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A foot in many camps: literacy teacher educators acquiring knowledge across many realms and juggling multiple identities

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This study involved 28 literacy/English teachers in four countries: Canada, the USA, the UK and Australia. The goal of the study was to examine their backgrounds, knowledge, research activities, identity and support within the university. The teacher educators had a range of classroom teaching experience which they drew on in many ways. Most went far beyond simply telling stories about their previous work. All were heavily influenced by their own childhood experiences, which continue to affect their current work. Many felt that they needed to hold dual identities, teacher and academic, because they were still heavily involved in schools through their research and in-service activities. Several felt that there was a hierarchy in their department with those most removed from schooling at the highest tier. Most saw themselves in the field of literacy not teacher education and gravitate towards literacy-focused conferences and journals rather than those in teacher education.

Keywords: teacher educators; literacy; life history

> The one word you always see in my [course] evaluations is passionate … And I think the students see that passion coming from the fact that I have real lived experience. I'm not just talking about it because I've read about it or it's some theory. I always try to make it real and that has to start with myself, what I know, what I've done … (Misa, Assistant Professor)

Introduction

Teacher education continues to be pilloried by many (e.g. Levine 2006). Since entering office, the US Secretary of Education Arne Duncan has consistently voiced his opinion that

> By almost any standard, many if not most, of the nation's schools, colleges, and departments of education are doing a mediocre job of preparing teachers for the realities of the twenty-first century classroom. America's university-based teacher preparation programmes need revolutionary change, not evolutionary tinkering. (October 2009)

Juxtaposed against this frenzy of criticism are the teacher educators who work valiantly and tirelessly (Margolin 2011; Swennen and van der Klink 2009).

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Whatever position one takes in this debate, it is reasonable to assume that quality teacher preparation depends on quality teacher educators. Yet, almost nowhere is attention being paid to what teacher educators do, should know and should be able to do. As the opening quotation by Misa (pseudonyms are used throughout) suggests, many teacher educators approach their work with integrity and commitment. Rebecca Rogers, who is passionate about the role of literacy/English teacher educators and fully aware of the heavy burden placed on them, sums up her views as follows:

> Those of us who have the privilege and responsibility of teaching literacy teachers are charged with designing learning experiences that support their development of the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed to work confidently with culturally and linguistically diverse children and families, especially those from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. This charge has never been more pressing. (Rogers 2013, 7)

The large-scale research project, *Literacy Teacher Educators: Their Goals, Visions, and Practices*, that is the basis for this paper attempts to fill some of the void on the background, knowledge base and experiences of teacher educators. There are three phases in this study of teacher educators from Canada, the USA, the UK and Australia with this paper reporting on the first phase, which has the goal:

- To study in depth a group of literacy teacher educators, with special attention to their backgrounds, knowledge, research activities, identity and support within the university.

Beginning the research by delving into the background of literacy/English teacher educators provides a strong foundation for phases two and three which will focus on pedagogy and practice.

Why study teacher educators?

According to Ducharme and Ducharme (1996), teacher education programmes and faculty are viewed as 'both the cause of all school problems and the source of many of its solutions' (705). In both criticism and praise, all teacher educators tend to be lumped together, but in fact they are not a homogenous group (Ducharme and Ducharme 1996) and in particular do not all have the same goals (Goodwin 2008). Martinez (2008) notes:

> Little systematic research has been undertaken to inform us about fundamental characteristics of the professional lives of this occupational group–their qualifications, their recruitment, their career pathways into and through the academy, their teaching and research practices, the problems they encounter, or their professional needs and practices. (36)

Understanding literacy/English teacher educators is important research for a number of reasons. Teacher educators in general are an under-researched group (Murray and Male 2005). A gaping hole will remain in research on teacher education and hiring/selection committees will be left working in a vacuum if there is not more systematic study of who they are, their transition into higher education, the reasons for their pedagogical choices and how they see their roles, For example, it is

important to know which previous experiences help them most in their work as literacy teacher educators. With over 1600 teacher credential programmes in the USA and 60 in Canada (Crocker and Dibbons 2008), teacher educators represent a significant number of university instructors in North America alone.

