

INTRODUCTION: TEACHER RESEARCH LITERACY AND TEACHER VOICES IN A NORDIC-BALTIC PROFESSIONAL LEARNING NETWORK

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This project was initiated in 2022 as part of Aslı Lidice Göktürk Sağlam's postdoctoral research at South-Eastern Norway (USN), under the mentorship of Kenan Dikilitaş and in collaboration with Dina Tsagari. Kenan and Aslı have been collaborating since 2016 through their initiative, *Classroom-Based Research for Professional Development* within the TESOL's Electronic Village Online, where they designed online teacher education courses. When both relocated to Norway, their goal was to adapt these ideas to the Nordic-Baltic context by creating opportunities for teachers in the region to develop their skills as teacher-researchers and disseminate their work through publications. Their work included recruiting schools willing to engage their teachers in the project and providing them with long-term training on how to conduct classroom-based research. This training involved three in-person, two-day workshop sessions: the first at Oslo Metropolitan University (OsloMet), the second in Drammen Upper-Secondary School, and the final at the University of South-East Norway (USN) campus.

Part I of this volume presents chapters developed from visits to Nordic-Baltic partner higher education institutions' research methods courses for pre-service teachers. During these visits, partners participated in observation and reflection sessions, offering written feedback to host universities: feedback that shaped the development of these chapters. Part II draws on the intensive training workshops held at OsloMet, Lier Upper-Secondary School, and the USN campus in Drammen with teachers, spanning 6 days in total. Delivered by Kenan Dikilitaş

and Aslı Lidice Göktürk Sağlam, these sessions supported participating teachers in understanding the practicalities of classroom-based research: designing research, identifying key issues, problematising teaching practices, and developing tools for data collection and analysis. Teacher participants were also guided in interpreting their findings and reflecting critically on their pedagogical approaches. This process lasted several months and was supported by sustained mentoring and collaboration with colleagues from partner universities. Part III features reflections from school leaders, providing administrative perspectives on how they understood and supported their teachers' engagement in research. This handbook represents the culmination of a sustained and collaborative effort.

All contributors received guidance, support, and encouragement throughout the process of developing their chapters based on their participation in pedagogical activities such as reflection, observation, classroom research workshops, and mentoring during the writing process. The resulting chapters in this volume are not only products of a well-structured programme but also illustrations of teacher educators and teachers actively engaging with research as a form of professional development.

This handbook is a timely response to evolving teacher development paradigms that position teachers as the practical knowledge producers and critical inquirers into their teaching practices. This movement has also encouraged teachers to undertake new roles that helped cultivate multiple identities, including being researchers of their practices along with their teacher identity. Teachers are engaged in being at the centre of their own development and increasingly called upon to act as reflective practitioners, critical thinkers, agents of change, and pedagogical innovators within their classrooms. At the heart of this transformation lies their ability to develop research literacy – a competency that empowers them to engage with, critically evaluate, and apply research to their practice. This handbook responds to the pressing need to explore how research literacy is cultivated, enacted, and sustained among teachers in the Nordic and Baltic regions, where education systems are renowned for their equity and quality yet may face unique challenges in preparing teachers to address the complex issues and questions arising in their classrooms. Over the past decade, calls for teacher education programmes that develop teachers' research literacy have intensified globally. The introduction of the Bologna Process – an initiative to harmonise higher education across Europe – along with advocacy from international organisations such as the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), has placed significant pressure on universities to

align their curricula with research-informed practices. Indeed, higher education institutions are increasingly expected to bridge the gap between teaching and research, positioning research literacy as a foundational pillar of teachers' developmental process. A robust body of recent scholarship underscores this shift, with research-based teacher education now representing a central tenet of academic discourse (Darling-Hammond, 2017). However, scholars and policymakers continue to grapple with two pivotal questions:

- 1) Why do teachers need to become research literate?
- 2) How can teacher education programmes be redesigned and implemented in a way that supports such teacher research (TR) literacy development?

