

2022

A comparative study investigating the enablers and barriers facing teacher educators in a regional university: Snapshots from 2013 and 2020.

Sharon L. McDonough
Federation University Australia

Robyn Brandenburg
Federation University Australia

Follow this and additional works at: <https://ro.ecu.edu.au/ajte>



Part of the [Teacher Education and Professional Development Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

McDonough, Sharon L. and Brandenburg, Robyn (2022) "A comparative study investigating the enablers and barriers facing teacher educators in a regional university: Snapshots from 2013 and 2020.," *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*: Vol. 47 : Iss. 12 , Article 6.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.14221/1835-517X.6238>

Available at: <https://ro.ecu.edu.au/ajte/vol47/iss12/6>

This Journal Article is posted at Research Online.
<https://ro.ecu.edu.au/ajte/vol47/iss12/6>

A Comparative Study Investigating the Enablers and Barriers Facing Teacher Educators in a Regional University: Snapshots from 2013 and 2020.

Sharon McDonough
Robyn Brandenburg
Federation University Australia

Abstract. Although the provision of initial teacher education has been the subject of more than 100 inquiries and multiple reforms, the work of those in teacher education remains under-researched. This comparative research provides two snapshots of teacher educator surveys conducted seven years apart (2013 and 2020) in a regional university in Australia. The primary aim of the research was to examine how teacher educators describe their work and goals and to identify the barriers and enablers that are present in their practice. The data were thematically coded and categorised. The outcomes highlight that personal and professional experiences do shape the goals and motivations of teacher educators; that knowledge and skills impact the ways that they enact their work, and that professional development is essential. Issues pertaining to the discipline of teacher education and an increasingly casualised workforce need to be addressed by those within and external to the profession.

Keywords: teacher education, teacher educators, teacher educator values, teacher educator professional development

Introduction

Teaching and teacher education remains highly scrutinized in the Australian context with more than 100 inquiries and reviews related both to the provision of teacher education (Louden, 2008) and the impact of teacher education programs on quality learning and teaching in schools (Bahr & Mellor, 2016). The introduction of national standards for teaching and for the accreditation of teacher education programs were aimed at improving teacher quality with the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL, 2011) arguing that standards and processes would lead to improved public confidence in the quality of teachers and teacher education programs. Quality teacher education (both initial and in-service) has long been identified as a key element of high performing education systems (Jensen et al., 2012), and as central in developing teachers for Australian schools, however, directions in policy and initial teacher education are derived from agencies other than teacher educators themselves (Fitzgerald, 2023). The emphasis on notions of quality and impact are reflected in AITSL's (2015) standards and procedures with "quality assurance" of teacher education programs regarded as "essential to ensure every program is preparing classroom ready teachers with the skills they need to make a

positive impact on school student learning” (p. 3). The 2014 report of the Teacher Education Ministerial Advisory Group (TEMAG) prompted the implementation of new processes in the field of teacher education, including the introduction of mandatory literacy and numeracy assessments, and a graduate teacher performance assessment (TPA). One of the other key challenges facing the field is that despite a continued focus on improving the quality of teaching and the impact on student learning is “defining what counts as quality teaching and what counts as student outcomes remains contested and problematic” (Gore, 2016, p. 29). More recent work by Bourke and Ryan (2023) considering notions of impact in initial teacher education highlights the complexity of the notion of impact and the need for more research into what constitutes impact from all stakeholders as they argue it would “allow new meanings and space for alternative unknowns to emerge leading to a rethinking of the impact agenda” (p. 146).

Despite these initiatives designed to improve the quality of teachers entering schools and the impact they have on student learning, the workforce of teacher educators who are responsible for implementing reform, new processes, and delivering teacher education programs, remains both underexamined (Hangul et al., 2022; Nuttall & Brennan, 2016; Manton et al., 2020). Bourke and Ryan contend that within the Australian policy context “teacher educators’ voices have been diminished” (p. 145). In this landscape where continued policy influence focuses on discourses of quality and impact, Fitzgerald (2023) argues that “accountability measures have gained a level of ascendancy precisely because the public imagination is regularly stirred by ideas that teachers and teacher educators cannot be trusted” (p. 7). We agree with Fitzgerald that speaking back to such measures requires “a continuing, united, and collective voice from teacher educators that speak to the public about the quality of what we do” (Fitzgerald, 2023, p. 8). This collective voice cannot occur without understanding the working conditions, challenges and opportunities that exist for teacher educators and the ways they influence what it is that they do.

