SELF-STUDY OF TEACHER EDUCATION PRACTICE (S-STEP): Methodology and pedagogy for teacher educators and their professional learning

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Setting the scene for S-STEP

Common understanding and acknowledgment of the multi-faceted role and work of teacher educators (Goodwin & Kosnik, 2013; Smith, 2011)
Setting the scene for S-STEP

• European Commission (2013) agenda for clear, coherent, and evidence-based forms of professional learning for teacher educators

• Teacher educators across 10 countries had similar concerns, plans, and strategies for their professional development (Van der Klink et al., 2017)
Setting the scene for S-STEP

• InFo-TED as an international group to support and exchange approaches to teacher educator practice, research and policies based on the EEC agenda (Lunenberg, Murray, Smith, & Vanderlinde, 2017; Murray, Lunenberg, & Smith, 2017; Vanassche et al., 2015)

• Divergence in priorities and needs of teacher educators, mainly in terms of:
  – Delivering programmes (i.e., teaching and learning)
  – Developing research skills

  (Czerniawski, Guberman & MacPhail, 2017; Dengerink, Lunenberg, & Kools, 2015)
Self-study as practitioner research

• Began in the early 1990s as a research approach for teacher educators to interrogate and communicate their understandings of practice

• The TEP is very important – there is a focus on practice (Vanassche & Kelchtermans, 2015)

• S-STEP has long been seen as an approach to examine teacher educators’ professional development (e.g., Lunenberg & Willemse, 2006; Smith, 2003; Zeichner, 1999)
“The birth of the self-study in teacher education movement around 1990 has been probably the single most significant development ever in the field of teacher education research”

Zeichner, 1999, p. 8
Self-study as practitioner research

Recognition that S-STEP has reached ‘maturity’ as a methodology/field

(Bullock & Peercy, 2018)
Self-study as hybrid methodology

“The study is always of practice, but at the intersection of self and other, and its methods are borrowed”

Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001, p. 15

Self-studies consider the self-in-practice

Ovens & Fletcher, 2014
Self-study characteristics

S-STEP

- Desire
- Community
- Stance

Ovens & Fletcher, 2014
Theoretical underpinnings

- **Phronesis and episteme** (Kessels & Korthagen, 1996; 1999)
Guidelines for Quality in S-STEP Design

LaBoskey (2004)

- Self-oriented/-initiated
- Improvement-aimed
- Interactive
- Multiple sources of data
- Validation based on trustworthiness
Who I am in how I teach teachers

The self-in-practice


What can self-study tell us?
Relevance $\leftrightarrow$ Rigour

Understanding $\leftrightarrow$ Effectiveness

(Vanassche & Kelchtermans, 2015)
A Shift...

Methodology
A Shift...

Methodology ↔ Pedagogy
A Shift...

• Recognition of teacher educators’ professional learning needs and outcomes as:
  
  – Multi-faceted (Goodwin & Kosnik, 2013; Smith, 2011)

  – Contextually grounded in practice and teacher educators’ identities (Kelchtermans, 2013; Murray et al., 2017)

  – Able to be articulated and exchanged (Loughran, 2014)
“... The framework is an attempt to illustrate how the development of teacher educators’ knowledge and practice of teaching and learning about teaching is intimately tied to: understandings of identity; the challenges and expectations of the teacher education enterprise; and, the place of scholarship as an important marker of knowledge, skill, and ability in the academy...”

Loughran, 2014, p. 272
• S-STEP not only helps improve teacher education practice and teacher educators’ learning; it contributes to teacher educators’ research activities and outputs
Examples of S-STEP as PD for Teacher Educators


Reframing pedagogy while teaching about teaching online: a collaborative self-study

Tim Fletcher\textsuperscript{a*} and Shawn M. Bullock\textsuperscript{b}

The purpose of this paper is to describe, interpret and analyze our experiences of teaching about teaching online. The contrast in our levels of comfort and exposure to teaching in digital environments offers a useful way to think about the different challenges teacher educators face in teaching online; particularly as they relate to teaching identities. We use collaborative self-study to unpack our prior assumptions about the nature and purposes of teaching about teaching online, and interpret how our personal and professional identities have been influenced by our attempts to better understand teaching practice in digital environments. The following questions...
What we did...

