

Towards Research-Based Teacher Education (RBTE) in Kazakhstan

Teacher educators' perspectives

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RBTE is "grounded in
research as content,
methods, and practice"

Munthe 2019, p.1

Research purpose

- To explore how teacher education universities in Kazakhstan implement newly introduced research methods courses as an explicit curriculum unit on integrating research in teacher education.



Research questions

1. How do teacher educators understand the role of research in TE?
2. How do they organize RMCs to align with the intended role of research in TE?
3. What challenges do they encounter in teaching research?

Analytical framework



Fig. 1 Research-based learning decision-making wheel
(Brew, 2013, p. 613)

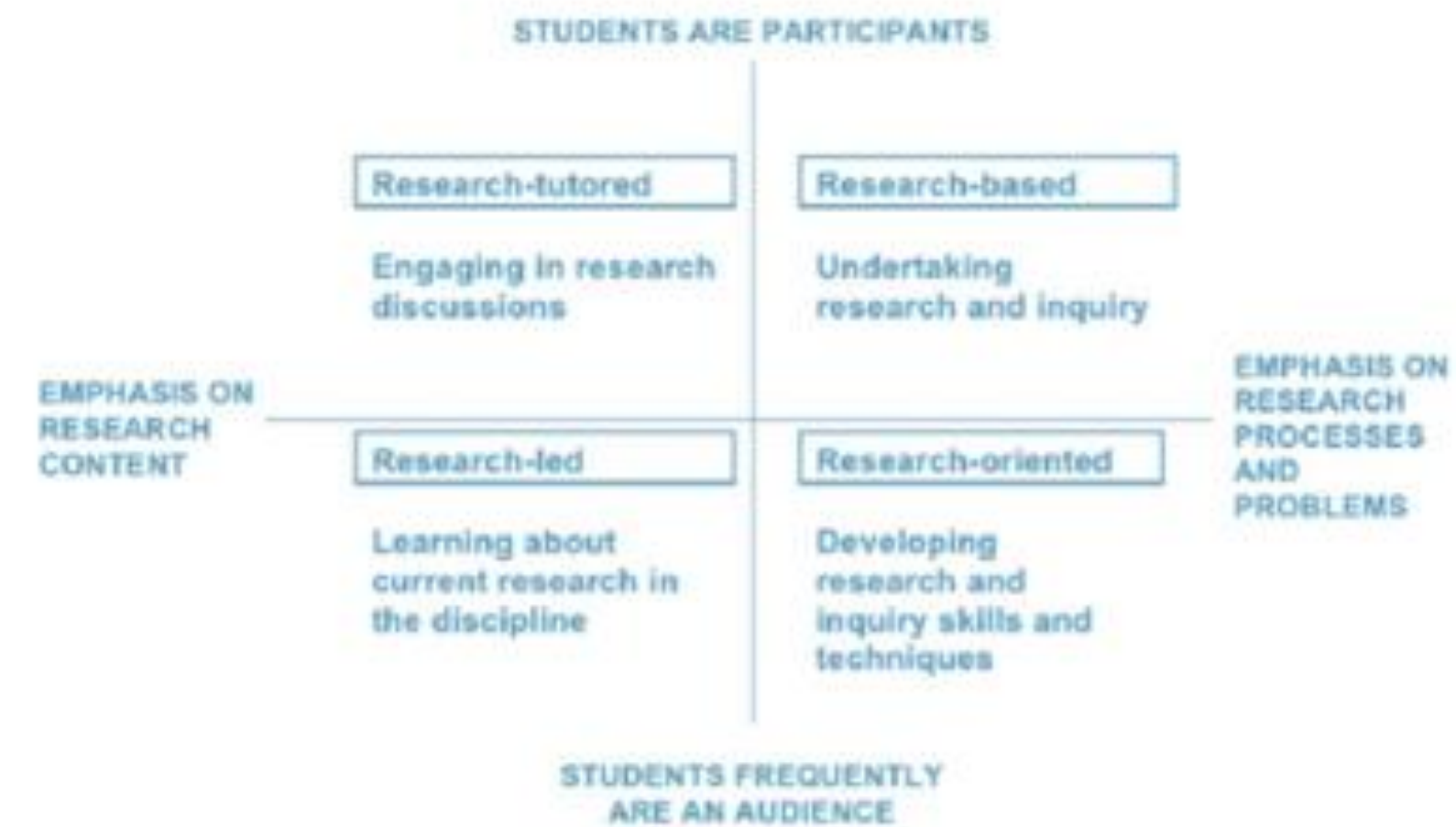


Fig. 2 The nature of undergraduate research and inquiry
(Healey & Jenkins, 2009, p.7)