Context of the Study

In light of this background, as teacher educators in a regional university we were interested in examining and understanding more about the complexity of the work of teacher educators. In 2013, we conducted an initial study *Quality teaching or teacher quality? Examining teacher educator values and identities* that sought to build a greater understanding of those working in teacher education. The research provided an insight into the ways in which teacher educators within our own institution perceived and understood their practice. In 2020, we conducted follow up research, again in our own university, reflecting the questions from the earlier study as we were interested in capturing and examining what changes may have occurred to the work practices, values and motivations of teacher educators. In this article, we undertake a comparison of the two data sets and present key findings and implications.

Literature

As noted in the background to the study, the work of teacher educators is subject to scrutiny with Nuttall and Brennan (2016) noting that, “to examine the work of teacher educators is thus to enter into a highly politicised terrain” (p. 364). One of the other contextual factors influencing those who work in higher education, and thus in teacher education is the increasingly

casualized nature of university teaching (Heffernan, 2018; Klopper & Power, 2014). Research from the *Work of Teacher Education* (WoTE) project which started in Australia in 2011 highlighted the complex nature of teacher educators' work where they seek to balance teaching and supporting students with maintenance of partnerships, research outputs and administrative and service requirements (see for example Nuttall et al., 2013; Zipin & Nuttall, 2016). While the complexity of working as a teacher educator is recognized in the literature (Loughran, 2016; White et al., 2021), understandings of who is teaching within teacher education and how they see their work are less well articulated. Manton et al. (2020) argue that “*who* the teacher educator is” is influenced by concepts of “*what* they should be doing” (p. 3). They identify three key categorisations of teacher educators: theoretician; expert-practitioner; and research and argue that this framing is useful in understanding the professional, complex, multi-faceted, and at times, contradictory roles of the teacher educator. One of the areas they identify is the lack of research into what motivates schoolteachers to take on academic positions, and they critique the lack of policy direction for failing to recognise that this is not a seamless transition, concluding that the “work and identity of the teacher educator in Australia are unknown” (Manton et al., 2020, p. 10).

As Loughran and Hamilton (2016) and others have suggested, being a teacher educator is more than being a teacher in another context (Davey, 2013; Murray & Kosnik, 2011). This collective research highlights the role of teacher educator identity formation and development. One of the key tensions illustrated in the research into teacher educator practice and identity is examined in Johnston and Purcell's (2022) study that focused on the Irish context. They argue that much of what we know about those working teacher education is based on those who work within faculties or schools of education, and that this fails to “acknowledge the various actors involved in higher education-based teacher education who may identify as teacher educators, despite coming from diverse backgrounds” (p. 114). Their study describes the subject discipline teacher educator who may be from a discipline outside teacher education but is contributing to a teacher education program. This study also highlights the complexity of framing the discipline and the work of teacher education, as they identify that subject discipline teacher educators make significant contributions to teacher education but “are not represented in teacher education policy, or research” (p. 124).

What appears consistent across the research is that “there are no established routes into becoming a teacher educator – the trajectories are often quite personal and unique” (Biesta et al., 2022). White et al.'s (2021) recent work highlights the need to learn from experienced teacher educators in order to “understand the role and professional learning needs of the future workforce of teacher educators” (p. 568). So, as we noted earlier, while we may argue for the need for teacher educators to use their collaborative voice to speak back by sharing their collective wisdom and knowledge, we also need to understand who they are, what drives them, and what issues and goals they have in their work as teacher educators.

