

Research or teaching? Contradictory demands on Swedish teacher educators and the consequences for the quality of teacher education

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Abstract

Based on a policy analysis and interviews with assistant lecturers and lecturers (with a PhD) who are heavily involved in teacher education, the present article addresses contemporary tensions and challenges in Swedish teacher education. The point of departure is the theoretical framework of mission stretch and the third space professional in teacher education with the aim of investigating how teacher educators experience and navigate their daily work. The findings of the study illustrate the tensions teacher educators experience between research and teaching tasks, between a constant flow of tasks, large student groups, and demands of high-quality teaching. The findings also show a gap between the practical anchoring of some research in teacher education and feelings of tension between teaching practices and the value of research. In conclusion, teacher education would seem to be developing into a cluster of tasks, challenges, expectations, and skills. This indicates that teaching and research are not the only missions and cannot be taken for granted in light of how teachers struggle to define their professional knowledge and value with respect to increasingly strong competitive demands for research performance.

Keywords: teacher education; teacher educators; teaching work; research; professionalism

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Introduction

The pressures on implementing a more developed, efficient and specialized academic work force has increased, as have demands on the academic profession (see Government Bill, 2007: 98). This has contributed to a rethinking of the balance between the two major university functions; research and teaching, and their interface (Leisyte, 2007), which in turn has created a differentiation in building legitimacy and prestige on the globalized academic market. Jacob (2009) also

argues that this differentiation can be explained by a long-term shift in system norms and in institutions, and is resulting in a potentially forceful cause of normative pressure.

In Enders and De Boer's (2009) study they describe this kind of academic shift through the concept of 'mission stretch'. The term addresses a process in which growing and (partly) contradictory demands and expectations, related to teaching and learning, research and community engagement, are put on the university. Mission stretch puts focus on some of the core values, but also contradictions in academic work, for instance varied framing related to 'elite' and 'mass' higher education, 'diversification', 'equality', 'stratification', the 'profession-based university', or the 'research university'. A consequence of these changes is that the privileges once enjoyed by members of the academic profession in an elite higher education system have increasingly come under pressure. As a result of these changes, academics today generally are more likely to concentrate on management or on teaching and research, while teaching and research themselves represent a further division of work (Enders & Musselin, 2008). This process has led to a situation where, for many academics, the scope for research time has decreased, leading to what academics generally experience as a decline in the status of their work (Ahlbäck Öberg et al., 2016). Mission stretch has also created ambiguity and uncertainty for many academics, with some staff working in new environments, often driven by both public service and market agendas. Whitchurch (2013) has used the concept of 'third space' to describe new roles; comprising elements of both academic and professional activity. These third space activities might take place on parallel tracks to formal structures and processes and are characterized by paradoxes and dilemmas. The space can be a place for reflection and at the same time can be both a safe and risky place to inhabit. The space can, for example, offer opportunities to be creative, build new forms of expertise and to form new relationships. On the other hand, the lack of clear boundaries can be threatening and create feelings of frustration and isolation.

In several studies these changes become especially apparent in semi-professional education programs such as teacher education (Beach & Bagley, 2012; Beach et al., 2014). In Sweden, teacher education is currently characterized by having a large group of staff who are employed as adjunct teachers (assistant lecturers) and who most often do not have a PhD, but a degree from teacher education as well as a master's degree or similar in a specific subject area. They are often employed in teacher education due to their specific skills or because of the general lack of teachers who have a PhD. Many of these teachers have a large teaching load and as a consequence have less possibilities to take part in research. Coupled with this, new financing regulations in the 1990s also negatively influenced the possibilities for teacher education staff to carry out research (Kallós, 2009; Lindberg, 2004; Government Bill, 1999: 63). The current state of Swedish teacher education means that it has a weak research base, a point taken up early in 2019 by the Swedish Research Council (VR), which reported on the current

dilemmas connected to a weak research base in teacher education and the lack of scientifically trained academics (Swedish Research Council, 2019).

It has been argued that higher education institutions characterized by an emphasis on teaching are more prone to academic drifts than others (Gardner, 2013). In addition, several studies show how an academic drift or stretch has created divisions of work (Angervall & Beach, 2017) and more unclear career paths (Acker, 2014). Keisu and Carbin (2014) have shown how positions and competences are distributed, related to stronger demands of performance indicators and how they have encouraged processes of self-monitoring in which the individual academic becomes responsible for their own knowledge production and well-being (Keisu & Carbin, 2014). The consequences of low performance within these systems can have consequences in terms of lower salaries or even job loss (Berg, Huijbens, & Larsen, 2016).

