extensive resources have been put into the implementation of assessment for learning in Norwegian schools. Nevertheless, in practice the policy makers send out conflicting messages as the numbers of standardised national tests are increasing, and teachers experience the tension between practicing assessment for learning and meeting accountability requirements such as preparing students for external tests and exams.

The other new course in the teacher education programme I introduced in Israel, *Teacher as Researcher*, was developed in alignment with my increased interest in professional development and strong belief in action research as a professional development tool (Smith & Sela, 2005). Cochran-Smith & Lytle’s book from 1993, *Inside/outside: Teacher research and knowledge* was a real eye-opener with regard to my understanding of the importance of teachers’ engagement in active research on their own and their school’s practices. If the goal is that teachers shall be systematic and informed reflective enquirers, they need to learn how to become research competent in teacher education. My attraction to self-studies and action research as professional and school development tools has been strengthened during the years, and I truly believe teacher educators benefit from doing research jointly with teachers and not only on teachers and teaching. In this respect I closely link my views on action research to McNiff’s (1993) and McNiff and Whiteheads’ (2011) work, but at the same expand the view to practitioner research, which goes beyond the specification of teachers as researchers (Cochran-Smith, & Lytle, 2009). Another term that aligns with my own research is the term practice-oriented research defined by Bleijenbergh, Korzilius, & Verschuren (2011):

“Our definition of practice oriented research is that it involves all research that is performed with the primary aim to support a practical problem to be solved or a decision to be taken. With a practical problem, as contrasted to a theoretical problem, we mean a problem that calls for an intervention or a new artefact, in order to change reality in a desired direction” (p. 146).
Without ignoring the importance of theoretical research, to better understand and enhance teacher education, I have tried to engage in research that is oriented towards the practice field (Smith, 2007; Smith, 2010).

The current practice turn in teacher education places the mentors, or school-based teacher educators, in focus, as well as their roles as teacher educators. Supported by Cochran-Smith’s claim (2005) that part of teacher educators’ responsibilities is to be involved with research, and the question is if they are research competent. In contexts where initial teacher education is at a graduate level and a research based master thesis is required, it might be expected that school-based teacher educators are involved with supervision of the student teachers’ research projects.

**Going back**

Already from the beginning of my academic career I had worked internationally and had developed a global network of colleagues. Yet, when I returned to Norway in 2005 and took up the position as a Chair (Professor) of teacher education in one of the main Norwegian Universities, I experienced a culture shock even though I returned to my home country, culture and language. My whole academic education had taken place in Israel in Hebrew and English and my career had been within a demanding and dynamic context. In Norway I soon discovered that Norwegian teacher education had, at that time, not been widely internationally oriented, and that professional discussions and publications were mainly in Norwegian. Research was local or at best national, but there was little networking or research cooperation in teacher education that crossed the national borders. My impression is supported by an extensive evaluation of Norwegian educational research by the Norwegian Research Council in 2004 (Norsk forskningsråd, 2004). Today the situation is different, to a large extent because the Norwegian Research Council, acting on a governmental assignment in 2005, issued a call for researchers to apply for funding for practice oriented research projects. This resulted in numerous research projects which engaged practitioners at a tertiary as well as at the school level. PRAKUT was in 2010 replaced by the programme Research and Innovation in the Educational Sector (FINNUT), “a long-term programme for research and innovation in the
educational sector. The programme funds research on a wide spectrum from early childhood education and care to higher education and adult learning” (https://www.forskningsradet.no/prognett-finnut/Home_page/1253990820560. These initiatives have noticeably enhanced and strengthened Norwegian educational research.

When I first applied for PRAKUT funding I realized that I had to learn a completely new professional language, even though my mother tongue is Norwegian. The language used in teacher education is strongly influenced by the context in which it takes place, and an example is that the strong emphasis on ‘danning’, German bildung, the cultural, moral and ethical aspects of education, was unfamiliar to me as a highly anglo- oriented academic. I was familiar with the concept from my own school days in Norway, but I was not able to place it into the academic context. Moreover, the dynamic character of the Israeli academic world was in strong contradiction to the traditional and rigorous Norwegian academy where new ideas were first accepted with scepticism, and if embraced, the implementation progress was long and tedious to comply with national and institutional regulations. I remember becoming the Head of a section which did a wonderful job as teachers in teacher education, but who were not used to participating in international conferences, and did very little, if any, systematic research. However, the resources for research were much greater than anything I could dream of in Israel, both in terms of time as well as opportunities for seeking funding. Most of my research in Israel had been small scale research which had not required external funding and most of it was done in my spare time or ‘in-between’ what I then, called my real work, teaching and leading teacher education programmes. This is the situation for multiple teacher educators working in contexts without time for research in the job description, and teaching and administrative responsibilities take up most of the time. Research and publication is a main criterion for promotion and academic acknowledgement (Korthagen, Loughran & Lunenberg, 2005, Murray and Male, 2005) and this is a challenge for teacher educators who do not have access to resources necessary to conduct research.

