



# THE ROLE OF RESEARCH IN TEACHER EDUCATION

**AULI TOOM**

**UNIVERSITY OF HELSINKI**

**ALIS OANCEA**

**UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD**

# GOALS

- To elaborate on research in teacher education and why it is important
- To explore the role of research in teacher education
- To explore the ways and reasons to enhance capacity for research in teacher education

**→ ways to think and tools to implement collaboratively and develop GLU programmes including research emphasis and MA thesis**

## GENERAL OUTLINE

- Research in teacher education – What does it mean?
- The role of research in teacher education – What purposes does it serve?
- Developing capacity to conduct and engage with research in teacher education – How to do it and why?



# WHAT IS RESEARCH IN TEACHER EDUCATION?

\*HOW DO YOU THINK ABOUT THIS? WRITE DOWN YOUR 3 MOST IMPORTANT THOUGHTS AND SHARE THEM WITH THE PERSON NEXT TO YOU.



# RESEARCH IN TEACHER EDUCATION: STUDENT TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVE

## STUDENT TEACHERS

- read educational research and learn about research findings – the course contents of teacher education are tightly related to research – *consumers* of educational research
- learn educational research methods and research process, and understand their relevance for practice
- learn to observe, analyse and conceptualise classroom practice – *inquiring orientation* towards the work of teaching
- conduct educational research during their studies, e.g. MA thesis – *producers* of educational research
- build connections between research and practice of teaching during teacher education
- during the TE programme, learn an inquiring orientation towards teacher's work

(e.g. Healey, 2005; Grossman, 2007; Kansanen, 2005; Elen et al., 2009; Munthe & Rogne, 2015; Toom et al., 2010; Jensen, Klette & Hammerness, 2017)

# STUDENT TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES AND PERCEPTIONS OF RESEARCH IN TEACHER EDUCATION

- In terms of learning to become teachers, student teachers experience teaching practice periods and MA thesis process especially crucial parts of their teacher education (Saariaho et al., 2015; Toom et al., 2015)
- Student teachers report to learn practical knowledge and a variety of strategies relevant for practice of teaching *through teaching and analysing teaching* during teaching practice periods (Allas et al., 2016; Heikonen et al., 2017)
- Student teachers expect scholarly approach in their pedagogical studies and integration of research in the supervision of their teaching practice (Byman et al., 2009)
- Student teachers report to appreciate research-based approach in their teacher education (Byman et al., 2009)

# RESEARCH IN TEACHER EDUCATION: TEACHER EDUCATORS' PERSPECTIVE

## TEACHER EDUCATORS

- read and become familiar with the research related to teachers, teaching and teacher education – as *consumers of research*
- use own and others' research findings in their teaching and supervision
- collect feedback and data from their own practice to evaluate, inform and improve their own (and their colleagues') practice
- conduct research projects related to education, schools and teacher education – *as producers of research*
- have capacity to provide academic teacher education and supervise theses
- develop as researchers on teacher education through teaching in teacher education
- engage in collaborative design and development of teacher education programmes

(e.g. Munthe & Rogne, 2015; Healey, 2005; Toom et al., 2010; Cao et al., 2018)

# TEACHER EDUCATORS' EXPERIENCES AND PERCEPTIONS OF RESEARCH IN TEACHER EDUCATION

- Teacher educators perceive themselves primarily as teachers (49%); equally as teachers and as researchers (32%); and primarily as researchers (19%) (Cao et al., 2018)
- Most of the teacher educators (77%) reported that their teaching and research are highly or totally related (Cao et al., 2018)
- Teacher educators report to integrate research and practice through their pedagogies (Toom et al., 2017)
  - Pedagogies focusing on reflection on practice were emphasised
  - Pedagogies focusing on experimenting and modelling practice of teaching were less utilised



# TEACHER EDUCATORS' EXPERIENCES AND PERCEPTIONS OF RESEARCH IN TEACHER EDUCATION

- Teacher educators working in academic (Finnish) teacher education context reported (Cao et al., 2018) that
  - *the contents of their teaching are based on research (50%)*
  - *their teaching methods are based on research (10%)*
  - *they apply inquiry-oriented methods in teaching (5%)*
  - *they do research on their own teaching (22%)*
  - *integrate students to their own research projects (9%)*
  - *they experience to develop as researchers through teaching (2%)*
  - *research supports their teaching (2%)*

# RESEARCH IN TEACHER EDUCATION: PRACTICE /FIELD SCHOOLS' PERSPECTIVE

## PRACTICE OR FIELD SCHOOLS COLLABORATING WITH TEACHER EDUCATION

- teachers utilise research-based knowledge and evidence when teaching pupils and supervising student teachers
- teachers allow student teachers, teacher educators and researchers to enter their classrooms for data collection or other research activities
- teachers and schools engage and contribute actively in co-designed and collaborative research projects
- teachers and schools are active in the evidence-based development of teacher education and education at their own schools
- school principals support and promote research-based collaboration and evidence-based development at schools