While many academics have had little choice but to comply with these changes, many are critical of the consequences. Archer (2008), for example, found evidence of both younger and senior academics attempting to resist drives for performativity and adopting similar critical positions in relation to dominant practices. They identified with the core values of intellectual endeavour, criticality and professionalism.

The need for a strong critical and a scientific base has long been expressed in connection with Swedish teacher education (see Beach, 2011). There has been a long-term political commitment in Sweden to research-based teacher education, as well as good support in studies on teacher education to give credence to the value of this ambition (Bagley & Beach, 2015; Kallós, 2009; Lindqvist, Nordänger, & Carlsson, 2014). Government reports from the 1940s to the early 2000s have argued that future teachers should be provided with research-based professional knowledge and research skills as a way of supporting their work to develop their profession, their schools and their teaching practices in the interests of the realization of a political vision of ‘one-school-for all pupils’ (Government Bill, 1948: 27). However, that vision has proved to be very difficult to fulfil in practice. One reason is the policy history of Swedish higher education, such as the Higher Education Act of 1977 (SFS 1977: 459) and the LÄTU reform of 1986 (Government Bill 1980: 3). Professors and Associates were removed from undergraduate teaching and teaching-only lectureships were created. Other reasons are the functional and financial division of education and research at a system level and organizational level since the 1970s (Bienenstock et al., 2014), as well as the attitude of Swedish universities, where universities have been described as not having recognized the strategic importance of teacher education and not providing opportunities for the development of research or necessary funding (Åstrand, 2006).

These problems have also been exacerbated following the recommendations of the latest teacher education commission (Government Bill, 2008: 109) and other political changes regarding higher education funding (Beach, 2019), which may have made the possibilities for a research-based content in teacher education delivered by a research-competent staff even more difficult (Allan, 2014).

Swedish teacher education illustrates well the growing pressures created by a performative culture (Beach, 2020). Education science faculties illustrate some of the general tensions and conflicts within the university of today, for example those related to relationships between the discipline itself and praxis, between science as a subject and teacher education (i.e. professional training) (Trowler, Saunders, & Bamber, 2012).

The present article gives analytical attention to the implications of a so called ‘mission stretch’ for teacher education. In particular, its aim is to focus on the questions of how research about teacher education, just as the need for research in the teacher profession, is regarded and understood by Swedish teacher educators today. There has to date been a dearth of research looking at how those engaged in teacher education perceive and experience the value of research and teaching. This research is a response to that gap. Three main questions are posed and concern: How is work in teacher education organized and influenced by the idea of ‘research-based’; how do teacher’s describe the relationship between research and teaching; why and what are the implications for the quality of teacher education and its staff?

The division of work in Swedish higher education

The general division of roles and responsibilities in Swedish universities can be traced to the Higher Education Act from 1977 (SFS, 1977: 263), which increased student numbers by 46,000 (33,000 women, 13,000 men) and the LÄTU reform of 1986 (Government Bill, 1980: 3) which together created the research and teaching responsibilities associated with the new positions of professor, lecturer, and assistant lecturer (adjunct) in Sweden.

Before the 1977 and 1986 reforms, the post of senior lecturer was introduced in 1958, following a proposal from the 1955 university investigation (Högskoleverket, 2006: 3R). The position was for teaching only and the motivation for the position was the large influx of university students in the 1960s and 1970s. The change also released professors from undergraduate teaching for research and supervision work in postgraduate education. The number of senior lecturers increased from 3,700 in 1984 to just over 6,300 in 2004. But on two occasions the number decreased. This was firstly in connection with the LÄTU (appointments) Reform in 1986 and later the 1999 Promotions (befordrans) reform (Högskoleverket, 2006: 3R).

