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Insights In, On and For Teacher Education: An International Teacher Educator Study

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Abstract: Whilst the importance of research in teacher education is widely emphasised, debates continue about issues of value, legitimacy and contributions to the knowledge base. This paper aims to contribute to these debates by looking at research in, on and for teacher education, by teacher educators. Drawing from 20 interviews of international experienced teacher educators, questions were posed into the types of research they have pursued, how their research contributed to the field, and how they conceptualised research in/on and for teacher education. Drawing from Bourdieu, findings give insights into what constitutes valued research capital within the divergent field or territory of teacher education.

Introduction

The paper is written at a time of continuing intensified debates about the place and nature of research in programs for intending and serving teachers as well as what counts as research evidence in teacher education (White et al., 2018). These debates swirl against repeated policy reform efforts in teacher education as many nations now see schooling – and consequently better educational outcomes, enhanced teacher performance and improved models of teacher education – as key to economic advancement. Such reforms have largely focused attention on pre-service teacher education, in particular. Historical analyses (Furlong, 2016; Furlong et al., 2013; Labaree, 2008) internationally show that in many ways this focus is not new: teacher education has long been a site where the discourses and practices about what it means to become and be a teacher are (re)produced and contested. Traditionally, the research field has been critiqued as multi-layered, divergent and often loosely framed (Rowan et al., 2015).

The recent systematic politicisation and regulation of teacher education across the world has focused more attention on teacher educators and their work (White, 2019), igniting debates about their practices in preparing new teachers, their research and positionality and identities in the field. There are constant references to an evidence base of research that teachers must use; the question, however, is what counts as evidence, whose evidence is being counted, and who decides? Teacher educators are often marginalised in these debates about the evidence base of teacher education research. The study reported in this paper has sought to address this issue and better understand teacher educators' research and their contributions to the field.

Teacher Education as a Research Field

The importance of research in teacher education to inform the development of teachers' knowledge bases and practices, in the long-term interests of strengthening school systems and improving children's education, is widely accepted (BERA-RSA, 2014; Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2005; White et al., 2021). It is part of the orthodoxy of teacher education that programs should be informed by robust research and that teachers should be research literate and able to analyse and critique research findings. Yet in a field marked by multiple, and sometimes divisive and contradictory, discourses and practices, it is inevitable that arguments continue about the types and purposes of that research, particularly focusing on issues of its status, value, legitimacy and contributions to the evidence and knowledge base of teacher education. The degree of teacher – and teacher educator – engagement in the active production of personal research is also contested, stressed as vital in many contexts but seen as less important in others (White et al., 2021). Longstanding debates have highlighted the Janus-faced nature of teacher educators' work as they are pulled between demands for excellence in both research and teaching (Smith & Flores, 2019).

This paper aims to contribute to the general debates about research evidence in teacher education by drawing on data from an international study of teacher educators. The International Teacher Education Research Alliance (ITERA) project was a broad study addressing a range of issues in teacher education (see White et al., 2021) but this paper seeks to analyse the research that 20 internationally experienced teacher educators conducted over their careers. We use the term experienced to signify their standing and status in the teacher education field. Drawing on Ian Menter's work (2023) the "field" is defined as three main forms that teacher education research may take, namely research in teacher education, research on teacher education and the third form which may be described as research around teacher education, that is research that has a wider purview, connecting with other disciplines and/or other arenas of social activity.

Using this framing and working from within the wider study as described by White et al. (2021), the research questions here are:

- How do these experienced teacher educators see teacher education and the value and purposes of research as part of the disciplinary "territories" they inhabit?
- What types of research do these experienced teacher educators engage in and why?
- How does this research assist them in inhabiting their academic territories?

Theoretical Framework

This paper draws on a theoretical framework deploying the work of Trowler (2014) and Becher and Trowler (2001) and Bourdieu (1998) to help illuminate what constitutes valued capital for the occupational group or "clan" of university-based teacher educators within the field of teacher education. Becher and Trowler's work on the relationships between academics, their disciplinary territories and the various forms of knowledge they espouse has developed and diverged over 30 years. In the space available here it is impossible to include a full analysis of these developments, particularly in relation to how different disciplines in academia form and thrive, but we present the most cogent details of this analysis, as relevant for teacher education (see Trowler, 2014 for a fuller analysis).