Method

In this article we explore teacher educator perspectives about their daily work and the enablers and barriers present in their practice. As a small-scale case study, the project focuses on those who work within the Institute of Education, Arts and Community (previously the School of Education) at Federation University Australia. It is worth noting that the context of the research

had undergone significant change between the two data collection points in 2013 and 2020. In 2013 the Australian Professional Standards for Teaching (APST) had been recently introduced and teacher education faculties were responding to their implementation and to shifts within the policy environment including revised requirements for accreditation of teacher education programs. By 2020, more significant shifts had occurred in the teacher education space including the implementation of the teaching performance assessment (TPA) and literacy and numeracy testing (LANTITE). At the institutional level, the data collected in 2013 occurred at a time of internal restructuring of the schools and faculties. The project was approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee (approval number: B12-154).

In this article we explore the data in relation to four intersecting research questions aimed at providing some insight into teacher educators and their work:

1. What motivates teacher educators (TE) in their work?
2. How do TE's describe their work, their goals and the barriers and enablers that are present in their practice?
3. What types of personal qualities and professional development do TE's perceive as relevant to their practice?
4. What changes do TE's identify as impacting on their work?

We used an online survey to generate data and invitations to participate in the survey were distributed via the staff electronic newsletter and via staff email. Due to recruitment and data collection occurring online, participation in the survey was self-selected. Due to the self-selected, and anonymous nature of the research which occurred at two different time points, the participant numbers vary across each of the data collection points. The self-selected nature of the study has also impacted participation in the survey, and as a result we had a low response rate and subsequently a small sample of participants in both rounds of the data collection. Due to staff turnover within the university, it is likely that they are also different people responding to the survey at the two data points, rather than the same participants responding at different points in time. While this is a limitation of the work, we see that it provides an authentic insight into the perspectives of people working in the field of teacher education at two distinct points in time. We also acknowledge that the small sample is a limitation of the work, however, we argue that the insights and issues we identify among a small sample are worthy for future research and consideration. The age distribution of participants in each of the data collection points is represented in Table 1. Table 2 provides an overview of the number of years that participants had worked in teacher education, while Table 3 provides an indication of their employment status. To protect the anonymity and confidentiality of participants we have provided each of these demographic elements separately rather than combining age, years of work and employment status.

Age	2013	2020
21-30	1	0
31-40	1	4
41-50	1	0
51-60	5	1
61-70	0	0

Table 1. Age distributions

Years of work	2013	2020
Less than 1 year	1	0
1-2 years	2	0
3-5 years	2	3
6-10 years	3	1
11-20	0	1
20+	0	0

Table 2. Years of work in teacher education.

Nature of employment	2013	2020
Full-time ongoing (FTO)	5	4
Sessional contract (SESS)	2	0
Fixed term contract (FTC)	1	1

Table 3. Nature of employment of participants

Data Generation: Survey

Data for the project was collected via two separate surveys. In 2013 the initial survey was shared via the *Google Forms* platform and in 2020 the following survey was generated and shared via the *Qualtrics* platform. Both surveys included demographic questions and 10 open-ended questions related to the work of teacher educators. This included asking participants about their reasons for becoming teacher educators, their goals, their approach to teaching, the things which impact on their work as a teacher educator, their professional learning, and how they see their future in the profession. In this article we explore the findings from the open-ended survey questions to examine all four research questions about the work of teacher educators.

Data Analysis

Prior to data analysis the data was examined to ensure that there were valid responses to the questions. There were 8 valid responses to the 2013 survey and 5 valid responses to the 2020 survey. We manually coded the open-ended responses to identify key words, ideas, patterns and themes (Lankshear & Knoebel, 2004) in the data. This coding was undertaken collaboratively, enabling us to cross-check codes and processes. During this coding process, we grouped the responses into categories related to the research questions and in the following section of the article we present findings related to these categories. In presenting quotes from participants, we distinguish between the 2013 and 2020 responses by using the code teacher educator (TE) followed by the year of data collection (for example TE2013). We also include the participant number as an identifier after TE for each year along with an abbreviation to indicate employment status (using the abbreviations noted in Table 3). For example, TE3.2020.FTO refers to participant 3 from 2020 who was employed in a full-time ongoing position. We refer to these two data collection points as snapshot 1 (2013) and snapshot 2 (2020) and we have deliberately chosen this language as they represent a particular insight to a moment in time.

Findings

The findings of this research discussed in the next section relate to the following three categories: 1). Motivations and goals 2). Enablers and barriers to work in teacher education; and 3). Teacher educator knowledge and skills.

