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The tensions of preparing pre-service teachers to be assessment capable and profession-ready.

Abstract

There is both a growing appreciation of teacher assessment capability for the improvement of school student learning and achievement and a commensurate drive for graduates in Australian Initial Teacher Education institutions to demonstrate impact on school student learning as part of a national accreditation process (AITSL, 2015). We argue in this article that if institutions are to prepare assessment capable graduates who are 'profession-ready', attention to practice architectures is warranted. Practice architectures are the features in schools that enable and/or constrain practice. Skills, knowledge and understandings do not just cleanly transfer across Initial Teacher Education institutions and practicum contexts into graduate teacher classrooms. Practitioner identities are produced through 'relatings' within specific social-political arrangement, 'doings' that constitute activities afforded in material-economic conditions, and 'sayings' that are a dominating medium in cultural-discursive frameworks.

Introduction

There is a clear expectation that beginning teachers will be 'profession-ready' upon graduation from their Initial Teacher Education (ITE) programs. This 'readiness' is framed by the complex schooling contexts in which beginning teachers find themselves – contexts that are often new to them. In this article the preparation of profession-ready beginning teachers is considered in light of the complexity of schooling contexts and the practice architectures that exist within them. Practice architectures encompass contextual traditions and collective projects that influence

the nature of relationships and what can be said and done in schools (Kemmis et al., 2014).

‘Profession-ready’, (a term used by Wyatt-Smith in personal communication, 2017) can be conceptualised as encompassing a range of assessment related skills, knowledge and dispositions, that are mediated by and contextually embedded within the practice architectures of schools. This notion of being professional transcends a checklist approach to initial teacher education (ITE). Rather than considering that pre-service teachers (PSTs) at the end of their ITE will be ‘classroom-ready’ (Craven et al., 2014) through meeting instrumentalist criteria, we argue that classroom-readiness is problematic because rigorous professional preparation is a complex and ongoing process. It is appropriate that ITE prepares graduates for robust engagement with the profession of teaching and learning, and in particular graduates’ own ongoing growth through critical inquiry into practice and assessment capability. Assessment capability includes building awareness of and skill in the variety of assessment modes, and ensuring understanding of validity, reliability, and task design in assessments.

This paper addresses how assessment capability for profession-readiness can be fostered through ITE. It provides an integration of literatures as a framework that highlights directions for future inquiry. The notion of assessment capability is complex, involving elements of agency and the location of identities. Public education discourses, which often constitute a focus on measurement for accountability purposes (Mockler, 2013), can frame teacher and student practices and identities in reductive ways. In this article we consider issues underpinning classroom and profession-readiness – the requirement that PSTs transitioning to beginning teachers demonstrate their impact on school student learning, the development of PST assessment capability, and the complexity of enacting assessment theory in the

practice architectures of schools.

Drawing from practice theory (Kemmis et al., 2014; Kemmis et al., 2017), we deploy the notion of practice architectures to consider the richness of higher education and schooling settings, and the challenge of supporting the skills, knowledge and dispositions of emerging practitioners in assessment. The development of these skills, knowledge and dispositions can be seen as a form of existential learning because it strongly influences the growth of practitioner assessment identities (Looney, Cumming, van Der Kleij & Harris, 2017). A conception of practitioner assessment identities contravenes a technicist policy approach to the execution of assessment practice, as there is an existential dimension. The concept of existential learning as identity work in ITE pertains to a sense of being in and with the world (Biesta, 2015) and the production of practitioner identities that are located and produced within specific social contexts (Charteris et al., 2015). Through existential learning, preservice teacher bodies, minds and social situational experiences are “transformed cognitively, emotively, or practically” with the result of a “continually changing (or more experienced) person” (Jarvis, 2006, p. 134).

Arguments about impact and assessment capability are legitimate, yet special consideration of the practice architectures that influence existential learning is warranted when preparing beginning teachers for professional practice in schools.

The drive for ‘classroom-readiness’ - impact and evidence

Across Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries, higher education is a significant driver of “economic competitiveness in the “knowledge-driven global economy” (OECD, 2010, p. 4). This has become significant to ITE as “high-quality teachers and high-quality teaching are emerging as keys to improved national performance” (Ingvarson, et al., 2014, p. 2) and this

competitive emphasis has translated into a drive to measure the impact of teacher education on the quality of graduates. Integral to a focus on PST performance are standards as a policy mechanism for leveraging development.