The work of Becher (1989), updated by Trowler (2009, 2014), seeks to understand academic work through analysing interactions between the disciplinary "territory" or field that groups of academics inhabit amidst the evolutions of particular structural relations, discourses, and rules within the territory. Those structures and discourses in turn influence

the available knowledge resources, language, subject positionings, and academic dispositions for those operating as agents in the field. In Becher and Trowler's (2001) terms, teacher educators, both in universities and schools, can be seen as the agents inhabiting the field of teacher education, the precise "territories" they inhabit are found within the locations in which they work, the programs on which they teach, the roles they undertake, and the knowledges and values they impart to their students.

The framework of Becher's original study (1989) created a taxonomy which categorised disciplines as either hard or soft, pure or applied, divergent or convergent, rural or urban. Hard disciplines were defined as having well-developed theoretical bases, often working towards the accumulation of clearly defined knowledge bases. Soft disciplines such as teacher education had "relatively unspecified theoretical structure" and diverse definitions of knowledge (Trowler, 2014, p. 18). Convergent disciplines had clearly defined standards of research practice, whilst divergent disciplines permitted greater flexibility of boundaries and contestations around what counts as research. Using this framework, teacher education can be defined as an applied discipline (in that it is regulated by external influences to a considerable extent), and also as "soft and divergent". In later work, Becher's original thesis developed to become less deterministic and to acknowledge the increasing complexity of academic life in the neo-liberal age, and aspects of the work still hold considerable validity for teacher education and for this study. For example, Becher and Trowler note (2001, p. 12) that the impact of the "geomorphic and territorial changes on academic staff … (are) ... substantial … (T)he relationship between the identifiable shifts in the landscape on the one hand and academic cultures, work conditions and disciplinary communities on the other is dynamic, complex and far from tightly-coupled".

These definitions of disciplines and the influences of competing and shifting discourses within them enable us to analyse the field of teacher education, as experienced by our participants, where the dominant discourses may be seen as multiple, intertwined and contested in complex ways and playing out differently in national and local sites. Yet it is still possible to identify some recurring contemporary discourses found across many differing contexts. These include the ongoing resonances of historical discourses tracing back to the roots of the field in the lower-status normal schools or teacher training colleges of the 19th and early 20th centuries. As teacher education moved into other higher education institutions, including universities, one consequence of these "humble" origins has been that the status of teacher education within academia is recognised as uneasy, with the low status and marginality of the field noted by commentators (Labaree, 2008).

Further dominant discourses of the field include those which see "theory" and "practice" as bifurcated, often associating the former with "the university" and "research" and the latter with "the school" and "practice", persistently constructing these things as distinct. These dichotomies endure despite many attempts to achieve more integrated senses of knowledge, in line with international evidence and practices verifying that integrating different sources of knowledge and maintaining close collaborations between university and schools are vital for teacher learning (see, for example, Burn & Mutton, 2015; Kriewaldt & Turnidge, 2013). Such approaches explicitly reject the theory/practice binary and simplistic "theory into practice" models, whilst acknowledging that de-contextualised research findings do not translate into "recipes for practice". Despite this, the often-binary language of "theory/practice" discourses persists in the field.

The concept of capital provides one way in which Bourdieu conceptualised agents within a field as confronting "each other with differentiated means and ends" (1998, p. 32). Capital is defined by the discourses and structures of the field, its source in the reservoir of all the possible knowledge, orientations and subject positionings created within and by those structures. In this sense, capital is the "product" of the field, manifested in a variety of ways

including modes of practice, knowledge orientation and values employed by its agents. But capital has value and power only as it is understood, firstly, within the structures of the field of production, and secondly, by the value which agents give it. Grenfell and James (1998, p. 22) argue that, whilst capital cannot be reified, it has practical consequences; types of capital are valued differentially within the field, permitting agents to play the "games" of the field in varied ways, to assume different positionings, and to gain or "buy" prestige and power within it. The term "*research capital*" as used here refers to the power and prestige that activities such as gaining research grants, publishing in high-impact journals or books, attending conferences and giving keynotes bring to teacher educators, enabling them as agents to play "the research game" (Lucas, 2006).