Moving to Norway was the beginning of a fascinating phase in my career in which I, and my Norwegian colleagues, were subjected to a steep learning curve. I had to learn about the Norwegian education system and the academic culture, and my colleagues were pushed into
research, getting their doctorates, presenting at international conferences and publishing in international peer-reviewed journals. The section was proud to host the 2012 EARLI SIG 11 conference on research in teaching and teacher education. Some achievements during this period were that the five years teacher education program for secondary school teachers became more integrated and practice periods were built into the program from the very first semester. For schools to be prepared to take on the students and to provide a progressive practicum component over five years, the university established partnerships with selected schools through an application, selection and contracted partnership. The school principals and the mentors were invited to several hotel seminars, where the content of the practicum, criteria for assessment and responsibility for assessment were discussed (Smith, 2016). This came in addition to the more separated cooperation with practice schools. Zeichner (2010) argues that to improve teacher education and create spaces where academic and practical knowledge meet (third spaces) universities have to establish democratic and inclusive relationships with schools. This is found to be challenging in many contexts mainly due to issues related to the logistics of enacting the partnerships alongside lack of resources in terms of time and funding often create conflicts. Not least, the differences in the academic and in the school culture contribute to potential obstacles (Bartholomew & Sandholtz, 2009). Moreover, when more responsibility for educating future teachers is left to school and the mentors (school based teacher educators), it becomes essential to assure that student teachers’ receive high quality mentoring during their practice teaching.

An awareness of the value of quality mentoring for students and for novice teachers has emerged in Norway and mentor education courses of 30 European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) points are centrally funded. The majority of teacher education institutions in the country offer courses. This very positive development was related to the international and national recognition of the challenges novice teachers meet in their first years as teachers (Fantilli & McDougall, 2009). Clusters of institutions joined forces in securing funding for regional support networks for novice teachers. As the Head of the university’s teacher education program, I was fortunate to be deeply involved in the planning of these exciting developments, and subsequently also in teaching some of the courses. In this period
much of my research and publications, in cooperation with colleagues, relate to mentors and novice teachers (Ulvik, Smith & Helleve, 2009; 2016). In our work we argue against a white or black perception of the first years of teaching, it is so much more complex and the strengths and resilience found in the majority of novices are sometimes forgotten in the discussion of all the challenges. As regards mentoring, co-researchers and I found that there are some generic characteristics of how mentoring is perceived in a variety of international contexts, such as the importance for mentors to be good communicators and be able to support students teachers’ acquisition of teaching skills as well as to provide emotional support. There are also contextual aspects that form the mentors’ as well as the mentees’ perception of mentoring (Tillema, Smith, & Leshem, 2011), especially in the perception of what is good teaching. Mentoring is a profession within the teaching profession (Smith, 2015,b), and we still have much work ahead of us to be able to define the professional knowledge of mentoring, a prerequisite for developing good mentor education

National Research school in Teacher Education (NAFOL)

In 2009 I was invited by the Norwegian National Council for Teacher Education to chair a discussion and planning group of how to develop a doctoral program in teacher education. The initiative rested in the criticism of the quantity as well as the quality of research in Norwegian teacher education, and the teacher education community realised that extensive initiatives had to be materialized. A preliminary plan was presented to the Ministry of Education, which immediately asked the Norwegian Research Council to issue a call for a national research school in teacher education. Instead of competing with each other with separate applications, the vast majority of the country’s teacher education decided to establish a network and to jointly apply for funding for the research school. It was difficult to reject a joint application from, at that time, 24 institutions. The national research school, NAFOL, (Norwegian: Nasjonal forskerskole i lærerutdanning) was established in 2010 with a first cohort of 19 students, all practicing teacher educators who had a four years scholarship (75% research, 25% teaching) to complete their Ph.D. dissertation. The initial plan was to accept four cohorts of 20 students with a project end in 2016. Today, the project period has been extended till 2021, and nine cohorts of above 20 students have been, are or will be
supported by NAFOL. Currently we have about 100 Ph.D. students in four cohorts, and four
cohorts of 97 candidates have already graduated from NAFOL. There is much to tell about
NAFOL, and I invite the interested reader to learn more from the NAFOL website,
http://nafol.net/, or from Østern’s (2016) informative paper. In an extensive evaluation of
NAFOL by a contracted researcher, one of the questions examined was the perceived impact
of NAFOL on teacher education after six years. The findings suggest that NAFOL plays a
central role in developing national and international networks in teacher education in that it
reaches beyond disciplinary, institutional, and national boundaries. The findings also point at
NAFOL’s contribution to strengthening a teacher education identity at an individual as well
as at an institutional level (Vattøy & Smith, 2015).

