Summary: The development of the profession and identity of teacher educators

This study is about the development of the profession of teacher educators for primary education in the Netherlands from 1779 until 2011, and the development of the identity of five individual teacher educators from different generations between 1950 and 2011. There are several studies in the Netherlands about the development of primary teacher education in which attention is given to the teacher educators. However, none of these studies have teacher educators as their main focus, and this is the case with most studies and documents that have been used for this research. The limited attention for teacher educators is surprising, as teacher educators are considered an important factor in the initial and further education of teachers, and consequently they are an important factor in the quality of primary (and secondary) education as a whole. The term 'teacher educator' is used in this study to indicate teacher educators for primary education. A broad description of teacher educators is used: teacher educators are those who are formally involved in the teaching and supervision of prospective teachers.

The study is divided into two parts. In part one the first research question is answered: 'How did the profession of teacher educators for primary education develop from 1779 onwards?' This study resulted in five chapters in which the history of the profession of teacher educators is described. In part two the second research question is answered: 'How does the professional identity of five individual teacher educators for primary education develop?' The second part of the study resulted in five professional life stories of teacher educators of different generations, the oldest participant was born in 1927 and the youngest in 1961. In the conclusion of each of these professional life stories and in the general conclusion the third research question is answered: 'How does the development of the individual professional identity of the five teacher educators relate to the development in their profession?'

This summary is divided into two parts. In the first of these, the theory, methodology and results of the study into the development of the profession of teacher educators for primary education in the Netherlands are described. In the second part the same is done for the study of the development of the professional identity of five individual teacher educators and the relation between the development of the profession and the development of the professional identity of individual teacher educators.
The development of the profession of teacher educators in the Netherlands

The first research question ‘How did the profession of teacher educators for primary education develop from 1779 onwards?’ is explored by way of a socio-historical study. The description of the development of the profession of teacher educators is based on the analysis of primary and secondary sources about the education of primary teachers and, as far as they exist, on sources about teacher educators. For the description of the most recent period, interviews were conducted with five experts. These experts have played an important role in the development of the profession of teacher educators or have knowledge about this development.

Within traditional views about professions and professionalism, medicine and law are amongst those regarded as ‘real’ or ‘full’ professions. Prestige is seen to be the most important characteristic of these ‘real’ professions, and they also measure up to other ideal-typical characteristics: monopoly, autonomy and academic knowledge. Teachers, nurses or civil servants are seen as semi-professionals, and that may be an important reason why there is little attention paid to teachers within the traditional views on professions and professionalism.

The development of a profession is often called professionalization. One way is for its members to undertake activities – like the establishment of an association, a journal or an ethical code – for the advancement of their profession. In this study, these activities are called professionalization activities. These activities do not, as was once believed, take place in a specific order. Whether they take place, how they take place and in what order, depends on the political, social and scientific context of the profession.

After World War II, the professions changed and the views about professions changed as well. Within these views, often referred to as ‘new professionalism’, the concept of expertise, next to traditional prestige, becomes important. The distinction between professions is no longer regarded as an absolute difference in quality, but as a relative difference. Vocabulary that was earlier restricted to that of the ‘real’ professions is now used for professions such as that of teacher and teacher educator. Since World War II, the monopoly of most professions has remained the same or increased, but the autonomy of many professions has diminished. The members of ‘real’ professions work in large organisations (lawyers are employed by private companies), and the impact of governments and clients increases. As expertise is regarded important for professionals, and knowledge has become readily available, the value of prestigious academic knowledge is questioned, and other forms of knowledge like experimental knowledge and practical knowledge are valued for and by professionals. These latter types of knowledge are referred to in this study as professional knowledge.

