

Co-Operation Is Not Enough: Teacher Educators as Curriculum Developers in Times of Change

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Abstract

The purpose of this exploratory two site case study is to examine how teacher educators, student teachers and programme leaders experience their ‘curriculum developer role’ in times of change, against the background of a new national guideline for preschool teacher education being implemented in Norway. The multidisciplinary team approach established by policy for this reform is examined as a strategy to create coherent programmes. Data collected for the study include fifteen semi-structured interviews and four focus groups conducted at two educational institutions. Qualitative data processing software is used to process four stages of qualitative data analysis. The evidence indicates that the actors involved experienced the ‘reproduction’ of curriculum elements from before the recent reform to a modest extent. Most frequently, they describe incorporation of earlier practices, ‘moderate translation’, in order to meet the demands of multiple disciplines. ‘Radical translation’ also takes place as part of their new collaborative role.

Keywords: Teacher educator, Preschool teacher education, Teacher collaboration, Program implementation, Curriculum development

1. Introduction

The intentions expressed in the Bologna agreement of 1999 carry consequences for the entire higher education sector, giving rise to challenges for teacher educators at many universities and university colleges throughout Europe as their programmes are restructured. These processes unfold both within countries and across European borders. Meanwhile, a European dimension in higher education has been promoted by various actors since the Bologna Process, especially with regard to curriculum development, inter-institutional cooperation, mobility arrangements and integrated programmes of study, training and research (Bünning & Shilela, 2006).

In Norway the education of preschool teachers is undergoing dramatic changes. Ministry of Education and Research (MER, 2012) started in 2013 to implement a new guideline for the bachelor’s-level programmes in this field, all of which are managed by universities and university colleges. The new national guidelines for preschool teacher education in Norway mandate teacher educators to work in multidisciplinary subjects, shifting their focus from teaching their subject of specialisation to participating in new collaborative cultures (Finne, Mordal, & Stene, 2014; MER, 2012).

Several researchers have maintained that teacher educators exercise an important role as ‘curriculum developers’ (Koster, Korthagen, & Wubbels, 1998; Lunenberg, Dengerink, & Korthagen, 2014; Smith, 2005). If teacher educators are understood as actors in the reform process, they take part in policy development. On basis of Røvik (2014) they then translate ideas into action and theoretical perspectives into new practices. Thus teacher educators translates the idea of how to develop curricula for multidisciplinary subjects into practice. Yet, knowledge of how the actors interpret and practice this role is scarce. On this basis, this study investigates how the teacher educators, student teachers and programme leaders translate a reform into educational practice. We do this by specifically ask:

In what ways do teacher educators, student teachers and programme leaders translate the idea of reform, as curriculum developers in multidisciplinary team-based programmes?

First the study presents the background before an overview of previous research on curriculum developers, then offers a brief overview of its underlying theoretical framework. The research design, participant data and methods of the study are then presented in turn; empirical results are reported and discussed in light of the current literature on the subject. This is done as a unit part three under the heading; analysis. The final section presents policy

implications of the study's findings along with opportunities for further research.

1.1 Background

In Norway, Preschool Teacher Education had received specific guideline in 1973 (Skram & Eilifsen, 2014). Later reforms have attempted to streamline the institutions' programmes and ensure pedagogical quality. The Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education evaluated the programmes in 2009-2010 (Note 1), aiming to encourage programme quality and using indicators of how integrated, professionally-oriented and research-based the existing programmes are (Hagesæther, 2010). New national guidelines, however, restructured the content of the programme from the previous ten disciplines into six multidisciplinary subjects (MER, 2012), obliging teacher educators to move beyond the individual academic subjects that had been the basis of professional education for teachers in Norway since the beginning of this programme in 1935 (Greve, 1995). In 2013, teacher educators from different disciplines began a new type of collaboration to develop common content, sharing curricula and building programmes with one plan, one syllabus and one common evaluation to provide to student teachers at the end of the collaborative process. Meanwhile, teacher educators were mandated also to retain their disciplinary affiliations and identities within these multi-disciplinary subjects (MER, 2012); they are responsible for unifying their disciplinary perspectives while providing overall direction for students within the profession. These changes set the stage for the new, closer, team-based collaboration between disciplines. Based on these new structures and a common objective, teacher educators and their collaborators have started to re-develop curricula. Given this situation, the present study investigate in what ways these changes influence campus-based and preschool-based teacher educators (Note 2) to develop curricula together with students and programme leaders.