Yet-another move

As NAFOL is not administered by what was, at that time, my university, I quit my previous
position and moved to the host institution of NAFOL. Currently, all my work is at the doctorate
level, and in addition to NAFOL, I am responsible for the Educational Department’s Ph.D.
program. I supervise quite a few Ph.D. students myself, and am involved at the national and
institutional level of improving the quality of supervision at the doctorate level in Norway. Most
of our doctoral students have experience as teacher educators or as teachers (I can see myself
in many of them), and this has awakened a keen interest in the professional development of
teacher educators—Who are they? How do they learn the job? What development needs do
they have? Until recently this is a rather under-researched area (Lunenberg, Dengerink &
Korthagen, 2014), however, researchers (Phuong, Cole, & Zarestky, 2017; Kelchtermans, Smith
& Vanderline, 2017) as well as policy makers (European Commission, 2013) are now alert to the
need for more research about and how best to support those who teach teachers.

International Forum for Teacher Educator development (InFo-TED)

An international group of experienced teacher educators with a shared interest in learning
more about the profession they represent, established in 2013 the International Forum for
Teacher Educator Professional Development (InFo-TED) of which I am the coordinator. Our
mission is
"to bring together, exchange and promote research, policy and practice related to teacher educators’ professional development" (Lunenberg, Murray, Smith & Vanderlinde, 2016, p. 559).

InFo-TED meets twice a year, and we have ongoing research projects and publications trying to understand more about the complex role of being a teacher educator (Czerniawski, Guberman, & MacPhail, 2017). We have also successfully applied for funding from ERASMUS + to launch an online professional development program for teacher educators and to organize a five days European teacher education academy summer 2018 in Trondheim, Norway.

Accumulated research portfolio

To conclude this shortened version of my professional journey, it seems natural to mention the main research projects I am currently involved with; Responsive pedagogy in teaching mathematics (RespMath), a research and development (R&D) project on how to empower math teachers in providing feedback which strengthens self-regulation, self-efficacy and math achievements (Smith, Gamlem, Sandal & Engelsen, 2016). Much time is spent on learning more about teacher educators, induction into teacher education, how they perceive their roles, and their own development from an international and a national perspective. Last, yet not least, I am keen to learn more about why teachers leave teaching; is it always because of bad experiences and lack of resilience, or are there other factors at play (Smith & Ulvik, 2017)?

When writing this, I realize that I have not given up any of my research interests that have accumulated during the years; I have just expanded them. I am still researching issues relevant to my past and current practice. Practice relevant research has been one of several guiding principles that have followed me throughout my career.

Guiding principles

I have worked in several and quite different environments with situated cultures, structures, and relationships. This has been enriching and taught me the skill of being adaptive and flexible, and trying to understand why things are as they are in a specific context. The Merriam-Webster Dictionary (https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/assimilate) suggests several definitions for the concept to assimilate, and when reflecting on my story, two definitions seem to be illustrative of how I interpret my own experiences: a) to take into the mind and
thoroughly understand. Whenever I was welcomed in a new context I tried to learn as much as possible about it by asking questions, observing and becoming familiar with documented regulations and the implicit culture hidden in the walls. It did not mean that I agreed with everything I learned, but I always tried hard to understand the underlying reasons. b) to absorb into the cultural tradition of a population or group. It was important for me to be absorbed, but more in the sense of being accepted than becoming similar, so a third definition by Merriam-Webster, c) to make similar does not agree with my self-inquiry. I wanted to be agent for my personal beliefs and not a conformist who totally took on the contextual identity, and lost the individual self. Thus, I strived to be true to the principles by which I wanted to work, close to Kelchtermans’ (2009) concept of professional self-understanding and enacting my personal (subjective) educational theory.