In Australia, the *Australian Teacher Performance and Development Framework* outlines systemic elements as aspirational characteristics for a culture of sustained improvements in schools (AITSL, 2014). An integral part of the Framework, the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers*, targets “professional learning, practice and engagement, facilitates the improvement of teacher quality and contributes positively to the public standing of the profession” (AITSL, 2011, p.1). In this particular framing of teacher practices, the focus is firmly on graduate teachers’ positive impact on school student learning. At ‘Graduate’ career stage level the Standards are used as a heuristic where PSTs in their final year practicums are required to provide evidence of their positive impact on student learning in their practicum classrooms (AITSL, 2015). We understand the term ‘impact’ to pertain to how teachers influence, and contribute to, student learning, development and achievement over a period of time.

Australian ITE institutions are charged with the task of producing ‘classroom ready’ graduates in ITE programs (Craven et al., 2014). In 2014, the Teacher Education Ministerial Advisory Group (TEMAG), led by Professor Greg Craven, reviewed 175 public submissions to provide a strong critique of the quality of Australian ITE programs (Craven et al., 2014). The findings drew attention to the assessment capability of new graduates as an important dimension of ITE.

[N]ot all initial teacher education programs are equipping graduates with content knowledge, nor evidence-based teaching strategies and skills they need to respond to different student learning needs; initial teacher education

programs include content not informed by evidence; programs are not preparing preservice students with knowledge to use assessment data to inform or improve their practice. (Hickey, 2015, p. 18)

The collection of data and evidence and the use of such information to inform newly graduated teachers' practices in responding to "different student learning needs" is viewed as a key role of teachers, albeit not one that was evidenced in all ITE courses at the time (Hickey, 2015). The government response to the TEMAG report was to tighten regulatory control over ITE through introducing the *Students First* policy (Australian Government Department of Education and Training, 2015). These policy shifts require "stronger quality assurance of teacher education courses"; "rigorous selection for entry to teacher education courses" (p. 5); "improved and structured practical experience for teacher education students" (p. 7); "robust assessment of graduates to ensure classroom readiness" (p. 8) and a "review of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers to make sure they capture what beginning teachers need to know and be able to do from their first day in the classroom" (p. 9). These mandates are a profound shift for ITE institutions that need to show evidence of the impact of their courses, with credentialing and accreditation linked with the quality assurance of their PSTs' readiness for classroom practice.

It is anticipated that the implementation of newly conceptualised graduate teacher performance assessments (currently being trialled in a range of Universities in Australia), will give emphasis to quality assurance of teaching practice into the future. For PSTs, this re-shaping of ITE provides a backdrop to the foregrounded reality of developing their assessment practices with school students in practicum classrooms. It is therefore timely to critically consider what we understand by PST assessment capability and impact on student learning within schooling ecologies (Kemmis et al.,

2014). Exchanging the notion of ‘agency’ for ‘assessment’, we draw from Biesta and Tedder’s (2007) conception of ecology to illustrate schooling ecologies.

[In schooling ecologies] actors always act by means of their environment rather than simply in their environment [so that assessment practices] “will always result from the interplay of individual efforts, available resources and contextual and structural factors as they come together in particular and, in a sense, always unique situations” (Biesta & Tedder, 2007, p. 137).

The notion of ecologies highlights the interconnectedness of practices. Therefore, the variables associated with impact are difficult (if not impossible) to fully determine. Moves aimed at “future proofing” (Murray & Passy, 2014, p. 504) graduates are based on the assumption that positive performance in preservice practicum contexts can translate unequivocally to the first year of teaching and that graduates can be highly effective practitioners from the moment that they enter the teaching workforce. While this aspirational goal is desirable, there is complexity in the transition of PSTs into schooling ecologies that may be overlooked when a technician lens is applied to teacher education.

Assessment capability

A focus on assessment capability transcends technical rationalism and evokes the notion of professional judgment which reflects teachers’ ontological positioning at that specific moment in time (Brownlee & Berthelsen, 2006). Teacher pedagogical actions can be seen as corresponding to a continuum from relativist to realist ontological positions.