The proposals from LÄTU (Government Bill, 1980: 3) meant that a more uniform service structure was introduced into the academic field (SFS, 1985: 702) to enable more flexible work planning where teachers and researchers could be assigned varied tasks in teaching, research, and administration. This need had, to an extent, its historical foundations in the Higher Education Act of 1977, when professional training institutes were incorporated into the higher education system. This brought a large number of non-PhD teachers into the academic field and the number of assistant lecturers expanded dramatically. However, despite the charge

of creating scientific fields and research to generate scientifically qualified lecturers in the new areas, the number of junior lecturers has not significantly decreased. Indeed, there have been temporary increases and some have become more or less permanent. One increase was in 1997. It was partly due to nursing colleges becoming incorporated into the university field. The proportion of junior lecturer posts also rose in proportion to the number of lecturer posts and this worsened after the Promotion (befordrings) Reform in 1999 when the number of professors increased through promotions from lecturer to professor.

In 1984 there were 2,000 junior lecturers without a PhD in state universities and colleges. LÄTU affected this number by incorporating several other staff groups under the designation of a junior lecturer and the number therefore rose by more than 1,000 full-year employees between 1986 and 1987. This number has, however, continued to increase, more so in some subject areas than others. As mentioned above, the increase was noticeably large when the nursing colleges were included, but a similar (if longer lasting and now really semi-permanent) situation exists in the Education subject areas, where the number of junior lecturers is much higher than the number of senior lecturers.

Academic work in teaching or research

Changes in higher education governance have led to changes in the balance between higher education and research. While market forces have encouraged universities to produce more research-minded and research-active professionals (Garrick & Rhodes, 2000), there is evidence of unequal access to the resources available and a widening of the gap between the research 'haves' and the 'have-nots' (Enders & Musselin, 2008). The combination of unequal access to funds and the fact that academics' career prospects are now largely dependent on the quality of their research activities has led to an increased division of labour between staff (Leisyte, 2007). The hierarchical nature of relationships between academics, as well as the control systems put in place in universities, reinforce the status and power of those deemed to be high-performers and exclude others (Alvesson & Spicer, 2016).

Policy developments have also put pressure on the traditional ideal of a close relationship between teaching and research (Jenkins & Healey, 2005) and the idea that all academic staff should be both teachers and researchers (Palfreyman & Tapper, 2009). Furthermore, it has been shown that staff engaged in teaching are undervalued and, in some cases, marginalized, compared with those concentrating on research (Lucas, 2006). The fact that women in higher education are a group that does more teaching and service (Misra et al., 2011) makes the gendered nature of a focus on research more apparent. Despite efforts to reduce gender inequality in European academia, figures show that the number of female researchers is still disproportionately lower at every step of the academic career ladder than the number of male researchers (European Commission, 2016).

A number of studies have addressed how changes in the balance between teaching and research are perceived by those working in higher education. In a study of higher education in Scotland, for example, Drennan (2001) found that academics did not believe that staff could move beyond a senior lecturer position, without high-profile research activity. Those responsible for the management and development of quality in learning and teaching continued to regard research as the main route for career advancement. Furthermore, the prioritization of research was reinforced by the discrepancy between large institutional awards for excellence in research and much smaller rewards for excellence in teaching.

In another study, Leisyte, Enders, and De Boer (2009) found that Dutch and English academics had a dislike for the increased separation of research and teaching, suggesting that the two spheres should be tightly coupled. The participants mentioned increased competition between teaching and research time, leading to conflicts in their work situation. Academics experienced increased levels of competition, and reported long working hours and short holidays. Changes in the institutional environment, including intra-university policies using rewards and penalties via financial incentives and staffing policies were perceived as contributing factors.

Finally, in a survey of higher education employees at three research-oriented universities in Sweden, Geschwind and Broström (2015) found that participants felt it was difficult, although not impossible, to strike an even balance between teaching and research at an individual level and in terms of time-management. Many of the respondents felt that demands on researchers were ever increasing, which strengthened the conflict between teaching and research in the daily academic schedule. Teaching for more than 10–20% of working time was seen as threatening to an academic research career, especially if the teaching had a loose connection to ongoing research. More generally, quality in research was significantly more rigorously evaluated and reviewed than quality in teaching. Research needs took priority over teaching needs and in response to external research funding, managers often delegated the bulk of teaching activities to less research-active staff, having continuity as their main priority. As such, management strategies reinforced existing patterns of division of labour between academic staff. In the context of teacher education, this is even more difficult, due to how teacher education historically has been placed, as less scientific, but also in regard to the aspects of research integration and funding (Swedish Research Council, 2019).