Not one school-changing institutions

The alert reader will have noticed that my academic studies took place at three different institutions of higher education. It was not because of dissatisfaction with any of them, but more because I believed I could learn more by becoming acquainted with a new context, new people, and not least, new schools of thoughts. I was against the inbreeding of new academics who completed the three degrees in the same institutions under the same supervisors, with the danger of ending up with an academic ideology instead of rich and varied academic knowledge. Horta (2013) concludes from reviewing previous research and referring to his own Portuguese study that there is a negative relationship between academic inbreeding and academic productivity, and inbred faculty established fewer networks outside their own institution. Knight (2015) points at the importance of international experiences in a more and more globalized approach to higher education where the exchange of knowledge among academics, institutions, nations and domains becomes an essential asset to the academy. Today in Norway international exchange is highly recommended and supported at all levels of higher education, yet we do still find quite a lot of inbreeding of ‘the golden scholars’. The good undergraduate students are encouraged to continue to graduate studies and the successful graduate students are encouraged to apply for Ph.D. positions in the same department.
Combination of individual and collaborative work

Another principle of mine has been to find a good balance between working alone and working in teams, and this would be evident in the publication list. At times, I find it most useful to think, collect data, and write the paper by myself. This happens often when I question my own work and seek answers to questions deeply related to practice with which I am currently involved. However, the experience of working with others, institutional, national and international colleagues has, perhaps, been the most valuable aspect of my work. The discussions, learning and aiming to understand different perspectives, getting access to new knowledge, and the social relationships developed have enriched me professionally and socially throughout my academic life. Sometimes I would take the initiative, other times somebody else invites me to join, and often a new idea is created over a cup of coffee. Whereas the benefits of cooperation are widely acknowledged, less is known about how a supportive collaborative environment can be established. Kezar (2005) recommends academic institutions to work according to eight basic guidelines: (1) to have an explicit mission of collaboration, (2) to encourage networking within and beyond the immediate context, (3) to integrate collaboration in the organisational structure, (4) to offer rewards and incentives, (5) to prioritize collaboration at a leadership level, (6) to encourage staff to participate in external collaborations, (7) to develop shared values- specifically about student centeredness, and (8) to provide for cross disciplinary and cross institutional meeting places. Looking back, I realise that several of the above points have affected my work. I have had the opportunity to establish networks nationally and internationally, and been financially supported to maintain the widespread collaboration through conference participations, for example. In my current as well as in the previous university, the organisational structure is built around cooperation either in teaching teams, research groups or disciplinary units. When seeking promotion reviewers would look at individual as well as collaborative work, and today in Norway it would be very difficult to get a grant without national and international collaboration. Perhaps I started off with a personal principle of balancing individual and collaborative work, yet the enjoyment of collaboration has intensified with experience. This takes me to the next principle I try to follow nowadays.

Educating a new generation of researching teacher educators
As a senior professor with a long and rich career I see it as my privilege and responsibility to engage in the education of a new generation of researching teacher educators. Currently the work at the doctoral level provides me with multiple opportunities to do just that. Much time is spent on supervision and commenting on texts, on having an attentive and empathetic ear, and to be demanding when that is needed. It is with pride I now see several of my doctoral students as professors, collaborating widely in Norway and beyond, getting grants, and taking on leadership roles. In a current research project we are seven researchers, including two senior professors, and the five others are previous Ph.D. students of mine, one of them already a professor. The younger researchers are encouraged to take the lead in the writing of papers, and we, seniors, provide support as co-authors, but are not the leading authors. Sometimes I think that it is the teacher in me that guides the work with junior researchers, and the pedagogical belief in student centeredness is enacted at advanced levels of education.

Meaningful research, relevant to practice

The final principle to be mentioned here relates to research. It has been important to me to engage in research which is meaningful and relevant to the practice field. In a way teacher education practice and research have been complementing each other since the very beginning of my career. I remember how this first came to mind as a graduate student. I wrote a seminar paper on the use of combined adjectives (e.g. red-headed, long-legged) in English, Hebrew, and Norwegian. The course professor of comparative linguistics tried to convince me into developing the theme into a master thesis, eagerly claiming that “nobody has done this”. Well, after some thinking I remember asking myself “So what?- What value does such a study have?” I decided to examine the effect of external exams on secondary school students’ motivation for learning English, instead. This was meaningful to the school system (kibbutz school) in which I worked as there were heated and ongoing discussions about moving from a non-testing school to introducing the external national exams at the end of secondary school. Since then I have mindfully aimed at making my research meaningful. Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2009) claim that practitioner research is central in political and academic discussions of how to make educational changes. They do, however, make specific requirements of applied research such as relevance beyond the local contexts, methods used should be epistemologically grounded.
and instruments and data validated. The double role of the researcher needs to be critically addressed (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009). Zeichner (1999) argues that practitioner research, self-studies, for example, is one of the most significant development in teacher education research. The professional identity of being a teacher seems, in retrospect, to be central throughout my career and is reflected in the way I approach teacher education and research in teacher education. The relevance of the work to the practice field and by the end-of-the day to the pupils, has been a guiding principle in my work.

