

# **Theorising early career teacher experiences in teaching students with diverse learning needs in general education classes**

**Australian Association for Research in Education Conference**  
Wednesday, 4 December 2019

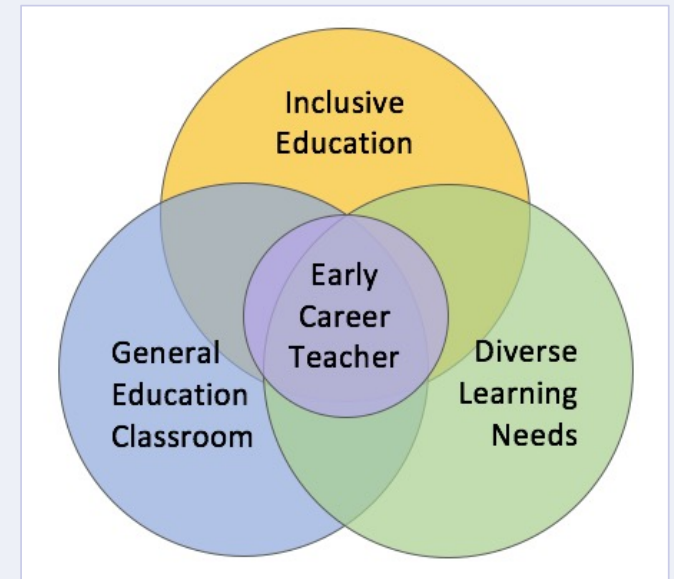
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# Presentation Overview

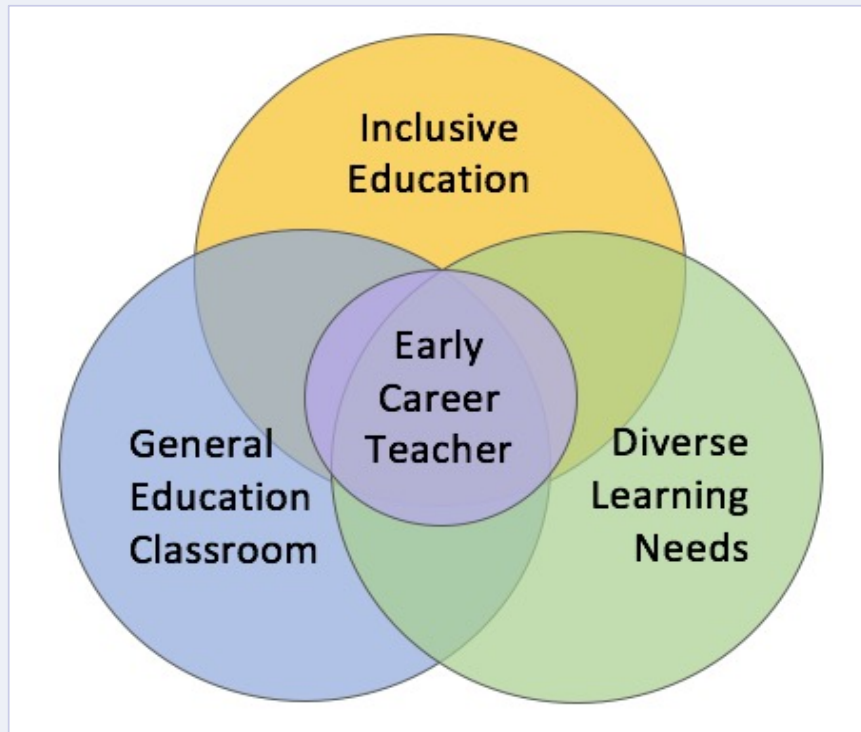
- 'Setting the scene' – Who am I & my study context
- Study aim
- Assumptions & preconceptions
- Research methodology & methods
- Participants
- Outcomes & significance
- References

# 'Setting the scene'

- My study focus is early career teachers (ECT) teaching students with diverse learning needs in general education classrooms.
- Evidence suggests ECTs experience challenge in managing the workload expectation of classroom teaching.
- Inclusive education is an expectation in Australian schools.
- ECTs working in general education settings are expected to effectively cater for the diverse learning needs of all students in their classroom.
- Using a constructivist grounded theory (CGT) methodology, the lived experiences of ECTs teaching students with diverse learning needs in general education classroom settings will be explored.