Two perspectives are used to describe the development of the profession of teacher educators. The first is that of the professionalization activities that contribute to the development of the profession. An inventory is made of these activities, and they are used to describe and understand the development of the profession of teacher edu-
cators. From this inventory, five categories were extracted: full-time work, change of name of the profession, legal protection of the profession, initial and further professional development of the professionals, and the founding of associations and journals for the professionals. The second perspective is that of the three main characteristics of professionalism: monopoly, autonomy and academic knowledge for and of teacher educators – and the struggle for jurisdiction that took place within the profession about these. Monopoly refers to the degree to which teacher educators have the (sole) right to educate teachers. Autonomy refers to the degree to which teacher educators have control over the curriculum of teacher education. Academic (and professional) knowledge refers to the existence of such knowledge bases for teacher educators, the question about who develops this knowledge, the degree to which teacher educators have access to this knowledge, and the degree to which teacher educators contribute to the development of this knowledge. The struggle for jurisdiction about monopoly, autonomy and academic (and professional) knowledge shapes the professions including that of teacher educators, and is part of the description of the development of the profession of teacher educators in this study.

Five periods can be distinguished in the development of the profession of teacher educators from 1779 onwards. The first period starts in 1779 – when the earliest ideas about a formal education of teachers are formulated – and ends with the Primary Education Act of 1857. Teacher education was not regulated and was largely a matter of private initiative. As a result there was diversity in forms of teacher education and teacher educators. During the first half of the nineteenth century, most teachers were educated in primary schools by the head of the school – who often owned the school, like a baker owned the bakery. These teacher educators (the term was not in use during this period) educated one or two so called assistants or deputy school masters (often their sons and successors), who worked in the headmaster’s school for a small salary. The head teachers prepared them in their own way and on a part-time basis for the state examination. Next to the education of teachers by the head teacher, private charity institutions founded ‘teaching schools’ (in Dutch: leer- en kwekscholen), good primary schools that were founded with the purpose of educating teachers. At these schools, a small number of teachers were educated in a more formal manner. The demands for the head teachers of the teaching schools were very high. They needed to have excellent knowledge of all primary school subjects, be excellent teachers and know how to educate teachers. In 1816, the Government founded the first teachers’ college (in Dutch: kweekschool), a professional school with the sole purpose of educating teachers. The teachers’ colleges were expensive for the Government to maintain, and during the first half of the nineteenth century only two teachers’ colleges existed in the Netherlands. The heads of the teachers’ colleges were highly regarded and very influential: they contributed through their teaching and writings to the development of quality primary education in the Netherlands. The formal requirements for the educators of teachers were the same as for teachers. Almost all of those involved in the education of teachers did so on a part-time basis;
only the heads and some teachers at the two teachers’ colleges were full-time teacher educators. Apart from the foundation of the teaching schools and teachers’ colleges, and the existence of more formal teacher educators, there were no professionalization activities in this period. The identity of the educators of teachers in the first half of the nineteenth century coincided with that of a primary (head) teacher.

The second period in the development of primary teacher education starts in 1857 and ends with the Primary Education Act of 1920. During this period, teacher education became more regulated, and three main forms of primary teacher education emerged. Firstly, the education in the primary school by the head teacher remained important, but heads of schools who wanted to educate teachers in their own schools needed permission from the inspectorate of education. Secondly, the teaching schools disappeared and, as elsewhere in Europe, normal schools (in Dutch: normaalschool; Normalschule in German and l'école normale in French) came into existence. Initially, the normal schools were closely connected to one or more primary schools, and the head teachers of these primary schools worked together to educate the new teachers. They did so part-time, before and after school hours. These relatively cheap and practical normal schools flourished during the second half of the nineteenth century. Some of the normal schools evolved and became full-time teacher training schools, and the teacher educators at these schools developed a high sense of being teachers of teachers, founding a professional association and a journal. Thirdly, the number of the more expensive and theoretical teachers’ colleges increased during the second half of the nineteenth century, and continued to play an important part in the development of primary education and teacher education.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, the variety in teacher education diminished, until in 1920 the Government decided that the teachers’ colleges would be the only form of teacher education for primary education in the Netherlands. As a consequence, the teacher educators at the teachers’ colleges became the only teacher educators. Several professional activities took place during this period. The first associations and journals of teacher educator in normal schools and teachers’ colleges were founded. From 1863 onwards, teachers in secondary education had to have a teaching licence, the so-called secondary teaching diploma, and it became more and more customary for teachers at teachers’ colleges to have such a diploma. The identity of teacher educators developed during the second half of the nineteenth century from primary teachers who were generalists and taught several, if not all, subjects (in Dutch: onderwijzer), into specialised subject teachers (in Dutch: leraar).