The design of our study means that we understand "research" as a powerful form of capital within the field of university-based teacher education. We assert this despite our knowledge that experiential knowledge of teaching in schools prior to entering teacher education is perceived to be highly valued capital for teacher educators in some national contexts, and other types of knowledge, particularly those gained through research or scholarship, can be marginalised or de-legitimised. Nevertheless, in academia in general, research capital is the most valued for many types of academic status and advancement; in this teacher education is no different as the criteria for tenure, for example, indicate. Our sample group here possess valuable research capital, widely understood to be important in the field and given high value by other teacher educators as agents, most notably by those nominating the final sample group for our study and, further back in the research process, by those reviewing and publishing the relevant journal articles and books on teacher education that disseminate the work.

The Study: Learning from Accomplished Teacher Educators

ITERA is an interpretive study, using interviews to capture the perceptions and experiences of teacher educators, internationally recognised by their peers as "experienced" and notable (White et al., 2021). Such research is important in that it promotes a maturing of the field, a way for teacher educators to learn about themselves and their research. It is also a way to build research capacity for the next generation of teacher educators; to acknowledge the experience and expertise of those deemed to be intellectual "elders" in the field; and to develop knowledge bases for teacher education. As Zeichner (1995, p. 21) noted:

> *Unless teacher educators can themselves articulate what it is that they professionally know, believe in, and "stand for", then, just as in the case of teachers … there is a danger that a knowledge-base [for teacher education] will be defined without the voice and perspectives of teacher educators [themselves].*

Ethical permission for the study was gained from QUT University. This was then cross-referenced for all the other researchers and universities. Keeping the identity of the 20 individuals anonymous could have been a challenge in a field as small as teacher education research; participants were therefore asked for permission to share their identities – all gave this. For the purposes of this paper, however, the participants have been de-identified and given pseudonyms as not all participant data is used. The study sought not to focus on naming individuals or establishing some form of hierarchy of standards; our interest in this study was to generate new knowledge for the profession collectively. With ethical permission in place, after much discussion, we identified and deployed two threshold criteria for identifying the teacher educators: 1) individuals should have an international reputation for the quality of their research and practice in teacher education; 2) each must have had first-hand experience at some point in their careers as a teacher educator, including preparing pre-

service teachers. We purposely left the descriptors for those people deemed "accomplished" relatively open in order not to bias the nominations by providing over-detailed attributes.

The sampling for the project had two stages. Stage 1 aimed for an international nomination process by fellow teacher educators: we drew on formal and informal networks and events, including the relevant divisions/groups of all the major international teacher education associations including the Australian Teacher Education Association (ATEA), the American Education Research Association (AERA), the European Educational Research Association (EERA) and the British Education Research Association (BERA). We asked people in each of these groups to nominate up to five teacher educators they regarded as "experienced" and highly regarded in their field. Rigorous data collection methods ensured that all nominations were made anonymously, following the ethical guidelines.

At the time of this study, the policy gaze on teacher education and its agents was intensifying. For example, in many OECD countries there was a growing focus on the professional learning of teacher educators (e.g., European Commission, 2013) at a time of heightened criticism of university-based teacher education (Furlong et al., 2013) and a time of increased fracturing globally of alternative pathways into teaching. The countries and contexts from which the participants have been drawn are simultaneously similar and diverse, but most have experienced extensive neo-liberal reforms to different degrees depending on context.

This first sampling stage resulted in the nominations of 118 teacher educators; all those names were then reviewed by the research team to ensure they met both threshold criteria, with those who did not, removed. We then selected the "top 20" nominees, 20 being a small enough number to support manageable, deep analysis, but large enough to ensure some diversity and representation across contexts and countries. Of the final selection of 20 participants, three interviewees came from Continental Europe (Norway, the Netherlands and Portugal), the rest came from Anglophone countries (three Australia, three UK, two from Canada and nine USA). The Anglophone and American-centric nature of the sample may be seen as a further limitation of our research design, but it was a clear outcome from our "nominative" sampling procedures. At a deeper level, the American-centric outcome may result from a convergence of factors including the greater availability of English-medium publishing opportunities in North America, increased opportunities for gaining research funding, and the huge scale of teacher education in the USA.

Of our final sample of 20, all but one was – or had been – full professors. Thirteen were females and seven males; this may be seen as an over-representation of men, given that in many countries, teacher education now involves a predominantly female labour force of teacher educators involved in the education of predominantly female students (White et al., 2021). But, despite attempts to increase employment equality, the tendency for full professors to be disproportionately male remains, even in a "feminized" field.