1.2 The Study

This study examine the experience of teacher educators and their collaborative partners as they perform adaptation and translation of their professional practices. The study also examines their work with collaborators and students in multidisciplinary teams to develop curriculum materials, and the situated knowledge arising from this process. The background to the study is an externally initiated reform process, mandated for educational institutions in the form of new national guidelines. The epistemological standpoint is based on the theory of pragmatism as described by Biesta (Biesta, 2010) and the understanding that teacher educators occupy a position of educational complexity (Biesta, 2013). The dynamics of teacher educators and their co-actors are a phenomenon of increasing interest to researchers (Lunenberg et al., 2014). Investigating these issues from the standpoint of teacher educators, this study seeks to understand their experiences creating new curricula as programmes and policies change.

The European Commission (EC) has defined teacher educators as 'all those who facilitate the formal learning of students and teachers, whether at the level of initial teacher education or continuing professional development' (EC, 2014). Although some teacher educators enter the profession after completing a Ph.D., the most common path is to teach in schools or preschools before becoming a teacher educator (Lunenberg et al., 2014).

In this study, the term 'role' is used as a synonym for 'a professional role', and is defined as 'a professional interpretation of a position based on environmental expectations and a systematically organised and transferable knowledge base' (Lunenberg et al., 2014, p. 6). To promote an inclusive and shared vocabulary as a basis for curriculum development, Fraser and Bosanquet studied the term 'curriculum' (Fraser & Bosanquet, 2006). They saw a need to reflect on and critique this concept in the context of higher education, especially given its inconsistent uses among faculty and in documents in multiple contexts. They defined curriculum as referring to the content and structure of delivery at the level of modules or courses (Fraser & Bosanquet, 2006, p. 269). Another study found that academics use the term 'curriculum' also to evoke a process of interaction between faculty and students that constitutes the students' learning experience, or a dynamic, collaborative and transformative learning process (Brooman, Darwent, & Pimor, 2015, p. 664).

2. Investigating Change

To obtain a suitable approach to building new knowledge, two types form the basis for this sub-point; ongoing research and theories of curriculum development in teacher education. A literature review was conducted by using the *Education Resources Information Center* (ERIC). Boote & Beile (2005) inspired the method used, aiming 'to find the analytical perspectives best suited for the analysis and synthesis of this data' (Boote & Beile, 2005, p. 4). On a similar topic, Lunenberg et al. (2014) identified fourteen studies about the role and behaviour of teacher educators in curriculum development (Grossman, Hammerness, & McDonald, 2009; Korthagen, Loughran, & Russell, 2006; Le Cornu & Ewing, 2008; Le Fevre, 2011; Martin, Snow, & Torrez, 2011), but did not find any publications relevant to the professional development of teacher educators as curriculum developers (Lunenberg et al., 2014). Some studies

by teacher educators, as Brooman et al. (2015), have described their collaboration with student teachers in curriculum development. For this, Bovill is using the term 'co-created curricula' (Bovill, 2014).

In addition, two newer studies have been particularly relevant in shaping this study. H kka and Etel pelto (2014) examined changes in teacher education in a Finnish context, highlighting the process of translating ideas into new curricula. They observed that, around the world, proposed pedagogical changes occur slowly and are difficult to implement. Investigating resources for and obstacles to change in the context of academic, university-based teacher education, the study revealed three major challenges: (1) obstacles in renegotiating professional identity, (2) internal competition between subject-matter groups within the education department and (3) tensions between individual agency and organisational imperatives. Based on these findings, H kka and Etel pelto argued that teacher educators' individual and collective agency must be supported to enhance their continuous professional learning and to promote organisational change. This goal can be achieved by developing teacher education concurrently at multiple levels, including the individual, the work community and the broader organisation. The researchers found a need to construct multiple relationships among the three levels. Meanwhile, an Australian group investigated team-based curriculum design as a contributor to change in teacher education (Burrell, Cavanagh, Young, & Carter, 2015). They examined several case studies that explored teams as agents of change, observing how a team approach could be used to instigate cultural change within the team and even beyond its boundaries. The goal of such change was to transform the pedagogical approach from individualist to collective and to achieve more meaningful ownership of the curriculum, including its design, maintenance and continuous improvement, for the participants. To build a team-based curriculum that promoted social change, they identified the following key factors: (1) a strong leader to make things happen, (2) ownership of team members in the process, (3) clear expectations, (4) communication between team members and between teams, (5) project-based management, (6) roles and responsibilities defined beforehand and (7) well-understood timeframes and resource requirements.