The third period starts with the Primary Education Act of 1920 and ends in 1968, when the Secondary Education Act entered into force. Now that the teachers’ colleges and their teacher educators had gained the exclusive right to educate primary teachers, the profession of teacher educators developed into a strong professional group within the education profession. Pedagogy developed as an academic subject at Dutch universities and became an important subject at the teachers’ colleges, where it was concerned with educational studies in general, subject studies, special education and teaching practice. During this period, several professional activities
for the development of the profession of teacher educators took place. Around 1920, several associations of teachers’ college and journals were founded for teacher educators. As was the practice at that time in the Netherlands, religious and social groups had their own associations and journals.

From 1920 onwards, private institutions were founded where primary teachers studied for the examinations for the secondary teaching diploma; before this, teachers had had to study individually with the help of books or private teachers for these examinations. Private institutions sometimes linked to universities, concerned with the study of education and Pedagogy, founded courses for teacher educators to study for a teaching diploma in Pedagogy – a study that was purely theoretical and had little focus on the work of teachers. Nevertheless, these courses were the first which were specifically meant for teacher educators. Tens of thousands of primary teachers (and others) studied for the secondary teaching diploma, and moved from being primary teachers to being secondary teachers and teacher educators. This increased their income as well as their status. The secondary teaching diplomas were highly regarded by teachers and head teachers, but they were professional and not academic studies. During this period the work of teacher educators became a regular and full-time educational profession.

The Teachers’ College Act of 1953 regulated the curriculum of teachers’ colleges, aiming at a curriculum that prepared students for their work as primary school teachers (Pedagogy), and regulated the practice of students in primary schools (supervised by the Pedagogy teachers). The work of all teacher educators at the teachers’ colleges became less focused on general education and more focused on the work of teachers. To prepare the teachers at the teachers’ colleges for the ‘new’ teachers’ colleges, as they were often called, the so called Pedagogical Centres – specialised institutes for the professional development of teachers – undertook the first professional activities (conferences, study days, written documentation) specifically for teacher educators.

Two identities for teacher educators existed from 1920 to 1968: the identity of subject teacher, who taught mainly the subject knowledge that was seen as important knowledge of teachers, and the identity of Pedagogy teacher, who taught Pedagogy and subject Pedagogy (mainly reading, writing and arithmetic), and also supervised the teaching practice of the student teachers.

The fourth period started in 1968 with the Secondary Education Act, by which both secondary and higher professional education was regulated and ended in 1984 with the Act on Education of Primary Teachers. The name of the teachers’ colleges changed to Pedagogical Academy (in Dutch: pedagogische academie, usually abbreviated to PA). In the law of 1968 the PA became part of higher professional education. This change of names indicated the ambition of the teachers’ colleges to become more academic (with content and methodology fit for Higher Education) and more professional – which was highlighted by the word pedagogical, that is to say more focussed on the work of primary teachers. The PA was part of higher professional education from 1968 onwards, but the actual move into higher professional education
took place after 1986. From 1968 onwards, new ideas about education and teacher education were developed at the universities by academics, and transferred into professional knowledge by the same academics and by staff members in the Pedagogical Centres. Based on development in the US, Competence-Based Teacher Education became dominant, and there was a focus on new methodologies to educate teachers and for the supervision of teaching practice.