Our sample had over 20 years of experience in the discipline of education (first in schools and then in higher education), with most having over 30 years. All 20 participants had once been classroom teachers earlier in their careers. Perhaps not surprisingly, given the basic criteria for "experienced", the final sample consisted of senior teacher educators in the field, all with international reputations, gained in the main for their research and high-ranking positions in international associations, such as chair of a division or network. With the youngest person in their early 50s and the oldest approaching 80, five of our sample were already fully or partially retired, and others were in the penultimate or final stages of their careers. If teacher educators can indeed be regarded as a large and diverse clan, then the data generated from this study is from some of those who may be regarded – in the most respectful way – as "the elders" of the field.

All but one had a doctorate (18 PhDs, 1 EdD). There were different patterns in terms of *when* doctoral study had occurred. Most of the European and Australian participants were already working in higher education as teacher educators when they completed doctorates. The one (UK) person in the sample without a doctorate also started researching *after* becoming a teacher educator. In contrast, all but one of the North Americans entered mainstream teacher education work after they had finished their doctoral studies. This pattern reflects cultural differences in the structures and availability of doctoral study, as well as the recruitment criteria in place for teacher educators in different contexts and timeframes. It may also explain some of the shifts in research focuses we found occurring over time, as discussed later.

Each person was interviewed (face-to-face or via an online platform) using a semi-structured interview format approximately 60 minutes long. There were six categories of questions: work history, identity, professional learning, advice for teacher educators, work environments, and research; each category contained an average of five probes. Most questions were posed to all participants, with further probes where necessary. All the interviews were audio-recorded and fully transcribed.

Analysing the Data

The interview data originating from this study must clearly be seen as the product of what it was possible for one experienced and "accomplished" teacher educator to say to an interviewer, who was a fellow teacher educator and often known to them professionally, about work in their shared field of teacher education. This is not then a study which claims the kind of "objectivity" found in positivistic research traditions; here "subjectivity" is positioned as an integral part of the research process and as part of the methodological strength of the research design. This is not least because that design incorporates traditional features of methodological rigor at each stage and aims to meet alternative criteria for judging qualitative research such as credibility, authenticity, dependability and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1994).

The research team are all then positioned as "insiders" in this study, and that status also permeates the analysis of the data, not least because of familiarity with the people, places and enduring issues of the field. We have therefore had to work hard to make "the endotic exotic" (Perec, 1973, p. 105), that is, sometimes, to make the familiar strange, as part of overcoming taken-for-granted assumptions about the meanings of the data. But a straightforward account of our data analysis, indicating its methodological rigor within the parameters above, is as follows.

Beginning with analysis of the six categories of the interview schedule, using grounded theory methods (Charmaz, 2014), each of us read and re-read the transcripts, allowing categories of meaning to emerge through using pen portraits, analytic memos, and data sorting. Moderation of data analysis across the team provided for the necessary analytical rigor, with team meetings organised (using video conferencing technology). The first meeting was especially critical as it enabled us to identify common themes across "richly descriptive" (Merriam, 1998, p. 7) transcripts, openly share discrepancies and different insights, and establish points of agreement. This process also meant that we could work through points of disagreement, and allow different processes of analysis to cohere, thus using our diversity as a strength for enriching the analysis and deepening complexity.

After the initial analysis using these processes, we went on to reanalyse all the transcripts, using open coding in the first stage (Strauss & Corbin, 2000) to examine properties of the data (Creswell & Miller, 2000) and identify salient words and phrases,

relating to the research questions. For example, under the "research" theme, we developed codes for how participants defined their research and how they described its deployment in academia and beyond. We also developed codes to capture how participants saw the "territory" in which they worked.

As clear codes and then themes emerged, we were thus "generating grounded abstract concepts, which can become the building blocks for the theory" (Punch, 2014, pp. 180–181) and exposing "theoretical possibilities" (Punch, 2014, p. 183). A final stage of data analysis then were the choices of the BERA-RSA categorisation of types of research and the application of the broad theoretical framework and its concepts to help us capture and describe the data more fully.