Analytical framework

Understanding of research in TE

Consumers
vs.
Producers

Research
vs.
Inquiry

Tool
vs.
Stance

Methodology

Table 1. Information about the sample (n=41)

University	Location	Teacher educators	Department	
			Pedagogy	Subject
University A	Central	11	5	6
University B	East	11	1	10
University C	North	9	3	6
University D	West	10	3	7
Total		41	12	29

Findings

The role of research in TE

- For instrumental purposes
 - Research in TE programs is needed for utilitarian purposes. Today, teachers need to engage pupils in conducting research projects for various competitions. It is very difficult for them if they do not know how to do it. In such cases, they come to us for help. (P5, Uni B, Chemistry)
- For scholarly development
 - Many of them [prospective teachers] plan to teach at universities; they want to work in academia. So, they will pursue further studies and probably enroll in doctoral programs. Through research opportunities, we can equip our students with the basic skills to conduct academic research. (P1, University D, Pedagogy)
- For inquiry-based teaching
 - With the introduction of inclusive education, there has been a growing body of research on the topic. However, children with special needs are often placed in classrooms, and the teacher does not have the knowledge or strategies to work with them effectively. If the teacher is unfamiliar with the subject or has not engaged with research in this area, they may struggle to address the children's needs appropriately. (P2, University B, Languages)

Findings

Organization of methods courses

- Content vs. Process
 - We teach students how to work with major databases such as Web of Science, Scopus, or eLibrary. They learn to search for research studies and evaluate their credibility, as well as of journals based on metrics like quartiles and percentiles. They need this knowledge to do quality research. (P11, University A, Physics)
- Teacher- vs. Student-centered Teaching
 - Everything we cover in lectures they immediately apply in practice. For example, we discuss what plagiarism is, and then I say: “Alright, here is a phrase you like, but it is not yours. How can you use it in your article without it being plagiarism?” So, we learn to paraphrase and to cite. This is very important. (P1, University B, Languages)

Findings

Challenges in teaching research

- Optimization strategies & poor infrastructure
 - In the past two years, our students have not been required to write graduation theses. As a result, while we teach research, they neither see its relevance nor feel motivated to engage with it. This poses a significant challenge for research training. (P10, University B, Languages)
- Inadequate research capacity in educational research
 - I found it challenging to teach a research methods course. During my undergraduate studies, I did not write a thesis, as I had the choice between a thesis or a state exam, and I chose the exam. It was not until I worked on my master's thesis that I gained experience in conducting research. Given my limited research experience, teaching this course was difficult. (P4, University B, Languages)
- Limited university-school collaboration
 - The problem is that this course [RMC] and teacher education in general are poorly connected to real schools. In the past, we had much stronger links with schools. We engaged in joint pedagogical research and held conferences together. Today, our collaboration is sporadic. Therefore, the course is abstract in nature. It does not provide an opportunity to realize how significant research is for the teaching career. (P12, University B, Pedagogy)

Discussion

1. Teacher educators hold various views of the role of research in TE; But the instrumental understanding prevails;
2. Dichotomy between educational sciences and subject sciences raises concerns over the consistency of TE across different teacher training departments;
3. Theory-practice dichotomy leads to questions about whether research in undergraduate TE needs to prioritize the preparation of better teachers to improve education or of future researchers to advance educational scholarship;
4. Multifaceted context in which TE is embedded influences teacher educators' views on research, curricula and pedagogical decisions.

Conclusion

Although the importance of the practitioner-researcher role in the contemporary teaching profession is emphasized in Kazakhstan's policy discourse, it is relatively weakly pronounced and seems inadequately implemented in newly introduced RMCs;

The enactment of policy-driven RBTE at Kazakhstani universities appears to be decoupled from higher-level structures.

Q&A

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