The intense focus on teacher education *programmes* (the curriculum, required courses, assessment measures and practice teaching experiences) over-looks the teacher educators who 'deliver' these programmes. Do they have the knowledge, skills and interests to meet their demands? In the UK, for instance, Michael Gove wants to return English teaching to the 'Golden Age' of the 1950s when school students learned the canon (Pope, Swift, Byron, Dickens) and were steeped in 'great' literature. He wants to rekindle Matthew Arnold's credo 'to introduce young minds to the best that had been taught and written' (Gove, 5 October 2010). To what extent are literacy/English teacher educators today in a position to assess proposals of this kind and foster relevant approaches to literacy teaching?

In developing the conceptual framework for this paper, two bodies of literature were used: teacher educator knowledge and identity formation. These are inter-twined because how one conceptualises the knowledge necessary to enact the role of teacher educator influences the process of identity construction. For example, if one regards the required knowledge as close familiarity with the government man-dates, then one's identity may be framed as a conduit for the government, whereas if one sees knowledge of current research as essential then one's identity most likely will be one as a researcher.

Teacher educator knowledge

Cochran-Smith (2003) calls teacher educators 'the linchpins in educational reforms of all kinds' (5–6), while Hoban (2005) refers to them as the 'missing link' in edu-cation. Cochran-Smith (2003) argues that we need to pay 'more attention to what teachers of teachers themselves need to know, and what institutional supports need to be in place in order to meet the complex demands of preparing teachers for the twenty-first century' (6). Teacher educators may indeed be the linchpins in educa-tion; however, more attention needs to be given to what they need to know in order that they might perform their work effectively.

Goodwin (2008) identifies five areas of knowledge teacher educators require:

(1) personal knowledge/autobiography and philosophy of teaching;
(2) contextual knowledge/understanding learners, schools and society;
(3) pedagogical knowledge/content, theories, teaching methods and curriculum development;
(4) sociological knowledge/diversity, cultural relevance and social justice; and
(5) social knowledge/cooperative, democratic group process and conflict resolution.

This is an extremely broad set of requirements. These five aspects guided the development of the interview questions for this study. Probe questions considered the knowledge the teacher educators have and how they acquired it and Goodwin's framework assisted with the analysis of the data.

Knowledge for literacy/English teacher educators

Moving from the broad categories identified by Goodwin, this study inquired into the knowledge required for being a literacy/English teacher educator. In this review of the literature, all aspects of literacy/English cannot be addressed; it is important to recognise the changing face of contemporary literacy teaching, which in turn requires a specific pedagogy of teacher education.

Literacy/English is a vast field that is changing quickly. The accessibility of various technological tools and shifts in communication practices provoke questions around how literacy education is to be engaged within classroom contexts. Contemporary literacy pedagogy must engage the complexities of our globalised society, wherein knowledge is constructed amidst multiple communication channels and increasing linguistic and cultural diversity (Cope and Kalantzis 2000). Multi-literacies research suggests that the rapid changes in how we communicate means that we need teacher educators who can address digital technology. Yet, Boling (2005) states 'research has revealed that teacher educators do not always have the knowledge, skills, or dispositions necessary for meaningfully integrating technology into their classes' (3). Thus, the increasing complexity of education in a globalised world has implications for both the broad theoretical knowledge and specific literacy/English pedagogical knowledge teacher educators require. If we accept the premise that today's literacy teacher educators must posses the knowledge, skills and commitment to teach an increasingly diverse student body in a multi-modal world, then it is important to examine the ways in which teacher educators are responding to this challenge. The National Council of Teachers of English argues:

> English/language arts teachers need to prepare students for this world with problem solving, collaboration, and analysis – as well as skills with word processing, hypertext, LCDs, Web cams, digital streaming podcasts, smartboards, and social networking software … New literacies are already becoming part of the educational landscape. (2007, 1)

In turn, how we can prepare student teachers for twenty-first century literacies is a key question. Unfortunately, major gaps exist in the study of literacy teacher education, resulting in lack of a research base for 'the optimal design of teacher education to ensure adequate preparation for all teachers in literacy' (Snow, Griffin and Burns 2005, 2). The scarcity of research on the experiences and situation of literacy/English teacher educators, *qua* the linchpins in education, is a void that needs to be filled.

