

Review of *Professional development through teacher research: Stories from language teacher educators*, edited by Darío Luis Banegas, Emily Edwards, and Luis S. Villacañas de Castro (2022).
Multilingual Matters, 213 pp. ISBN 878-1-788892-771-0 (hardback)

Leijun Zhang

In the language teacher education literature, researchers have focused primarily on language teachers. Scant attention, however, has been given to language teacher educators, who we may call *teachers of language teachers*. Although the professional development of second language teachers has been the object of discussions (e.g., Borg, 2013; Johnson & Golombek, 2011; Richards, 2008), the professional growth of language teacher educators has received comparatively little attention. In other words, how language teacher educators acquire and maintain the professional skills and knowledge required in order to educate language teachers has long been under-represented in the literature. Language teacher educators are, to a large extent, “at the top of the pyramid in the formal preparation and development of language teachers” (Banegas et al., 2022, p. 4). Given the central role that teacher educators play in teacher education programmes, what language teacher educators do when they are working with language teachers is a significant area that warrants exploration (Wright, 2010).

The book edited by Banegas, Edwards, and Villacañas de Castro comes as a fresh and timely contribution to the understanding of language teacher educators’ professional development in terms of the ways in which teacher educators improve the quality of their own teaching through engaging in research. This publication brings together diverse accounts of teacher educator research from a wide range of professional and institutional contexts (i.e., Argentina, Australia, Colombia, Ecuador, Kenya, Pakistan, the United Kingdom, and Vietnam). The integration of international aspects qualifies the book as a useful guide for language teacher educators working at various universities or institutions around the globe, and it is also geared towards academics interested in the professional development of language teacher educators.

The book consists of 12 chapters. Having *teacher professional development, teacher education and teacher research* as a binding thread running through the entire volume, Banegas, Edwards, and Villacañas de Castro, in the introductory chapter, provide an innovative illustration of the relationship between the three interrelated domains by associating it with the interplay between what constitutes John Dewey’s philosophy of education, namely, *growth, education, and scientific inquiry*. This parallelism helps equip the reader with an understanding of the somewhat complex nature of the fundamental aspects of language teacher education, and it depicts teacher professional development as “an ever-expanding spiral of internal and external transformation” (Banegas et al., 2022, p. 203). In the past decades, second language teacher education (SLTE) has undergone considerable change. Teacher education has shifted from a knowledge-transmission view to a sociocultural view which

emphasizes the nature of teachers' knowledge, and its role in SLTE, and the contextual influences on its nature and acquisition (Freeman, 2001; Richards & Nunan, 1990; Richards, 2008). Recently, change and innovation have become integral elements of a great deal of SLTE activity and also the new agenda in SLTE (Wright & Beaumont, 2015). SLTE and change are closely intertwined through language teacher education, which necessitates the discussion of SLTE pedagogy and practice, that is, "what language teacher educators do" (Johnson & Golombek, 2020, p. 117). Yet, there is a well-documented paucity of research and reflection on the work of language teacher educators; that is, how they go about exploring and self-reflecting on their work as SLTE practitioners and researchers (Barkhuizen, 2021; Peercy et al., 2019). Such inquiry could open up our understanding of teacher educators, their contexts, and their pedagogies of teacher education, which may in turn create a climate in which change and innovation in SLTE is enabled.

This book seeks to uncover teacher educators' professional practice in initial teacher education programmes and understand their professional gains through research with their own student-teachers. It is clear that the contributors are all sensitive and responsive teacher educators. They scrutinize and evaluate the issues that they encounter in their immediate professional practice, which ultimately inform their studies. Positioning themselves as "change agents" (Wright & Beaumont, 2015, p. 3), they act on the identified issues through pedagogical interventions or actions in pursuit of possible solutions or transformative change to these issues. The contributors present their professional inquiry on a wide range of topics and even on those less well-trodden ones in the SLTE literature such as student-teacher agency (e.g., Yang, Chapter 4), prospective teacher emotions (e.g., San Martín, Chapter 5) and engagement in their learning (e.g., Khurram, Chapter 7), or student-teacher identity and needs (e.g., Sarasa, Chapter 8).