The answers to these questions are multifaceted. First, global competitiveness necessitates the cultivation of 21st-century skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving, and adaptability (Greiff et al., 2014). Teachers equipped with research literacy are better positioned to innovate curricula, respond to shifting student needs, and transition from passive knowledge recipients to active knowledge creators (Niemi & Nevgi, 2014). Research-literate teachers can autonomously integrate theory and practice, grounding pedagogical decisions in evidence while remaining responsive to classroom realities (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009; Zeichner, 2010). Studies by Parkison (2009) and Dunn et al. (2019) demonstrate that research-based teacher education fosters lifelong professional learning, thereby enabling teachers to recognise emerging student needs and adapt their teaching practices accordingly. Despite the benefits of research-focused teacher education, its implementation remains uneven across geopolitical contexts. Studies reveal that in many regions, from upper-secondary schools to tertiary institutions, teacher research has yet to become a widespread practice (Bai & Hudson, 2010; Borg & Liu, 2013). A synthesis of barriers identified across diverse educational systems highlights four critical challenges:

- 1) Teachers often operate in isolation, without access to collaborative networks or a sense of community in their research endeavours (Curtis & Uştuk, 2024; Dikilitaş et al., 2022; Dikilitaş & Göktürk Sağlam, 2023; Göktürk Sağlam & Dikilitaş, 2020). This stifles innovation and limits opportunities for peer feedback.
- 2) Many teachers report low confidence (Wyatt & Dikilitaş, 2016) in their ability to design or execute research, often due to inadequate training in methodologies or data analysis (Yuan et al., 2016; Zuo & Yang, 2019).

- 3) Research engagement is frequently driven by external pressures, such as institutional mandates or performance metrics, rather than intrinsic interest (Peng & Gao, 2019). In contexts like China and Vietnam, where research productivity is increasingly tied to career advancement, teachers exhibit mixed motivations, with extrinsic incentives often overshadowing genuine curiosity (Bao & Feng, 2023; Bao et al., 2024).
- 4) Teachers undertake and perform multiple roles, including teacher, mentor, and administrator, leading to tensions between their identity as practitioners and emerging expectations to act as researchers (Barkhuizen, 2021; Eryılmaz & Dikilitaş, 2023; Nana & Jing, 2017). These barriers are not merely logistical; they reflect systemic inequities and cultural attitudes toward teacher professionalism.

These challenges highlight the need for systematic support mechanisms, including TR communities, continuous TR mentoring, and institutional incentives, such as dedicated time, recognition badges, and promotion pathways for research engagement.

The “how” of research-based teacher education has been explored in certain national contexts, with studies emphasising that student teachers must actively participate in research processes to develop analytical and reflective competencies (Cochran-Smith & Fries, 2005; Jyrhämä et al., 2008; Munthe & Rogne, 2015). This engagement involves immersing prospective teachers in scientific methodologies and developing critical interaction with research literature (van Ingen & Ariew, 2015). As Griffiths (2004) argues, research-based teacher education cultivates a style of thinking and acting rooted in empirical inquiry. However, as Dobber et al. (2012) caution, such efforts only bear fruit when inquiry is purposeful, deliberate, and reflective – embedded within programmes that treat teaching as an ongoing, research-informed practice. Despite this growing consensus on its value, debates persist about the implementation of research-based teacher education. Moreover, few studies offer granular insights into how specific research activities are designed, executed, or evaluated within teacher education programmes. This handbook addresses the gap by presenting explorations of research-based course design and teacher reflections, with a particular focus on the Nordic-Baltic context. It represents the culmination of the two-year *Teacher Research Literacy (TREL): Comparative Trajectories in the Nordic-Baltic Region* project, funded by the Nordplus Horizontal programme.

The TREL Project aimed to develop a collaborative network that explored research engagement in teacher education programmes and provided insights on how in-service teachers can integrate research into their teaching. An integral aim was to promote professional development by strengthening teachers' research literacy: the knowledge and skills required for conducting research in both pre-service and in-service contexts. Within this professional learning network, participants engaged in collaborative and reflective dialogue concerning the application of research knowledge acquired at university to school-based situations, generating critical inquiry, reflection, and continuous professional learning. University partners supported this process by delivering in-service teacher education workshops and mentoring school-based partners in conducting classroom-based research to explore and strengthen their practice.

The TREL project aimed to enhance collaboration between schools and universities across the Nordic and Baltic regions, promoting teacher-initiated research in schools and the systematic incorporation of research into teaching practices. To create a multidimensional impact on teacher education, the TREL network focused on three key levels:

Participant Level: Enhancing how teachers and develop both practical and theoretical insights into research-based learning and teaching.

Organisational Level: Supporting schools and higher education institutions in integrating practical pedagogical research into teaching and learning processes.