Motivations and Goals

*“I thought I had what it took to be a rare gem for the next generation”
(TE3.2020.FTO)*

Across the data we identified a commitment by the teacher educators to work in teacher education and in guiding the next generation of teachers, and as one participant noted, a belief that they could be that “rare gem” to support pre-service teachers in their development. They expressed that their motivation and focus was the provision of meaningful teaching and learning opportunities, together with a sharing of experiences. It is interesting to note that this sentiment was more dominant in snapshot 1 where there were multiple references to making a transition from a teaching career to university teacher educator – with one participant noting, “having taught for many years in schools I feel I can bring a great deal of experience in teacher education” (TE8. 2013.SESS). 60% of this sample were aged 51-60 years, suggesting a length of time in the profession, prior to transitioning to university. Others indicated that they had retired and/or taken family leave from school teaching and moved to academia. Career transition is not mentioned in snapshot 2 and we noted that 80% of the teacher educators in this snapshot were aged between 31-40 years, possibly reflecting an earlier transition to academia.

While across the data the participants reflected on their own teaching careers and experience, together with what could be understood as pre-requisites and motivation for being a teacher educator, participants in snapshot 2 referred to research more than those in snapshot 1, questioning the ways that research could - and should - inform their practices in teacher education. This apparent emphasis on the integration of research informed approaches is reflected by one teacher educator who pondered their own experience as a pre-service teacher, stating that,

*I mostly felt that my initial teacher education was a mixed bag. It seemed to be a jumble between teachers with brilliant knowledge but a lack of research-informed practice, academics who were uninterested in undergraduates, and the rare gem who was able to tie it all together in an interesting manner.
(TE3.2020.FTO)*

Interestingly this sentiment was not identified in the earlier snapshot 1 responses. Rather than a focus on research-informed teaching and learning, responses from snapshot 1 highlight the role of personal professional experiences to pass on to the next generation as a means “to address problems of poor teacher knowledge (content and pedagogy) that [they] observed in secondary schools” (TE7.2013.FTC).

Teacher Educator Goals

“Take off their blinkers, open their eyes, be confident to change established practices” (TE6.2013.FTO)

A common goal among teacher educators, evident across the data, was to contribute to producing well prepared teachers for the profession. There was variation however on the ways that this could be achieved with the snapshot 1 participants focusing on the building of teaching skills, transmission of content and pedagogical knowledge. For example, one suggested their aim was to “assist them [psts] to develop knowledge, skills and values that will make a real difference in children’s lives” (TE2.2013.FTO) and another, to “identify strengths and weaknesses and address these throughout their careers” (TE7.2013.FTC). The suggested focus here is on the way that the teacher educator could assist the individual to be “the best teacher they can be” (TE4. 2013.SESS). The teacher educators in the 2013 cohort commonly described their teaching approach as “teacher as facilitator” and “teacher directed”.

In contrast, the overall goals expressed by the 2020 participants reflect a connection to the broader context of teaching and teachers being key agents in the profession. For example, teacher educators spoke of preparing graduates for the “challenges of teaching during precarious times” (TE3.2020.FTO), to “fight ignorance... [to] produce teachers who are both passionate and innovate (sic) practitioners willing and able to push against neo-liberal school systems” (TE1.2013.FTC). There were more references to the broader educational context and the role and impact of the dispositions required – and demanded – in an ever-changing education landscape. Dispositions that were identified included passion, innovation, the ability to “push” to be “pedagogically strong” and “enjoy” (TE4.2020.FTO) being an active member of the profession. In contrast to the responses in snapshot 1, in snapshot 2 most responses to the question related to a description of their teaching approach, referred to “a student-centred approach”. As one teacher educator expressed, “It’s hard to label but I spend a lot of time getting the students to talk about their experiences in relation to the content” (TE1.2020.FTC).