This period is also characterized by the preparation for the new teacher education academies that were established in 1984. For these new academies, the PAs had to merge with the training schools for kindergarten teachers to be able to educate teachers for children from the age of 4 to 12 years old. The term for the merged institutions was ‘pedagogical academy for basic education’ (in Dutch: pedagogische academie basisonderwijs, PABO). The macro-curriculum of the PABO was developed by several committees and working groups over a period of more than fifteen years and enforced by law in 1984. Teacher educators played a limited part in the development of this macro-curriculum. To prepare for the PABO, the ministry of education funded the Pedagogical Centres to support the transition from PA to PABO. During this process, the existent associations of teacher educators and their journals – founded and owned by the profession – disappeared and a new journal – owned by the Pedagogical Centres, with the title ID Journal for Teacher Educators came into existence (in Dutch: ID Tijdschrift voor Lerarenopleiders). ID was the abbreviation of Informatie- en Documentatievoorziening, which means in English: Information and documentation provision). Alongside the journal, many books and documents for teacher educators about Pedagogy (teaching), subject methodology (in Dutch: vakdidactiek), supervision of teaching practice and curriculum development for teacher educators were published and distributed among the new PABOs.

The identity of teacher educators from 1968 to 1984 is characterised by a weakening of the former two strong identities of subject teacher and Pedagogy teacher. Pedagogy teachers were influenced by the educational sciences that emerged during this period, while subject teachers focussed more and more on subject pedagogy and took over part of the former tasks of the Pedagogy teachers. During this period, the term teacher educator came into use for teachers at the PA.

The last period that is described in this study runs from 1984 to 2011. In 1984 the new PABO came into existence. At the same time the move into higher education which had taken place in 1968 became noticeable because the PABOs, and many other professional training institutes, merged into large higher education institutes (HEIs, in Dutch: Hogescholen). The process of the merger of the PA and training schools for kindergarten teachers, the introduction of the new curriculum for the PABO and the move into HEIs weakened the new PABOs. The number of students decreased and many teacher educators lost their motivation. To counter this development and to improve the quality of the PABOs, and teacher education for secondary education, the Dutch government initiated nation wide, large and top down innovation projects. The many documents of that period show the influence of the ideas that were characteristic of what we before have called new professionalism. The
expanding HEI’s planned their own educational improvement schemes and as a result competence based education, client centred education and practice based education became part of the curriculum of the PABOs.

Practice based education (formerly referred to as pedagogical or professional teacher education) became increasingly important after 1984. Based on initiatives in the UK and the US partnerships between schools and PABOs were and are implemented with the financial support of the government. Primary teachers who take part in the supervision, formal education and assessment of student teachers are more and more recognized as teacher educators – they have, for example, their own professional standard.

In 2004 the first academic PABOs are founded in The Netherlands – an important professionalization activity for the profession of teachers. The student teachers at the academic PABO receive an academic and a professional bachelor diploma and the teacher educators at the academic PABOs are both the regular PABO teacher educators and university teachers.

After 1984 different kind of teacher educators with different identities come into existence: the ‘regular’ PABO teacher educators, the school-based teacher educators and the academic teacher educators. Whether the university teachers acknowledge their identity as teacher educators is still a question.

More professionalization activities than in the former periods took place, not only for the PABO teacher educators, but also for teacher educators for secondary and vocational education, like the foundation of the Dutch Association of Teacher Educators (in Dutch: Vereniging Lerarenopleiders Nederland, VELON) and of the VELON Journal of Teacher Educators. The VELON, together with staff of university teacher education institutes, developed a professional standard for teacher educators, a register for teacher educators and the so-called knowledge base for teacher educators. In line with the changing ideas about professions these instruments are not so much intended for the improvement of the status of the profession of teacher educations, but more so for the professional development of teacher education – for the improvement of their expertise.

The monopoly of teacher educators (the sole right to educate primary teachers) increases form 1900 onwards. In 1923 the teachers’ colleges receive the right to examine their students, the so-called jus promovendi. In 1984 the state exam (that existed form 1806) is abolished and from that time on teacher educators have full monopoly over the education and examination of future primary teachers. However, this position is under attack because the education of teachers increasingly takes place within the context of the primary schools and school teachers not only supervise the practice of the student teachers, but are also involved in the teaching and assessment of their future colleagues.

Throughout the history of primary teacher education representatives of religious, social and political groups try to influence the macro curriculum for primary teacher education. From 1806 onwards the autonomy of teacher educators is limited as the
government prescribes the exams of teachers and from 1920 onwards also the contents of the macro curriculum. The government steers teacher education by means of laws, subsidies and numerous documents. The government supported and supports the development of common curricula for teacher education, standards for teachers and the development of the contents of subjects like language, mathematics and history for primary teacher education.

