

Livingston, K. & Flores, M. A. (2017) Editorial. Trends in teacher education: a review of papers published in the European journal of teacher education over 40 years, *European Journal of Teacher Education*, vol 40, nº5, pp. 551-560

Trends in teacher education: a review of papers published in the European journal of teacher education over 40 years

Introduction

The journal of the Association for Teacher Education in Europe (ATEE) was first published in 1978.

At that time it was known as *Revue ATEE Journal* (1978–1982). It began by inviting members of the ATEE to publish papers and by inviting authors of note-worthy papers presented at the ATEE Annual Conferences to submit papers to the journal. In 1982 the journal became known as the European Journal of Teacher Education. For the purposes of this Special Issue, which is the last issue focused on the theme of all the issues in the 40th Volume of ETJE – *Looking back, Looking forward in Teacher Education* – we have undertaken an analysis of all the papers that have been published since the inception of the journal in 1978. The analysis has given a fascinating insight into the topics of the papers published, the context(s) in which the particular topic was considered and the methodologies used in the research reported in the papers. We were particularly interested in the trends emerging: similarities and differences in the topics considered over the 40 volumes of the journal; topics that were re-visited and those that were not; changes within and across countries in Europe and beyond; and similarities and differences in the methodologies used. A total of 917 papers were published between 1978 and 2016 and formed part of our analysis. The abstracts that were available for each paper were read by both of us. We begin by discussing the countries that were identified as the context for the research presented in the papers published and the methodologies utilised. The analysis of topics is then discussed and we present our views on emerging trends in teacher education over the 40 years time period of the publication of EJTE.

Countries

The focus of the European Journal of Teacher Education is, as readers would expect, on teacher education in Europe. However, many of the issues in teacher education extend beyond the boundaries of Europe and it is therefore important to be aware of and learn from research that is conducted world-wide. While the focus in each issue is predominantly on research in teacher education in European countries many papers are accepted from authors beyond Europe. For this reason across the years in most volumes of EJTE there are papers concerning teacher education from countries across the world.

In our analysis of the 917 papers only 714 mentioned explicitly in the title and/or in the abstract the context for the research. The table below indicates the spread of countries where the author(s) did indicate the context. It is important to note that in some papers more than one country may be identified as they draw on joint work of contributors from various contexts (Table 1).

Most of the authors come from European countries. The UK is the top country with 157 papers (which includes papers from researchers in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland) followed by the Netherlands (96), Turkey (37), Spain (37), Germany (36), Ireland (35), Finland (34), France (33), Belgium (30) and Norway (30). It is important to note that countries from outside Europe are also included in the high contributing countries (more than 10 papers published in EJTE) as is the case of USA (19), Australia (18) and Canada (13). Also of interest is the spread of countries located in northern but also southern and Eastern Europe.

Other countries (with fewer than 10 papers) include Austria, Slovenia, Cyprus, Estonia, Switzerland, Russia, Switzerland, Romania, Poland, Czech Republic, Egypt, China, Latvia, Serbia, Bulgaria, Hungary, Nigeria, Lithuania, Iran, Croatia, Japan, Singapore, Albania, Barbados, United Arab Emirates, Iceland, Taiwan, Algeria, Jordan, Luxembourg, Hong-Kong, South Africa and Saudi Arabia.

Research methodologies

A diversity of methodologies was used in the papers published over the last 40 years in EJTE. The papers fall into three main categories: empirical study papers – which include papers describing empirical research (using all kinds of methods, quantitative and qualitative or mixed-method); theoretical/reflexive papers – papers describing personal reflections or theoretical reflections on given topics. This category also includes reflections on specific teacher education programmes in a given institution; and reviews of literature – papers presenting a literature review or systematic reviews of studies.

It was however also possible to identify other kinds of papers such as personal accounts on one's own professional trajectory, summaries/reports of meetings within the ATEE, etc., especially in the early years of the journal.

Most of the papers published in the EJTE over the last 40 years are empirical study papers (433) and theoretical/reflexive papers (353). Only 8 papers focusing on a systematic review of literature were identified (see Table 2).

In regard to the systematic review of the literature, the 8 papers focused on issues such as the mapping of research on partnership in teacher education, teachers' use of research, students' misconceptions, practicum experience, teacher educators' identity, teaching for diversity, final thesis models in European teacher education and university teacher roles and competencies in online learning environments.

The theoretical/reflexive papers are abundant and they address normally issues related to given specific programmes or features in teacher education. Examples of these kinds of papers include the development of theoretical frameworks on professional development of teachers, models of teacher education, multiculturalism, professionalisation of teachers, global perspectives on education and on teacher education, the discourses on and in teacher education, professional learning, etc. Included in this category – theoretical/reflexive papers – are also reflexive papers focusing on the nature of change in given teacher education programmes, the master level in teacher education, issues of literacy, social justice and research in teacher education, theory and practice in teacher education, bilingualism, etc.

As far as the empirical study papers are concerned, it is possible to identify different kinds of research designs: (i) quantitative studies using questionnaires with large

samples, (ii) qualitative through the use of interviews the most recurring of which is semi-structured interviews, (iii) mixedmethod designs, which combine both quantitative and qualitative approaches; (iv) exploratory and pilot studies which focus on a small sample; (v) longitudinal studies. In general, small-scale studies are prevalent, usually following a qualitative design, but it was also possible to identify quantitative studies and mixed-method studies. However, the samples are, in general, small, with some exceptions, focusing, in many papers, on case studies. Although quantitative, qualitative and mixed-method studies can be found, small-scale studies are the most recurrent ones. Less frequent are action research methods, meta-analysis and self-study designs. Comparative studies are also identified although less frequently.

In the majority of the studies questionnaires and/or interviews are the most recurrent methods. Less frequent are life history accounts, document analysis and less traditional research methods such as storyline and image-based methods such as drawings and videos. Also of relevance is the fact that, although few papers do include observation methods, this is one of the less recurrent methods in the papers published in EJTE over the last 40 years.

As for the research focus, not surprisingly, student teachers and new teachers are the most recurrent focus. Most of the studies focus on student teachers' perceptions, views and experiences most of which are related to the practicum and to their experience during initial teacher education. Also, many studies draw on the transition from student to teacher and include the perspectives of new teachers. The third category of participants is teachers. In this case practicing teachers are the focus of the research including their views on different aspects such as continuing professional development opportunities and inservice, collaborative work, professionalism, use of instructional designs, use of ICT in the classroom, etc. It is also possible to identify other kinds of participants such as teacher educators. The focus is on their identity and development and on their practices as teacher educators. Less recurrent participants are pupils, doctoral students, policy makers and veteran teachers.

There is a need, in our view, to develop larger studies with bigger samples using mixed-method approaches. Also of relevance is the design and implementation of comparative studies in teacher education, especially focusing on the effects of the Bologna process in European universities.

There is a need to undertake more reviews of existing research literature on teacher education in order to provide researchers with a more systematic perspective of teacher education internationally.

In addition, it is important to include the perspective of various stakeholders in order to bring together issues of research, policy and practice in teacher education.

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