This literature review has revealed certain insights relevant to teacher educators in a curriculum development role, and how to develop curricula for use with multidisciplinary teams. These studies have also noted some responses to the actors' challenges.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

As means for understanding the translation process as an interpersonal and organisational iterative process, the study draws upon several key bodies of work. First, Lunenberg et al. (2014) review more than twenty years of international research on teacher educators, providing an overview of six professional roles: (1) teacher of teachers, (2) researcher, (3) coach, (4) *curriculum developer*, (5) assessor and (6) broker. Their study describes the critical features of the roles and the activities associated with each. Lunenberg et al. (2014) found that, generally speaking, teacher educators working within a curriculum lacked a shared guiding principle. The teacher educators need for support and direction was generally greater than that which was considered necessary. Willemse, Lunenberg and Korthagen (2008) completed a case study of nine teacher educators in the Netherlands. The intention of this project was to integrate pedagogical aims more effectively within the teacher education curriculum, especially certain aspects of moral education. Their study shows, however, that these teacher educators were mainly focused on the development of the part of the curriculum for which they were individually responsible, with the result that moral education is only a recognisable element in certain phases of the resulting curriculum (Willemse, Lunenberg, & Korthagen, 2008).

As a second theoretical assumption, the perspective of preschool teachers must be promoted and constantly incorporated by teacher educators, while at the same time addressing students' learning and development. Murray and Male (2005) distinguish between the (pre)school teachers' teaching and work as acknowledged teacher educators (Murray & Male, 2005). These authors used the concept of 'second-order practitioners', a concept acknowledging that teacher educators must fulfil a double responsibility as they induct students into the practice as preschool teachers. Murray and Male initially discuss the first-order context of (pre)schoolwork and then the second-order context of teacher education. The complex role of teacher educators is to work between two such levels. As a second-order practitioner, personal integrity requires that these double aspects be negotiated at the same time (Murray & Male, 2005; Swennen, Lunenberg, & Korthagen, 2008).

To understand teamwork as a practice, a third key perspective is set out by Lave and Wenger (Lave & Wenger, 1991). They state that through mutual engagement and involvement in a common practice, a team maintains and develops its reason for existing. As a social community of practice, team members must strive for and define a common project. The team has to function as a common foundation for work and must be directed at a common goal. Communities of practice are understood as groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better through regular interaction (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2016). Mutual

engagement is possible because the members engage in actions together and they negotiate with one another. In this understanding, heterogeneity is also an important characteristic for teams; to function effectively as a social community of practice, homogeneity or the wish for uniformity among members must be toned down. Heterogeneity is a resource used by the team to expose the field of activity and to deal effectively with the demands of various tasks. This perspective identifies three key factors of communities of practice: (1) mutual engagement, (2) an understood joint enterprise and (3) a shared repertoire (Wenger, 1998).

The fourth theoretical perspective incorporated into this study is translation theory. This grounded perspective addresses how changing ideas are implemented in organisations according to three central concepts: translation, context and travel. Ideas are understood to undergo implementation at both the level of intention and the level of formalisation (Røvik, 2014). Translation theory distinguishes between rational translation, which reduces conflict deliberately, and more unconscious processes of translation. Røvik (2014) states that translation can be characterised by (1) ‘reproduction’, where copying the earlier practice is normal, (2) ‘moderate translation’, characterised by adding or subtracting from the existing practice and (3) ‘radical translation’. Radical translation requires that participants develop their expertise as translators; a good translator is defined by Røvik (2014) as having knowledge of the context from which the ideas informing change arise. For the current study, the relevant framing is teacher educators’ knowledge of international and national trends in education policy. In addition, good translators need to know which way the winds are blowing and to be aware of current trends. They must have the courage required to edit transformative ideas and to contextualise them by performing translation using concepts close to their own practice. The term ‘travel’ treats ideas themselves as taking independent journeys. Regardless of formal plans and policies, ideas are carried by individuals, as translators, as they perform their own acts of adaptation and interpretation. It means that not only the translators, but also the ideas themselves matter (Røvik, 2014).