A teacher with a realist worldview would be more likely to endorse a belief that knowledge can be transmitted to a student, whereas a relativist would be

more likely to express a constructivist perspective that each student constructs knowledge that is relevant to him or her with the help of the teacher (Kelly, 2017, p. 148).

During the early 20th century traditional measurement approaches to assessment prioritised objectivity, focused on social efficiency and behaviourist theories of learning. These foci resulted in assessment becoming separated from instruction. Later social-constructivist paradigms emerged that acknowledged the interrelatedness of assessment, curriculum and learning theories (Willis, Adie, & Klenowski, 2013). Assessment practice became understood as a relational activity, influenced by the social, cultural, economic, and political contexts in which it operates (Gipps, 2005). In recent years contextually embedded inquiry has been an important facet of schooling assessment practices. When conceptualised as critical inquiry, teacher assessment practice is constituted through four lenses: conceptions of knowledge; conceptions about the alignment of assessment, learning and teaching and how these are enacted in practice; teacher judgment practices (e.g. moderation); and curriculum literacies that are required to participate in and contribute to knowledge domains (Wyatt-Smith & Gunn, 2009). Sociocultural assessment practices, that evoke these 4 lenses, involve “critical inquiry [into] the practices and processes of assessing – social and cultural acts of doing assessment in actual contexts” (Wyatt-Smith & Gunn, 2009 p. 87).

While it is generally held that teachers need to be assessment literate (Willis, et al., 2013), with expertise in assessment techniques and practices, and understanding of quality and standards, emphasis is also given to assessment capability. Involving assessment practices that enable learners to self-regulate and exercise agency in their learning, this is a departure from formulaically adopted assessment for learning practices that do not prioritise the role of learners (Booth, Dixon, & Hill, 2016).

Practitioners with assessment capability understand that assessment for learning takes place in the “everyday practice” of “students, teachers and peers” when they seek, reflect upon and respond to “information from dialogue, demonstration and observation in ways that enhance ongoing learning” (Klenowski, 2009, p. 264). In these environments, assessment data is used by education leaders, teachers, and importantly, learners themselves, primarily for formative purposes associated with growth and improvement.

Fostering the assessment capability of PSTs

As indicated above, the assessment capability of PSTs is deemed essential to the success of school students in classrooms. Consideration must therefore be given to the assessment experiences PSTs encounter in ITE that will influence their own assessment practices. There is a concerted drive to foster the assessment capability of initial teacher educators (Grainger & Adie, 2014) that in turn can translate into a capacity to support the assessment capability of PSTs during their teacher education.

While there has been research about the ways in which authentic assessment (Grainger & Adie, 2014), formative assessment (Dargusch, 2010), and assessment for learning (Klenowski, 2009) are enacted in schooling settings, less has been written about the types of ITE assessment practices that strengthen PSTs’ knowledge and skills in assessment as they transition into the profession (Grainger & Adie, 2014).

Given the task for initial teacher educators to ensure that PSTs achieve the practice level outlined in the *Professional Standards for Teachers* in Australia, it is important that a coherent approach is adopted across ITE courses. Flockton (2012) highlights that there is the need for education systems to be assessment-capable. ITE is therefore an important space for promoting and modelling authentic practices to provide a foundation for the ongoing development of teacher assessment capability. There is

evidence, however, from a study spanning four Aotearoa/New Zealand universities, that although in general the graduates were well prepared, emergent assessment capability was not universal. By graduation, “many were still less than confident and in need of support to use assessment for multiple purposes” (Hill, Smith, Cowie, Gilmore & Gunn, 2013, p. 9).

To produce assessment capable ITE graduates, teacher educators must determine the assessment beliefs and skills of PSTs and use this information in supporting and developing robust assessment for learning practices. The above results shed light on the need to support PSTs in making judgements against standards using authentic as well as standardised assessment tasks, and in engaging in productive moderation and professional learning conversations.