Until World War II no professional, let alone academic knowledge, was developed for teacher educators. All attention goes to the development of the improvement of the profession and education of primary teachers. Teacher educators contributed to the professional knowledge of primary teachers and student teachers by publishing books and teaching methods for primary education and teacher education (in all its forms). It is only after the teachers’ colleges have developed into strong schools with a more professional curriculum that the need rose for more specific knowledge for teacher educators. Around 1950 the Pedagogical Centres organised study days that aimed at the professional development of the teacher educators, especially the Pedagogy teachers. During this period the first documents with professional knowledge about the work of teacher educators were published, among others about ‘pedagogy about pedagogy’.

The first academic knowledge about the education of teachers came into existence after 1968. Educational scientists (in Dutch: onderwijskundigen) and staff of the Pedagogical Centres, often together, developed academic knowledge and transferred this knowledge into accessible professional knowledge for teacher educators that was often published in professional articles and books and distributed among the PAs and PABOs. After 1984 the influence of the educational scientists and staff of the Pedagogical Centres diminished and their place was taken by teacher educators and researchers of university teacher education institutes. They developed and still develop academic and professional knowledge for teacher educators and make this knowledge accessible for (other) teacher educators in, for example, the Journal for Teacher Educators. After 1990 the first articles about teacher educators and their professional development – written by Dutch researchers and teacher educators – emerge and are published in academic and professional articles and books. This is an indication that teacher educators are recognized as a specific professional group within the education profession. It is only during the last decade that teacher educators for primary education are involved in academic and practice based research and contribute to the professional and academic knowledge base of their profession.

The development of the identity of five individual teacher educators and the relation to the development of the profession

The theory that is the basis of the second study relates to the professional identity of teachers, the development of identity in context, the transition of teacher to teacher educator and the development of the specific identity of teacher educators.
Most teacher educators have developed an initial identity as first order teachers; they worked in the context of a primary school where they were teaching their subject to their students. As teacher educators they work in the context of teacher education in higher education and they may develop identities as teacher in higher education, researcher or second order practitioner. The latter means that the teacher educator is a teacher of teachers and is able to provide education about education. This second study can be characterized as an empirical research into the development of the professional identity of five teacher educators, making use of the biographical method. Interviews were held with five teacher educators from different generations, which were gradually transferred into professional life stories. The participants who were interviewed differ in age: the oldest participant was born in 1927 and the youngest in 1966. As far as possible with a limited number of participants, we strived to differences in gender, region and denomination of the HEIs where the participants worked, or still work as teacher educators. All participants were primary teacher, studied for a teaching diploma for secondary education and worked or still work at a teachers’ college, PA or PABO.

The professional life stories give insight in how the teacher educators decided to become teachers, their studies and work as a teacher, their study and other activities to become a teacher educator, their initial years as teacher educator and their further professional development. The professional life stories show that the interviewed educators develop professional identities that fit their individual abilities, their personalities and the context of the period in which they work. The identity or identities they develop are those that are available in a certain period. The two youngest teacher educators, for example, acquire an identity as researcher, which is not available for the three oldest teacher educators. The identity of the teacher educators is visible not only by what they teach, but also in the use of language that reflects the predominant views about teaching teachers in a given period. It is therefore not possible to separate the development of the individual identity of the five teacher educators from the development of the profession of teacher educators. As an example we describe in this summary how the teacher educators think about themselves as teacher educators – and the words they use to indicate themselves.