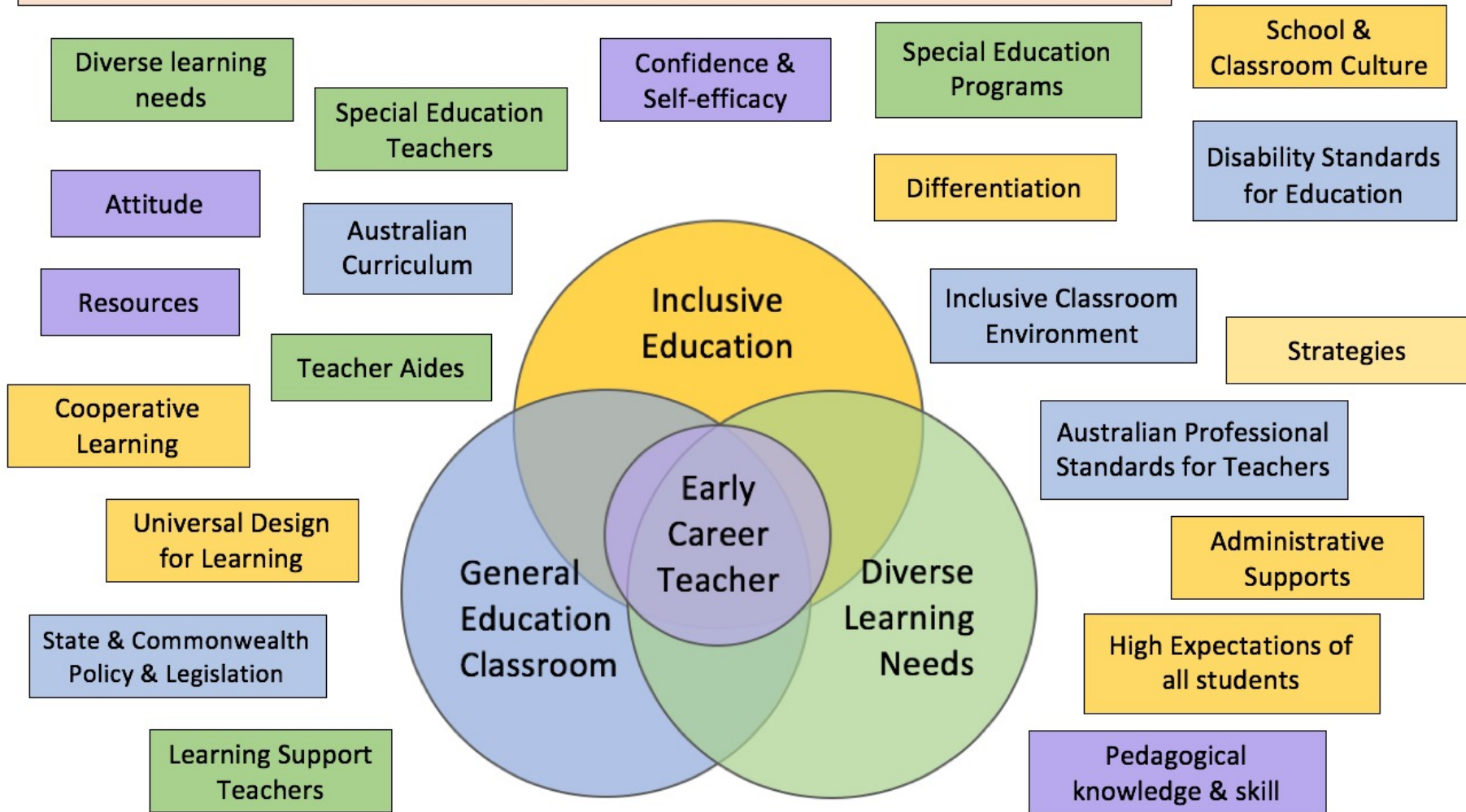
# Study aim



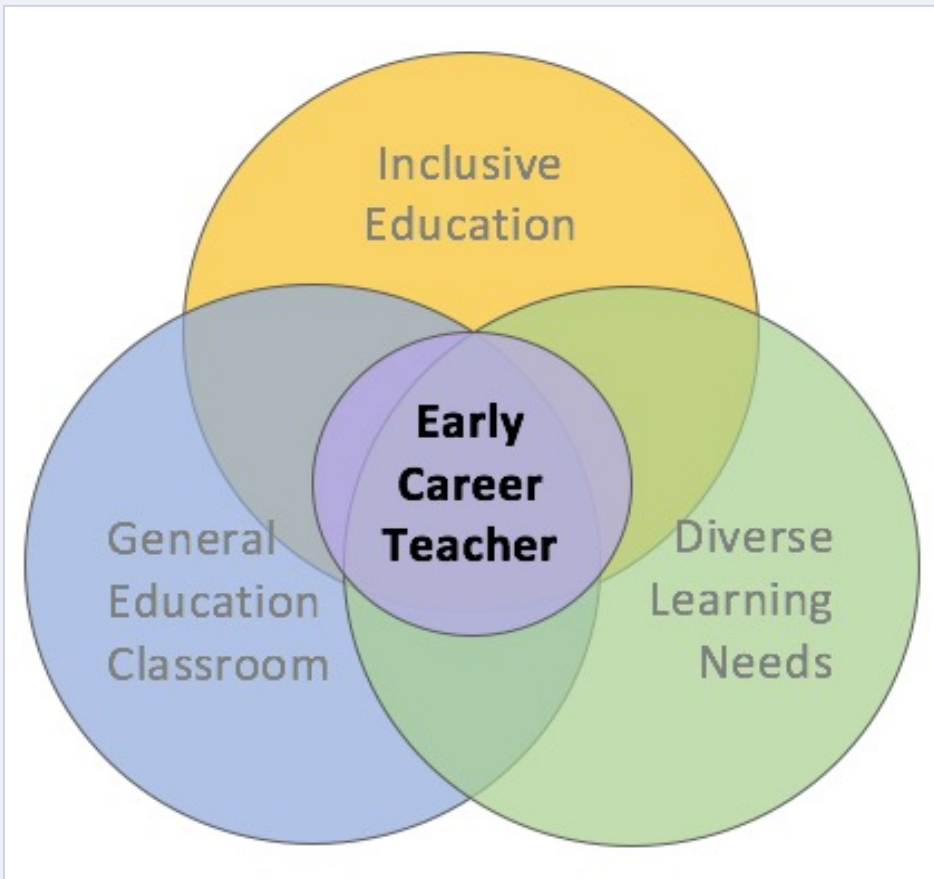
To theorise and better understand the lived experiences of early career teachers (ECTs) teaching students with diverse learning needs in general education classroom settings.



Researcher assumptions & preconceptions – Pressures & influences for early career teachers