Assessment capability - an existential endeavour

More than just working with the knowledge and beliefs of PSTs, building assessment capability involves existential teacher learning, linked with teacher identities. Looney et al (2017) draw on teacher identity research to posit “that teachers’ identity as professionals, beliefs about assessment, disposition towards enacting assessment, and perceptions of their role as assessors are all significant for their assessment work” (p. 1). They coin the term ‘teacher assessment identity’ to describe a rich and broad representation of teacher as assessor and consider issues for teacher assessment capability and engagement.

Less linear than assessment literacy (Gardner et al., 2010), the notion of teacher assessment identity adds an existential dimension that encompasses the notion that identity is not stable and shifts over time due to a plethora of external contextual and internal factors (Looney et al., 2017). Therefore schooling ecologies (Kemmis et al.,

2014) are important considerations for the development of assessment capable teacher education graduates. For assessment capability to be developed in ITE and successfully transitioned into schools, engagement with assessment practice architectures across contexts must be considered.

Practice architectures

The development of teacher assessment capability is closely linked with socio-cultural contexts of schools, communities and the wider politics of the time and place. Schatzki (2005) observes that the “social is composed of nexuses of practices [organised human activity] and material arrangements... [so that] social life inherently transpires as part of such nexuses” (p. 470). Kemmis et al (2014) take up Schatzki’s work in their assertion that the most beneficial practices are those that engage with local and situated contexts, or “site ontologies” (p. 33). “[P]ractices are not performed from predetermined scripts; the way a practice unfolds or happens is always shaped by the conditions that pertain in a particular site at a particular time” (Kemmis et al., 2014, p. 33).

Both higher education and schooling contexts are characterised by particular social, cultural and historical shapings. As Hardy (2010) points out, there are “socio-political, material-economic and cultural-discursive dimensions... [that interact to] collectively influence and are influenced by those who constitute any social setting” (p. 391). In Education settings, practice architectures both enable and constrain “particular kinds of sayings, doings and relatings among people within them, and in relation to others outside them” (Kemmis & Grootenboer 2008, p. 59). Immersed in practice architectures, learning can be seen as a process of being “‘stirred in’ to practices” (Kemmis et al. 2017, p. 45). Kemmis et al (2017) use this mixing metaphor to highlight “the motion and dynamism” of becoming a practitioner (p. 45).

The diagram below (Figure 1) illustrates the intersection of “cultural discursive”, “material economic” and “social political” arrangements that create schooling practice architectures that hold professional learning in place (Kemmis et al., 2014, p. 34).

Insert Figure 1 here.

Figure 1. The media and spaces in which saying, doings and relating exist (Kemmis et al., 2014 p. 34)

It is highly relevant therefore to consider practice architectures in relation to ITE programs which are accredited ‘based on an assessment of their impact’ and their preparation of their PSTs to be profession-ready.

Practice architectures and profession-readiness

In the current milieu, teacher education has been constructed through the cultural-discursive arrangements of semantic space as a ‘policy problem’ (Brett et al., 2016). This ‘problem’ is characterised by a global teaching standards movement and increased political and policy attention directed toward the impact of teacher education programs (Brett et al., 2016). Like Brett and colleagues, we hope that a proactive approach by ITE institutions may facilitate “a more profound definition of university-school partnerships, and better-prepared pre-service and graduate teachers” (p. 1). However, there are important considerations for those preparing teachers to transition into the profession and wider implications of this political emphasis on preparing ‘classroom-ready’ (Craven et al., 2014) graduates.

It is timely to reflect on the underpinning rationale for practice preparation and a distinction needs to be made in the field between classroom-readiness and profession-readiness. But what constitutes socio-political ‘profession-readiness’? We consider

