

## EDITORIAL

### Learning to teach and teaching for learning: Exploring professional learning in L1 Education

This special issue on L1 Teacher Education has generated considerable enthusiasm – it represents the first issue emerging from a new Special Interest Group on L1 Teacher Education in the International Association of Mother Tongue Education. As editors, we found that the articles fall into two groups: Teacher preparation at the university (three articles) followed by teacher practices in the schools. Researchers from three regions – Europe, Australia and the Middle East – wrote the articles that highlight the international and global diversity of L1 educators and education, while nevertheless conducting reflexive dialogue about L1 teaching and learning across national boundaries.

The articles reflect a progression that begins with teacher educators of L1 and proceeds to articles on teacher education programs and processes. The final two articles take up issues centred on schools with a focus on in-service teacher education and classroom teaching of L1.

The issue opens with L1 teacher preparation in university teacher education programs. Elkad-Lehman and Greensfeld's article entitled, *Professional learning and change: The experience of literature teacher educators*, reports on an Israeli study that draws our attention to the teacher educators themselves, a rarely explored research area. Through autobiographical narratives and in-depth interviews, they traced the ways L1 teacher educators come to know their discipline and renegotiate their understanding and practices. The article has particular relevance because of the paucity of research of L1 teacher educators and the concept of a model for professional learning and development for those entering and engaging in the academic context.

*Integrating Theory and Practice: Learning to teach L1 language and literature* by van Veen and van de Ven shifts the focus toward the pre-service teachers in their teacher education program in the Netherlands. The authors seek to find a way to integrate and blend the disparate poles of such commonly held perceptions of the theory-driven university program versus the practice-based site experiences of pre-service teacher education (in L1). They also address the drive to become increasingly 'practice' based in teacher education, leaving the theorists to theorize. In their study, the authors aim to disassemble the dichotomy and reunite theory and

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practice in L1 teacher education. They explore cases for “key incidents” with their L1 pre-service teachers and use them for analysis and reflection that is deepened over time and experience. This leads to a final project where the pre-service teachers explore and theorize their own practice to establish a theoretical framework that travels with them as a starting point for further reflection and development.

Doecke and Kostogriz tackle the exposition of, and resistance to, current drives to standard-based reforms that rely on the specious evidence found in standardized test results and the ‘teaching as technician’ model that frequently results, a consequence that particularly and deleteriously redefines the work of L1 teachers. While the authors research the issue in Australia, the problem exists in many national contexts. To resist succumbing to the scripted, technical model of teaching arising out of neo-liberal ideologies, the authors invite their pre-service teachers of L1 to develop a critical perspective and practice, a journey they call “ideological becoming.” The researchers use oral and written narratives: the oral interviews conducted in focus groups take up issues that arise in their classes (and provide a space for social explorations and conversations) and from their personal literacy histories; the written narratives describe personal family histories of literacy and language acquisition. The accumulated texts provide a glimpse of the challenges and tensions of developing teaching as agency when forces around pre-service teachers of L1 mitigate against any such notions of L1 teachers as ‘transformative intellectuals’. The authors leave us with two relevant and haunting questions: How can we build on such critical insights to engage in a larger project of social reform? and, ‘Where will we be if this work is not done?’

The fourth article, *Teachers of mother-tongue education in action: Designing concept-context enriched education*, by Platteel, Hulshof and Van Driel takes us into the schools and action research with in-service, experienced, L1 teachers. The research project aims to involve teachers in developing “context-concept” enriched educational experiences in their mother-tongue education classes. The article reports on the first year of the study with 14 teachers and a researcher/facilitator as they seek to socially construct meaningful and motivational L1 classroom practices and experiences. The initial foray into action research with and by the teachers gave rise to the complexities of creating and implementing change in the schools – even with the support of the university research team and the Dutch school system itself which supported changes requiring new pedagogical approaches toward ‘requiring students to gradually take control of their own learning processes.’ Interestingly, unlike the context reported by Doecke and Kostogriz, reform movements in the Netherlands in schools seem to support the drive to enriched student learning (developing self-regulation, for instance). Nevertheless, the teachers, in this first phase of the study, find it both inspiring to work collaboratively with colleagues and challenging to find their way to making change a reality in their classrooms. The study highlights the complex contours of teacher development and learning and its complicated route to classroom practice.

In this issue, Damhuis and De Blauw contribute the only study that focuses directly on classroom practices by teachers entitled, *High quality interactions in classrooms: A Focus for Professional Learning*. They research the place and use of oral language which remains fundamental to all educational processes and learning

and yet is scantily explored in the research. As literacy becomes emphasized, they argue, oracy recedes in importance at the elementary school levels (and we would argue, at the secondary levels as well). Teachers recognize the importance of oral language for learning (and literacy) development, but it remains the neglected element in the learning process. To approach this issue, Damhuis and De Blauw created a course for teachers, which they call LIST, involving three dimensions: teacher focus groups, case studies from classrooms, creating classroom practices for meaningful oral interactions. The authors' development of a grid of oral language strategies accompanies teachers into the planning and practices. Damhuis and De Blauw actually follow these teachers into their classrooms to observe the oral language activities and demonstrate several key incidents from their research. They suggest that since their study proposes possibilities for change in patterns and processes of oral interactions (and enhanced learning), it is advisable to create larger scale studies to test these teaching and learning strategies on a grander scale and across a variety of educational school contexts.

This special issue of *L1-Educational Studies in Language and Literature* aims to bring teachers and teacher educators into dialogue about language and literature learning and teaching in schools. The authors draw our attention to the various stakeholders and gatekeepers as they lead us on a tour of this educational research domain. As editors of this special issue, we encourage you to join this critical conversation.

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Guest Editors  
Special Issue