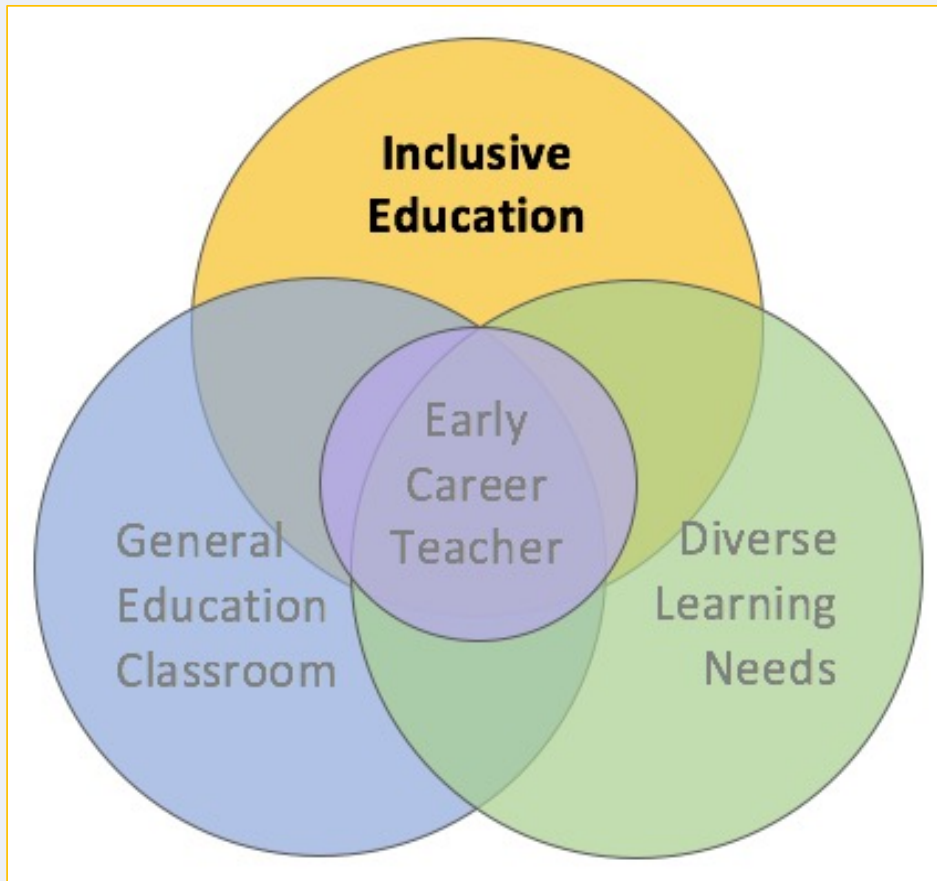
# Early Career Teachers



## Early career teacher

- First five years of teaching;
- Knowledge, skills, & pedagogy;
- 'Classroom ready';
- Developing teacher identity;
- Building confidence, attitude & self-efficacy;
- Graduate level - Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (APSTs);
- Identifying and managing expectations.