Findings: Defining the Field of Teacher Education

A recurring theme in the interview data was that, within their university systems, all the participants saw the position of teacher education research and the field more broadly as precarious. They also noted that this low status of teacher education impacted their research, talking of their struggles for communal and individual legitimacy within the academy as both teacher educators and researchers. In speaking about the precarious position of teacher education at one of the most prestigious universities in England, one participant said, for example,

> *Education tends to be a poor relation, tends to be seen as an applied field, a professional field, rather than a pure academic field … a lot of people in the, other parts of the university hardly know the education department exists. (Isaac, UK)*

Another participant talking about her research-intensive university in Continental Europe echoed this sentiment, "(O)ur teacher education institute is always in danger of being diminished. It's always moving from one place to another. It's on the bottom" (Ilse, Netherlands).

Many of the participants described how they had been encouraged *not* to pursue a teacher education research career. As one American participant recalled:

> *Well, I think teacher educators are very low status. I remember when I started my doctoral program and I had decided that I wanted to do my research in teacher education. One of my colleagues said to me, you mean being a teacher wasn't low status enough? You want to go lower?*

Despite discouraging advice about entering teacher education, these participants ignored the advice and went on to have internationally recognised research careers in education. As one USA based participant noted looking back on her career,

> *People told me "Don't do teacher education". As a matter of fact, they said "Get as far away from it as fast as you can because it won't help your career". … When I got elected to (an international organisation for Teacher Education de-identified), it was like I wanted to go to some of those people and say, "You're wrong". (Maree, USA)*

These and similar findings from our data analysis reiterated many of the historical resonances and discourses around how teacher education is widely (mis)understood and adversely positioned as an applied and divergent discipline, particularly within university systems. Our analysis found all too familiar leitmotifs from historical and contemporary analyses of teacher education repeated by our participants as part of their characterisation of the territories in which they work; this is depressing but perhaps not surprising.

Without exception, the sample group conceptualised teacher education research as vital for the ongoing health and viability of their discipline. Participants described not only the type of research they conducted but also the value they perceived it had for teacher education and the teaching profession. Specific reasons included contributing to knowledge on schools and schooling, connecting schools and the university, understanding the complexity of teacher education and the external forces upon it, and enriching personal and general practice in teaching pre- and in-service students. Often, these reasons were intertwined; so, for example, research into the pedagogies of teaching teachers was positioned as improving practice in teacher education itself and hence schooling in the longer term.

Teacher education research has been repeatedly critiqued internationally. Meta-analyses (see, inter alia, Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2005; Menter et al., 2010) suggest that much of it is small-scale (with relatively few large-scale studies involving more than 100 participants); it is usually qualitative (often using self-report data collection methods such as interviews), often practice-based or in the self-study tradition, emerging and too often unfunded (resulting in what is sometimes characterised as "boot-strap" research).

Several of our participants clearly acknowledged these critiques of teacher education research, noting its divergent nature and low status in the academy and talking about how that continued to impact on the research territory; they talked of the ongoing struggles for communal and individual legitimacy within universities as both teacher educators and researchers. One participant from the USA described teacher education research there as follows:

> *a lot of it is – and this is not a critique of individual studies – but a lot of it is a single teacher educator studying their single teacher education program or a single pedagogy within a program … (although) it was improving and expanding. (Lilly, USA)*

Like many other participants, she deployed various strategies to combat the critiques and to reposition teacher education research, as discussed below. The participants' accounts of the field of teacher education they inhabit in many ways mirror existing knowledge about the ongoing status of teacher education and its research base, including that status within the university remains uneasy, that the research base is seen as lacking rigor, but that research is seen as vital to inform practice.

Research In, On and For Teacher Education

Our findings show a diversity of ways of engaging in research as a teacher educator, both in terms of the chosen focus, methods and theories. Several participants focused the majority of their research on the school sector, analysing teaching practices, curricula and issues of social justice within schools as experienced by pupils and teachers. One American participant, for example, had been a life-long researcher in multi-cultural education in schools, with interests in language and literature. Another forged an international reputation for her research on teachers' pedagogical practices with African American students, later using critical race theory to analyse her findings. One Canadian participant, now sadly deceased, was also largely engaged in research *for* teacher education, focusing much of his life's research on schooling, with reference to the teaching of drama and English.

Following the definitions offered by the BERA-RSA report (2014) into research for teacher education, the work of these researchers may be defined as part of a body of *research for teacher education* which forms a central element of program *content* on pre-service courses. Underlining the intertwined nature of research into schools and teacher education, studies of schooling clearly have the potential to inform the content of teacher education

programs, as well as to directly enrich knowledge of practice in the school sector. For these participants, using their research on schools to make a direct contribution to improving schooling and developing the quality of how serving teachers taught was key.

