

Flores, M. A. (2017) Editorial. The complexities and challenges of be(com)ing a teacher and a teacher educator, *European Journal of Teacher Education*, 40(1), pp. 2-5

EDITORIAL

The complexities and challenges of be(com)ing a teacher and a teacher educator

Much has been written about the process of be(com)ing a teacher. Issues such as the professional socialisation of new teachers, the need for support and guidance, mentoring and induction, the formation of teacher identity and opportunities to learn in the workplace have been addressed. Existing literature points to the complex and ongoing nature of the process of becoming a teacher, which relates not only to issues pertaining to the content and form of teacher education programmes, but also to motivational, contextual and professional aspects (Flores 2006; Feiman-Nemser 2012). Less is known, however, about the process of be(com)ing a teacher-educator, particularly as far as his/her education and opportunities for continuing professional development (CPD) are concerned, as well as his/her professional identities, despite the growing interest in the topic in recent years (Vanassche and Kelchtermans 2014; Izadinia 2014; Lunenberg, Dengerink, and Korthagen 2014).

Therefore, it is my pleasure to write the editorial of the first issue of EJTE in 2017 which offers a wide range of contributions which mark the beginning of 40th anniversary of the journal. The papers included in this issue focus on the complexities and challenges of be(com)ing a teacher and a teacher-educator in a variety of contexts. They come from different countries and all of them provide the readers with evidence that may broaden our understanding about issues such as teacher retention, the process of learning to teach, learning in the workplace, mentoring and opportunities for CPD.

The issue begins with the article, 'Psychological states and working conditions buffer beginning teachers' intention to leave the job' authored by Debbie De Neve and Geert Devos, from Belgium. The authors conducted a study aimed at investigating how working conditions such as job insecurity, teacher autonomy, collective responsibility, reflective dialogue, and deprivatised practice as well as psychological states such as teacher self-efficacy and affective commitment influence turnover intentions. In total, 272 beginning teachers from 72 Flemish (Belgian) primary schools participated in the study. Data were collected through a questionnaire which included scales that were based on existing instruments. Findings indicate that beginning teachers' intention to leave the job is strongly determined by their levels of self-efficacy and affective commitment. The authors also found that self-efficacy and affective commitment play a crucial role in the ways in which beginning teachers' intention to leave the profession is related to how they experience the work environment. In other words, the relationships between 'collective responsibility' and 'teacher autonomy' on the one hand and the intention to leave the job on the other hand are mediated by teacher self-efficacy and affective commitment. The authors conclude that when beginning teachers receive more autonomy they express higher levels of self-efficacy and affective commitment and that teachers with higher levels of self-efficacy and affective commitment report lower intentions to leave the job. De Neve and Devos argue that the ways in which new teachers perceive collective responsibility affect their sense of efficacy and commitment to the organisation.

In a similar vein, Kati Aus, Anna-Liisa Jogi, Katrin Poom-Valickis, Eve Eisenschmidt, and Eve Kikas look at the experiences of new teachers in the Estonian context. In their paper 'Associations of Newly Qualified Teachers' Beliefs with Classroom Management Practices and Approaches to Instruction over One School-Year', the authors examine whether newly qualified teachers' professional outcome expectations and their beliefs about students' intellectual potential are associated with teachers' self-reported classroom management and instructional practices. In total, 118 beginning teachers participating in an induction year programme were involved in the study. Data were collected through questionnaires which were group-administered during the group meetings of the induction year programme. Findings suggest that there are longitudinal associations between newly qualified teachers' beliefs in the beginning of the school-year and their self-reported instructional strategies and classroom management practices in the end of the school-year. The authors conclude that teachers with a more optimistic view of student ability and their personal teaching efficacy used more individualistic and mastery-oriented teaching strategies (taking into account students' individual needs, progress and effort) and also offered their students more emotional support compared to teachers with a more reserved view of students' intellectual abilities.

Also, Lisa Gaikhorst, Jos Beishuizen, Bart Roosenboom and Monique Volman, the authors

of the third paper 'The Challenges of Beginning Teachers in Urban Primary Schools', from the Netherlands, investigated new teachers teaching in urban contexts. They examined the problems and challenges of 15 beginning teachers in Dutch urban primary schools through in-depth semi-structured interviews. Findings showed that the urban problems related mainly to lack of time and capacity to pay sufficient attention to students at risk of academic failure; adapting to the differences in cognitive development and language development of children, and dealing with parents from a different culture or background and values and/or who speak a different language than the teacher. Findings from this study offer insights in developing support and guidance to new teachers during induction.

In the fourth paper 'Approaches to Learning of First-Year and Fifth-Year Student Teachers: Are There Any Differences?', the authors continue to explore dimensions of becoming a teacher. Iris Marušić, Ivana Jugović and Darko Lončarić, from Croatia, focus on the motivation, skills and professional identity of future teachers during their initial teacher education. Their aim was to look at differences between first-year and fifth-year student-teachers on a set of personality and motivational variables that are indicative of their approaches to learning. In total, 217 first-year and 109 fifth-year student-teachers participated in the study. Data were collected through questionnaires which assessed personality dispositions, self-descriptions, achievement goals, motivation, learning strategies and perceived autonomy support in learning. Findings indicate that final-year student-teachers displayed more conscientiousness, self-efficacy for learning and performance and had higher academic and problem-solving self-concepts than first-year student-teachers. The authors conclude that final-year students also showed less test anxiety, had lower mastery and performance avoidance goals and lower use of rehearsal learning strategies, and perceived less autonomy support from their university teachers compared to first-year student-teachers.