Tensions in Swedish teacher education

Swedish teacher education produces less research and also involves more adjunct teachers (without a PhD) than any other semi-vocational program (National University Board of Higher Education [UKÄ], 2018; Wahlström & Alvunger, 2015). This can be identified in terms of the proportion of doctoral theses and national research grants awarded to educational science research and that students

from teacher education are less likely than students from other semi-professional programs to go on to do research after their studies (Wahlström & Alvunger, 2015). The weak connections between research and teacher education has led to an alleged continued devaluation of education. Nilsson Lindström and Beach (2015) argue that critical research knowledge is not being funded, nor communicated as examined knowledge, in Swedish teacher education today.

Kallós (2009) points to the difficulties of creating a research field in the area of Swedish teacher education. Despite government intentions, Kallós argues that teacher education research funding in Sweden is characterized by massive underfunding and low levels of research and teaching cooperation between universities and university colleges. Rather than strengthening the necessary relationship between research and teaching at individual universities, as well as cooperation between universities, he also argues that government measures concentrate on increased competition for funding instead.

Teacher education in Sweden often lacks stable research environments and research education (Kallós, 2009; Lindberg, 2004). Research possibilities within the field of teacher education are increasingly restricted to a small number of universities, specifically the six more research-intensive universities in Sweden, in Gothenburg, Stockholm, Umeå, Uppsala, Lund, and Linköping (Swedish Research Council, 2019), whilst external research funds are lacking in smaller colleges (Angervall, Gustafsson, & Silfver, 2018). To reach national status and influence as a researcher, connection to one of the six relatively research-intensive universities is decisive (Swedish Research Council, 2019). External research funds, access to nationally as well as internationally influential networks are lacking in smaller colleges, although there is also room for research merit (Angervall et al., 2018). These realities highlight the added pressure on researchers to perform in universities outside the group of six if they are to keep in step with their counterparts in the more influential, high-status universities.

At the same time as there are reduced possibilities for research within Swedish teacher education, there has been a toning down of the value of pedagogical research and studies for teachers in favour of subject content knowledge and generic professional knowledge and skills (Government Bill, 2009/10: 89). New quality assurance models of organizational control place specific knowledge needs on teachers and teacher educators that are often more immediately experienced than the needs of research skills and research-based knowledge. Female-dominated areas of teacher education aimed at the teaching of younger children, for example, tend to have lower status than those areas relating to older students and in which a greater proportion of men work.

Method

The study referred to in this article uses two main approaches. By first using a policy ethnographic approach, we aim to make visible how policy discourses and

practices are brought together, negotiated, and adapted (Beach, 1995, 2013). The approach we used is also inspired by institutional ethnography (Smith, 2005). Through interviews and other documentation, institutional ethnography brings to the fore relations of power and expressions of agency, such as those which might be suggested in acts of resistance or compliance when research-promoting activities are introduced. The approach shows how people interact and interpret meaning, bringing forth patterns of behaviour, categories of identification, modes of management, as well as exercises in power.

The article is mostly based on data produced within a previous large Swedish research project called 'Gender and Career' (see Öhrn & Lundahl, 2013). This project investigated the level of interest that primarily doctoral students (late in their research studies) and junior researchers had for research and a research career. The project also investigated the opportunities and barriers connected to a research career, to career opportunities, and the strategies used to navigate the terrains in which the respondents worked. The importance of gender issues in these areas was also investigated.

The project generated a substantial amount of research insights, for example concerning the basis for gender divisions in educational sciences; why women do teaching and men research, but also insights on the implications of policy change on academic work practices. During the project, 120 interviews were conducted between 2010–2011, followed by a small sample of additional interviews conducted between 2017–2018 (10 interviews). The findings presented here are premised on the idea that the main data used is still valid even though several years old. This data has, however, been compared with more recent data, as well as with other research. We find that the data used here is still valid as a base for this kind of analysis. All the respondents were active as lecturers or assistant lecturers in six education faculties at Swedish universities.

In this specific study, interview transcriptions of 10 assistant lecturers (teachers without a PhD) and 10 lecturers (who have PhDs) have been re-read. All were employed on long-term contracts (a minimum of four years) or on permanent contracts in two different education faculties. This group was selected based on the criterion that they were heavily involved in teacher education, despite their slightly different backgrounds (as teachers and researchers). The group spent the majority of their time teaching, even though a few also participated in research studies, part time. The lecturers or senior lecturers who took part, who were qualified to carry out research, were mostly involved in teaching (in teacher education). The respondents were all women (over 80% of the total workforce in teacher education are women). The interviews were semi-structured, about 90 minutes in length, audio-taped, and transcribed. They were all carried out in Swedish by one of the authors in this study, who also did the transcriptions and preliminary analysis.