Regional Level: Contributing to research-based educational strategies aligned with the mandates of ministries of education in the Nordic-Baltic regions.

Spanning six countries – Norway, Sweden, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, and Finland – the TREL initiative united universities and upper-secondary schools to investigate how research literacy is taught to future teachers and how practicing teachers can harness research to understand and address classroom dynamics. By juxtaposing pre-service training in university programmes with in-service experiences in Norwegian upper-secondary schools, the project offers a unique comparative lens into the trajectories of research literacy development across the Nordic-Baltic region.

The Nordic and Baltic countries provide a compelling backdrop for the study of teacher research literacy development in teacher education. Renowned for progressive education systems that prioritise equity and student autonomy, these nations have also embraced research-based teacher education as a policy

imperative. In Norway, for instance, the Higher Education Act (2005) and subsequent white papers (Ministry of Education and Research, 2007–2009; 2012–2013) mandate that teacher education programmes be “profession-oriented, integrated, and research-based”. The 2010 national teacher education curriculum codified these principles by requiring student teachers to do the following: engage with national and international research relevant to teaching; plan and reflect on teaching using research and experience-based knowledge; assess school practices and contribute to the ethical and pedagogical development of the profession; and develop systemic competencies to address future educational challenges (Ministry of Education and Research, 2010).

In Sweden, the Education Act requires that all education be grounded in “scientific principles and proven experience” (Swedish Government, 2010, p. 5), a mandate with long-term implications for both in-service teachers and teacher education programmes. Teacher education is defined as an “academic vocational education” (Swedish Government, 2008) and must be research-based. Student teachers should be provided with opportunities to learn from the latest educational research, be taught by educators who are active researchers, and develop academic and research literacy. This includes consuming original research to understand scientific methods, posing relevant and critical questions, and independently conducting research within the profession. Sweden’s national structure plan for school professional development (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2024) reinforces this priority, emphasising that practice-based research and participation in research and development projects should be integral to teachers’ competence development. Additionally, it specifies that school leaders play a crucial role in initiating and creating conditions for teachers and preschool teachers to engage in research.

Similar reforms have unfolded across the Baltic states. In Lithuania, the Ministry of Education, Science, and Sport, along with the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education, mandates that all undergraduate teacher education programmes develop research skills. Future teachers must apply educational research, analyse literature, design and conduct studies, and use findings to address educational challenges. In Estonia, teacher education also emphasises the importance of research engagement. The Estonian teachers’ professional standard, adopted in 2005, defines teachers as reflective practitioners and lifelong learners (Pedaste et al., 2019).

This handbook is designed to support teachers in developing TR literacy by offering an accessible approach to TR. It brings together contributions from teachers, school leaders, and teacher educators across the Nordic-Baltic region, providing a comprehensive resource for all stakeholders in the field of teacher education. Our handbook is organised into three parts:

- 1) Teacher Research Education at Universities
- 2) Teachers' Voices: Teacher Research and Reflections at Schools
- 3) School Leaders' Perspectives of Teacher Research

The first part, Teacher Research Education at Universities, consists of five chapters, each representing a different country from the Nordic and Baltic regions involved in the TREL project. These chapters function as case studies from universities in the participating countries, examining teacher education programmes and strategies for developing research literacy among teachers. Alongside programme analysis, each chapter includes observations and reflections from TREL partners who attended the featured courses. This part aims to provide detailed, first-hand accounts of how research literacy development takes place within universities across the region, emphasising approaches that prepare pre-service teachers to engage with research and apply it effectively in their future classrooms. The second part shifts the focus to reflections by in-service teachers on projects conducted in collaboration with university faculty from the TREL project. It highlights how upper-secondary school teachers, partnering with academics, can apply and critically reflect on research-based practices in their teaching. In this part, teachers describe their own research experiences and offer reflections on them in their own voices. The third part offers further professional perspectives from school administrators, who provide observations and reflections on teacher research literacy and its broader significance for professional development and educational outcomes.

School teachers' perspectives focus on classroom-based research cases that detail teachers' experiences integrating research into teaching practice. These personal and independent accounts illustrate how teachers identified classroom challenges, conducted research, and applied findings to enhance student learning. The teacher reports include details on classroom contexts, student demographics, subject-specific research topics, teachers' motivation for exploring these issues, and reflections on professional development outcomes.