A pedagogy of teacher education

In light of the discussion of the changing face of literacy, there are two corollary questions: What knowledge do LTEs need of teacher education and literacy? and What pedagogies should LTEs use? As discussed above, they need substantive knowledge in areas such as cultural diversity and digital technology. There are a number of spheres of knowledge related to literacy teacher education: knowledge of politics around literacy teaching (in both higher education and with government); knowledge of research on literacy (on both children and student teachers); and knowledge of current literacy practices and materials in school districts.

Beyond literacy-specific knowledge, there is the skill involved in the actual teaching of student teachers. Teacher educators need insight into the process of becoming a teacher, their role in facilitating this process and a repertoire of strategies for teaching in higher education. They need mastery of what Loughran (2006) has called a 'pedagogy of teacher education':

> It is not difficult to see that teaching can be viewed as comprising a knowledge of theory in and through practice and that each gently moulds the other in the creation of purposeful pedagogical experiences. The ability to make all of this clear and helpful to students of teaching and learning in teacher education requires a genuine scholarship of teacher education and demands much more than simply 'demonstrating good teaching.' (18)

A study of literacy teacher educators would shed light on the kinds of knowledge and experiences they require to carry out their multi-faceted role. Understanding how they draw on their diverse life experiences, work as classroom teachers and their involvement in research enables the enactment of literacy teacher education.

Teacher educator identity

Identity construction is an active, intentional, continuous process that is never complete but rather a perpetual path of becoming (Jenkins 2006). In recent years, much has been written on the complexity of this process within the context of teacher educator identity (Bullock and Christou 2009; Dinkelman, Margolis, and Sikkenga 2006). A major theme in this writing is that new teacher educators need to adopt a new identity when they move from the school to the higher education context:

> The transition from the first-order setting of school teaching into the second-order setting of HE (higher education) based teacher education was constructed by the majority of the interviewees as a distinct and stressful career change, characterised by high levels of uncertainty and anxiety. Recurring feelings about the early years of HE work were of being 'de-skilled', of 'struggle', and of 'masquerading' (Murray and Male 2005, 129).

Since identity construction is ongoing, even experienced literacy/English teacher educators must continue to negotiate their identity because of the multiple contexts in which they work and research. An understanding of the inherent complexities of constructing a literacy teacher educator identity necessitates the study of this process within multiple contexts, taking into consideration the teacher educators' educational histories, and professional trajectories and the social contexts in which they participate.

Jenkins (2006) argues that how we see ourselves is influenced by how others see us; however, this is just one of many factors. Identity construction is a multi-faceted process constituted within specific contexts and temporal sequences, while simultaneously negotiated within the internal/external realms of 'self' and 'other' (Gee 2000; Jenkins 2006). Gee speaks of 'discursive identities' (2000); they are socially constructed based on people's interactions with each other, how they interpret those interactions and how they view those interactions in relation to the models of identity that exist within the community (Brown, Reveles, and Kelly 2005). As Jenkins states, identity is of crucial importance as it:

involves knowing who we are, knowing who others are, them knowing who we are, us knowing who they think we are, and so on: a multi-dimensional classification or mapping of the human world and our places in it, as individuals and as members of collectivities. It is a process – *identification* – not a ;thing.' It is not something that one can have, or not; it is something that one *does.* (2006, 5)

Literacy/English teacher educators are not simply delivering a programme. Their identity as researchers, members of a faculty and teachers impacts on their work in both pronounced and subtle ways.