A principle is a rule or code of conduct (Merriam-Webster: https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/principle) and the selected principles discussed above have been guiding me since my days as a teacher and graduate student. Together with additional, more personal principles, they have given me a feeling of safety and direction in my professional learning.

**Lessons learned**

In full awareness of the space limitations this section will be rather short.

**Work hours- leisure time- impossible to separate**

A non-surprising, yet not irrelevant lesson learned is that with an academic career it is possible to enjoy the advantages of flexible working hours as well as flexible places of work. I can work from home or in my office, and often in hotel rooms. The drawback is that as the work pressure increases, the number of hours often exceeds the regular work hours and days. Work and leisure time melt into each other, the job becomes a hobby. Perhaps this is not the best way to model academic life to a new generation of researchers, quality of life is probably more than just work. In a Finnish study of in-depth interviews with 40 academics, Ylijoki (2013) found that three different patterns of work-leisure time division; “total commitment involving the work-life equation, boundary between time for real work and wasted time, and boundary between work and life” (p.242). Time becomes a rare resource which many find difficult to handle.

However, having said this, the opportunities to travel, meet new people, making new friends,
and the relative freedom to work with what I like, are aspects of academic life that to a certain extent outbalance the long hours.

**Constantly seeking new challenges, new directions**

To maintain motivation and enthusiasm for the job, I learned early on that it suits me to constantly be seeking new challenges, to move out of my comfort zone whenever I felt the slightest danger that I would continue in the same routine. It has not only been about changing institutions, it has been about getting engaged in new research areas with new people, and to try out new ideas and projects. Some have been successful, such as NAFOL and InFo-TED, and others have been less successful, either because of external constraints or simply because the idea was not good enough. However, all new moves have been worthwhile and have provided me with unique opportunities for new experiences and new knowledge. The love for the job has not been lessened throughout a long career.

**Developing good relationships in the close and distant community**

The most important lesson I have learned as a teacher, teacher educator, researcher, and leader is the fact that the quality of our work depends on the relationship we establish with people whether these are students, respondents, or colleagues. It is a question of respect and trust, empathy, and ethics that are at the heart of the work of educators. When strong relationships have been created, learning opportunities are endless. Relationships are therefore the main issue to bring into the following discussion about future teacher education.

**Future teacher education**

Initial teacher education (ITE) consists of four components, subject matter-, methodological-(didactics), pedagogical knowledge and practical skills. The practice of teaching is, however, a combination of it all, and the integration is what the Finnish experienced teacher educator, Sven-Erik Hansén (2008) calls *teachership*. Current ITE does not succeed in sufficiently integrating the four components and many students perceive their ITE to be fragmented with little contact between the people they meet in the various components (Darling-Hammond, 2006, 2012; Grossman, Hammerness, & McDonald, 2009). In the future it might be useful to
seek ways to strengthen the relationships between all those engaged in teacher education. It is a question of acknowledging various types of expertise realising that the students are in need of being supported in integrating the various components of teacher education in order to develop teachership. In educational contexts coloured by competition between the various units, the experience of fragmentation is strong and might even be harmful to the students. In the future we can be wiser and look for creative ways to cooperate in teacher education. It could be through co-teaching, joint exam assignments, off campus venues, shared project supervision and joint research projects. The integration, through improved relationships will hopefully be at the faculty level, and moreover, between the university and the practice field. There is an increasing awareness of the importance of creating spaces where students meet theory and practice and are exposed to the complexity of teaching. Students are likely to benefit from actively participating in learning dialogues about how theory and practice complement each other. The argumentation for creating third spaces in teacher education is not new (Bhabha, 1990; Zeichner, 2010), but there are still challenges which make it problematic to implement in many contexts (Klein, Taylor, Onore, Strom, & Abrams, 2013), and also in Norway (Lillejord & Børte, 2016). One of the main challenges with educating teachers in fully integrated contexts, similar to what Korthagen (2011) calls realistic teacher education, is that curricula will have to be less based on pre-planned lectures and reading lists. The topics discussed are likely to develop from concerns, experiences and questions raised by the participants, and the ‘teaching’ is likely to become more spontaneous, requiring rich and deep knowledge made accessible to the students. This might make ITE more relevant to the school of today, yet not become merely practical. To my mind, developing and integrating multiple third spaces based on mutual respect and acceptance of different types of expertise in the ITE curriculum is a major challenge for future teacher education.