School leaders' personal perspectives are based on case studies and interviews that illustrate how they fostered professional development and research engagement among teaching staff. These chapters provide insights into school-wide professional development strategies, support structures, and the impact of teacher research on institutional practices. They highlight strategies for fostering reflective culture in schools, professional development initiatives, and understanding the long-term impact on school policies. The following parts offer a more detailed description of each part and its chapters.

Part 1: Teacher Research Literacy in Education at Universities

This part examines how research literacy is woven into university-level teacher education programmes. Case studies from Nordic and Baltic universities reveal both commonalities and distinctive approaches to integrating research into teacher preparation.

Chapter 1 examines the integration of research literacy within teacher education at OsloMet, situated within Norway's national framework. Following the 2017 reform, Norway's teacher education system emphasises research literacy as a core competency, defined as the ability to "find, understand, assess, use, and contribute to research." The five-year integrated master's programme embeds a research and development (R&D) pillar across its curriculum, progressing from foundational academic writing and practicum observation in the early years to advanced methodology courses and a master's thesis. Despite policy mandates, challenges persist, including fragmentation between theoretical and practical knowledge domains and varying understandings of research literacy among educators.

The chapter presents two case studies. Case 1 examines a second-year English module for novice researchers, where students undertake a small-scale research project supported by workshops on proposal writing, literature reviews, and data analysis. Case 2 explores a fifth-year English module preparing students for their MA thesis. Here, advanced research literacy is cultivated through empirical research tasks, methodological distinctions (qualitative/quantitative), and student-led seminars. The module emphasises ownership, critical reflection, and alignment with broader academic practices. The chapter illustrates a developmental approach: early stages prioritise low-stakes, scaffolded tasks to build confidence, while later stages demand independent accountability. Challenges include reconciling student-centred pedagogy with research

community expectations, such as allowing novices to adjust research questions versus enforcing rigid methodologies. Additionally, fostering coherence between research and teaching identities remains contentious, as students may view research as peripheral to classroom practice.

Chapter 2 examines Sweden's teacher education system, shaped by a national teacher shortage and policy mandates promoting research-based practice that aim to bridge academic rigor with classroom relevance. This chapter investigates research literacy development at Malmö University (MAU) and the University of Gothenburg (GU), highlighting pedagogical strategies and systemic challenges. At MAU, the fourth-year course, Sociolinguistics and Intercultural Communication, prepares upper-secondary teacher candidates for their MA thesis through an annotated bibliography workshop. Students formulate research questions, analyse empirical articles, and engage with international databases. Scaffolded tasks, such as a structured annotation table, support critical analysis and methodological awareness.

At GU, the penultimate course for lower-secondary teachers (L9K81A) combines lectures on educational research methods with hands-on qualitative (interview) and quantitative (survey) workshops. Both cases underscore Sweden's commitment to embedding research literacy within teacher education: in these cases, MAU emphasises academic writing, while GU prioritises methodological rigor, thereby reflecting strategies to balance theoretical and practical demands. However, systemic barriers include restricted school access to research databases, which limits direct classroom application, and student workloads coupled with optional workshop attendance, which hinders consistent engagement. Additionally, tensions remain between cultivating research identities and addressing immediate classroom needs.

Chapter 3 examines Lithuania's teacher education system, which offers multiple pathways to teacher certification, including undergraduate pedagogy degrees, supplementary modules, non-degree programmes, and prior learning recognition. Integration of research literacy varies across several routes: degree programmes emphasise research skills such as problem identification and methodology design, while non-degree programmes focus on practical competencies, with limited research training often confined to final projects. Although national policy prioritises research-based pedagogy, challenges persist, including teachers' limited data analysis skills and a perception of research as separate from classroom practice. This chapter focuses on a one-year, 60 ECTS teacher

qualification programme offered by a Lithuanian university as a case study. The programme, designed for bachelor's degree holders seeking teaching credentials, blends pedagogy courses with a mandatory internship. A central component is an action research (AR) project addressing classroom challenges, divided into two phases: research design (fall semester) and implementation and reporting (spring semester). The AR assignment aims to cultivate reflective practitioners who apply research to improve teaching practice. The chapter underscores the persistent tension in Lithuania between practical teacher training and the cultivation of research literacy. Action research is championed as a bridge between policy and practice, thus enabling teachers to investigate classroom issues while aligning with policy goals. However, systemic barriers – such as the limited scope of non-degree programmes and limited legislative support for research competencies – highlight the need for curricular reforms. The case illustrates the iterative process of aligning teacher education with national priorities, emphasising the role of reflective practice and the ongoing need to integrate research literacy into all pathways of teacher preparation.