(Hytönen & Kansanen, 1982; Mincu, 2013; Husu & Toom, 2016; Toom & Husu, 2017)

# RESEARCH IN TEACHER EDUCATION: TE PROGRAMME AND CURRICULUM PERSPECTIVE

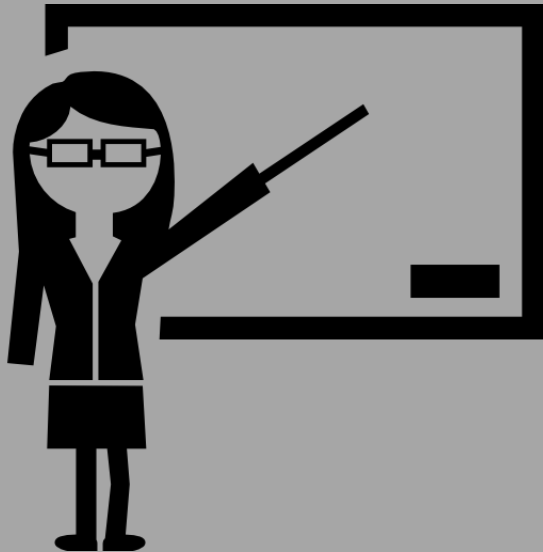
## TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMME

- Program and curriculum design demonstrate research orientation through organising theme, logic supporting student teacher learning, course contents, pedagogies, assignments and assessment
- Is implemented in the academic context of teacher education
- Research related to teacher education and empirical evidence from student teachers are utilised to improve the programme

(e.g. Healey, 2005; Kansanen, 2005; Elen et al., 2009; Munthe & Rogne, 2015; Zeichner & Conklin, 2005; Toom et al., 2008; 2010; Zeichner, 1983)

# RESEARCH IN TEACHER EDUCATION: MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES

## PERSPECTIVE OF TEACHER EDUCATION CURRICULUM



**STUDENT TEACHERS'  
PERSPECTIVE**



**TEACHER EDUCATORS'  
PERSPECTIVE**



**FIELD SCHOOLS'  
PERSPECTIVE**



# **THE ROLE OF RESEARCH IN TEACHER EDUCATION**



# PROJECTS OF TEACHING AND TEACHER EDUCATION

Tensions: political / sociological / philosophical

- Moral and theological project
- Ideological projects
- Scientific project – psychology, scientific pedagogy
- Multidisciplinary developmental project: child development and social transformation
- Professional project

## THE WOW FACTOR...

TE: preparation for selflessly and resiliently exercising your craft in order to act on your calling in line with the best evidence while efficiently excelling against top-down performance measures!

A 3D rendered word "WOW!" in a bold, sans-serif font. The letters are white with a red outline and a slight shadow underneath, giving it a three-dimensional appearance.

# PERSISTENT TROPES ABOUT EDUCATIONAL PRACTICE

“Resilience”



“Common sense”  
(in contrast to “academic expertise”)

“Selfless love”



“(Messy) craft”



“The gap”  
(between practice and research)



# THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RESEARCH AND PRACTICE

- **Australia:** ‘disconnection between theory and practice’ → ‘better ways to integrate the theory and practice components of ITE’ (TE Ministerial Advisory Group, 2014)
- **England:** ‘the integrated working of the best university-school partnerships’ (DfE, 2011)
- **Scotland:** TE “requires a more integrated relationship between theory and practice, between the academic and the practitioner, between the provider of teacher education and the school” (Donaldson, 2011)
- **US:** against practical training as merely an ‘add on semester after years of instruction in educational theory’ (Dept of Ed, 2011)

## Solutions?

co-siting (osmosis);

practitioner research;

evidence-based practice

## IF IT'S SO SIMPLE, WHY HAVE WE NOT SOLVED IT YET?

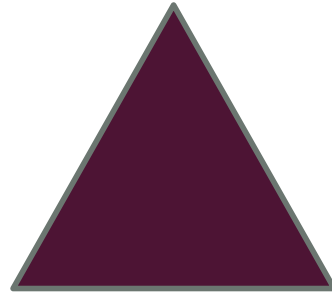
- **epistemic fallacy**: assumption of divide requiring bridging by TEs → **co-siting**
  - But: lacks integration in account of human rationality, action and flourishing
- **institutional fallacy**: practice and theory as bounded institutionally → e.g. **practitioner research**.
  - But: both are more complex and topography is divisive
- **cultural and pedagogical fallacy**: assumption research = theory while educational activity = practice → **evidence based practice**.
  - But: ignores educative potential and diversity in research; practitioners as *paedagogus laborans*.