The fifth paper 'Pre-service teachers' questions about the profession during mentoring-group conversations' also explores issues related to the process of learning to teach. Anita Eriksson, from Sweden, focuses on the use of mentoring group conversations as a tool to support pre-service teachers' professional development. Her research is based on ethnographical observations of mentoring group conversations, and looks at how pre-service teachers who participate in a mandatory mentoring model use their conversations as an opportunity to enhance their professional knowledge. In total, four mentors and 33 pre-service teachers, divided into four mentoring groups, participated in the study during which 25 observations were conducted over a period of one and a half year at the end of the teacher education programme. Findings indicate that there were three recurrent topics during the conversations: teachers' role and teaching practice, conditions for professional development and conditions related to the profession. The author concludes that pre-service teachers mainly used conversations to discuss, share and reflect on pedagogical and didactical dilemmas related to teaching activities in the classroom and on their own role as well as on other teachers' behaviour and attitudes in different situations.

Opportunities for teachers to learn in the workplace are also what the sixth paper deals with. In 'The importance of environment for teacher professional learning in Malta and Scotland', Rachel Shanks, from Scotland and Michelle Attard, from Malta, examine how teachers in two European countries engaged in professional learning at work. Semi-structured interviews were used with 16 teachers in Malta and an online community in which teachers held discussions about their professional learning. In Scotland, two interviews were held with 10 new teachers, their official CPD documentation was collected and two online questionnaires were sent out to 167 teachers. According to the authors, the participants expressed individual preferences for professional learning experiences. In the Scottish context teachers learned in the classroom through and in their practice but also understood the benefit of learning from and with significant others. In the Malta some teachers recognised the enabling effect which their peers had on them, by encouraging them to participate in professional development opportunities. The authors argue that workplace conditions including the pedagogical and social atmosphere, and the community dimension, impacted on the participants through supporting and restricting factors. In other words, they suggest that the ways in which schools organise and manage teacher professional learning, support new teachers and enable informal learning to take place can be highly influential in a teacher's engagement in professional learning.

In the seventh paper 'Redefining What It Means To Be A Teacher Through Professional Standards: Implications For Continuing Teacher Education' Deirdre Torrance and Christine Forde, from the UK, explore the role of professional standards within the context of educational policies that aim to foster teacher quality and teacher education. Focusing on the Scottish context, the authors focus on professional standards and argue that a recent national review of career-long teacher education called for a reprofessionalisation of the teaching profession. The revision of the standards formed an element of this process. Torrance and Forde discuss, in particular, the concepts of 'teacher leadership' and 'practitioner enquiry'. They point to the complex and contested nature of both terms and to the tensions associated with the need to meet professional standards as part of teacher education and aspirational dimensions of the policy of reprofessionalisation. Issues

such as the balance between aspiration and regulation and the need for new conceptualisations of practitioner enquiry and teacher leadership, through career long professional learning, taking into account the engagement of teachers with professional standards as discursive texts are explored further in the paper.

The final paper, 'The professional developmental needs of higher education-based teacher educators: an international comparative needs analysis' authored by Gerry Czerniawski, from the UK, Ainat Guberman, from Israel and Ann MacPhail, from Ireland, focuses on teacher educators' needs in regard to their CPD within the context of the International Forum for Teacher Educator Development (InFo-TED). The authors examined the kinds of professional learning activities higher education-based teacher-educators value most. Data were collected through a questionnaire and in total, 1158 teacher-educators working in higher education institutions from Belgium, Ireland, Israel, the Netherlands, Norway and the UK participated in the study. Findings suggest that teacher-educators are moderately satisfied with their professional development experiences, but they express a strong desire for further professional learning. Issues such as beliefs concerning 'best practice' in teacher education, academic skills required to further their professional careers and knowledge of the curriculum associated with their fields of expertise influence the ways in which the participants look at priorities and needs for further professional development.

Each of these papers illustrates the challenges and complexities of be(com)ing a teacher in various contexts. Each provides the readers with interesting data that may be useful to develop relevant professional learning opportunities for student-teachers, teachers and teacher-educators.

References

- Feiman-Nemser, S. 2012. *Teachers as Learners*. Harvard Education Press.
- Flores, M. A. 2006. "Being a Novice Teacher in Two Different Settings: Struggles, Continuities, and Discontinuities." *Teachers College Record* 108 (10): 2021–2052.
- Izadinia, M. 2014. "Teacher Educators' Identity: A Review of Literature." *European Journal of Teacher Education* 37 (4): 426–441.
- Lunenberg, M., J. Dengerink, and F. Korthagen. 2014. *The Professional Teacher Educator. Roles, Behaviour, and Professional Development of Teacher Educators*. Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.
- Swennen, A., and M. van der Klink, eds. 2009. *Becoming a Teacher Educator Theory and Practice for Teacher Educators*. Springer Netherlands.
- Vanassche, E., and G. Kelchtermans. 2014. "Teacher Educators' Professionalism in Practice: Positioning Theory and Personal Interpretative Framework." *Teaching and Teacher Education* 44: 117–127.

Maria Assunção Flores
University of Minho, Portugal
<http://orcid.org/0000-0002-4698-7483>