Methodology

To put together, the sample of 28 literacy/English teacher educators which are the focus of this research lists of teacher educators at a variety of institutions were developed. It was important to include participants from different types of institutions hence the sample includes participants from both research-intensive institutions (Tier 1) and teaching-focused universities (Tier 2). The research team systematically worked through the lists of names of individuals. Some were invited because members of the research team knew these individuals taught literacy methods courses, others because they had published research in literacy. To make the sample consistent, only those who had a doctorate were invited. In reviewing the profile of each possible candidate, the team ensured there was a range of experience (e.g. teaching in elementary/primary and secondary schools), and a gender representation comparable to that in the profession as a whole. Six declined the invitation to participate for a variety of reasons (e.g. assuming a new administrative position and would not be teaching literacy methods courses). It appeared that none declined to be involved because of lack of interest.

The sample included participants from four countries: Canada, the USA, the UK and Australia. In all cases, the individuals were currently employed in the country of their citizenship; all except one had received their doctorate in the country where they were currently employed, almost all had worked as a classroom teacher in the country where they were currently employed; while three had worked in at least one other country as either a teacher educator or classroom teacher.

Each participant was interviewed once over the period April 2012 to August 2012. The interview was approximately one hour in length and had five parts: background experiences; qualities (in their view) of an effective literacy educator; identity (e.g. your academic community, audience for your writing); turning points in your career (personal and professional); and research activities. Semi-structured interviews were carried out either face to face or on Skype and were audiotaped and transcribed. The same questions were asked of all participants but probe questions were used and additional comments were welcomed. Most of the questions were open-ended in that they sought more than a yes/no responses or simple factual answer. Much of the methodology was qualitative as defined by Merriam (2009) and Punch (2009). Qualitative inquiry is justified here since it provides depth of understanding and enables exploration of questions that do not on the whole lend themselves to quantitative inquiry (Guyton and McIntyre 1990; Guzzetti, Anders, and Neuman 1999; Merriam 2009). It opens the way to gaining entirely unexpected ideas and information from participants in addition to discovering their opinions on simple pre-set matters. A grounded theory approach was used because it does not

begin with a fixed theory but generates theory inductively from the data using a set of techniques and procedures for collection and analysis (Punch 2009). As the analysis progressed, key themes were identified and then refined (by adding some and deleting or merging others) through 'constant comparison' with the interview transcripts. As Strauss puts it (2003), 'The basic question facing us is how to capture the complexity of the reality (phenomena) we study, and how to make convincing sense of it' (16).

For data analysis, NVivo 9 was used which involved going through a number of steps. (1) Initial coding of the transcripts was fairly broad, leading to 42 nodes/themes. Some arose straightforwardly as answers to interview questions (e.g. background experience as a classroom teacher) while others emerged unexpectedly (e.g. fell into doing a PhD). (2) Goodwin's (2010) five areas of knowledge required for teacher educators was helpful but not all findings could be classified under one of these areas. Jenkins's and Gee's discursive identity frameworks were used because they provided a basis for analysing and interpreting comments from the teacher educators. (3) After two rounds of coding and analysis, the 42 nodes/themes were collapsed into 24; however, within the 24 (e.g. early childhood experiences), there were sub-nodes (e.g., gaps in knowledge had sub-nodes of knowledge of research, knowledge of schools). NVivo facilitates double and triple coding which was done for certain content (e.g. the same material might relate to influence on practice, classroom teacher experience, and pedagogy). In addition to consulting the transcripts, the literature was used throughout the entire process, including assisting with analysis (Wold, Young, and Risko 2011). (4) As the quotes, annotations and memos were analysed, summary findings in four areas developed: knowledge gained as a classroom teacher; influence of identity on knowledge development; knowledge gained through and from research; and turning points related to knowledge development and career trajectory. Given the sophistication of NVivo9, queries were conducted to see relationships between the biographical data and other data (e.g. Ph.D. area of study and current research activities). NVivo9 facilitates drawing on both qualitative and quantitative data.

Findings

Previous work/educational experiences

Since the sample was diverse rather than uniform, it is not surprising that the literacy/English teacher educators do not fit a cookie-cutter profile. As the chart below shows, they have come to the enterprise of literacy teacher education with a range of experiences as classroom teachers and hold different ranks in their universities.