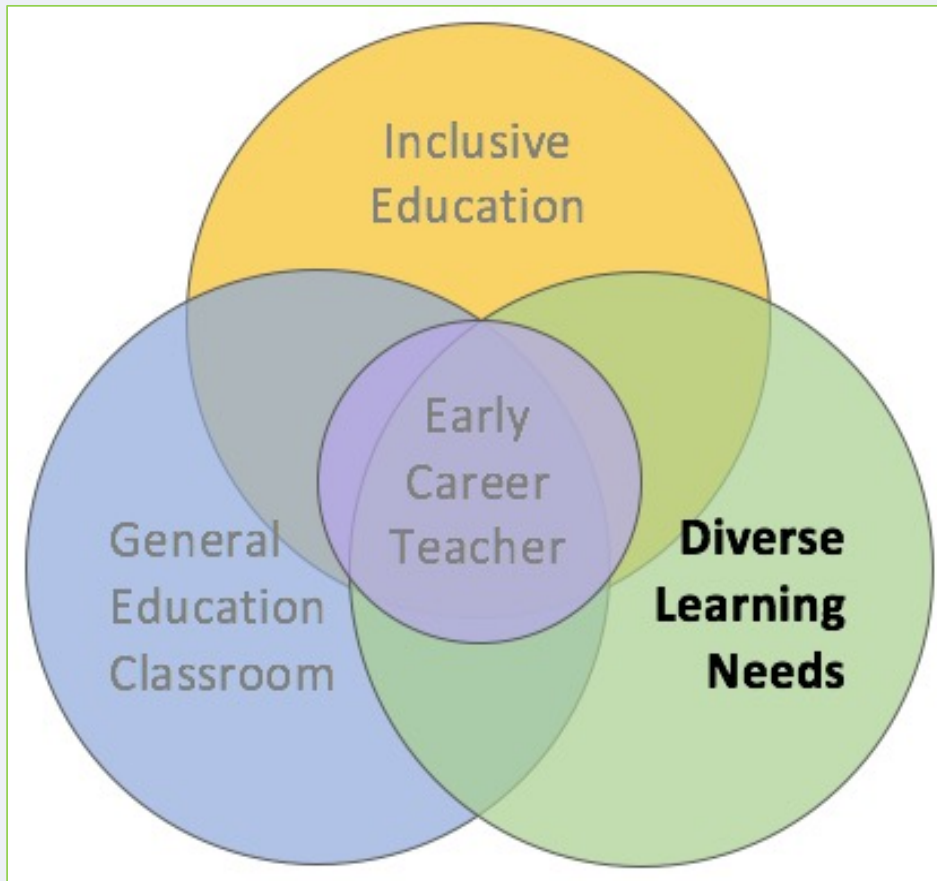
# Inclusive Education



## Inclusive Education

- Expectation across Australia with variable implementation;
- Defined in the CRPD but not widely understood;
- Students with disability:
  - Disability Standards for Education (DSE)
- Educational participation for **ALL** students with their same-age peers;
- Acknowledges/supports range of diverse learners.