The interviews are characterized by an in-depth approach and the use of targeting questions, employing intensive questioning relating to specific aspects of policy, teacher competence, experience, and professionalism. During the interviews, several questions about research and teaching were discussed, as well

as the relationship between teaching experiences and a scientific degree. The focus was mainly on the everyday practices of lecturers and teacher educators and what, how, when, where, why, and to what extent research and teaching are part of those practices. The respondents were asked to describe important aspects for the ‘professional’ teacher in teacher education and why they were regarded important. The respondents were also encouraged to reflect on their own practices, how their practices were influenced/affected or not by the discourses, policies, and strategies they encounter regarding research and research-based teacher education, and what this means for them as teacher educators. The interviews also included questions about the teachers’ relation to research or research-based teaching and how their actions enable and constrain the practices they identify (implicitly or explicitly) as influencing their practices.

As a result of the re-readings of the interviews, which were done jointly and discussed between the authors of this paper, the following themes and issues arose; the importance of research to teacher education, the relationship between teaching and research, the importance of teaching experience, the competitive nature of research (compared to teaching), as well as how work time issues impinge on research work opportunities. Below, these themes are expanded into two main sections in order to illustrate our findings: ‘Working as a lecturer in teacher education’ and ‘Values and divisions between research and teaching.’

Working as a lecturer in teacher education

In the study, several of the lecturers had strong ideas about their need for better support in their teaching work, their priorities in teacher education, but also their status and constant lack of research funding. The importance of teacher educators, carrying out research, as well as using research as a knowledge base for their teaching was, for example, mentioned explicitly by all number of the respondents, but in slightly different ways.

Perceived priorities for teachers in teacher education

Several of the lecturers described how departmental leaders continuously expressed a growing need for employing more teachers with a PhD. The departmental leaders and programme coordinators also often mentioned the lack of research quality in teacher programmes and how having lecturers with research competence would change that. Several of the respondents also saw research as an important quality measurement. Maggie (assistant lecturer) for example, argued that ‘It is important to engage in research, not least to use that knowledge in teaching.’ Lisa (lecturer) too explained that she wanted ‘...to be a researcher: that was why I went through graduate school.’

However, another respondent, Jenny did not feel it was important to carry out research in order to further her career. She explained that

I work mostly in administrative contexts and with some assignments and so on, and strategically I need to be in those contexts. To get a permanent position in teacher education it is important to show that you are in an important role, that is needed here, and in this respect getting a PhD has never been that important to me. (Jenny, assistant lecturer)

Jenny points to the fact that for her work in teacher education it has been more important to conduct teaching and to act professionally in her teaching assignments, than to carry out research. She illustrates what many of the respondents talk about during the interviews. They express being aware of the strong interests behind keeping research and teaching apart, as if they are clearly different and unrelated.

Gwen also expresses the view that there would be a negative consequence for those who spent too much time working with teaching or administrative tasks. She explains that:

One is not successful if one engages too much in administrative work or in teaching. There is a kind of hierarchy here, that also exists throughout the academy. Research has higher status than teaching... (Gwen, assistant lecturer)

Gwen points to how different work tasks give staff a particular work identity, which is valued in different ways. According to Gwen, researchers with a PhD are positioned as more successful and therefore higher in the academic hierarchy than teachers.

Sinead refers to the importance that management attaches to her doing research but that 'expectations are very double, ambiguous really...' She went on to explain that

I have a broad position in teaching and administration, which means that I can be in several places and do many different tasks. [...] but I like to do different things and then sometimes it is too much [...] and yes, I will work weeks that are long, maybe 50-60 hours a week may be normal. (Sinead, assistant lecturer)

Sinead identifies a lack of time for research work opportunities and refers to the work task structure that is based on a division between different tasks, where research is structured in a different way than teaching and administration. When struggling to get time for research the amount of work hours risk becoming too heavy. Two other respondents, Maggie and Lisa, also point out that being engaged

in research when working in teacher education is not to be taken for granted. Often other work demands and pressures get in the way. Maggie explained that:

I am very interested in teaching, but when I see my work situation, I realize that it just does not add up. What to do then? It is important to engage in research, not least to use that knowledge in teaching, but I cannot do everything!
(Maggie, lecturer)

Lisa described her own situation as follows:

...even if I really stick hard to keep my hours for research, I have to do as much teaching I can to fill my schedule, so it sometimes becomes difficult. I am forced to work very long hours, at least 50 hours a week, because of the normal teaching load. The hours we get per course do not cover the amount of time we spend on the job. (Lisa, lecturer)

Lisa and Maggie describe a situation where heavy work responsibilities in teaching mean that they are forced to work long hours and therefore risk losing parts of their research opportunities. There is basically too little time left over for research work, due to an overload of teaching assignments. Their descriptions suggest that they seem burdened by an underestimation of the time needed for teaching assignments, and that this basically ‘eats up’ their chances of doing research.

Another respondent, Lucy, explains how her position is totally dominated by teaching:

I have a temporary appointment, which lasts six months at a time. My work is also entirely devoted to teaching, and I really have very little time to do anything else. [...] I like to teach and I think that my teaching qualifications will help me, sooner or later, to get a permanent position in teacher education. (Lucy, assistant lecturer)

In the short term, it seems as if teaching, and not research, is a way to get a permanent position at Lucy’s department. One can see also how this creates stress and frustration. Elisabeth explains something similar that the often-raised expectancies of doing more research creates worries about increased workloads. She said:

I would like to focus more on research, but there are so many things you should have time to do and are expected to solve. I have no time to work on research, it is that simple. (Elisabeth, lecturer)

Elisabeth's response reflects some of the problems that appear through multiple functions of the modern and expanded university (Archer, 2008). Others too express similar issues connected to the realities of 'mission stretch' in terms of contradictory demands and expectations.

Several of the lecturers and assistant lecturers illustrate an engagement with research and feel that research is important, in order to act professionally. Only one or two directly referred to not being in need of doing research work. However, several claim they would like to do more research, just as engaging more in their teaching work, but that there is simply no time. Their responses give an indication of the hierarchies and contradictions within teacher education, where research and teaching create conflicting expectations and demands. This mission stretch in turn seems to create competition and value confusion between groups of lecturers and assistant lecturers, which we partly think concern gender (see Angervall & Beach, 2017; Archer, 2008).

Values and divisions between research and teaching

The relationship between research work and experience-based practice was discussed as rather complex by all of the respondents. The value of professional experience was for example taken up as an important part in terms of adding quality to the job. Sara explained that

My research work is so closely tied to teacher practice, that I see it as a clear advantage to have that experience behind me, plus that I am still active in the schools out there. There is another researcher here who has an area very much close to mine, but I don't think she's been out (in school) much at all and I feel that I have a big advantage in that respect.
(Sara, lecturer)

Sara's work as a teacher educator keeps her involved in teaching practices, both within and outside of teacher education, which she thinks is good in order to update her experience.

Birgitta (assistant lecturer) too took up the importance of the 'practical' aspects of teaching for the quality of teacher education. She refers to the fact that many teacher educators with a PhD seldom have 'hands on' qualities, and wondered whether '...any of those who had a PhD in our field know the practical aspects at all.' Her response suggests that practice is seen as something different to research, and that teacher educators are either involved and experienced in more practical areas *or* in research.

Also Nina discussed the different expectations on research and teaching when saying:

There are so many teachers without a PhD who have wide experience of working in teaching. They say to me: ‘Your research, Nina, is very interesting, but has no bearing on reality. What use is it? (Nina, lecturer)

Nina’s response illustrates a kind of division between those who work as assistant lecturers without a PhD and those with it. For example, her reference to ‘reality’ seems to include ‘hands on’ experiences and insights into everyday practices that, according to Nina, those teachers with a PhD do not necessarily have. Nina’s ideas about educational research seem to be that it is conducted elsewhere and is not necessarily relevant for teacher education. This expression connects to a rather specific understanding of scientific knowledge that possibly does not include developmental research areas such as action research or ethnography. It is almost as if she points at a division, not necessarily related to specific research interests, but to a power relationship between those in or outside the classroom (see Drennan, 2001).