Experience as a classroom teacher	0 years	1
	1–5 years	3
	6–10 years	12
	11–20 years	6
	21 + years	6
Rank at the University	Assistant Professor (Lecturer in UK and AU)	6
	Associate Professor	5
	Senior Lecturer	7
	Full Professor	5
	Other	1
	Contract	4

In terms of preparation to teach adults, 10 had been consultants with school districts/local education authorities; many had done workshops for teachers; and some had taught on contract at the university. All but one had a school teaching certificate and had taught at the school level. Working with adults prior to assuming a full-time faculty position was generally seen as a crucial bridge, yet many described their surprise at the demands placed on them once they secured a full-time position at a university.

Drawing on previous experiences

Since literacy/English teacher educators are preparing students to work in schools, a series of questions regarding previous experiences were posed, in particular, 'Did participants feel that previous experience as a school teacher was necessary?' Some were stunned by this question wondering why it was even being asked; Justin reacted with this comment: 'The idea of being a teacher educator without substantial classroom experience strikes me as somewhat bizarre'. Valuing having been a classroom teacher is not surprising because it gave them 'credibility with the student teachers'. Beyond credibility, Stella (pseudonyms are used throughout) explained:

> I think on a practical level it enabled me to understand how you can plan to teach a varied English curriculum, and it gave me insight into the whole range of resources that are available and the pleasures of working and being with other people. Like working in a team had been really important and that's something I've stressed with my PGCE (Postgraduate Certificate in Education) students.

By contrast, three participants did not feel school teaching experience was necessary. They did think knowledge of schools was critical, but it could be gained in other ways (e.g. working in a not-for-profit agency that assisted schools).

Regarding the appropriate number of years as a classroom teacher, there was no consensus; most said around five years but others felt the more the better. In terms of drawing on this experience, many felt it is not sufficient simply to tell stories of their previous work. It is not just the experience of being a classroom teacher that is important but how that experience and knowledge are used. Misa uses examples to reveal her values:

> I do tell them I was a classroom teacher, but I don't talk about it much after that. I have a lot of student work that I use to show what I believed in as a teacher … I pull out the book the kids made and I talk about the post-its that are in it saying things like 'I enjoyed reading your book. Thank you.' … I can just pick up these examples, and I think it's important for them to see that, so they can see we lived the philosophy we're encouraging them to take up. They see that we walked the talk.

Since NVivo allows for the conducting of queries, there emerged clear continuities between the priorities the participants had held as classroom teachers and their priorities as literacy/English teacher educators.

- Giovanni emphasises working with underserved communities, as he had done as a teacher.
- Demerra and Sharon continue to work with subject organisations.
- Pietro underscores working with marginalised youths, which he had done as a

classroom teacher.
- Justin and Stella are still teacher activists.
- Carolina encourages her student teachers to be part of teacher inquiry groups, as she has done in her professional life.

In identifying gaps in their knowledge, all noted that remaining current with local school district initiatives was one of their main challenges. Many remained connected to teacher network groups (through their own initiative) because they felt that getting out of touch would compromise their work. Many used artefacts from their teaching (e.g. stories pupils had written) and, surprisingly, the more recently hired teacher educators worried that their artefacts were becoming dated. Those who had been away from the classroom for a long period often found ways to overcome the problem: for example, a number who are grandparents used examples from their grandchildren. There was a marked difference between junior faculty and senior faculty in identifying gaps in knowledge. The former were extremely specific: Melissa needed a textbook for multi-cultural education and Hope wanted to learn more about middle school. The more experienced teacher educators had much broader areas; for example, Chester and several others felt they needed to know more about digital technology.

Influence of life experiences

When asked to produce a timeline of turning points in their lives (personal or professional), there was a wide range of responses: getting tenure; struggling with reading; own experience as a bilingual student; pupil who said 'don't treat us like dogs'; belonging to a teacher inquiry group; receiving a teaching award; learning about a grandfather's early life; doing *tae-kwon-do* with her son (being a learner again); caring for her step sisters; having her classroom used as a research site; and working in a rural school where the community was quite racist.