Enablers and Barriers to Work in Teacher Education

“At times I become despondent. But ... this collective work has been a source of pleasure” (TE3.2013.FTO)

Across the data there were examples of participants identifying the impact of program and/ or course coordination, and administrative requirements as a barrier impacting their work. This was reflected by a participant who commented, “The significant burden that program coordination places on time and thus the ability to focus on other parts of the job” (TE1.2020.FTO). Regulatory and institutional changes were also regarded as a barrier that impacted job satisfaction, with the same participant describing the negative impact of neoliberalism while another commented that “uni [sic] systems are shit but the notion of an institution is dependent on them” (TE3.2020.FTO). Changes to institutional structures were identified as posing a barrier, with one sessional participant from snapshot 1 describing that “as a sessional teacher it has sometimes been difficult to know who to ask about different issues” (TE8. 2013.SESS).

Despite the barriers posed by external forces and internal institutional changes and heavy administrative demands, across the data participants described themselves as being satisfied with their work in teacher education, with one describing “I love what I do. I love working with pre-service teachers” (TE5.2020.FTO). The diversity of working in teacher education was commented upon by participants in snapshot 1 who described the opportunities to “work with a wide range of students from undergraduate first years to master's students” (TE2.2013.FTO). In considering their futures in teacher education, participants in both snapshots saw themselves

continuing in their work, describing goals for personal advancement within the system, such as moving academic levels, taking on program leadership, or management within the university. Along with goals for personal advancement, participants described the desire to continue building programs and curriculum in partnership with others to provide education to students. This was described by one as, “still striving to achieve the best for our students and education. Supporting staff to introduce and deliver a new programme” (TE7.2013.FTC). The perceived futures in teacher education reflected the goals and motivations they had, with one describing that they:

think about this a lot. In some ways, I really enjoy working in a small regional university as it allows a better connection to students. I think long term I would really like to work more in partnership with students to develop better curriculum. (TE1.2020.FTO)

Teacher Educator Knowledge and Skills

“My experience as a teaching and learning coach has enabled me to develop the skills required to support other teachers in their own professional learning”.
(TE4. 2013.SESS)

Two of the survey questions invited responses that described the qualities they bring the profession as a teacher educator and to reflect on the ways that they develop their knowledge as professionals. Our analysis identified that knowledge was perceived as a central quality that informed their practice as a teacher educator. Responses from 2013 associated their knowledge with the individual skills and experience that they could pass on to students. That knowledge was grounded in their previous professional experiences as illustrated by this participant who commented that they had, “A thorough understanding of what is required to be a good secondary school teacher” (TE8. 2013.SESS). Similarly, another sessional staff member described one of the qualities they brought to the role as “sharing my own experiences and making connections between their theoretical learning in university and the practical classroom setting” (TE4. 2013.SESS). Interestingly, the two sessional and the one fixed-term contract staff member from 2013 commented more frequently through the survey about valuing the practical experience as a quality that they brought to their work as a teacher educator and their ability to “address gaps in knowledge that university courses missed” (TE7.2013.FTC).

Across the data set the majority of participants indicated that professional development of their knowledge and skills in teacher education was informed by participation in research conferences. One described the importance of this research led professional development saying, “The wider academic reading I have engaged in to develop and teach courses has provided a deeper understanding of the theory practice nexus. Research has enabled me to focus on particular areas and build deep knowledge in a specific discipline” (TE2.2012.FTO). While participants from both snapshots referred to drawing from research conferences to develop knowledge, again in the 2013 data there were more references to participation in conferences run by teaching organisations which might reflect the sessional staff and fixed term contract participants who expressed a greater emphasis on drawing from and connecting to their teaching experience. In contrast, the data from snapshot 2 participants had a greater emphasis on engaging in collegial conversations and collaboration as a means of professional development.

Discussion

Our research questions sought to identify what motivated teacher educators, the goals they expressed in relation to their work, together with the enablers and barriers. Across the data we have identified that personal and professional experiences have shaped the goals and motivations of the participants in this study. For some, such as the sessional staff and fixed-term contract respondents from 2013, in particular, this is based in their professional practice as teachers in school contexts and a desire to see pre-service teachers equipped with the technical and practical skills required for teaching. For others, particularly those from 2020, there is a desire to be the “rare gem” who can bring together practical skill and research-informed evidence. As the literature indicates working in the field of teacher education is complex (Loughran, 2016; Manton et al., 2020) and teacher educators indicated that this complexity is present within their work and institutions. Our data indicates that while within a small sample there are some common goals and motivations for the work of teacher educators, there is also a diversity of understandings of what people emphasise, enact or bring to their work- notably in relation to the areas of research and practical experience. We are not suggesting that teacher educators all need to hold the same beliefs and philosophies about teacher education, but we do posit that this might speak to one of the persistent challenges in the field of teacher education, i.e., how to develop and share collective understandings of what the discipline is, what it might be, and what the expectations and roles for those working in teacher education are. We address this further in the implications section of this article.