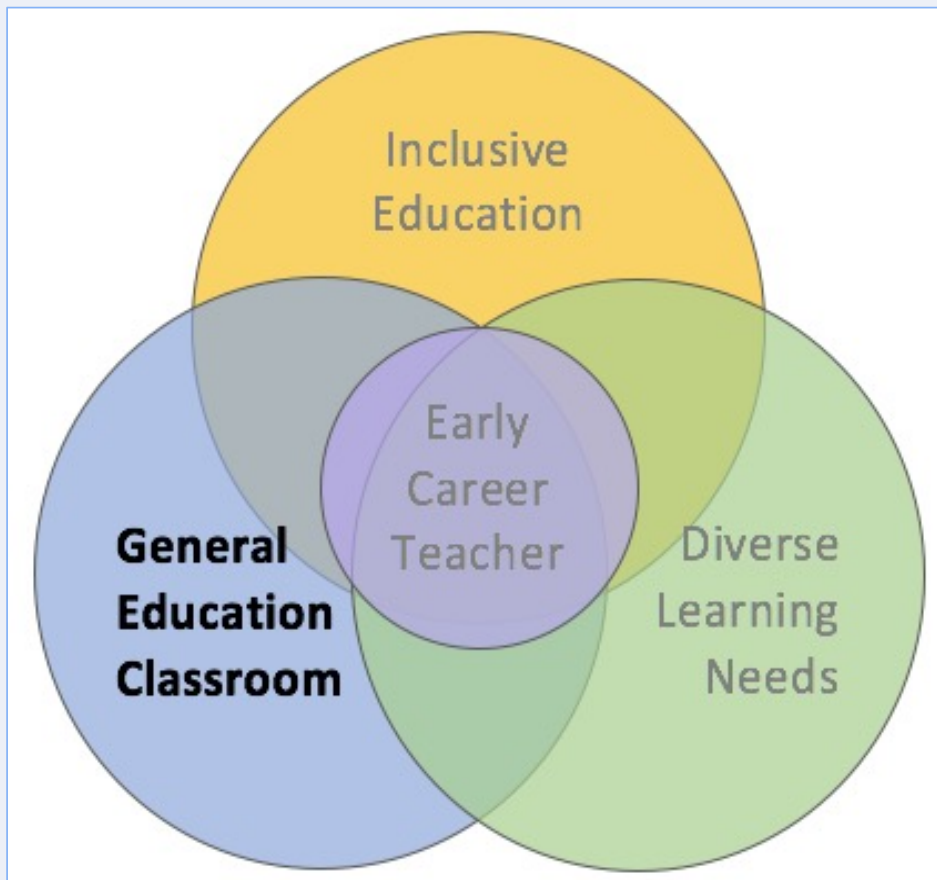
# Diverse learners with diverse learning needs



**Diverse learners** (traditionally marginalised groups):

- Students with disability
- Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander
- English as a Second Language or Dialect (EALD)
- Gifted & talented
- Behavioural challenges
- Cultural
- Socioeconomic
- LGBTI
- Social-emotional challenges

# General education classroom



## General Education Classroom

- Australian Curriculum;
- Inclusive educational mandate;
- Teaching & catering for needs of all students / diverse learners;
- High expectations with appropriate adjustments;
- Pedagogical approaches:
  - UDL, Differentiation, Cooperative learning
- Supports & collaboration;
- School & classroom culture;
- Multi-tiered support systems.

# Researcher motivation

- Years of educational experiences – student, parent, teacher, & teacher advisor for curriculum & students with ASD.
- Current teacher educator.
- Observed/involved in successes, frustrations, overcoming barriers, achievements & failures.
- Aware of the expectations, pressures & challenges from self, students, family, school administrators & colleagues, community, standards, regulations, legislation...
- Teachers go into the profession with a range of attitudes & expectation in regard to inclusive practice.
- Vast literature base – research & anecdotal – as to what/how teachers should teach in inclusive context.

I'd like to know & better understand...

...the what, how & why general education teachers teach a classroom of diverse learners as they do in the early years of their career.





Research methodology?

Qualitative approach...