Interestingly, their own early childhood experiences were identified by almost all as having had a significant impact on them and continuing to do so to this day. For example, some who had an aunt or grandmother who was a storyteller use stories with their student teachers; others who went to church and 'read' the hymns emphasise out of school literacy experiences with their student teachers. Many could vividly remember a teacher from elementary or secondary school who had a strong influence on their own schooling and whose strategies they incorporate in their current practice. For example, Jessie recalled her fifth grade teacher Mr Willow as if she had worked with him yesterday.

> Mr. Willow was great because he liked me. … And it gave me a different trajectory because I probably was on the medium to slow track, and I just decided that I wanted to do better.' Jessie in her work with student teachers discussed how you often have to scaffold pupils in quite direct ways as Mr Willow had done with her. He explicitly taught her about literacy and some pupils like her need to be directly taught 'the secrets of being successful readers and writers.

Surprisingly, some recounted very negative experiences with English when they were children or adolescents, and the effect this had on them. Pietro, who is highly reflective, described his very unfortunate school experiences:

I was a rotten student. I flunked second grade. I was considered to be learning disabled. I was diagnosed with all sorts of things, including dyslexia. And so as an elementary school student I was branded as someone who would never read and write. And obviously, as a PhD from Stanford, that was an inaccurate diagnosis, which is infuriating to me as someone who came up through the system. I had some very well-intentioned teachers who tried to fix the problem, but the truth is it was a life-shaping experience. … What turned it around, honestly, was my love of reading and writing, but I had to do it on my own. That was not a school activity, it was an underground literacy.

Accordingly, in his work as a teacher educator Pietro tries to help his student teachers look beyond labels, imploring them to develop a rich English programme so pupils do not have to resort to 'underground literacy'.

In discussing their personal timeline, many commented that their experiences were cumulative and shaped who they are today. Goodwin's first knowledge category (personal knowledge/autobiography) was very prevalent because each interviewee could identify how their own life experiences influenced them. They in turn encourage their student teachers through writing their personal literacy autobiography or other such reflection activity to make explicit the influences on their views of literacy.

Qualities of effective literacy/English teacher educators

Beyond knowledge of schools and themselves as literacy learners, what other kinds of knowledge did the teacher educators feel were required? When describing strengths and qualities of literacy/English teacher educators, many focused more often on personal attributes than academic expertise. This position is consistent with Goodwin's second and fifth categories (understanding learners and social knowledge). Pietro stated: 'There's a practical [knowledge required]. … which is how to deal with classroom literacies in an affective – affective, not effective way, how to create relationships with students'. Similarly, Melissa commented: 'So getting to know [my students] on a more personal level. Which also means that, at times, I have to make myself more vulnerable than other people are comfortable with'. Qualities participants identified most often as those of effective literacy teacher educators were 'soft' qualities: caring, listener, reflective, team player, compassionate and flexible.

Since the quality of caring seemed to be so prevalent and is not typically considered as a necessity, it was important to probe why the participants held this view. Some like Maya said that she problematises traditional literacy instruction, and through developing a supportive learning community they can as a community investigate the biases in typical programmes. Others noted that some student teachers are nervous because they are not strong readers and writers themselves hence they need to develop confidence that they could be effective literacy teachers. Yet, others felt that being a teacher is much more than just delivering a curriculum, it is about supporting the individual pupil. Caterina said, 'I listen to the students. I don't know if this has to do with literacy, but … so many professors will not listen to their students about how they learn best or what they need to do well in a course'. While Chester reflected, 'One trait I really like is that you have the capacity to care. I'm not sure how that translates. But you really need a genuine willingness to listen and a capacity to care'. This is consistent with Wold Young, and Risko (2011) research:

'Across data sources, there was agreement that mentoring qualities and interpersonal skills are the most critical influences of literacy teacher educators in developing teacher excellence' (10).

Having been a classroom teacher seemed to have a significant impact because participants conceptualised effective literacy/English teacher educators along interpersonal/relational lines. Sharon explained,

> I think that those of us who have taught in classrooms have much more of a student-oriented focus. Maybe I'm not being fair to those who have not but I don't hear those who have no classroom experience talking about their students in the same caring way saying that you put your students first because you're a teacher first.