3. Method

3.1 Data Collection

The participants for this exploratory two-site case study came from two educational institutions offering Preschool Teacher Education. The cases chosen were quite similar in size and culture, but located in different parts of Norway. Data was collected by visiting each of the two institutions seven times during 2013–2016. This timeline encompassed the first three years of the new educational programme, the period during which the new programme was implemented. In both institutions’ multi-disciplinary teams, Children’s Development Play and Learning (CDPL) was chosen as the object of study because this subject was placed in the first academic year. That meant that the author could start data collection during the first year of implementation. Members of the two CDPL teams were asked by email to participate in interviews that would take place during the next three years. After agreeing to participate, the two teacher educators from the subject of pedagogy in each institution were the first four participants to be interviewed. The next phase of the study included another four teacher educators from different disciplines. Finally, two preschool-based teacher educators and six student teachers were also included (for an overview see Table 1 below).

Table 1. The participants

	Pedagogy	Physical education	Drama	Religion and ethics	Social science	Natural science	Preschool-based teacher educator	Student teacher
Case A	2	0	1	0	1	1	1	3
Case B	2	1	0	1	0	0	1	3

3.2 Methods

Qualitative study methods – interviews and focus groups – were chosen to acquire a richer understanding of how people experience aspects of their life situation, because while structured these methods remain flexible in the face of unknown opportunities for understanding and insight (Postholm, 2010). In semi-structured interviews, the researcher is the most important aspect of the data collection process (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This insight means that the researcher affect the results of the investigation, both through the approach and by interpretation of the data. For this research project, the main data source was derived from fifteen semi-structured interviews and four focus groups of the members of the CDPL teams, along with representatives from the students in CDPL and programme leaders at

two different educational institutions. As a part of the design, the same teacher educators from the subject of pedagogy were followed over three academic years (for an overview, see Tables 2 and 3).

Table 2. The interviews ´timeline, subject of pedagogy from the CDPL- teams

The four Teacher Educators of the subject Pedagogy		Case A	Case B
2013–14:	Individual, Semi-structured interviews	2	2
2014–15:	Individual, Semi-structured interviews	2	2
2015–16:	Focus groups	1 (n=2)	1 (n=2)

During these three years, semi-structured interviews followed (2013–2015); an additional interview was carried out in the last academic year of the programme (2015–2016) at each institution, using a focus group format (n=2). All interviews included questions about the teacher educators’ experiences of their roles and their team; later on, questions were added concerning the interpretation of the teacher educators’ roles and functions proposed by the researcher. Because of this last element, the focus group interviews functioned as a retrospective take on their experience, followed by a reflection and further discussion. In a way, this experience also became a part of the study’s validation of the acceptance of its results by the participants. Table 3 gives an overview of the process, describing the collaborators that participated in the interviews, and specifying when each interview was completed.

Table 3. The interviews ´timeline, CDPL-teams (minus subject pedagogy), leaders and students.

		Case A	Case B
2013-14:	Individual, Semi-structured interviews	0	0
2014-15:	Individual, Semi-structured interviews (teacher educators, programme leaders)	4	3
2014-15:	Focus group of students	1(n=3)	1 (n=3)
2015-16:	Individual, Semi-structured interviews of the Preschool-based Teacher Educator	1	1

Interviews lasted between 45 and 70 minutes, and covered different aspects of the educators’ experience, such as their roles and involvement in and their experiences and interpretation of curriculum development. For this study, the author conducted all interviews, face-to-face, and moderated all focus groups. Visits to the two educational institutions chosen were longer than strictly necessary for the interviews, to better understand the context of the selected teams and to be able to observe some everyday situations. These included participating in lunches and coffee breaks, meeting with teachers, meeting the teams, attending events run by teacher educators and students, and even observing CDPL practice periods in preschools.

3.3 Data

All study participants were part of the CDPL programme, as students or team members, or were programme leaders with the overall responsibility for multidisciplinary subjects (for an overview, see the Table 4).

Table 4. Data sources

Data sources from Case A	Data sources from Case B
2 Teacher Educators from pedagogy (repeated x3)	2 Teacher educators from pedagogy (repeated x3)
3 Teacher Educators from different disciplines	2 Teacher educators from different disciplines
1 Preschool-based Teacher Educator	1 Preschool-based Teacher Educator
3 Student teachers	3 Student teachers
1 Programme leader	1 Programme leader

The data was audiotaped, transcribed verbatim and analysed by the author. Meet the requirements in the Norwegian research guideline and is reported to NSD (*Guidelines for research ethics in the social sciences, humanities, law and theology*, 2016). Although both institutions and all the actors were unknown for the author before the study began, both the experiences as a researcher and as a teacher educator have influenced the questions and interpretation of the data. However, the author tried to reach a reasonably critical distance by adopt the role of a researcher, rather than a colleague.