Chapter 4 presents a case study related to Estonia's teacher education system, which emphasises research literacy as a cornerstone of professional practice, integrating evidence-based approaches into policy and pedagogy. Governed by regulations such as the *Requirements for Teacher Training* (2023), educators must complete rigorous academic and practical training, including supervised internships and a certification examination assessing pedagogical and research competencies. Teacher education programmes at Tallinn University and the University of Tartu blend subject mastery with research methods courses, thereby preparing educators to critically engage with research, conduct action studies, and analyse student learning outcomes. A national focus on evidence-based policy and upper-secondary student research projects further reinforces teachers' roles as research supervisors, thus fostering a culture of continuous professional development. The chapter covers two cases. The first case examines a master's-level course at Tallinn University designed to equip in-service teachers and education professionals with the skills to design and execute empirical studies. Delivered through a blend of lectures, discussions, and hands-on tasks, the course is structured around mixed teaching methods and introduces software such as Jamovi for quantitative analysis and QCAMap for qualitative data analysis. Students conduct interviews, design surveys, and analyse data, culminating in assignments aligned with their thesis work. The second case examines a seminar within a foreign language teacher programme focused on questionnaire design,

addressing objectives, feasibility, validity, and ethics. Participants, novice teachers with limited research experience, engaged in hybrid sessions discussing instrument development, sampling, and ethical dilemmas. Both cases underscore a challenge of balancing methodological rigor with pedagogical accessibility.

Chapter 5 explores Latvia's teacher education system, which prioritises research literacy as a cornerstone of professional development. Under Regulation No. 569 (2018), teachers must hold subject-specific higher education qualifications and pedagogical training of at least 3 ECTS. The University of Latvia, recognised as a "science university", embeds research literacy across its programmes to equip educators for evidence-based practices in classrooms. This chapter explores these developments within the national context and presents a case study of the *Research Methodologies* course in the English Studies master's programme (MSP). Offered in the third semester of the MSP, the course prepares students for thesis work through hands-on engagement with applied linguistics research, balancing theoretical rigor with practical application. Students analyse real-world scenarios, such as improving reading comprehension through targeted strategies, and apply methodologies to their teaching contexts. By semester's end, students produce draft thesis proposals that outline research questions, methods, and ethical considerations. The case study illustrates that, despite prior experience such as bachelor's theses, students struggle with hypothesis formulation and methodological precision. The course mitigates these challenges through iterative feedback and peer review. Reported outcomes include enhanced critical appraisal of research, heightened ethical awareness, and strengthened competence in designing classroom-relevant studies.

Part 2: Teachers' Voices: Teacher Research and Reflections at Schools

The second part shifts focus to practicing teachers in Norwegian upper-secondary schools, where collaborative action research projects undertaken under the aegis of TREL illuminate the realities of research literacy in classroom settings.

Chapter 6 presents a project designed and implemented by Lana Chernik at Drammen Upper-Secondary School, investigating the role of self-assessment in enhancing learning outcomes among first-year upper-secondary students enrolled in a general studies programme. Although self-assessment practices are embedded in Norway's English curriculum and course materials, they were inconsistently applied and poorly understood by students. Chernik sought to

bridge the gap between theoretical expectations of self-assessment and practical implementations through a seven-week Literary Project, during which students analysed short stories and engaged in peer discussions, and concluded with recorded “Literary Conversations”. Students were guided to assess their own performance using criteria aligned with curriculum goals, including language proficiency, critical thinking, and communication skills. Pre- and post-project surveys revealed initial student scepticism towards self-assessment, with only 20% initially believing it promoted learning. However, training students in applying assessment criteria, combined with regular practice, led to significant shifts: by post-project, over two-thirds reported greater awareness of their strengths, and 85% identified areas for improvement. Chernik discusses how the project contributed to her professional development, reinforcing the need for teachers to model self-assessment strategies and provide explicit guidance.