Educational background and research activities

Throughout the interviews, many of the literacy/English teacher educators pointed to influential experiences (e.g. educational background), relational interactions (e.g. mentor relationships) and practices (e.g. classroom teaching) that they drew upon to construct their professional identity and approach to their role. In terms of their own educational backgrounds, a minority had completed undergraduate degrees in English. It might be commonly assumed that most would have had had a long history of studying English, but this was not the case. A number of participants had studied science as an undergraduate, one had studied law, and many did teacher education in their undergraduate degree. By contrast, all five of our participants from the UK had undergraduate degrees in English. For many, their educational journey could be described as serendipitous and in particular a node/theme that emerged was: 'Fell into doing a PhD' where, in answer to the question, 'When you were doing your undergraduate degree did you plan to do a PhD?' only 6 responded 'Yes' and 22 'No'.

Doctoral research

As noted earlier, only teacher educators who had a doctorate were included in the sample. It was important to find out how their trajectories led them to a doctorate. There were a number of interesting turning points involving encouragement: a few whose classrooms were used as research sites were encouraged by the lead researcher to pursue a doctoral degree. Others had amassed a number of graduate credits and were encouraged by their faculty advisor to do something with them, so they completed a thesis. Some who were working in universities (e.g. teaching pre-service courses) were suddenly required by their institution to obtain a higher degree. Some stayed connected to an instructor from their own teacher education programme who encouraged them to consider doing a doctorate. Almost all could clearly identify a mentor who encouraged them to acquire a Ph.D., with many commenting that initially they did not even consider a Ph.D. because they were 'just a classroom teacher'.

When the research topics for their doctorate degrees were categorised, there were four areas: 17 conducted it on children; five on student teachers (in pre-service); three at the in-service level (on teachers); and three on something rather different (e.g. breaking the cycle of intergenerational women dropping out of school). Interestingly, eight focused their doctoral research in their own classroom (e.g. an

action research project), which led to them identifying themselves as teacher-researchers. Although all participants' current research was broader in scope, for most there was a direct link with their doctoral research; for example, doctoral research on adolescent writing and current research on use of technology for adolescent writing.

Why do a doctorate? Regarding academic knowledge in particular (Goodwin's third realm of pedagogical and theoretical knowledge), participants were asked about the necessity of having a PhD. The group was split in their views, with 16 saying it should be a prerequisite and 12 feeling it was not necessary. Justin who was in the latter group clarified his position as: 'What is important is … an ongoing commitment to intellectual rigour … [A] doctorate might, in some circumstances, be taken as a proxy indicator of that, but I don't think at all that a doctorate is a precondition [for being an able teacher educator]'. There was unanimity, however, that literacy/English teacher educators should be inquirers and comfortable with research, because they need to be able to read research and draw on it in their teaching.

Some recalled that when they were required by their institution to obtain a doctorate, they did not see the point. Beatrice for example, a Senior Lecturer, commented:

> Beforehand, I didn't think it was important to do research because I thought your knowledge came from what you did [as a classroom teacher]. And I must say that now I can see what research brings to the process. You look at things differently in some ways … you can see how what you're seeing in one school is generalizable to schools across the board …

In less concrete terms, many noted that a PhD instantly provides status within the university. This definitely has implication for identity. As Carolina noted: 'If everyone else has a doctorate, you have to have one too'.

Current research activities

While all have a doctorate, participants were drawn from both research-intensive (Tier 1) and teaching-focused (Tier 2) universities. Interestingly, a significant number continue to build on their doctoral research regardless of how long ago they completed it.

Continuing research done for their thesis?	A great extent	15
	To some extent	7
	Have moved to a new area of research	6

In their doctoral programme, most had studied an aspect of literacy (e.g. Stella studied teaching poetry at the secondary school level). Most had a fairly narrow topic and few had studied teacher education *per se*. There were very few comments about the need for knowledge of teacher education pedagogy or research on teacher education; most were focused on their discipline.