The first wave of data analysis took place in the spring of 2015, beginning with the participants' experiences with their roles and functions as actors in the implementation of curriculum reform. I conducted a descriptive coding of the interviews (Saldana, 2009) then followed an iterative process based on Bryman's 'Four stages of qualitative analysis' (Bryman, 2008) using NVivo software. By combining data-driven and theory-driven processes of reading and re-reading, pre-coding and coding, pre-categorisation and reflection, finally a hierarchical matrix of categories was constructed. This second wave of analysis was completed in the spring of 2016. The last coding process consisted of thematic coding, completing a form of pattern-coding reflecting the participants' experiences (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 69). The pattern codes identified emergent themes from the data and were used to condense the data into fewer and more meaningful units of analysis (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). This process created a total of seven main categories and forty-six sub-categories. Based on the research question, this study uses one main category and six sub-categories for analysis of its hypotheses. The coding procedure involved classification of utterances into six groups relating to the speaker's perceptions of (1) collaboration competence in multidisciplinary teams, (2) students' experiences of their teacher educators as curriculum developers, (3) the programme leaders' experiences supporting the curriculum development process, (4) reproduction of the earlier curriculum, (5) moderate translation and (6) radical translation in their role as curriculum developers.

4. Analysis

This section presents the six issues identified in the data analysis above. The empirical results will be reported and discussed in light of the current literature on the subject in this united part.

4.1 Collaboration Competence in Multidisciplinary Teams

The investigation indicates that while the informants do not use the concept 'co-created curricula' themselves, the process is understood as an ongoing negotiation among different actors in asymmetrical positions, based on differing traditions, experiences and disciplinary cultures. The campus-based teacher educators, the preschool-based teacher educators, the student teachers and the programme leaders each influence the curricula in different ways. The two institutions studied also start from different locations. Beginning years earlier, institution A has experienced change with the characteristics of a bottom-up process, while institution B, without this advantage, has experienced more of a top-down process (Røvik, 2014).

'To us, it was a huge advantage when the national guideline came. For us, it meant that we had already tried this for two years. Even though we had to make adjustments, we were in the mindset' (Trond, drama, institution A).

If the institution's starting point is to write individual plans for the multidisciplinary, collaborative subjects, it is able to conclude that the educational institution is characterised as standing in a top-down process:

'There was not much time for processes. Though there were only individuals who wrote the subject plans' (Focus group, institution B).

The dilemma of translation, whether from an individual or a team perspective, recurs repeatedly. Nevertheless, the possibilities of change are expressed and appreciated by the actors who understand their role taking on the mindset and navigating towards a successful outcome when developing curricula for multidisciplinary subjects.

'Then I realised that under this programme leader it has been very nice. I think she has emphasised in a good way the interaction between the field of practice and the university' (Bert, Preschool-based teacher educator, institution B).

'I think... I have thought that we won't be good at this, as teacher educators, or whatever we are, without working in teams. To me, administration is also important. Because I work so closely to them in relation to individual students, facilitating and with the practice administration and in general. So there are many important persons involved to make you feel that you succeed' (Eva, pedagogy, 2013–2014, institution A).

When the team is big and insignificant, built of persons with little degree of identity as preschool teacher educators, some other collaboration dilemmas are visible:

'In CDPL this year, I have been responsible for a total of nineteen teachers. And getting them to feel ownership or responsibility is really hard when they just come in and take their two hours and then run again. This becomes simply too fragmented' (Mona, pedagogy, 2014–2015, institution B).

'But clearly, it's time consuming and I do not know. When we have this multidisciplinary now, so mathematically, I think there must be less time for the subjects. I can't go through so thoroughly, of course.

It will be a question of judgment of what do we win and what do we lose with this? But as a rule, we win' (Trond, drama, institution A).

These challenges introduce uncertainty and challenge the sense of collective ownership and responsibility exercised by the team as a whole. For some educators, it becomes easier to 'take your classes and run'. This aspect arises more frequently among large teams, where some teacher educators may teach in several bachelor's programmes and lack a strong identity as a preschool teacher educator. Still, team members may feel that they lose power and professional standing in their work. Frustration becomes visible, such as when a team presents a curriculum that is still fragmented after two years of work on the project. Nevertheless, after noting the challenges the multidisciplinary teams provide, one respondent observed, 'We don't feel good without a team'. This teacher educator took into account that many important persons have to be involved to make the process feel like a success for the participants.