Constructivist Grounded Theory

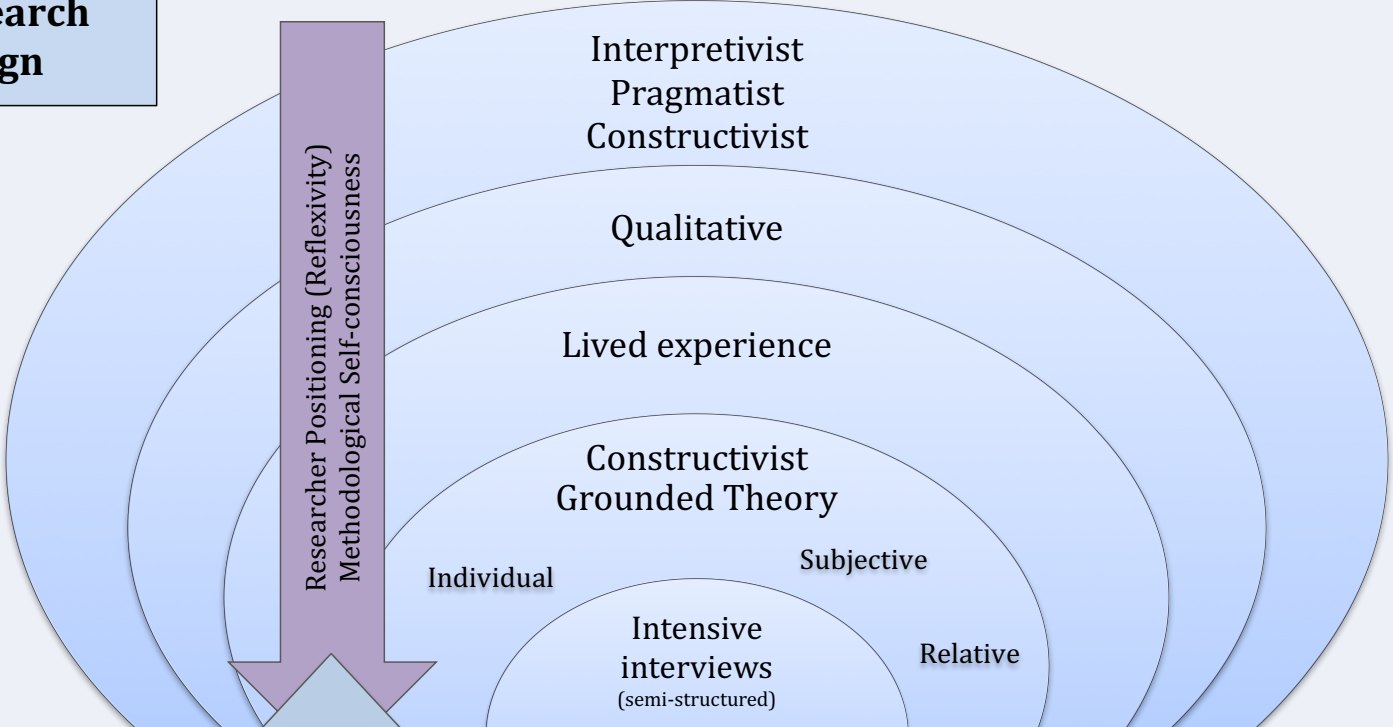




# Constructivist Grounded Theory

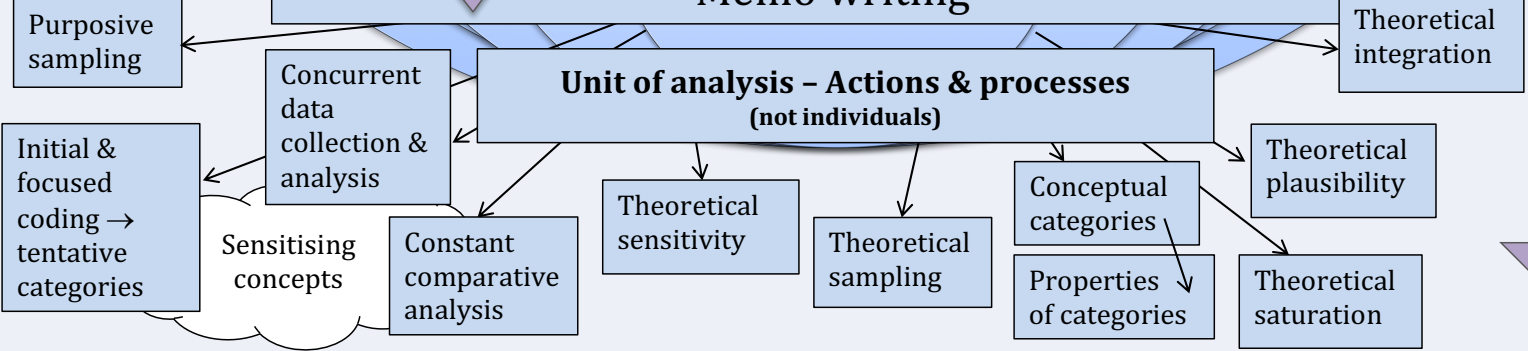
- Qualitative research methodology, philosophically underpinned by *Interpretivism, Constructivism & Pragmatism*.
- Views “research as constructed” and acknowledges “subjectivity and the researcher’s involvement in the construction and interpretation of the data” (Charmaz, 2014, p. 13).
- Values subjectivity, multiple perspectives, a fluid and indeterminate reality, and problem solving (Charmaz, 2014).
- A framework for ascertaining, understanding, and theorising on lived experiences through identifying patterns, trends and generalisations of this experience (Birks & Mills, 2015).
- Uses an inductive process to generate and analyse data with the ultimate goal of theory generation (Birks & Mills, 2015; Charmaz, 2014).