- Identified focus of S-STEP
- Established critical friendship, research questions and data collection strategies:
  1. Tim to generate journal entries (biweekly) and emails to send to Shawn who would respond
  2. Monthly recorded Skype calls
  3. Course artifacts
What we looked for...

- Instances where new understandings of the self-in-practice were evident:
  - Shifts in identifying as a teacher educator
  - Clear evidence of learning to teach teachers
  - Deepened understanding of personal pedagogies of teacher education
What we found...

1. Teaching about teaching online can feel disembodied
   - Implications for how the teacher educator’s and students’ identities are presented and interpreted
What we found...

2. Teaching about teaching online can feel as though teaching = assessment

• When teaching interactions are reduced to comments on students’ posts, it felt as though the teacher educator’s main job was to act as an evaluative authority.
What we found...

3. When it was understood that relationships and identities were negatively impacted by teaching online, teaching satisfaction declined
What we learned...

• The importance of synchronous components in online teaching if relationships and identities of teacher educator and learner are valued

• S-STEP was useful as both methodology and pedagogy:
  – Ongoing, situated, based on needs of teacher educators
Facilitating self-study of teacher education practices: toward a pedagogy of teacher educator professional development

Eline Vanassche* and Geert Kelchtermans

This article reports on a two-year study of a self-study research group facilitation. The research group was designed as a professional development project in which six experienced teacher educators investigated their practices using a self-study approach. The pedagogical rationale of the facilitation was based on four broadly shared theoretical principles on how teacher educators can effectively work on their professional development. These theoretical principles were translated in a series of propositions (‘if ... then ...’) making clear the implications these principles held for the interventions of facilitators of teacher educator professional development. Qualitative content analysis of the audiotapes of the
What they did...

• Six self-selected teacher educators with little research experience

• Two researchers facilitated the S-STEP (theory + methodology)
  – Participants identified the focus of their S-STEP inquiries

• TEs gathered video observations, journals, etc.

• Monthly meetings supported by online, phone and 1-1 support
What they looked for...

• Validation and/or amendments to four propositions of teacher educator professional development
What they found...

“Mirror data” revealed instances of alignment and misalignment between beliefs and actions

• These data provided a springboard for theorising about teacher education practice (e.g., the “hows and whys”) with others in the group
What they found...

- Bridging identities and roles as teacher educator-researchers was a source of tension.

- Explicitly acknowledging the source of tension helped avoid resistance to S-STEP as professional development.
What they found...

- The group process potentially put teacher educators’ beliefs about practice into conflict with colleagues or their institutions
  - Making knowledge of teacher education practice public therefore carries risks and needs to be appropriately managed
Conclusions

“... Professional development of teacher educators must be purposefully conceptualized, thoughtfully implemented, and meaningfully employed. However, for that to be the case, there is an overwhelming need for teacher educators to have a vision for their professional development that affords them agency in the active development of their scholarship.

Loughran 2014
Conclusions

“... All teacher educators, whatever their career entry stage or profile, need to take part in a suitable programme of induction into the identity and task of educating teachers, as well as into their new employer institution.

European Commission, 2013
Conclusions

- S-STEP can be an effective form of practitioner research for teachers and teacher educators

- S-STEP is not a quick nor easy fix to teacher educators’ professional learning needs

- It carries many of the hallmarks of powerful professional learning, but requires motivation and willingness of the teacher educator seeking development
Questions for You

• Will you be expected to balance time and effort for teaching and research? What challenges might you face in doing so?

• What are some of the ongoing questions, curiosities or complex problems you find in your teacher education practice?

• Who might you turn to help drive an investigation of problems you face in your teacher education practice?
Questions for Me?
Reference List