that while classroom readiness involves the acquisition of content knowledge, evidence-based teaching strategies, and skills (Hickey, 2015), profession-readiness is an existential endeavour that evolves over time and involves engagement in a broad conception of Education. Education is more than ‘learnification’ where the educative process becomes reduced to an economic transaction, with learners as ‘consumers’ and institutions as ‘providers’ that facilitate an exchange of classroom interactions (Biesta, 2005). Regrettably, through cultural-discursive (policy levers) and material-economic (funding levers) arrangements, teacher education can be positioned as a commodity to be consumed, with classroom-readiness characterised by PSTs’ ability to reproduce this type of exchange. Taking up this critique of instrumentalism, Husbands (2016) describes teacher education as vocational, more a grounding for the profession, than preparation for occupational employment. “Although it is concerned with preparation for the classroom, it does much more, addressing issues of purpose and value in education as much as how to teach” (Husbands, 2016, p. 26). Therefore, ITE can be seen as non-instrumental if it ensures that broad goals associated with social good are foregrounded through an education process. In the words of Biesta (2005), this involves “democratic deliberation about the content and purpose of education and its role in society” (p. 60). For PSTs to be profession-ready they need to understand the importance of this “deliberation” and equipped to partake in debate. To be profession-ready is therefore not to be unequivocally prepared for any classroom and processes of teacher professional growth are ongoing. Furthermore, there are significant differences between the unique practice architectures of educative spaces that need to be recognised when considering readiness for the profession.

Practice architectures across organisations

Although there is an emphasis on classroom-readiness (Craven et al., 2014) as an internalised capability, PSTs' ability to exercise assessment capability in operating in a range of contexts, including both ITE and Practicum schools, is challenged here. Universities and schools have unique practice architectures. Therefore, to 'survive and thrive' in contexts, graduates become part of the happenings (the doings, sayings and relatings). To be part of the "living practice" (Kemmis et al., 2014, p. 34), 'profession-ready' graduates participate in the unfolding sayings, doings and relatings in education sites, negotiating particular kinds of "discursive, physical and social traces or residues of what [has] happened through the unfolding of the practice" (p. 34).

The *Students First* policy impetus on 'teacher quality' (Australian Government, 2015) influences the practice architectures of ITE as it frames the cultural-discursive dimension of this work (*sayings*). There is a substantive material-economic investment in the aspects of ITE mentioned in the *Students First* policy (*doings*). The new sorts of social-political arrangements between the government, ITE providers (universities), PSTs, and schools are reframing *relatings*. This policy emphasis on quality assurance could ultimately lead to tighter control over teacher education provision and the endorsement of a narrow conception of ITE (and schooling).

Students First places an emphasis on classroom-readiness and assessment competence, implying clear relationships between practice architectures across the institutions in which PSTs experience ITE. Yet there are important and often necessary differences in the emphases of tertiary education and schools and there can be a disjuncture between practices in these settings, with different values and pedagogies profiled as important. High quality practices that demonstrate innovation

can be evident in both settings, yet these may not be seen and recognised due to the political emphasis in the organisation and the dynamics of the culture.

Being “stirred in” (Kemmis et al. 2017, p. 45) to the profession is time consuming. Therefore profession-readiness in new contexts initially requires substantive engagement with the existing practice architecture of schools where graduates commence their careers – those who are fortunate enough to secure ongoing employment. Profession-readiness is therefore an aspiration, rather than a set of skills that can be developed through previous practice in a different context. While final practicums and internships provide opportunities for PSTs to practise assessment semi-independently, these practices are firmly tied to the site in which they occur and are strongly influenced by that site. Although PSTs have the opportunity to ‘try on’ the role of teacher, there can be tensions between what is learned and experienced in ITE, and what is learned and experienced in the environment of the practicum. A further disjuncture can arise when beginning teachers are called upon to negotiate and engage with the practice architectures of their new, first year teaching contexts. Also of concern is the way in which they are charged with the very different work of building identities as teachers, after a period of close mentorship. Consideration must be given to the ways in which new graduates make sense of these experiences in the setting of first year teaching.

Practice architectures and assessment capability

In the current milieu, there is a move to prepare PSTs to be assessment capable and attributed with assessment capability. However, it is unclear how these attributes transition from contexts of practicum experience to graduate positions. More complex than a set of skills, assessment capability requires proficiency in the assessment associated relations, doings, and beings of classroom contexts. These practices

include proficiency in making teacher judgments according to cultural-discursively defined levels of progression, moderation, and practices associated with sharing socio-political power with school students who are encouraged to be self-regulating learners.

The robust development of PST assessment capability as a process of critical inquiry is complex. It involves an acknowledgement of the sophistication of assessment decision making and an engagement with existential learning where practitioners function within the practice architectures of specific schools. Without assessment-capable school systems operating at the convergence of cultural-discursive, material-economic and social-political affordances, it is doubtful the aspiration for school students to be assessment capable will be realised (Flockton, 2012). As Absolum et al. (2009) highlight, assessment capability is desirable at all levels of the system which implies that it is relevant to teacher educators, PSTs, mentor teachers, school leaders, teachers and students.