Chapter 7 presents a project by May Britt Baadstø from Drammen, aimed at enhancing academic writing skills among first-year students in the bilingual Drammen International Programme. Recognising that previous instruction had not adequately addressed the distinct demands of academic English, she designed a focused intervention to bridge the gap between everyday language use and the formal register required in higher education. The project began by engaging students with a diagnostic survey that probed their preconceptions about academic language and writing, asking them what these terms meant and how they thought academic writing could best be learned. Following the survey, Baadstø conducted a two-session workshop using multimedia resources to elucidate key academic writing concepts, such as organisation, clarity, evidence-based arguments, and formal tone. Baadstø’s approach exemplifies the integration of reflection and teaching, simultaneously enhancing students’ academic language proficiency while gathering data to refine her pedagogical methods. The project provided immediate benefits by preparing students for the rigors of university-level writing and offered valuable insights for continuous improvement in teaching practices.

Chapter 8 details a study by Nikoline Holmøy Ellefsrød from Drammen, exploring how student autonomy and peer collaboration impact motivation in oral assessments. The project involved 50 students across two cohorts (VG Year 1 and VG Years 2 and 3), who created TED-style presentations on self-chosen topics and conducted peer interviews to discuss their subjects. Results from post-project surveys revealed that 84% of students felt more motivated when selecting their own topics, 55% gained substantial new knowledge, and 74% reported

heightened responsibility when collaborating with peers rather than teachers. Reported challenges included technical issues with recordings, uneven dynamics in unfamiliar student pairings, and limited access to resources for certain topics. The study underscores the value of student agency and authentic peer interaction in fostering engagement, while highlighting the need for guidance on critical questioning and logistical support. Ellefsrød discusses how shifting the teacher's role to a facilitator promoted democratic classroom dynamics and strengthened student ownership of learning. Future refinements include strategic peer-matching and the digital integration of tools to address technical hurdles.

Chapter 9 details a project by Siri Hunstadbråten at Drammen, investigating the effectiveness of constructive feedback in improving academic writing skills among second-year bilingual students. Despite students' general proficiency, persistent challenges in grammar, syntax, and formal tone prompted the implementation of a color-coded feedback system (such as yellow for grammar, blue for vocabulary, purple for sentence structure) alongside rubrics to guide revisions. Data were collected through pre- and post-revision surveys, asking students to reflect on the clarity, utility, and motivational impact of her feedback. Results revealed that 62% found the feedback "completely understandable", while 57% felt "highly motivated" to revise, citing the specificity of margin comments and colour codes as key strengths. However, 38% of students expressed uncertainty about how to apply feedback, noting challenges in translating critiques into actionable improvements. Post-revision, 55% reported satisfaction with their revised texts, citing improved precision and reduced errors, though some felt limited by time constraints or persistent stylistic habits. Hunstadbråten argues that constructive feedback enhances metacognition and self-editing skills but requires balancing detailed critique with scaffolded guidance to empower students as autonomous writers. Her findings reinforce the importance of iterative practice and reflective dialogue, prompting plans to integrate peer-review workshops and digital tools to sustain motivation and address individual learning gaps.

Chapter 10, by Kimberly Wynne from Lier Upper-Secondary School, examines the challenges Norwegian high school students face in developing robust English reading skills and explores whether explicit instruction in reading strategies can boost their motivation and comprehension. The chapter opens by noting a troubling decline in both reading stamina and proficiency, prompting questions about potential causes such as digital distractions, curriculum shifts, or the lingering impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Wynne outlines a mixed-methods

study combining quantitative surveys with qualitative methods, including think-aloud protocols and semi-structured interviews, to address two main questions: What reading strategies do students know and use, and does employing these strategies enhance their motivation to read? Findings indicate that while students frequently rely on surface-level strategies like skimming and scanning – techniques that align with their existing classroom practices – they seldom employ deeper, critical reading approaches. This gap between the national curriculum’s emphasis on reflective, analytical reading and students’ actual practice suggests the need for more explicit instruction and modelling of close-reading techniques. Wynne’s chapter offers both an insightful analysis of current reading practices and a call to reframe teaching methods to better support students in becoming more engaged, critical, and effective readers.