In most of the research in the volume, reflective practice functions as a tool for guiding the contributors' research processes. In particular, Tran's chapter (Chapter 2) on promoting reflective practice as a collaborative activity and Sucerquia's (Chapter 9) contribution on the development of "critical consciousness" through reflection and praxis are revealing. It is instructive to see how reflection practice is being used in teacher education programmes. For instance, Huang (Chapter 6) provides an excellent account of the processes involved in embedding practitioner inquiry as part of teacher education programmes and the potential of reflective practice in facilitating teacher professional learning. The chapters also hold practical evidence of teacher educators' pursuit of professional growth through dialogic and collaborative activities with student-teachers, colleagues, and postgraduates. In a study on the use of collaborative dialogue between supervisors and supervisees, Fajardo-Dack, Célleri and Serrano (Chapter 10) report how the integration of students' perspectives into their own narratives prompted them to delve into their own supervision practice, and subsequently opened up opportunities for their professional development as supervisors and researchers. The authors suggest that such collaborative inquiry appears to contribute to more successful supervision practices that could in turn benefit the students' progress and learning.

The chapters also offer clear and detailed accounts of the motivation and rationale underlying their research, how it was conducted as well as how it contributed to their own professional growth. All of the contributors have engaged in exploring and theorizing of their own practice systematically through the interplay between reflection, pedagogy and research. Collectively, these ten chapters provide rich, illuminating, and useful insights into how language teacher educators might go about researching their own practice. However, I feel that quite often, the research practices are presented somewhat uncritically, and little is known about any contextual difficulties they may have encountered in the process, with a few exceptions (e.g., Medina & McDougald, Chapter 11). These discussions could have made for an interesting reading experience and future researchers would also benefit from this information.

This edited collection is a worthy attempt to fill the gap that the professional development of language teacher educators has been neglected in the research literature. Regardless of the growing recognition of teacher educators as agents of change, few attempts have been made to explicitly investigate the experiences of language teacher educators who agentively embrace teacher research

in their modules and programmes in pursuit of professional development and quality language teacher education provision. This book can provide language teacher educators with inspiration and resources to engage in inquiry into their own professional practice and illuminated the extraordinary power that language teacher educator research can offer SLTE as they scrutinize, understand, intervene, and enhance language teachers' professional learning and development. As Wright (2010) puts it, "embracing the twin functions of teaching and of research is a good way of continually upgrading quality in SLTE" (p. 287), and I believe this book has made a convincing case for teacher educator researchers to exercise their agency by engaging in teacher research that seeks to enact change in SLTE.

References

- Barkhuizen, G. (2021). *Language teacher educator identity*. Cambridge University Press.
- Borg, S. (2013). *Teacher research in language teaching: A critical analysis*. Cambridge University Press.
- Freeman, D. (2001). Second language teacher education. In R. Carter & D. Nunan (Eds.). *The Cambridge guide to teaching English to speakers of other languages* (pp. 72-79). Cambridge University Press.
- Johnson, K. E., & Golombek, P. R. (Eds.). (2011). *Research on second language teacher education: A sociocultural perspective on professional development*. Routledge.
- Johnson, K. E., & Golombek, P. R. (2020). Informing and transforming language teacher education pedagogy. *Language Teaching Research*, 24(1), 116–127.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1362168818777539>
- Peercy, M. M., Sharkey, J., Baecher, L., Motha, S., & Varghese, M. (2019). Exploring TESOL teacher educators as learners and reflective scholars: A shared narrative inquiry. *TESOL Journal*, 10(4).
<https://doi.org/10.1002/tesj.482>
- Richards, J. C. & Nunan, D. (1990). *Second language teacher education*. Cambridge University Press.
- Richards, J. C. (2008). Second language teacher education today. *RELC Journal*, 39(2), 158-177.
- Wright, T. (2010). Second language teacher education: Review of recent research on practice. *Language Teaching*, 43(3), 259-296. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261444810000030>
- Wright, T., & Beaumont, M. (2014). *Experiences of second language teacher education*. Springer.

About the author

Leijun Zhang (she/her) is a PhD student at the University of Edinburgh. Her research interests focus on second language teacher education and professional development, teacher research and aspects of languages (English and Chinese) teaching and learning in schools, including literacy development, teaching strategies and material design. She is currently undertaking research on Chinese as a foreign language (CFL) literacy development in Scottish secondary schools. She is also a tutor in MSc Language Education and MSc TESOL programmes at the University of Edinburgh. Leijun received her MSc TESOL from the University of Edinburgh. Prior to coming to Scotland, Leijun taught English as a foreign language in Shanghai, China.