

Doctoral Dissertation

**A Comparative Study on Research Engagement of Teacher Educators in  
Myanmar, Singapore and Thailand**

Summary

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September 2024

## ABSTRACT

Research about the professional group of teacher educators is a growing field and we still have more to explore within the field. Teacher educators' professional works, including their research activities, have been studied and discussed due to globally increased expectations of their research. This study aims to excavate the characteristics of teacher educators' research engagement and its underlying factors by comparing how teacher educators' research is promoted, conceptualized, and implemented in three ranging countries such as Myanmar, Singapore, and Thailand. The following research questions guided the study: 1) How is research engagement of teacher educators promoted in each country's national-level policies and institutionally? 2) How do teacher educators conceptualize 'teacher educator research' and how and why do they engage with and in research? 3) How do the national, institutional and individual levels interact in promoting and implementing teacher educators' research engagement? 4) What are the similarities and differences among the cases? 5) What are the underlying factors of teacher educators' research engagement?

To answer research questions and realize the research purpose, this qualitative study employed a comparative case study approach to conduct a thorough investigation of multi-level on a cross-national comparison. Data were mainly drawn from the documentary study of relevant documents and semi-structured interviews with teacher education executives ( $n=13$ ) and teacher educators ( $n=53$ ) in five public TEIs in the studied countries. Data were analyzed by the integration of inductive and deductive content analysis, and comparisons were made vertically (among the different levels, such as the national- and institutional-level policies and individual-level practices), horizontally (among the countries), and cross-axis synthesis.

The key findings were as follows: 1) the national-level prioritized research areas covered research relevant and impactful to the countries' education and socio-economic benefits of citizens. All the studied TEIs had a common expectation of 'teacher educator research' for educational development. Conducting collaborative research and publications were highly expected in TEIs and provided resources such as research funds and materials, and technical support. 2) Participants in this study conceptualized 'teacher educator research' as research on diverse areas in education as a means to improve their teaching and their students' learning and to contribute to the development of teacher education and education (in general) more broadly. Teacher educators consumed research-driven knowledge as teacher education practitioners to improve their teaching and research mainly. They also appeared as teacher education scholars while consuming research-based materials for reviewing articles or moderating as session chairs at conferences. For their research-producing activities, they conducted more academic and educational research overall. Many respondents expressed a mix of internal and external drives. Additionally, sociocultural aspects such as the encouragement of former teachers (in Myanmar), the affectional bonds within research teams (in Singapore), and collective culture (in Thailand) enhanced some teacher educators to keep engaging in research. Time constraints, complicated procedures, difficulties derived from policy priority, challenges to access research sites, limited research budget (TEIs in Myanmar and Thailand), insufficient research competence and skillset (in Myanmar's TEIs and Thailand's TEI-D), inadequate resources and dissemination channels (in Myanmar's TEIs) were raised as hindrances. 3) The study observed that policy transmission regarding research engagement of teacher educators occurs from the national to institutional and individual levels. It also reported discrepancies between promoting (at the national level) and implementing teacher educators' research (at the individual level), discrepancies among policy encouragement and support provided, and inconsistencies among different policy initiatives (at the national and institutional levels). Ground-up approaches were evident at both the institutional and individual levels, demonstrated through customized

policies, enhanced communication between institutional leaders and teacher educators, and the educators' efforts to find leeway and develop strategies to overcome challenges. 4) Although all the studied countries commonly put efforts into promoting teacher educators' research activities, countries differed in teacher educator recruitment policies, major responsibilities, level of policy requirement, and cohesion and consistency among their respective initiatives. Institutionally, common initiatives such as providing research funds, research guidance, and facilitation through both formal and informal support were found. Results indicate differences in the studied TEIs with regard to promoting policies and practices of teacher educators' research. In TEIs with the original mission of teacher training, teacher educators' research was more related to professional aspects, conducting small-scale studies, and they appear more as practitioner-researchers. In contrast, in TEIs affiliated with research-intensive universities, teacher educators' research was more likely to be concerned with academic aspects, conducting both small- and large-scale research. They appeared more as teacher education scholars and educational researchers rather than as practitioner researchers in both aspects of research-consuming and producing activities. 5) The study revealed four main underlying factors affecting the research engagement of teacher educators—personal factors (teacher educators' understanding of and attitudes toward research, their perceived research skills, commitment to their work, and attempts to find leeway and strategies to combat challenges), policy-related factors (both national and institutional levels' initiatives, expectation and support provided as well as the issues related to policies in all the countries), system-related factors (complicated procedures in the bureaucratic system (Singapore and Thailand) and 'hidden time' in a largely centralized system (Myanmar), and sociocultural factors (social ties in Singapore and Thailand and influential role of teachers in Myanmar).

Findings from this study help us advance our understanding of teacher educators and their research activities, especially by adding insights from the perspectives of Southeast Asian

(SEA) countries, which are underrepresented in the literature. By identifying the characteristics of teacher educators' research engagement in different types of TEIs and their underlying factors, this study offered scholarly contributions. For practical implications, this research hopes to serve as a valuable reference for other researchers as well as policymakers not only in SEA countries but also in other international contexts seeking to promote the development of teacher educators' research activities and the development of teacher education.