**Research Design**



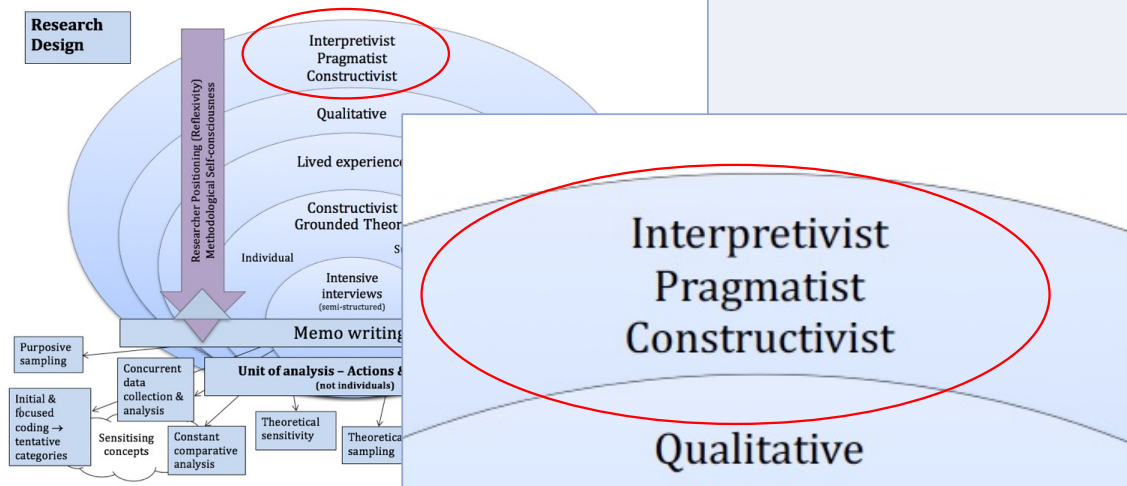
Researcher Positioning (Reflexivity)  
Methodological Self-consciousness

**Memo writing**



**Theory Generation**

# Theoretical underpinnings

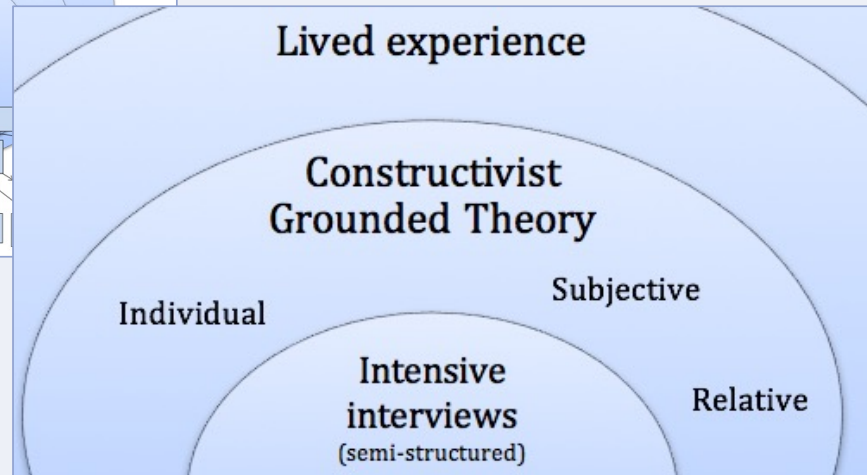
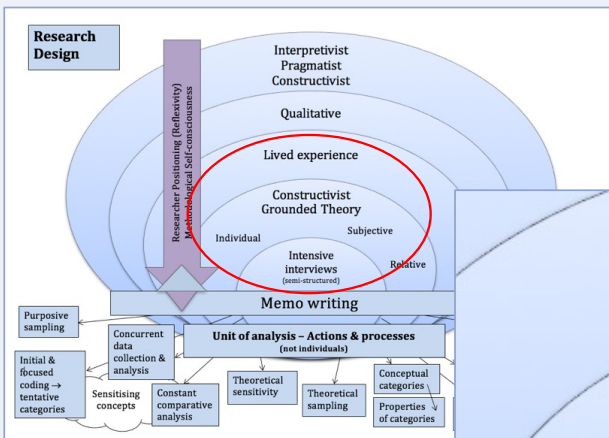


- Truth as conditional
- Reality as socially constructed; defined by individual experience and perspective
- Studies individual's actions to solve emergent problems
- Unites the viewer with the viewed; the researcher with the researched
- Acknowledges & seeks multiple perspectives
- Locates experience in social context
- Human agency – self-organising, proactive, self-reflective & self-regulating

Researcher Positioning (Reflexivity)  
Methodological Self-consciousness

(Charmaz, 2016, p. 5)