# INQUISITIVE PRACTICES

- **Systematic flexing of inquisitive thought**
  - systematic process
  - shared internal norms and standards of quality
  - hospitable attitude towards educative purposes
- **Reflective use of tools**
  - procedural reasonableness, trustworthiness and rigour
  - methodological theorising
  - intelligent apprenticeship
- **Considerate exercise of virtues**
  - deliberative and conversational
  - interpretative normative practices grounded culturally, historically and politically
  - considerate of other practices and their norms of educative-ness

# THE BASIS FOR INTEGRATION

**Systematic flexing of  
inquisitive thought**



**Reflective use  
of tools**

**Considerate  
exercise of virtues**



# DEVELOPING RESEARCH CAPACITY IN TEACHER EDUCATION



## WHAT DO WE MEAN BY “CAPACITY”?

### ■ What ‘capacity’ – for what?

- individual capabilities to act professionally and support others to do so: expertise, motivation, opportunities (Desforges)
- organisational resources, including human, culture, structures and infrastructure to support professional activity
- systemic frameworks, resources, structures and infrastructure to facilitate and sustain this activity

### ■ Whose capacity?

- Teacher educators
- Practitioners
- Trainee teachers
- Policy makers
- Organisations
- Systems

# EXAMPLES FROM THE UK: A HISTORY OF EXPERIMENTATION

- **UK-wide, large scale (1998-2009, £30m): ESRC TLRP, incl RCBN & TEG :**
  - CB required in each project plan → ECR, practitioner and PhD support
  - formal training workshops & resource dissemination to diversify methodological repertoires
  - online research training resources, VRE, professional networks to support communities of practice (including in specialist sub-fields)
- **UK-wide (2008-10): SFRE etc:**
  - Multi-stakeholder stock-taking and agenda-setting fora
- **England: TERN (2008-09)**
  - Informal professional learning in multi-institutional research groups for collaborative bidding
  - Research fellowships with mentoring: one-to-one, one-to-many, peer
  - Blended learning experience: workshops and VRE

# EXAMPLES FROM THE UK: A HISTORY OF EXPERIMENTATION

- **Scotland (2003-2008, £2m): AERS**
  - Formal pedagogy through distance learning modules
  - Mentoring and peer coaching for ‘supported (collaborative) research project experience’, including fellowships and studentships
- **Wales (2007-09, £350k): WERN**
  - Research project bursaries to inter-institutional groups, with mentorship provision
  - Collaborative fellowships
- **Wales (2012-15, under £1m ): WiserdEducation**
  - On-site coaching and mentoring; fellowship placements; data infrastructure
  - Writing retreat, PhD support, conference funding, institutional visits, directory of expertise
- **Northern Ireland:** stakeholder forum, CPD, online resource



## BARRIERS: CONTEXTUAL AND INSTITUTIONAL

- Fast pace of systemic and policy **change**, plus tight **accountability** regimes
- Conflicting pressures generated by **restructuring**
- Institutional **reluctance to invest** in emerging research cultures
- Perceived **financial disincentives** to institutions' investing in TE research
- Teaching and research not part of the same **professional culture** in institutions
- Insufficient recognition of research as part of **workload** allocation
- Insufficient appreciation of the demands of **high-quality** research
- Difficult to grow '**critical mass**' in institutions
- Insufficient understanding of education research in other subject **faculties** in HEI

## BARRIERS: FIELD - RELATED

- Relatively **small size** of research community in education
- **Geographical** imbalance in distribution of research qualifications/ expertise
- **Fragmentation** of research activity across types of institutions, groups of staff, modes of research and disciplines
- Insufficient spread of **advanced research skills** → small recruitment pool and need to import
- Uneven recognition of the value of **different forms** of educational research
- Insufficient infrastructure for **research communication** in education