Pete, born in 1927, worked from 1959 to 1984 at a teachers’ college and PA. Although he developed somewhat an identity as subject methodology teacher after 1968 – with an interest in reading and second language education – he sees himself primarily as a teacher of Dutch at the teachers’ college’ (in Dutch: leraar Nederlands aan de kweekschool). Thom, born in 1942, worked as teacher education at the PA and PABO from 1974 to 2003. He calls himself Pedagogy teacher (in Dutch: pedagogiekleraar) and this remains his main identity throughout his career. Thom played an important role in the innovation of his PABO. Bram was born in 1950 and worked at the PA and PABO from 1975 to 2007. He started as a subject history teacher and worked ten years as vice-head and head of the PABO. In these last positions he experienced from close by the difficulties that were the result of the mergers between the training schools for kindergartner teachers and PAs. Bram also experienced the change from being a
teacher at an independent PA to being a teacher at a PABO which is a part of a HEI and has to adapt to the educational rules and regulations of the HEI. According to Bram, the autonomy of teacher educators is limited by this. Bram calls himself lecturer at the HEI (in Dutch: docent aan de hogeschool) and history lecturer at the PABO (in Dutch: docent geschiedenis aan de pabo). Hilde started working at the PABO in 1984, and still works there, as a teacher educator in mother tongue education. Hilde, born in 1958, calls herself educator (in Dutch: opleidingsdocent), researcher and language teacher (in Dutch: taaldocent). Of the five teacher educators she developed the strongest identity as a teacher educator in the sense of second-order teacher. In addition, she developed – and is still developing – additional identities as a language teacher, in-service trainer and researcher. Hilde welcomes the fact that the courses in teacher education are increasingly developed in teams of teacher educators, because to her this improves the quality of teacher education. The youngest teacher educator in this study, born in 1961, is Inez, who is still working at the PABO where she started in 1991 as a music teacher. Inez’s main identity is that of musician: she plays the organ and violin and performs as a singer. She emphasizes that she mainly works at the PABO to have a regular income, but she is nevertheless dedicated to her work as teacher educator and takes up many task within the organisation. For four years she worked as a researcher. She is involved in projects with primary schools about cultural education. Inez calls herself educator (in Dutch: opleidingsdocent) and lecturer cultural education (in Dutch: docent cultuureducatie). Inez regrets that many courses are now developed by teams of teacher educators. This means she has less say about the contents of the courses and she regards this as a loss of autonomy.

As described in the professional life stories the development of the teacher educators is a different process for each teacher educator, but there are also similarities between them. None of the teacher educators was formally supervised during the first years of working as a teacher educator. The five teacher educators all have a long transition period. During their first years as a teacher educator they are busy with learning to teach their subject – Dutch, pedagogy, history and cultural education – and only after at least five years they focus on teaching subject methodology or preparing students for their later profession. Their further professional development as teacher educators is almost entirely their own initiative. It is sometimes supported by their managers, but never initiated by their managers. None of the teacher educators was or is a member of VELON. Some of them are members of associations of teachers for their subject. Hilde is a member of an association of teacher educations mother tongue education and Dutch as a second language at the PABO. None of the teacher educators registered as a teacher educator.

This study is the first Dutch and international research on the development of the profession of teacher educators and the development of their identity. It covers more than two centuries of history, each period can be further developed, every aspect of the professionalization deeper investigated. This applies to all periods, but especially for the period after 1984, when so much more going on in the professionalization of the profession of teacher educator than ever before. Four aspects emerge which re-
quire further investigation: the development of the profession and the identity of teacher educators in journals for teacher educators through the centuries, the development of the profession and the identity of teacher educators for secondary education, a comparison of Dutch development of the profession and the identity of teacher educators with those of teacher educators abroad and the way recent developments within the PABO influence the development of the profession of teacher educators, their identity and their professional development.

Finally, three practical recommendations for the further development of the profession and the identity of teacher educators can be made. The first is the foundation of an expert centre for teacher educators. This centre has two important tasks. The first is the harmonization and coordination of the professional development of novice and experienced teacher educators. The second is stimulating and coordinating professional and academic research for, about and by teacher educators. The second recommendation is to increase the autonomy of teacher educators by strengthening the influence of the (cooperating) teacher education institutions on teacher education policy. The third and final recommendation connects to recent intentions of the Dutch government that all lecturers in Higher education, and also teacher educators, have a master or PhD degree. It is important that teacher educators do not just undertake research about their initial subject, but involve in study and research that cover themes that are specific to the work of teacher educators and the professional development of teacher educators.