Our research questions also aimed at identifying the enablers, barriers and changes that teacher educators experienced in their practice. Interestingly, the kinds of things described as enablers, barriers and changes impacting practice remained consistent across both data collection points, with participants describing the negative impacts of administrative burdens and of changing institutional and neoliberal structures and systems on their work. Such responses are representative of other work examining the work of teacher educators (see for example Nuttall et al., 2013; Zipin & Nuttall, 2016) and are representative of the pressures experienced by academics in higher education more generally (Pitt & Mewburn, 2016). In their work, McDonough et al. (2020) identified that the factors that sustained teacher educators in their practice included being able to set and achieve goals and to engage in professional learning that linked to a sense of purpose. Similarly, in our study the enablers to practice are those elements that enable teacher educators to connect with colleagues and to their goals of developing the best possible teachers for the profession.

Further research questions examined the qualities and professional development that teacher educators perceived as relevant to their practice. As outlined in our findings, our participants perceived their professional experiences as being central to their work in teacher education, with the sessional and fixed-term contract participants from 2013 emphasising the ways that their practical experiences in school teaching contribute to what they bring to teacher education. They described undertaking a combination of professional learning that included research conferences or events facilitated by teacher professional associations or with a focus on professional practice. These have been self-identified and self-led. This concurs with Biesta et al. (2022) who suggest that the journey of becoming a teacher educator is “less about receiving formal education and more about individual and collective processes of self-formation” (p. 325).

In their recent work White et al. (2021) argue that there is an urgent need “to equip the next generation with a deep knowledge of the history of the teacher education field and what it

means to be a teacher educator” (p. 577). As we consider the data generated from our study, we wonder about the contextual and personal factors that might inhibit the development of this deep knowledge across those who work in teacher education, something we consider below in our implications and future directions.

Implications and Future Directions

Notwithstanding our acknowledgement of the limitations of this small-scale study that captured snapshots of teacher educators' work generated over almost a decade apart, the outcomes have provided a catalyst for us to reflect on a range of critical issues confronting the field of teacher education. In this section of the article, we meld our data and the research literature as a means to create a springboard for considering these broader issues and in doing so, suggest how individually and collectively, we could use these to inform and guide future directions.

Exploring and Articulating the Discipline of Teacher Education

First, there is the ongoing challenge to advocate for the discipline of teacher education (Loughran, 2009) as it is imperative that those who work as teacher educators collectively define and articulate what it is that constitutes the discipline. As we identified through our data there is evidence of heterogeneous perspectives about teacher education, and these appear to be mediated by the backgrounds of those working within the field. How we articulate and frame the discipline of teacher education is important to consider as it is so frequently framed by those who are external to the discipline. Loughran and Hamilton (2016) argue that the public view of teaching that suggests a linear progression of learning contributes to view of teacher education as training. How teacher education is seen in the public imagination is one area of tension, but how we ourselves see and understand the discipline is another. As Johnston and Purcell (2022) identified, who constitutes the discipline can be contested as those teaching into teacher education programs may be from within teacher education or from other disciplines within higher education. This complexity raises questions for how we identify and explore the discipline. Beyond the challenges of articulating what the discipline is for those who work within it, and doing so in ways that move beyond responding to responding to policy alone (Fitzgerald, 2023; White et al., 2021), there also lies the challenge of how we do that among all those working in teacher education.