It was generally more common for the North American participants, many of whom undertook their doctoral research before starting sustained work in teacher education, to focus their doctoral work on an aspect of schooling, including a subject (for example, language teaching) or a curriculum question (for example, representing social diversity in the curriculum). For some, a single area of research essentially focused on schooling first and foremost had dominated their careers.

Other research careers took more varied paths. For example, some of the North American researchers who focused on researching aspects of schooling for their doctorates switched focus on entering teacher education work and becoming established practitioners *in* the field. One USA participant, for example, said that her doctoral dissertation was on "children's early literacy". She then went on to forge a reputation for research Language and Literacy "for the first five to seven years of my professional career", completing "two big studies, two books and articles". But she then made a "transition from understanding how young children learn to be literate … (to) studying how teachers learn to teach children language and literacy". She saw that as "a fairly smooth transition but it was very deliberate", following a strategy to build a tenured career in teacher education at a major USA university. In this stage of her career, often working with a colleague, she researched and "conceptualised teacher research in relation to teacher development across the continuum" of pre- and in-service education. She then made "another shift, about 13 years ago, 10 years ago (*sic*), to focus more on policy" (Mary, USA); that shift was described as "less deliberate" but had the result that she is now widely recognised as a world expert in policy research.

Most participants, though, were engaged throughout their careers in some aspect of research *on* teacher education, here defined as informing *program design and practices*. This body of research focuses directly on pre- and in-service courses, including the histories, policies, practices, institutions, multiple stakeholders, and individuals involved. Deploying their research to strengthen and develop teacher education itself was a key aim, although all participants also aimed to improve the quality of schooling through their work, albeit indirectly. Indeed, many saw undertaking research with students or serving teachers as a particularly rich and important area of their work.

This consistency of focus on research *on* teacher education was particularly marked for the Australians and Europeans. Reflecting national traditions for these teacher educators to enter the field as practitioners from schools, such participants were more likely to have completed their doctorates whilst already working in teacher education. For example, the doctoral research of one European participant was a "historical overview of the profession of teacher educators", and she described continuing to research that history in her country in her later career. Another European participant researched assessment modes used in pre-service education, whilst a third looked at student teachers' patterns of acquisition of the knowledge for teaching English.

The category of *research on teacher education* (see example) also included policy analysis and an understanding of how teacher education interprets and responds to national or state mandates and local labour markets. For all those from Europe and Australia and most of the North American participants this type of research was their focus. Here research could include analysing national policies, and/or their own institutions, programs and pedagogical and assessment practices.

Facing the "reform" efforts indicated earlier, 10 participants had assumed major roles in conducting policy research on teacher education as government or state legislation changed. For example, in recent years, many of our participants from the USA and England

researched pathways into teaching, including alternative or "fast track" routes including Teach for America or school-led programs. Through their policy research, such researchers aimed to reduce the marginalisation of teacher educators and their voices in policy making and to ensure that they could be, at least in theory, actively involved in policy change.

Engagement in various types of practitioner research in and on teacher education was defined as key by many participants, with such work often commencing at the start of their careers. One American participant, for example, talking about her research *on* teacher education stated that,

> *I did it by really paying attention to and talking to and studying what my colleagues were doing at {institution} who knew more than I did. And then, by actually going and looking at programs and studying syllabi and understanding that, trying to unpack the knowledge base about learning and development for most children and adults. (Lily USA)*

Others also took their own students' experiences and the partnerships with schools they formed as their research focuses. Jeffrey (Australia), for example, talked about starting his PhD in teacher education in the 1980s.

> *So I actually had encouragement to do something now that seems pretty ordinary but then was really quite different, to study your own class of student teachers and, you know, to begin to pay attention to your own reflective practice and whether you can develop in student teachers, was sort of on the edge of all that meta-cognition stuff.*

Five of the accomplished teacher educators in this study are particularly well-known for their research using self-study methods, indeed two of them drew on the "simple" tool of reflection in and on practice (Schön, 1987) to create this now well-established and distinctive body of close-to-practice research in teacher education.