Summarized we can say that in spite of different starting points, the institutions have many of the same characteristics on the levels; 'individual' and the 'work community' (Hökkä & Eteläpelto, 2014). It takes time to reach a community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991) especially when the teacher educators are struggling for mutual engagement and still have lack of ownership of team members (Burrell et al., 2015).

4.2 Students' Experiences

Students proved themselves to be conscious of change, and able to formulate discipline challenges already after one semester. They are able to see the profession, the preschool and the child as 'painted concrete' in the middle of theoretical perspectives. As representatives for the second cohort in the implementation, they understand theory and professional norms as being closely related and teacher educators as unifying agents (Burrell et al., 2015). It is also possible to interpret the students' experience as Wenger (1998), as an understood joint enterprise:

Aa: 'At least I think so. When we have classes, I can see the preschool in my mind. To work as a preschool teacher and leader are clearly discussed, and that's good. I have been looking forward to the practice period'.

Ba: 'Yes, theory and profession come close to each other. The focus is on the expectations of ourselves' (Focus group students, institution A).

Despite some wishes for better communication among educators, these findings indicate that more and more they are able to connect the content from different subjects to make coherent curricula. When they were asked if their institution was characterised by consensus, they answered:

Ba: 'I experience a great deal of unity'.

Ca: 'To a certain extent. They could have been better in collaborating on subjects. The submission of our labour demands, for example. It does not mean that it is bad, but it could have been better'.

Ca: 'But those who don't have experience, do not manage to put it into a practical context relevant to the preschool. It becomes more truthful when we have teachers who not only have studied it, but lived it!' (Focus group students, institution A).

The students prefer that teacher educators have their own experiences working in preschools and have 'lived the preschool' themselves. We can also understand the student teachers as having been active as developers and assessors of these emerging curricula.

In what ways experience teacher educators' work with the new curricula, the students were able to see the professionalisation in the content of CDPL:

Bb: 'In the preschools, it is easy to see that we don't have individual subjects. As students, we have to assemble what we learn into a whole profession. Then you understand that the profession is not divided. 'We see more and more connections already of course and what we have learned in one multidisciplinary subject is connected to the others'.

Ab: 'I have seen that I do not learn math, like in the high school. You work with mathematics by thinking about 'the child'. And you get a lot of integrated examples of preschool work' (Focus group students, institution B).

Co-created curriculum was the concept Bovill (2014) used when the students were active developers of the curricula together with the teacher educators. When these students were asked about the degree of influencing, they responded to have been valuable (Brooman et al., 2015):

Ca: 'We have many contributions to make. Our teacher from pedagogy says we must say if something is not ok, and they will fix it. Often we are passive and do what we did in high school, and then we forget that we have real influence. We have a lot of power, really' (Focus group students, institution A).

Cb: 'Otherwise, it is positive that the feedback we have received as students has resulted in a change in the curriculum' (Focus group, students, institution B).

Summarized we can say that CDPL's curricula and practice seem to be experienced being close to the preschool teacher profession and the educators have created a shared repertoire (Wenger, 1998). The students experienced to be listened to as actors in co-created curricula, and both programmes are experienced as largely coherent.

4.3 The Programme Leaders' Experiences

The third perspective is the leaders' role to prepare for and support the multidisciplinary teams' curricula. The processes of change seem to reflect a moving reference point, going from first reference to the earlier national curriculum guidelines, to making a curricula within a multidisciplinary context.

'We do not use the old model or plans as a reference point anymore. So I think the process has come quite a long way' (Programme leader, institution A).

'I think our institution is in the forefront of this reform, but I also see that many things are not properly in place. It is about the overall context, because this is an underfinanced programme (...). There are ways in which things could have been done, but this is not a job that could be completed in one semester. Remember, this is a relatively large structural change' (Programme leader, institution A).

The organisation does not have sufficient resources, while the leaders are struggling with an underfinanced programme. These team-based multidisciplinary programmes are not externally motivated like ad hoc projects, but rather represent a continuous responsibility (Murray & Male, 2005).

'For us, the processes have largely taken place within the institution. It certainly represents effective management from the previous programme leader, but also her strong ability to read the oncoming trends, right? I do not like the word proactive, but we had the possibility to get into the processes early, and to direct our own process. It's not just about a speeding train you're going to jump onto. Clearly, I feel there is a great deal of loyalty to the reform here. I think that's about the ownership people have for the reform. It is probably a lot about the fact that you have not forced the change, but had influence and real involvement' (Programme leader, institution A).