Learning About Teacher Education in an Increasingly Casualized Higher Education Sector

Our study highlighted that even with a small number of respondents in one regional university there exists a diversity of beliefs, opinions, practices and expectations, which is to be applauded. However, without a collective and perhaps mediated identity as a discipline, with defined and collective protocols and practices, there is difficulty in finding and acting as a unified voice, both within and about the profession. What are the teacher educator knowledge, skills, dispositions and practices that represent a discipline? Our study indicated that all teacher educators, regardless of employment status, identified the ways that they engaged in professional

learning and opportunities for research and pedagogical development. We assume that teacher educators understand the dimensions of the discipline – yet, what do we base this on other than personal and professional experiences? Until we can articulate and identify this internally, we cannot expect those outside the discipline to know and understand our discipline, thereby leaving ourselves and teacher education vulnerable to external stakeholders (Fitzgerald, 2023).

We also see the influence of sessional employment in the growth of the profession as a discipline as particularly pertinent for further consideration. Snapshot 1 highlighted the approaches of a small number of sessional and fixed-term contract staff who suggested their pathway to academia was via an “experienced teacher” role. The focus of their teaching was to use this experience as a means of preparing pre-service teachers for their profession. We argue that if we are to build a sustainable, responsive discipline of teacher education, then sessional and fixed-term contract staff need to be provided with opportunities for professional development and creative exploration of theories, and research-informed pedagogies. Our universities cannot effectively function and move forward without the collective contribution from the casual, sessional, precarious workforce.

Reid and Hall (2022) argue that teacher educators require “practice-based and disciplined evidence to share” (p. 20). They contend that this could be undertaken in collaborative ways by the profession itself. These endeavours, however, require teacher educators to have the time, capacity and support to undertake this work, and we question how an increasingly casualized university workforce might impact on calls such as these. We question how we can support the pedagogical and research development of those working in teacher education if casualized staff are not supported financially to engage in collegial networking, professional development and research. White et al.’s (2021) work seeks to learn from the ‘shoulders of giants’, and we question how the next generation of giants within the teacher education discipline will be supported if they continue to be subject to casualized contracts, or for those in ongoing positions to heavy administrative and teaching demands that limit the opportunity for deep exploration of the scholarship of practice and research.

Where to Next?

Our learning from this small-scale comparative study has been useful in prompting us to consider the silences and tensions that we see emerging in our data and in the literature more broadly. We see the potential for future larger scale work examining the work and workforce of teacher educators. We argue that such work would provide universities, policy makers and stakeholders such as government with insights into ways to support teacher educators as they implement initial teacher education programs. This research needs to occur alongside continued research, discussion and collaboration to advocate and define the discipline of teacher education. Without these two streams of work, the field of teacher education will continue to be misunderstood and subject to characterisations of what it is and is not by those from outside the field.

References

- Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership. (AITSL). (2011). *Australian professional standards for teachers*. AITSL. <https://www.aitsl.edu.au/standards>
- Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership. (AITSL). (2015). *Accreditation of initial teacher education programs in Australia*. AITSL. https://www.aitsl.edu.au/docs/default-source/national-policy-framework/accreditation-of-initial-teacher-education-programs-in-australia.pdf?sfvrsn=e87cff3c_48
- Bahr, N., & Mellor, S. (2016). *Building quality in teaching and teacher education*. ACER Press.
- Biesta, G., Takayama, K., Kettle, M., & Heimans, S. (2022). Who educates the teacher educator? On research, practice and politics. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education*, 50(4), 325-327. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1359866X.2022.2104467>
- Bourke, T., & Ryan, M. (2023). How is impact defined in initial teacher education policy in Australia? *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice*, 29(2), 133- 149. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13540602.2022.2144824>
- Davey, R. (2013). *The professional identity of teacher educators: Career on the cusp?* Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203584934>
- Fitzgerald, T. (2023). Disrupting discourses and reclaiming public teacher education: A provocation. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education*, 51(1), 5-14. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1359866X.2022.2162849>
- Gore, J. (2016). Reform and the reconceptualisation of teacher education in Australia. In R. Brandenburg, S. McDonough, J. Burke & S. White (Eds.), *Teacher Education: Innovation, intervention and impact* (pp. 15-34). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-0785-9_2
- Hangul, T., Ozmantar, M.F., & Agac, G. (2022). Teacher Educators: A bibliometric mapping of an emerging research area. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 47(10). <https://doi.org/10.14221/ajte.2022v47n10.3>
- Heffernan, T.A. (2018). Approaches to career development and support for sessional academics in higher education. *International Journal for Academic Development*, 23(4), 312-323. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1360144X.2018.1510406>
- Jensen, B., Hunter, A., Sonnemann, J., & Burns, T. (2012). *Catching up: learning from the best school systems in East Asia*. Grattan Institute. https://grattan.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/129_report_learning_from_the_best_main.pdf
- Johnston, J., & Purcell, R. (2022). Who else is teaching the teachers? The subject discipline teacher educator in initial teacher education. *European Journal of Teacher Education*, 45(1), 113-126. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02619768.2020.1803267>
- Klopper, C.J., & Power, B.M. (2014). The casual approach to teacher education: What effect does casualization have for Australian university teaching? *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 39(4). <https://doi.org/10.14221/ajte.2014v39n4.1>
- Lankshear, C., & Knobel, M. (2004). *A handbook for teacher research*. McGraw-Hill.
- Louden, B. (2008). 101 Damnations: The persistence of criticism and the absence of evidence about teacher education in Australia. *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice*, 14(4), 357-368. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13540600802037777>
- Loughran, J. (2009). Is teaching a discipline? Implications for teaching and teacher education. *Teachers and teaching: Theory and Practice*, 15(2), 189-203. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13540600902875290>