In practicum schools, it is understood that “practices take form in, and are formed by the site of the social” (Schatzki, 2002 in Edwards-Groves, 2013, p. 19). In these contexts, the development and demonstration of PSTs’ assessment capability is influenced by their stature as novice and outsider, relationships with mentors, and the nature of teacher/student relationships which are constituted and reconstituted within learning settings. This has repercussions for the ways in which PSTs experience those aspects of practice that match with descriptions of assessment capability.

For some PSTs, it is necessary to be guided in practice by mentors who themselves may not have all the markers of assessment capability and whose own assessment practices may be constrained by their understanding of their role as assessor (particularly in the high stakes contexts of the National Assessment Program –

Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) and credentialing in Senior Schooling). In these schooling apprenticeships, practice is in most cases intensively directed by the guidelines set by the ITE institution and the requirements/expectations of the school itself. PSTs are specifically guided toward specific elements of practice – and in particular practices aligned with the graduate dimension of the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* (AITSL, 2011). Therefore, PSTs may not be aware of the sophistication of doings, sayings and relatings and how these interrelated practices influence the enactment of assessment in the school. Because of these parameters and limitations, PSTs can experience assessment, as bounded by the practice architectures of the school, without explicitly understanding their influence. The process of developing assessment capability through critical inquiry, where teachers demonstrate the “practices and processes of assessing—as “social and cultural acts of doing assessment in actual contexts” (Wyatt-Smith & Gunn, 2009, p. 83), is only achievable to a limited degree in ITE and practicum contexts. The PST does not have full ongoing responsibility and associated accountability for a class of learners.

We argue that consideration be given to the ways in which teacher educators both model and practise assessment, for PSTs experience assessment in ITE as both ‘student’ and ‘professional in training’ (Davis & Dargusch, 2015). Elwood and Klenowski suggest that ITE teachers should consider their own practices “in line with current thinking of what constitutes effective educational assessment at the classroom level” (2002, p. 244). This could ease the burden on PSTs to negotiate the differences between the educational assessment they have experienced and that which they must enact (eg. primary school settings) (Grainger & Adie, 2014).

Assessment capability and existential learning

Fostering assessment capability in ITE settings and transitioning into schooling ecologies is acknowledged here as a complex undertaking. Hill et al (2013) make recommendations for transition practices that support graduate teacher assessment capability.

[I]t would be valuable to assist ITE students to engage in their own assessment and become more accountable for their own learning, and at the same time assist ITE students to learn more about how to help the children they teach to become assessment capable in these ways. Greater liaison between universities and schools to consolidate beliefs and practices for an assessment for learning schooling environment would also be beneficial. Such liaison could provide more consistency for the ITE students moving between these two contexts as well professional learning and development opportunities to ensure continued assessment learning in the two years before full registration.
(p. 9)

If PSTs are to be supported to develop assessment capability, it cannot be assumed this concept is widely understood by educators in teacher education institutions. Hill et al (2013) also make the case for teacher educator professional learning in assessment. While formative assessment is a widely acknowledged concept in higher education, it is debateable whether the assessment practices described by Boud and associates (2010) have consistently translated across into all ITE practice. There are a range of factors that require further scrutiny.

Assessment capability for profession-readiness

There are considerations for ITE institutions and employing authorities to be mindful of when supporting graduates with their transition into schools. It could be assumed

that assessment related classroom-readiness merely incorporates elements of assessment for learning. These elements include but are not limited to the ‘skills’ of reading data, planning for clear learning intentions with the co-construction of achievement criteria, personalising learning for individual needs, fostering school student self-regulation, fostering feedback practices, engaging in collaborative benchmark setting and moderation, and conducting summative assessment. If graduates are assessment capable and ‘profession-ready’, it is of value that they clarify their theoretical stance in relation to the politics of assessment practice. It is pertinent that educators in ITE develop an understanding of how assessment practices can be implemented to enhance ‘learnification’ (Biesta, 2005) as a reductive form of technicism, or be seen as a process of generative professional identity work that offer opportunities for existential learning.