Other participants drew on broader practitioner and action research traditions to achieve similar close-to-practice examinations. For example, a European, who studied teacher educators and their practices for his doctorate diversified into researching other professional educators (e.g., nurse educators) in universities as his work shifted to providing induction courses for new academics. Now in late career, he described his work as that of "a research facilitator, guiding schools and teachers through research projects". Consequently, for him, "scholarship and research then became much more varied across higher education and school education. Jack of all trades, master of none". But the linking theme across all the diverse substantive focuses of his work continued to be his "close-to-practice" research.

Three of the participants explicitly claimed their research as "hybrid", connecting the various fields in which they worked. Whilst all the participants saw their "territory" and work as reaching beyond the university and into schools, classrooms and communities, for these participants their hybrid research on behalf of and with different stakeholders was key. A USA participant (Megan), for example, spoke at length about her research defining it and her role as "hybrid" – crossing boundaries and school-university divides. She stated: "I embrace the hybrid world … (*the*) in-between world. We're not in schools. We're not in academia … We live in between".

Such claims made explicit what many of the other participants discussed in terms of the duality of their research in and on teacher education conducted for the benefit of both their own field and that of schooling. But the concept of "hybrid" research also makes explicit the view of teacher education as polyphonic, embracing and theorising diverse types of knowledge, including those that reside in schools and communities, as well as universities, and drawing in various stakeholders well beyond academia. One participant, arguably a leader in forging such hybrid research traditions, reflected on his life's work explaining:

> *So that idea of hybridity, which is I think a central part of my work now, has been present all along. And when I think back, like why am I so engaged in trying to convince people that communities have expertise that new teachers need, or that having teachers just serve as a site for a clinical placement, or being in a room to listen to, say, what the core practices are. (Keith, USA)*

Overall, our analysis shows heterogeneity and divergence in terms of the substantive focuses, methodologies and methods and theoretical frameworks used by our participants, as they engage in research intended to inform teacher education, both directly and indirectly. Beneath the heterogeneity, there are common themes including commitments to promoting and defending teacher education itself, improving the quality of research in the field, improving schooling, influencing policy, and contributing to the teaching profession. The heterogeneity emerging in these findings is mirrored on a larger scale by past analyses of teacher education research, including a meta-analysis from the AERA (Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2005) that categorises 10 main types in the USA alone. The breadth and depth of different types of research found amongst our participants and the extent of their intended outreach highlights the divergent, polyphonic and loosely framed nature of the field of teacher education.

This study indicates that all these types of teacher education research, divergent as they might appear to observers from another discipline, were clearly valued as research capital by those nominating our sample group of accomplished teacher educators. The international reputations and influential and senior positions that all the group hold in the territories of teacher education further attest to the value and power of this capital. With these varied types of research as their academic capital, how then do these accomplished educators inhabit these spaces? How does this capital help them to "play the games" of the field in various ways, assuming different positions and achieving recognition and power for their work?

Inhabiting the Academic Territory of Teacher Education

In this study these participants' research capital has enabled all but one person to gain promotion to full professorships within their universities, as well as to achieve international status for their work. All the participants spoke about how they deployed this research capital to navigate the low status of teacher education research in their varied national and institutional contexts, and to address the perceived marginalisation of it within universities and schools more widely. Of particular interest here were the strategies which participants used to address critiques of teacher education research in general as lacking rigor. Three participants, for example, had led meta-analyses of teacher education research in their countries (the UK and the USA), explicitly identifying the existing patterns and omissions in the field and suggesting ways forward to strengthen the research base. Others, particularly in the USA, had led large-scale, well-funded, mixed method or longitudinal studies in a response to critiques of teacher education research as all-too-often small scale and qualitative.

Another strategy was to address the critiques of teacher education research by using the same kind of methodological approaches that policy makers are drawn to, but for more nuanced purposes. As one European researcher (Isaac, UK) explained:

> *comparative work has been very important for me and should be important across the community. Because politicians are only interested in comparative work when they think it provides answers of how to do things so that you get better results, but researchers are being more*

nuanced than that. I think you can learn a lot from looking at what is happening elsewhere and seeing whether it has something to tell you about your own practice, or not.

As indicated above, many of the participants used their research in powerful ways to illustrate and illuminate their teacher education and to connect their research to other educational institutions, particularly schools, policy makers, politicians, the media and other stakeholders. Here, addressing critiques of teacher education research by involving multiple stakeholders became a powerful tool to leverage research capital, as did actively working with policy makers and the media to ensure research findings were disseminated to the public; many participants spoke out as both teacher educators and "public intellectuals" (Cochran-Smith, 2006). Engagement in particular types of research then became a way in which they could exercise their agency and preserve senses of autonomy.