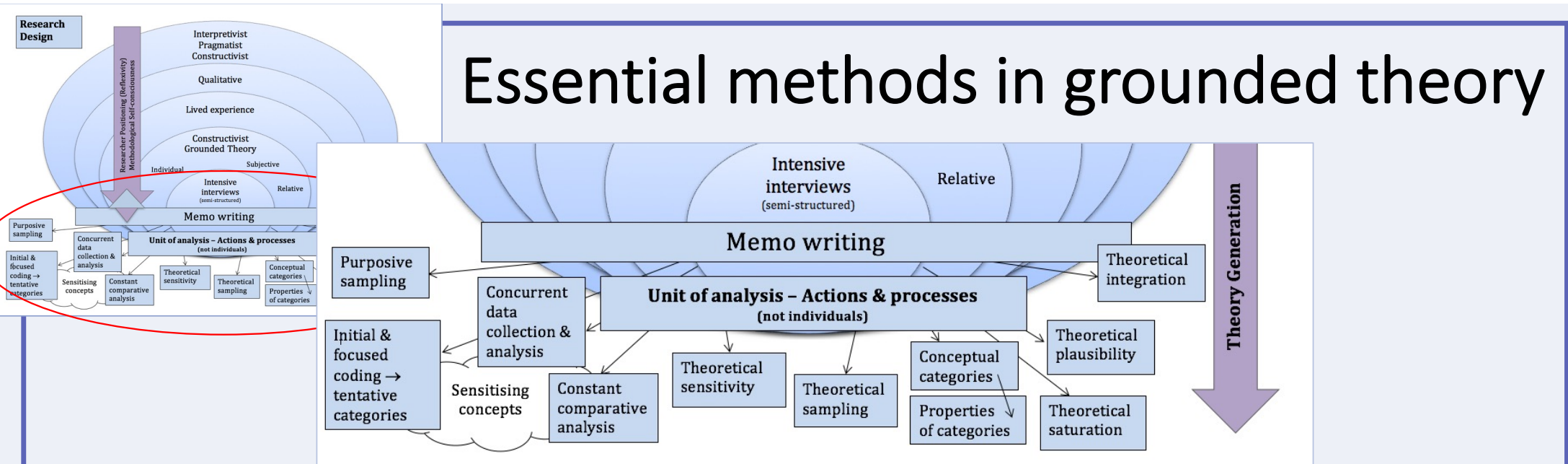
# Constructivist grounded theory Qualitative research



## Strength of qualitative research for this study:

- Develop a deeper understanding of specific context
- Teacher perspective of their lived experience
- Understanding of experience as subjective and relative to individual and context
- Opportunity to theorise and better explain teacher experience in this context

# Essential methods in grounded theory



- **Constant comparative analysis** - concurrent data collection & analysis.
- **Theoretical sampling** - “the process of identifying and pursuing clues that arise during analysis” (Birks & Mills, 2015, p. 68).
- Theoretical sampling & constant comparative analysis guide future data collection in order to obtain relevant data needed to inform **theory generation** (Charmaz, 2014).
- **Memo writing** – “informal analytical notes” provides opportunity, and prompts for, the researcher to be reflexive and “actively engaged” throughout the whole of the research process (Charmaz, 2014, p.162).

## Sources of data – Participant Interview

### **Participants are:**

- Early career teachers,
- General education classrooms,
- Primary and or secondary school,
- Full time,
- Queensland school & Queensland registered,
- Self-selected – invitation to participate via word-of-mouth, social media, professional networks.

Other data sources may include memos, researcher journal entries, artefacts, relevant documents, related literature.

## Data collection – Semi-structured & Intensive Interview

### One-to-one interview

- Semi-structured / Open-ended questions
- About an hour duration
- Intensive – “a gently guided one-sided conversation” (Charmaz, 2014, p.56).
- Face to face, phone or video conference.
- Recorded (and transcribed).
- Opportunity for follow-up via informed consent process.
- Ethically – low risk/low harm (ethical clearance obtained).

“Grand tour”  
interview opener: *Tell me about your experience teaching students with diverse learning needs...*

## Initial data collection and participants

### 11 ECT teachers have been interviewed...

- Nine female / two male
- Range of ages – early 20's through 40+
- Between one and five full-time years teaching – State, Cath Ed and Independent schools – range of school enrolment size
- Across Queensland – metro, regional, rural and remote
- One face to face, remainder - video conference
- All have been transcribed but only 3 coded – using a constant comparative approach with continual memo'ing

**Only constant across participants is their early career status**



## Anticipated outcomes & significance

- A grounded theory approach in exploring a critically important topic.
- Development of substantive theory of the day to day lived experience of early career teachers teaching students with diverse learning needs in general education classrooms.
- A deeper understanding of early career teacher practice in inclusive educational settings.
- Further knowledge & understanding to inform:
  - Teacher education
  - Inclusive education – theory & pedagogy
  - School & jurisdictional process, procedure & policy.



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