When this programme leader compared their process to its contrary, and said that she did not have to jump on 'a speeding train', the translations were categorised as allowing enough time to let the actors do their translation and take part in policy development on behalf of the whole educational institution. It is possible to interpret this process as complying with Brooman et al., who found that curriculum processes can be used to 'evoke a dynamic, collaborative and transformative learning process' (Brooman et al., 2015, p. 664). In institution B, the programme leader experiences something different:

'We have not had the very big waves, and the reform has been accepted. But I know the grief that some teachers are aware of. It has been particularly noticeable in Mathematics and Language Arts. But at the same time, we have achieved this with the learning outcomes descriptions, and we need to base our practice on to the current requirements in greater extent now. We have introduced two professional days per semester, and have discussed that perhaps Language Arts should get more of this time, to own it more, preferably with the field work component. Perhaps that is also how the earlier discipline, Language Arts, can take responsibility for its key elements effectively?' (Programme leader, institution B).

'In the first fall of the transition, we experienced a large volume of meetings. Some teachers mentioned that they had conducted up to 40 meetings, including evaluation meetings after initial implementation. But we must in some way find other ways of working. It's a challenge' (Programme leader, institution B).

When this programme leader feels sorry for the earlier disciplines that have lost credits and position in the programme, in this case a creative alternative is found. The leader wants to give them the responsibility for the 'Professional days' as supplements. The translation for why some earlier disciplines have to suffer was explained by the new national guidelines, intended to support student learning outcomes. Her mandate showed where the trends (reform ideas) are going, even while the guidelines promote these ideas (Røvik, 2014). This is also an example where a project leader uses moderate translating, and needs to avoid conflicts while meeting the demands of multiple disciplines (Røvik, 2014). Summarized we can say that the teams have had strong leaders who were able to support

the teams and to be in forefront of the processes. Different frames have been given, but the programme leaders are building on a new culture of responsibility where the team members' identities as preschool teacher educators, is a key. Moderate translation of the reform ideas are seen as a way to solve the feeling of unjust sharing among disciplines.

4.4 Reproduction

A fourth perspective represents forms of reproduction of the earlier curriculum;

'Ideally, it should have been, but then we have to have one process for it. And when we have time to do it? It is a good question (...). Instead of strengthening one teacher educator, we initially had the idealistic concept of strengthening everyone, but it became too laborious and challenging. I have always seen that this process requires time' (Mona, pedagogy, 2014–2015, institution B).

'When it comes to the assessment of theories underlying the subjects, I'd like that area not to be our responsibility. I'd like to be making comments, and can certainly say something, but is that enough? That is what I am thinking. A lecturer would perhaps say that another theory could have been used, but I do not have these skills' (Pre-school-based teacher educator, institution A).

The administrative systems also present challenges, because sometimes the teams seem to pull together too late to discuss and evaluate the current semester's curriculum and therefore miss administrative deadlines for the next academic year;

'The work requirement has not changed, because we have kept the old folder assignment. When we wanted a common theme in relation to the workload in CDPL, we first worked on it in March of this year. But it was too late to get the change in for the subsequent year's plans' (Mona, pedagogy, 2014–2015, institution B).

These participants' acts of translation demonstrate the complexity of choices, and show that teacher educators occupy a position of educational complexity (Biesta, 2013). It can be useful to remember that the programme was not poor when the process of evaluation began (Hagesæther, 2010), although the degree of integration, professional orientation and basis in research needed to be strengthened. The experiences of lack of time, lack of support and lack of subjective confidence are in accordance with the findings of the Finnish study (Hökkä & Eteläpelto, 2014) with discrepancies between individual agency and organisational development. The need to construct multiple relationships among the individual level, the work community in the teams and the educational institution seem to be necessary to solve these challenges. Summarized we can say that reproduction is not seen as a frequent translation form. The explanations for why the curriculum does not change, are largely understood as lack of time, lack of support, lack of subjective confidence and collision with their earlier traditions.

4.5 Moderate Translation

The fifth perspective is how and why the institutional actors have largely translated old into new curricula at a moderate level. Structures are often given focus, however, while content or culture therefore often wait for unconscious translation (Røvik, 2014). One teacher educator was asked if she had experienced occasions when structures inhibit curriculum innovations;

'CDPL lasted last fall, but other subjects were in between. Beginning with autumn 2014, students will be required to make up the first subject before joining the next' (Eva, pedagogy, 2013–14, institution A).