Others referred to what they perceived as differences between teaching and research, and especially the competitive nature of research. Rakel, for example, explains that

I have always had a lot of teaching assignments, even during my own research studies. People have been able to rely on me to take on courses and supervision even though I have been in the middle of my own research studies. That is how we always work, try to help out and share assignments [in teaching]. What I have learnt is that between research studies and teaching assignments it’s like two different worlds. In research nobody helps others out really. (Rakel, lecturer)

Veronica shares a similar view. According to her teaching work is often less competitive than research work. She explained that

Sometimes I really think that in research they should work more on collaboration, as we do in teaching. We are good at collaboration in teaching, but poor at that in research. Many even think that the kind of collaboration we have in the educational context is old-fashioned. Working in a research team means something different. (Veronica, lecturer)

Veronica, here, refers to the importance of collaboration for research quality, but also to the different rationales that tend to be involved in teaching and research

work. She suggests that teaching and research are part of and create different work cultures: one that is flatter and more collaborative, and another that is more hierarchical and competitive. This illustrates also another part of the tensions within mission stretch. Lina points to how work cultures can create power relations influencing work on a daily basis. She argues that:

The system here [in teacher education] is unclear. You don't know what to think sometimes... On the one hand, you are expected to get research merits and your PhD and if you don't you might risk losing your job, but then, on the other hand, if you work in teacher education, you are also expected to represent a kind of scepticism towards science and the academy. (Lina, lecturer)

Just like Lina, several of the respondents illustrate some of the dilemmas in expecting teachers to be hands on and 'practical', but also be active in research work and to keep up with research insights.

Teaching and research are perceived to be different spheres at times, with teacher educators belonging to one sphere or the other. We think this illustrates how the realities of mission stretch play out for staff in terms of the associated demands and expectations. Either you work heavily in teacher education and have 'hands on' experience in 'reality' or you work mostly with research and lack this experience. This means that the mission stretch risks creating or imposing on ideas about academic identity and knowledge, seldom something in-between that could be more reflective (see Whitchurch, 2013). This obviously creates problems in acting professionally, where many teacher educators are unable to fulfil the demands for research-based teacher education.

Discussion

In this article, we have addressed questions concerning the so-called mission stretch in teacher education and how it plays out for lecturers and assistant lecturers in their daily work. In particular, our aim has been to raise issues about the need for research in the teacher profession, and how that is regarded and understood by Swedish teacher educators today.

The findings illustrate that there are lecturers and assistant lecturers who understand research and practice-based teaching work as going hand in hand, as needed and fruitful. There are also those who argue for a more research-based teacher education and that this also seem to influence many of the respondents' ambitions to engage in research. However, several of the respondents described levels of confusion, which we interpret as part of the mission stretch dilemma of double expectations and demands (see Enders & Musselin, 2008). In particular, these experiences were described by the assistant lecturers. In general, the idea of

the professional teacher educator almost appeared as in a loop. Several of the teachers talked of the expressed need for more research-active staff but also about research as something in the hands of a teaching rationale with a strong time structure, closely related to administration and learning outcomes. One or two even mentioned what they see as a necessary division between research and teaching as if based on different rationales. These descriptions are similar to the paradoxes and dilemmas found in Whitchurch's (2013) study on the third space professional; where some academics express feelings of frustration and isolation. They also reflect other findings that show that the scope for academic research time generally has decreased, leading to what academics generally experience as a decline in the status of their work. (Ahlbäck Öberg et al., 2016.)

The messages about the value of teacher education research expressed by the respondents also, at least partly, match the findings of previous research showing that parts of the measures put in place, to improve teacher education, have led to more restricted views of quality and professionalism, and where teacher expertise is regarded as less and less valued and increasingly distanced from the national policymaking processes (Savage & Lingard, 2018). The descriptions given here also seem to reflect other consequences of mission stretch. Coupled with the models of organizational control put in place as a result of increased governance, we have a situation where teacher educators are less able to influence the content of their work, but at the same time also express feelings of a growing pressure and lack of work value.