The emphasis placed on various types of close-to-practice research in advocating for and improving both teacher education and schooling was also notable here and highlights the value placed on this type of research. Such research capital was clearly valued highly within the field, reflecting a history dating back to the 1960s in articulating and celebrating the micro-levels of practice in the territory of teacher education. Close-to-practice research exists in other vocational/professional fields of course, including social work education and nurse education, but in teacher education it has added value and particular distinction for teacher educators as teachers of teachers because of the opportunities it offers to model pedagogic practices with and for student teachers.

Yet, despite the very significant contributions which close-to-practice traditions have made to knowledge about teachers' and teacher educators' practices and professional learning, this type of research continues to face challenges both within teacher education itself and in the wider academic research community. In national research audits in the UK and Australia (see BERA-RSA, 2014; White et al., 2018), for example, the significance, rigor and scale of practitioner studies and action research have been repeatedly questioned. And in university communities, as one participant, an eminent self-study researcher, noted there is a constant "challenge for the self-study community … how do you gain legitimacy in an academic world when you present your findings differently?" Her defense to such critiques was to stress, "Well, we value teaching, and we value the knowledge making process through teaching, and we say that's a serious part of being a teacher educator" (Amy, Australia).

Arguments were made by the group that reflection on one's practice is an important aspect of connecting theory and practice and what in essence characterises teacher education research from many other disciplines.

Conclusion

Drawing on a theoretical framework deploying the work of Trowler (2014) and the concept of "research capital" drawing on the work of Bourdieu (1998), this paper has given insights into what constitutes valued research capital within the divergent field of teacher education. The findings show the diversity and heterogeneity of that capital, but they also indicate high levels of homogeneity in the values attached to research in developing practice and contesting broader social values. The study points to the importance of teacher educators (both novice and experienced) embracing a mature profession and the critical importance of all involved in owning the identity of being a teacher educator researcher. The study emphasises the urgent need to equip each generation with a deep knowledge of the history of the teacher education field and what it means to be a teacher educator. This cannot be achieved if those mentoring are not themselves modelling this to the next generation.

Whilst the study underlines that teacher educators are indeed a divergent occupational group, often seeing themselves as under-valued in the academy, it also underlines their dual allegiances to both school and teacher education sectors and the contributions they hope to make through their research. Finally, the paper indicates how the diversity of their research capital has the potential to raise the status of teacher education research within the university and beyond. We intend to pursue this theme in more depth in future papers.

We acknowledge the limitations of this study, in particular the criteria used to determine our sample excluded parts of the fast-growing occupational group of teacher educators, notably those working in schools who were not likely to be active researchers. Our findings then clearly only relate to part of the field and the part of the occupational group working in higher education, with opportunities to research. Additionally, our criteria undoubtedly valued the capital gained through publishing and disseminating research over the daily practice of being a teacher educator, designing and implementing learning for pre- and in-service teachers, whether in schools or universities. We would argue, however, that in this, the design of the study resonates with the research-led cultures of most universities and the most common criteria for academic promotions through research production. Over and above these limitations, we see this study as offering important insights into the diversity of types of research valued in teacher education, enhancing our knowledge and understanding of teacher educators as an occupational group, and contributing to debates about research quality, methods and focus.

The paper is written at a time of continuing intensified debates about these issues for the authors of this paper as proposed policy reforms for Initial Teacher Education (ITE) in England, Australia and the USA seek to reshape ideas about the place and nature of research in programs for intending and serving teachers (White et al., 2021). In these countries, as in a number of other national policy arenas, whilst the importance of research in, on and for teacher education may be superficially stressed, drilling down into the detail of recommendations shows that the model of research informed ITE espoused is a limited one.

In England, official documents since 2010 (Mutton et al., 2017) have emphasised the contribution of research to ITE, whilst using definitions that offer very narrow definitions of that research and position student teachers in reductionist models of teacher-as-technician and teacher-as-research-consumer (but not research-producer). Emerging environments for teacher education are “often data-driven” … (*appearing*) “to militate against teachers’ engagement in more open forms of research and enquiry” (BERA-RSA, 2014). Rather than adopting narrow research bases for teacher education, we would argue that teacher education must retain its rich, varied and polyphonic diversity in order to nourish its diversity and growth.

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