For a truly integrated teacher education to work, policymakers and the teacher education community need to realise the importance of creating a strong infrastructure, not only as regards the structure of the programs, but also in widening the concept of who is a teacher educator and what qualifications are required to be a teacher educator. Content professors who teach in ITE or in In-service teacher education who see themselves as teacher educators,
explicitly model good teaching and are familiar with how the subject of their expertise is taught in schools. Similarly, school-based teacher educators, mentors for student teachers and novice teachers are entitled to be supported in understanding their dual roles as teachers and teacher educators, and encouraged to engage in professional learning of what it means to be a teacher educator. Too long has supervision been left to experienced, hopefully successful teachers, yet today there is an increasing awareness of the importance of educating the teachers of teachers. If the current practice turn in teacher education is to improve teacher education in the future, it is worthwhile investing resources in creating a solid infrastructure of how teacher education can become a fully shared responsibility between the university and the practice field. Just to shift ITE from higher education to the practice field without developing third spaces and a strong infrastructure will, as I see it, prevent a positive development of the relevance of teacher education to the current and future school.

The changing perception that teacher education is not mainly related to initial education, but to a career-long education, could be a useful direction to develop further in the future. The first years in the profession is an induction phase during which the learning curve is steep, and the novices’ on-job learning is in need of quality support, not only by a qualified mentor, but by the whole school. Promising initiatives are found in a number of countries, and Scotland, New Zealand and Israel are just a few examples. During the induction phase it is mainly learning-by-doing, and to avoid fragmented ad-hoc learning, carefully planned induction programs can be further developed. In my own country, Norway, we have much work ahead of us. The attrition of novice teachers is too high in Norway (Christoffersen, Elstad, Solhaug & Turmo, 2016) as well as in many other countries (Clandinin et al. 2015). It is high time more effort and resources are put into the importance of induction and in-service education of teachers. The concept career-long teacher education goes beyond the letter, and becomes built-in in spirit and in practice for those responsible for teacher education at the policy and implementation level.

Not only novice teachers who are in need for support during induction, but also teacher educators might experience an easier induction to the role as a teacher educator if they had been properly inducted into the profession. There is lack of clarity about who is a teacher educator, there is also little shared understanding about what knowledge and skills are needed
to do the job, and how such knowledge is acquired. In brief, we know little about being a teacher educator. Most current reforms suggest changes in the structure of teacher education, and in the future we have much to learn about those who practice teacher education. Perhaps it is time not only to argue that ‘teachers matter’ (OECD, 2005), but that teacher educators matter. Today we do not know enough about what matters and how to empower teacher educators to become researching teacher educators. This is another challenge for the future, and there are interesting initiatives in Belgium, The Netherlands and in Norway. NAFOL as well as INFO-TED are exiting examples that have provided useful experience and new knowledge, and can serve as good practices for other contexts and in different ways.

Conclusion

When reflecting on my professional life, I realise what a fascinating journey it has been. The complexities of teaching, teacher education and research are providing continuous challenges, and when I have felt something has been accomplished, a new idea or initiative is already knocking on the door. Stretching beyond the comfort zone and into a learning zone has been my motivation alongside the recognition that I have tried to work according to my principles, first and foremost, respect for others and creating trustful relationships. This is not always easy in an increasingly competitive academic world. My main regrets are rooted in all the things I have wanted to do and change, but I did not succeed or the circumstances were not right. I would want to develop a system which successfully integrates formative and summative assessment with a shared goal of enhancing learning for assessors, assesses and the system, and reduce the increasing accountability pressure in education. The notorious gap between practice and theory is still a major problem, and a future vision is to make teacher education a truly integrated professional education, which will be experienced by the students as a ‘whole’ education. For that to happen genuine collaborations need to be established among all stakeholders in education, including stakeholders outside the field of education. I wish to see real collaboration based on mutual respect and trust. However, most of all, I foresee a new generation of researchers who will take us into currently unimaginable worlds of knowledge and skills.
References