Issues for further consideration

We view the theory of practice architectures as a useful one, however there have been issues raised in relation to its application. Kemmis, Wilkinson & Edwards-Groves (2016) have acknowledged that: it has been seen as “incoherent”, “ambiguous” and “confusing”; people have struggled in its use to analyse unfolding practices in sites; and others have found themselves embroiled in disagreements over “their analyses and their implications” (p. 255). However we see that it offers a unique lens on the complexities of ITE practice and the associated enactments of policy.

Research focused on early career teachers’ attrition from the profession in Australia presents a relatively bleak picture with 20-25% of graduates leaving within 5 years of graduation (Mayer, et al., 2015; Mayer, et al., 2014). In Canada and the U.S. attrition within the same period is as high as 50% (Fauntilli & McDougall, 2009; Joiner & Edwards, 2008). While this paper is not dealing with the worrying issue of attrition,

some of the key research messages about difficulties that affect PSTs in the transition to teaching practice are relevant. When considered against the framing of practice architecture and assessment capability, these messages provide opportunities to identify further important research questions and directions to address attrition.

Firstly, early career teachers construct their teacher identity shaped by the contextual factors present in their teaching site while trying to ‘apply their existing perspectives, priorities and philosophies to this work’ (Morrison, p. 91, 2013). Further research could consider how graduates could best be supported to bring their assessment knowledge and skills to new placements in order to foster identities as independent and effective teachers within schooling practice architectures. Investigation of the different types of sayings, doing and relatings that are experienced and practised during ITE and practicums influence teacher functioning in the practice architectures of first year classrooms. Further research could provide insights into how beginning teachers might be supported to consider and develop their own assessment identities. Further consideration could be given to how emerging teachers negotiate practice architectures as profession-ready assessment capable practitioners when they are in new teaching contexts.

Secondly, ITE cannot present PSTs with a complete set of diverse experiences as they are constrained by both practicum contexts and the bounded nature of the ITE degrees. It follows, therefore, that existential learning is required for preservice teachers to be ‘stirred’ into the profession (the cultural-discursive, material-economic and social-political arrangements). Further investigation would be needed to understand the extent to which existential learning is explicitly supported in the push for graduate assessment capability.

Thirdly, the communities in which new teachers find themselves as graduates may not provide them with the types of mentoring or opportunities to participate in professional learning that are necessary to support continued growth (Morrison, 2013). Consideration should be given to the types of mentoring practices that support graduates to recognise the dimensions of practice architectures and how they can adapt and thrive in them. In addition, it is necessary to investigate how profession-readiness pertains to the existential process of learning to be assessment capable in ITE contexts and schooling settings where novices are mentored on practicums and internships.

Fourthly, university course preparation and the ‘realities of classroom practice’ are viewed as quite distinct by new graduates (Joseph, 2011). Connections between ITE and classroom practice are an important area for research. This could include a focus on what relationships, if any, exist between practice architectures in higher education and schools. Attention could also be given to how PSTs’ assessment expertise could be ‘stirred into’ (Kemmis et al. 2017, p. 45) the graduate teacher classroom. The experiences of graduates vary in the practice architectures of schools and they take up different roles that may involve permanent appointment or casual contract-based relief teaching.

The identities afforded teachers within practice architectures are linked with their institutional circumstances, the sayings, doings and relatings in particular contexts. Experienced teachers with secure ongoing employment are located differently within the social-political arrangements (relatings) of schools to PSTs on practicum, casual relief teachers and new graduates. What they can do, due to material-economic affordances, and what they can say (cultural-discursive frameworks), is different to

those who are well established within the powerful frameworks of school practice architectures.

Unlike the technician notion of classroom-readiness where students develop content knowledge, evidence-based teaching strategies, and skills, becoming profession-ready as an assessment capable teacher is an existential learning process. While it is anticipated that they will be take some responsibility for learning in classrooms, PST practicum identities are constituted according to the practice architectures of school learning spaces. Existential learning in this instance implies becoming proficient in assessment practices that are located in specific contexts. Assessment capability transcends assumptions of working up skills in relation to assessment. If we recognise that quality assessment is manifest through classroom relationships between school students and teachers, and between students, the ways in which graduate teachers comport themselves as teacher assessors is produced through schooling practice architectures. A reconceptualised emphasis on assessment capability for profession-readiness speaks to the notion that graduates will emerge from their ITE with the capacity to demonstrate criticality, agility and responsiveness in school practice architectures. The ITE practices that support graduates to develop assessment capability for profession-readiness are critical at this time.