- Loughran, J. (2016). Teaching and teacher education: The need to go beyond rhetoric. In R. Brandenburg, S. McDonough, J. Burke & S. White (Eds.), *Teacher Education: Innovation, intervention and impact* (pp. 253-264). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-0785-9_15
- Loughran J. & Hamilton, M.L (2016). Developing an understanding of teacher education. In J. Loughran & M. Hamilton (Eds.), *International handbook of Teacher Education* (pp. 3-22). (Vol 1). Springer. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-0366-0>
- Manton, C., Heffernan, T., Kostogriz, A., & Seddon, T. (2020). Australian school-university partnerships: the (dis)integrated work of teacher educators. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1359866X.2020.1780563>
- McDonough, S., Papatraianou, L., Strangeways, A., Mansfield, C. F., & Beutel, D. (2020). Navigating changing times: Exploring teacher educator experiences of resilience. In C. F. Mansfield (Ed.), *Cultivating teacher resilience: International approaches, applications and impact* (pp. 279–294). Springer https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-15-5963-1_17
- Murray, J., & Kosnik, C. (2011). Academic work and identities in teacher education. *Journal of Education for Teaching*, 37(3), 243-246. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-15-5963-1_17
- Nuttall, J., & Brennan, M. (2016). Teacher education as academic work: the affordances of a materialist analysis. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education*, 44(4), 364-378. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1359866X.2016.1144712>
- Nuttall, J., Brennan, M., Zipin, L., Tuinamuana, K., & Cameron, L. (2013). Lost in production: The erasure of the teacher educator in Australian university job advertisements. *Journal of Education for Teaching*, 39(3), 329-343. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02607476.2013.799849>
- Pitt, R., & Mewburn, I. (2016). Academic superheroes? A critical analysis of academic job descriptions. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*, 38(1), 88-101. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1360080X.2015.1126896>
- Reid, J., & Hall, G. (2022). Looking back, looking forward: taking stock of teacher education at (another) crossroad. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education*, 50(1), 8-22. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1359866X.2021.2019676>
- Teacher Education Ministerial Advisory Group (TEMAG). (2014). *Action Now: Classroom ready teachers*. Retrieved from: https://docs.education.gov.au/system/files/doc/other/action_now_classroom_ready_teachers_accessible.pdf
- White, S., Murray, J., Goodwin, A.L., Kosnik, C., & Beck, C. (2021). On the shoulders of giants: advice for beginning teacher educators. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education*, 49(5), 566-579. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1359866X.2020.1756223>
- Zipin, L., & Nuttall, J. (2016). Embodying pre-tense conditions for research among teacher educators in the Australian university sector: a Bourdieusian analysis of ethico-emotive suffering. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education*, 44(4), 348-363. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1359866X.2016.1177164>