The teams sometimes struggle to reach the objectives set in curricula (Burrell et al., 2015), for reasons such as insufficient attachment to the team and its goals, the fragility of team members' identities as preschool teacher educators, the number of participants in the process and the lack of a strong leader (Burrell et al., 2015) to provide a framework, support and direction are explained as reasons:

'Everyone is in all other places, so to get it up then, "I'll know what day I'm going to give classes", right? Now, people have to 'get their days', and everyone is in every other place in other programmes' (Focus group interview, institution B).

'Then we have made some changes based on student evaluations and the undergraduate evaluations from the teachers who are relating pedagogy to the other subjects ... We have not made such major changes, and more changes to organisation than to the content itself' (Mona, pedagogy, 2014–2015, institution B).

In spite of moving from more unitary curricula to more multidisciplinary curricula, the findings of this study indicate that the new curricula are more practical, and that some team members exceed the requirements set for the exercise,

and use a more research-based curriculum packed with new literature and have given the team a more shared repertoire (Wenger, 1998). However, new qualities in the programmes are possible to see;

‘I see that the pedagogue responsible for first-year students has this little extra responsibility to solidify the profession and attitude, along with managerial responsibility. Concretely, the exercises have become more practice-related. They were already somewhat like this earlier, but are now consciously so. They have pulled it a little longer. So I think they have become better off using more new and relevant literature and research’ (Anita, Preschool-based teacher educator, institution A).

Summarized we can say that moderate translation is used frequently, and seen as structural changes for a better curriculum or to avoid conflicts. The positive changes can be observed by the actors, both for the curricula of the practical parts of the programme, for the content by reaching a more research based and actual curriculum.

4.6 Radical Translation

One example of a new kind of active solution is using a text-workshop format instead of assessment comments in response to the students’ website.

‘Now this fall, we simply offered guidance to the students. We did not have any resources for this, but we two educators sat at the library, and set up a schedule for when we would be there. Then the students worked there and we could guide them’ (Mona, pedagogy, 2014–2015, institution B).

Another example of radical translation is the programme leader who started a pilot project that gave one of the institutions more than two extra years to build a new organisation around the team structure. This leader inspired a bottom-up process through quick-acting, fearless action in anticipation of change, having felt how the wind was blowing (Røvik, 2014).

‘Our previous programme leader was quick and took much of this role. Yes, she has been like a prime mover’ (Eva, pedagogy, 2013–2014, institution A).

In the other institution, they engaged in R&D for the preschool field, to support teacher educators to identify more strongly as preschool teacher educators. The national guideline has functioned as a scaffold, supporting the programme leader to pursue radical translation;

‘R&D in the preschool field is important, and we will implement this in our institution. Many also teach in other bachelor programmes as well, and we would like teachers to identify themselves in the preschool-team’ (Programme leader, institution B).

The institutions are well situated to negotiate the change process and to engage with new curriculum challenges:

‘In relation to work requirements, we are working on a plan for the bachelor assignment, and we see at once what needs to be done, but we do it, even if it is challenging to get it done’ (Ane, pedagogy, 2014–2015, institution A).

They are still going through changes and seem to have the courage to be in change. Summarized and based on this evidence, radical translation has been experienced by participants in some cases. A strong leader to make things happen (Burrell et al., 2015) seems to be important for these institutions to do radical translation.

5. Conclusion

We have seen that teacher educators translate their roles as curriculum developers in these two cases in different ways. As in Hökkä and Eteläpelto (2014) this current study finds tensions between individual agency and organisational imperatives. To build a team-based multidisciplinary curriculum that is coherent and leads to changes, the following key factors are identified: (1) a strong and supportive leader, (2) ownership of team members, (3) time for close communication between the collaborators, including the students, (4) identity as preschool teacher educator (5) mutual responsibility for a common curriculum, and to be (6) close to the preschool teacher profession. Seeing the findings as a whole, this study suggests the need for closer attention to teacher educators in change, including their role as translators of reform ideas. We have seen how this influence on the curriculum and programmes’ quality including the actors’ possibilities to continue their professional development. The field remains open for additional research, but the most useful approach is still to approach these complicated answers through a continued series of questions. Thus we see that due to the multidisciplinary framework embedded in preschool practice and curriculum demand an interdisciplinary approach to teacher education.

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Notes

Note 1. NOKUT is Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education, in the function of being the controlling authority for educational activity at all Norwegian Universities and University Colleges.

Note 2. Preschool-based teacher educators (others use the related concepts of practical training supervisors or mentors) are educators who take primary responsibility for the student teachers' practical periods in the preschools. In Norway, this element takes up 100 days of the programme.