Conclusion

It is argued here that current definitions of assessment capability need to be built on and extended to include transitions to practice in particular dimensions of profession-readiness. If ITE is to be practice focused and address purpose and value in education, site ontologies are important considerations. An engagement with existential processes of teacher learning can transcend an insular focus on graduates merely demonstrating their impact on school student learning for credentialing purposes, and

moving onwards into their occupation. The social and cultural positioning of PSTs can be vastly different to those identified as teachers with ongoing employment in the school. Therefore “profession-readiness” is dependent on the particulars of context.

It follows that if PSTs are to take up effective assessment approaches in their teaching practice as they transition into the profession, opportunities are required for them to experience robust assessment for learning within ITE programs (Stiggins, 2002) and on practicums, and to consider the growth of practice-related identities. However, the development of ‘classroom-ready’ assessment capable PSTs, requires more than a formulaic approach to assessment practice during initial education (Deluca & Volante, 2016).

It is appropriate therefore to critique an emphasis on performativity. It is questionable that a ‘package them up intact’ with a ‘performance guarantee of effectiveness’ will enable graduates to be ready for the complexity of classroom work. If ITE institutions sign off on ‘classroom-readiness’ there may not be enough of a focus on either the disjuncture between institutional practice architectures or the wider debates around what it means to be profession-ready.

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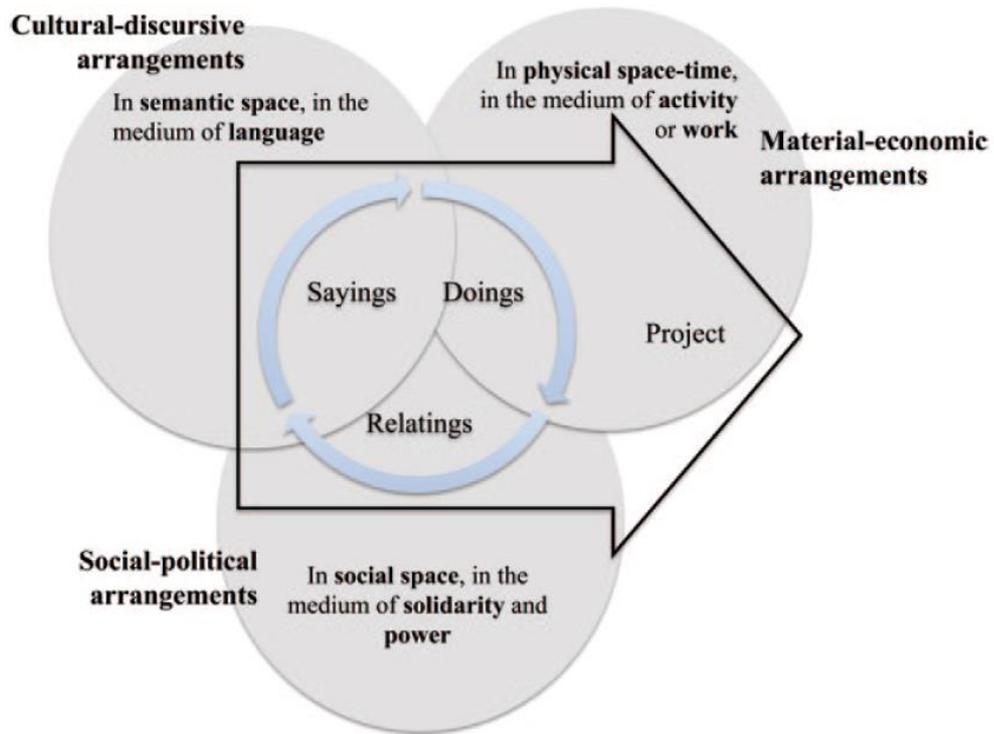


Figure 1