



Assessment – Mentoring – Teacher Education

Tony Burner, Siv M. Gamlem and Vibeke Solbue

Guest editors

This special issue of *Nordic Journal of Education and Practice* is dedicated to Professor Kari Smith and her impact on research in and on teacher education in Norway. She has been supervisor for several PhD students, and the editors of this issue are three of those who want to honor Kari by focusing on three main research areas in her academic career: assessment, mentoring and teacher education.

Assessment of, as, and for learning has several purposes and consequences, both intended and unintended. “Assessment is the most powerful type of measurement in education that influences student learning” (McMillan, 2013, p. 4) and, according to Smith (2015a, p. 743), “assessment literacy is more than following recipes technically. It is a well informed and mindful professional practice which requires teacher learning and professional growth.” **Mentoring** activities are given a central role in the education of professionals – in initial, induction and in-service education (Smith, 2015b). Smith (2015b) claims that mentoring is a profession within a profession, where mentoring is a different experience than practicing the profession. **Teacher education’s** “practical part”, the in-service training or practicum, and assessment of student teachers’ performance play a major part in forming the future generation of teachers (Smith, 2010). Teachers’ professional learning is a key condition for establishing and embedding Assessment for Learning and quality feedback to support students’ learning in classrooms (Pedder & James, 2012; Smith 2011).

For this special issue, we were interested in the most recent developments in assessment in schools, and students’, teachers’ and principals’ voices about assessment. We asked for submissions regarding how we can make sure that “assessment works”, that it feeds into the needs of students, teachers and principals, and in what ways assessment practices can become counter-productive to students’ and teachers’ acquisition of skills and knowledge. We also welcomed submissions concerning ways to develop

Tony Burner,
Oslo Metropolitan
University.
Email: tonyb@oslomet.no

Siv M. Gamlem,
Volda University
College.
Email: sivmg@hivolda.no

Vibeke Solbue,
Western Norway
University of Applied
Sciences.
Email: Vibeke.Solbue@hvl.no

©2019 Tony Burner, Siv M. Gamlem and Vibeke Solbue. This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>).

Burner, T., Gamlem, S. M. & Solbue, V. (2019). Editorial. *Nordisk tidsskrift for utdanning og praksis*, 13[2], 1–3. <https://doi.org/10.23865/up.v13.1966>

mentoring for learning as a profession within a profession and the most recent developments of mentoring in schools and teacher education. We asked these questions in a call for this special issue because we knew that these are a few of the questions that reflect Kari's immense research career. Abstract deadline for the call was December 1, 2018, and the manuscript deadline was March 1, 2019. We received a total of 18 manuscripts. After desk review and one round of double-blind peer review, 11 manuscripts were selected for further reviews. In the further review process, there were seven high quality manuscripts that were selected for this special issue; i.e. almost two thirds of the manuscripts were rejected in the process of reviews.

Grade-free assessment is the topic of two articles that focus on assessment. The first one, by Eriksen and Elstad, is about Norwegian language art teachers' experiences with grade-free semesters in upper secondary schools. The main conclusion is that teachers have predominantly positive experiences with a grade-free semester. The grade attention decreases while the focus on students' attention to learning progress based on the teacher's feedback increases. The second article on assessment, by Gillespie and Burner, concerns principals' views on the implementation of grade-free middle schools. The study suggests that principals rely on research and unsatisfying assessment practices when justifying a change to grade-free schools. However, they do not find the involvement of students, nor the information directed at parents about the implementation, to be sufficient. A third article on assessment is by Vattøy and Gamlem, focusing specifically on feedback dialogues in lower secondary schools. The results indicate that attention to adolescent perspectives seems to be a neglected aspect of feedback dialogues in lower secondary schools.

Mentoring in schools is a growing field of expertise in Norway. Helleve, Ulvik and Roness focus on what expectations newly qualified teachers, their mentors and their leaders have to mentoring and professional development, and thereby identify what kind of mentoring is needed in the fourth article in this special issue. The results of their study show a discrepancy between school leaders' expectations that call for supervision, and mentors' and newly-qualified teachers that ask for mentoring rooted in classroom activities.

In the fifth article in this special issue, Eklund, Aspfors and Hansén investigate teachers' experiences regarding their masters' theses, directly after finishing teacher education and after one year in the profession. The results show that the master's thesis can be perceived as a tool for developing teachers' knowledge, yet there is a need to facilitate the integration of their knowledge into their daily work and its relevance for the school community. The study is an important contribution, particularly since Norwegian teacher education recently expanded from a four year to a five year master's program. In the sixth article in this special issue, Høydalsvik examines teacher educators' self-understanding when it comes to their professional identity. The findings illustrate that teacher educators have different understandings of being a professional. For some, their identity is rooted in the discipline in which they were educated. However, others have built identities as teacher educators

supplementary to their primary careers. The last article in this special issue is also about teacher education and is written by Murray and Vanassche. They write about the importance of research as a key element of professional learning for prospective and practicing teachers, as well as their teacher educators. Therefore, they claim, it is of crucial importance to build research capacity in teacher education. The article analyses three international examples of practice in teacher education research: the Norwegian Doctoral School (NAFOL); the use of self-study research in Belgium (Flanders); and the Teacher Education Research Network (TERN), a social-practice initiative in England. The overall question of the article is: what can be learned from these cases about how to build research capacity in and on teacher education?

Assessment, mentoring and teacher education research are three different but related areas of research that have been the major focus for Kari over the past decades. Her impact on research and development work in all of the three areas is significant, both nationally and internationally. Some of the articles are directly linked to her research by citations, others are written by research collaborators and her former PhD students. We hope that this special issue will lead to a deeper understanding and more research on Kari's important research areas.

Congratulations, Kari!

References

- McMillan, J. H. (2013). Why We Need Research on Classroom Assessment. In J. H. McMillan (Ed.), *SAGE Handbook of Research on Classroom Assessment* (pp. 3–16). Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE.
- Pedder, D., & James, M. (2012). Professional Learning as a Condition for Assessment for Learning. In J. Gardner (Ed.), *Assessment and Learning*, 2nd ed., (pp. 33–48). London: Sage.
- Smith, K. (2010). Assessing the Practicum in Teacher Education. Do We Want Candidates and Mentors to Agree? *Studies in Educational Evaluation*, 1(2), 36–41.
- Smith, K. (2011). Professional Development of Teachers. A Prerequisite for AfL to be Successfully Implemented in the Classroom. *Studies in Educational Evaluation*, 37, 55–61.
- Smith, K. (2015a). Assessment for learning – a pedagogical tool. In D. Wise, L. Hayward & J. Pandya (Eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Curriculum, Pedagogy and Assessment*, (pp. 740–755). London: Sage.
- Smith K. (2015b). Mentoring. In H. Tillema, G. J. Westhuizen, K. Smith (Eds.), *Mentoring for Learning* (pp. 283–298). Sense Publishers: Rotterdam.