Chapter 11, by Mats Berg-Berthinussen and Vanja Larsen from Lier, examines the challenges vocational students face in developing academic orality: a critical skill for professional interviews and workplace communication. The chapter details an action research project conducted in a childcare class where students frequently expressed feelings of insecurity and reluctance to participate in oral academic tasks. Using surveys, group activities, and teacher-facilitated sessions, the teachers addressed three key questions: What do students need to become verbally proficient in academic settings? Which activities most effectively boost their oral engagement? What prerequisites are necessary for developing academic language for professional interviews? Findings indicate the critical role of creating a safe and supportive classroom environment. Students highlighted that a sense of security – achieved through clear instructions, teacher-assigned small groups, and opportunities for social interaction – greatly influenced their willingness to participate in academic discussions. Findings suggest that varied oral activities not only build confidence but also enable students to express their professional competence more effectively. While short-term interventions can lead to improvements, the chapter concludes that sustained and systematic efforts are needed to foster lasting oral proficiency among vocational students.

These chapters are written by practising in-service teachers who participated in the TREL project while continuing to teach full-time. They are written in the teachers’ own voices. Readers will notice moments of self-questioning, honest acknowledgement of limitations, and reflections on the tension between daily teaching life and the demands of formal research. These qualities are precisely the kind of practitioner knowledge this book seeks to document and value.

Part 3: School Leaders' Perspectives on Teacher Research

This part explores school leaders' perspectives on teacher research literacy – a viewpoint rarely examined in educational research. It seeks to bridge that gap by collating school leaders' insights drawn from both their written contributions to the handbook on reflective practices within their schools and from in-depth interviews. These narratives offer readers a unique understanding of how school leaders view and value teacher research literacy in their institutions.

Chapter 12, by Christine Funtek, offers an in-depth examination of Drammen Upper-Secondary School, one of Norway's largest and most diverse institutions. Funtek introduces the school's unique context, highlighting its wide-ranging programme offerings, which range from general studies to specialised tracks in internationalisation, entrepreneurship, and research. Funtek also highlights the school's diverse student body and its strong commitment to continuous professional development, promoted through collaborative practices, subject group reflections, and international partnerships. Funtek explores how teachers at Drammen engage in small-scale, classroom-based action research projects that integrate practical, actionable strategies into their everyday teaching. This approach is presented as a means of bridging the gap between theory and practice, ultimately enhancing pedagogical methods and student learning outcomes while fostering a culture of reflective inquiry and sustained professional development.

Chapter 13, by Nina Forsberg, paints a comprehensive picture of Lier Upper-Secondary School as a dynamic vocational institution committed to innovation, flexibility, and international engagement. The chapter highlights the school's curricula reforms since 2014, which merge practical vocational training with academic pathways to prepare students for both professional certifications and further education. Central to this transformation is the school's robust international collaboration through Erasmus+ projects, which enriches learning and fosters cross-cultural exchanges. Forsberg emphasises the importance of shared responsibility in school development, detailing how collaborative practices among teachers, school leaders, and other staff drive curriculum innovation and professional development. Additionally, the chapter discusses the practical challenges and successes in integrating teacher-led reflection into everyday classroom practice, underscoring the need for manageable, classroom-friendly models that translate theory into actionable strategies.

This handbook serves both as a diagnostic and a call for action. It acknowledges the progress achieved in Nordic-Baltic teacher education while urging stakeholders to resist complacency. In a world marked by misinformation and persistent educational inequities, research-literate teachers are not merely desirable – they are essential. By equipping teachers to investigate their teaching, innovate responsively, and generate practical knowledge, the TREL project envisions a future where teachers see themselves not only as teachers but also as reflective practitioners, engaging in professional development through sustained research engagement.

This handbook reflects the collective efforts of the TREL project partners, showcasing teacher engagement in reflective practice both at the faculty level and within in-service contexts. Through collaboration with faculties and schools, the project members gained a deeper understanding of how teachers are prepared to conduct research during pre-service education and how they integrate research into their classrooms at the in-service level. The chapters written by the in-service teachers reveal their voices from the classroom and, indirectly, those of their students across the Nordic-Baltic teacher education network. These contributions provide contextualised examples of TR practices and outline implications for future initiatives.

As you progress through this handbook, you will encounter voices from lecture halls, staff rooms, and classrooms engaged in active experimentation. These narratives invite you to reimagine the role of the teacher and to join the vital endeavour of bridging research and practice for the benefit of all learners. Beyond showcasing examples of interinstitutional collaboration among teachers and teacher educators, this handbook demonstrates how teachers' reflective practice can be cultivated through mentoring within a supportive community of teachers, administrators, and educators.

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