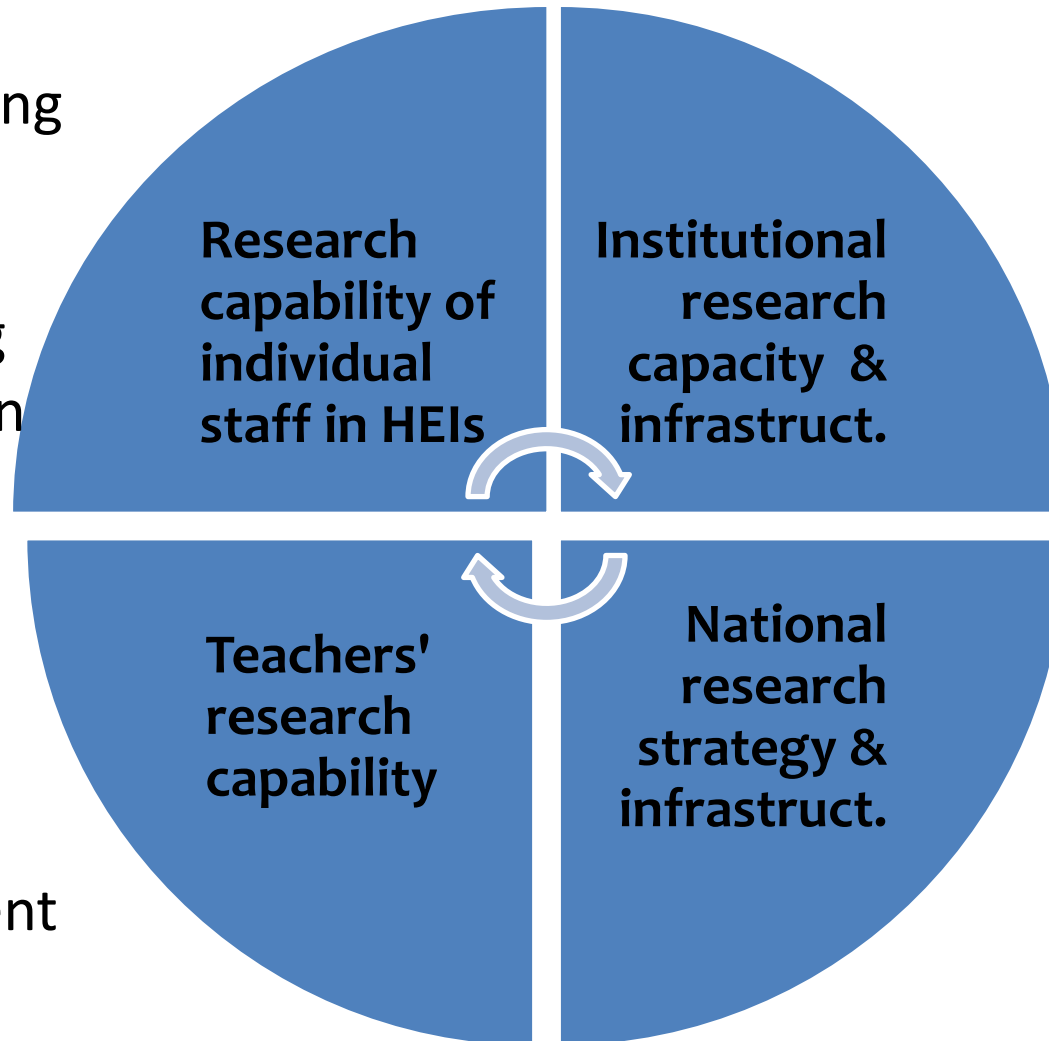
## BARRIERS: INDIVIDUAL - LEVEL

- **Time** and workload pressures
- Increasing **workloads** in the aftermath of restructuring
- Perceived lack of **senior management** and institutional support
- Perceived lack of **funding** opportunities
- Limited or non-supported **access to training** opportunities
- Difficulties in securing **employment conditions** that match higher levels of research training and capabilities.

# CAPACITY BUILDING - LEVELS OF INTERVENTION

Coaching & mentoring  
Fellowships  
Writing support  
Conference funding  
Project participation  
PhD support

Co-production  
Communications  
Support pupils'  
research engagement



Partnerships  
Working environment  
Institutional visits  
Bespoke activities

National frameworks  
Directory of expertise  
Data infrastructure

## OPPORTUNITIES

- **Public investment** in the profession, including in PG and teacher research
- Supportive **political agenda** to develop a research-rich and practice-oriented profession
- New **research leadership** roles, emergent **strategic emphasis** on research in institutions
- New **research initiatives** across the system
- Opening educational research **data infrastructures**
- Appetite for dialogue and **partnership** HE - schools
- Integration of **mobile researchers and practitioners**, including internal
- Opportunities to learn from **Masters-level** teacher education provision

# CONCLUSIONS

- Research in teacher education concerns all those involved: student teachers and teacher educators as well as TE institutions and field schools through curriculum, pedagogies and research
- Educational research and practice are intrinsically connected and this is a strong basis for integration
- Research capacity building needs to encompass all stakeholders and levels of intervention (individual, organisational, systemic)

## QUESTIONS FOR TABLE DISCUSSION

- What lessons from models of building research capacity in teacher education would you like to take back and discuss with your colleagues?
- What needs to be put in place to ensure that your teacher education institution and practice schools have sufficient capacity to provide research-informed and inquiry-rich teacher education and MSc supervision?



**THANK YOU!**