However, the expressed desire to take part in research and to get involved in research education was also mentioned by almost all of the staff interviewed. Several expressed ambitions to get more involved in research, but at the same time mentioned the burdens of teaching and other responsibilities, which often hindered research participation. For a number of the respondents this leads to feelings of frustration. As the majority of the respondents in this study are women and engaged in high levels of teaching, these findings cannot be separated from issues of gender and as such reflect the findings made in previous research (Angervall & Beach, 2020). Research by Angervall and Beach (2017) has shown, for example, that women tend to spend more time on their teaching and have heavier teaching loads than men. Women are more engaged in teaching and service and in so-called 'striving environments', where teaching and service are considered 'lesser' than the domain of research (Boyer, 1990). Women often find themselves in an inferior position, given the increasing demands to both do research and at the same time maintain a high teaching load (Henderson & Kane, 1991). Finally, as Gardner (2013) has shown, higher education institutions characterized by an emphasis on teaching are more prone to mission drift than others. As women comprise the majority of the workforce in these types of institutions, the findings here strongly reflect the implications of this reality.

The replies from the lecturers and assistant lecturers also highlight the perceived importance of practical experience, especially when carrying out research. Many of the respondents also expressed ideas that there is sometimes a

gap between the practical anchoring of some research in teacher education and feelings of tension between what one of the respondents described as the 'two different worlds' of teaching and research. A number of those taking part took up issues of competition and lack of cooperation in the area of research, which they did not feel was the case in teaching. Similar themes are taken up by Wallace et al. (2018), who describe a situation where academics admitted seeking individual achievement over team accomplishment, and where work-avoidance took place in relation to some aspects of the academic job (i.e. teaching and administration), in order to create time for other areas of work, specifically research. The study suggests that such behaviour is exacerbated by positions of power and that managerial practices, and the culture of the organization were also contributing factors. These points resonate with the replies presented here; they also point to power relations and a culture of work that is based on competition and which ultimately only tends to exacerbate the already weak connections between research and teacher education.

The descriptions of daily working conditions which come across in the comments given by the respondents demonstrate the effects of a mission stretch, the processes in which growing and contradictory demands and expectations are put on the university (Enders & De Boer, 2009). The results show clear evidence of the growing demands on the university, with the respondents describing the situation where they have too much to do and as a result less time to carry out research.

As a result of the above changes, including the limited opportunities to carry out research, a perceived dichotomy seems to have been created, where the connections between teaching and research are no longer seen as self-evident. The division between assistant lecturers and lecturers illustrate this, as do the divisions between teaching and research. Opportunities to take part in research has become more and more restricted to a privileged few. The power aspects that lie behind these trends have been presented by Alvesson and Spicer (2016), who describe a situation where the hierarchical nature of relationships between academics, as well as the control systems put in place in universities, reinforce the power position of high performers. This small group have been able to transform their power into favourable conditions that enable research (such as lower teaching loads and low levels of administration.) The gap that has been created between research and teaching has created a culture of competition, and an unjust situation where many academics find themselves overburdened by teaching and administration. These trends would seem to only further weaken the connections between research and teacher education, and have even more negative consequences for the quality of Swedish teacher education.

Conclusion

This study concerns the mission stretch of teacher education, namely the growing and (partly) contradictory demands and expectations expressed in but also forming the everyday work of teacher educators. Through this ‘mission stretch’ we have been able to put focus on some of the core values, but also contradictions in teacher education, for instance related to ‘third space’, ‘knowledge’, to ‘elite’ and ‘mass’ higher education, ‘diversification’ and ‘equality’ and the ‘profession-based university’ or the ‘research university’ (Enders & Musselin, 2008; Whitchurch, 2013).

The results show that the need for a research-based teacher education is felt strongly by the participants in this study; both for the quality of teacher education generally and for their own professional development. However, at the same time the respondents express feelings of frustration due to the fact that teaching and other work responsibilities partly prevent research participation as teaching and research are perceived as two different worlds. This was particularly emphasized by assistant lecturers without a professional research(er) education. The results, hence, illustrate that a research-based teacher education cannot be taken for granted, or can be perceived differently. One group that particularly seems affected is women, and we plan to write more in the future focusing intensively on gender and profession in teacher education.

The article shows that the daily reality for teachers in teacher education appears as somewhat convoluted and does not directly match the policy rhetoric of a research-based teacher education. It also offers clues as to how the situation might be improved. We believe that a change of attitude within Swedish universities is needed. The strategic importance of teacher education needs to be fully recognized and measures and funding provided to provide the opportunities for the development of the research that is strongly desired by the respondents in this study and that is suggested by the study to be fundamentally important to professionals’ policy interpretations and enactments.

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