Their doctoral research and experiences as classroom teachers led the participants to the view that teacher educators must be inquirers. As Dominique suggests, 'I think [one requirement] is intellectual curiosity'. Their doctoral work framed their current approach to research which was almost entirely school-based, with a focus

on teachers and pupils. The amount and range of research being conducted was impressive, with 27 of 28 having at least one research project underway in a school. The one participant not doing research in schools was studying policy but had completed a number of studies in schools. Many involved classroom teachers in their research. Topics included: voices of immigrant students; after-school programmes for at-risk first and second graders of afro/latino descent; use of iPads in secondary school; and oral language development of second grade students. Although topics varied, a common feature of the research was that it entailed an innovation in a teacher's classroom which meant they had to spend significant time in schools, leading the initiative, building relationships and gathering data. Many were year-long ethnographic studies. The demands of this research cannot be underestimated. Of the 28 participants, 27 identified both teachers *and* academics as the audience for their writing. Only one wrote exclusively for academics. Having a dual audience appeared to impact on how they saw themselves, which is explored in the following section on identity.

Holding multiple identities

Being a teacher educator is much more than just 'delivering' lessons. Zeichner deconstructs the notion of teacher education as a 'self-evident activity' (2005), a simple extension of classroom teaching. Beyond acquiring new knowledge and pedagogies, teacher educators' identity must transform from being a school teacher to an academic who still has a 'foot' in the camp of schooling.

Self-identification

Most of the participants continue to have a heavy investment in schools through both their research and service activities. As a result, all have adopted dual identities: school-based and university-based. When asked which terms they would use to describe themselves, the breakdown was:

Terms participants used to describe self (could select more than one)		
	Literacy professor	15
	Teacher Educator	17
	Teacher	14
	Professor	3
	Other:	
	Learn with kids	1
	Lecturer	2
	Teacher trainer	1
	Associate Dean	1
	Researcher	1

That 14 chose the term 'teacher' was a surprise because the term definitely has a lower status in the academy.

This study is in line with the findings of Murray and Male (2005), yet delves deeper to show the complexity of the multiple identities literacy teacher educators must hold. Since their research is in schools, they must be able to 'talk the talk' with teachers. They cannot shed their teacher identity completely when they secure a faculty position, which has implications for their sense of belonging in their university. Further undermining their sense of self-worth, a number stated that their student

teachers were not really that interested in the research they were doing, just wanting them to deliver a bag of tricks. Carolina ruefully admitted that student teachers were more interested that 'I was a classroom teacher than that I am an active researcher'. This concurs with Wold Young, and Risko (2011) research on literacy teacher educators:

> Teacher educators' research is the least influential quality reported in the online survey and the open-ended questions [which teachers completed about their literacy teacher educators] … The fact that research was not an influential part of the preparation of these teachers of excellence raises questions about the importance of research as perceived by those learning to become teachers. (12)

Faculty in the USA, UK and Australia felt pressure to prepare student teachers for the curriculum and standardised tests used in school districts, which further tied their work/identity to school teachers. Canadian participants did not feel this pressure to the same degree, in part because there is not a national curriculum or standardised tests (e.g. Praxis I) as an exit requirement.

Academic home

The complex process of negotiating identity as teacher, teacher educator and researcher might help explain why many felt like second-class citizens in their department or school of education.

Is there a hierarchy in your school of education/department?	Research-intensive (Tier 1)	Yes	15
		No	1
	Teaching-focused (Tier 2)	Yes	8
		No	4

Those in Research-intensive (Tier 1) universities felt that their colleagues most removed from schooling held the highest place in the hierarchy, which left them in an awkward space since their work was often closely tied to schooling. As a result, they often felt disregarded by their colleagues.

Another strategy used to probe identity was to ask participants about their academic home. Most identified their academic home as being with literacy/English teacher educators, usually at another university or in an organisation.

Academic communities with which you identify	Own university	15
	Teacher research group or network	4
	Classroom teachers	8
	Literacy conference (Literacy Research Association)	22
	American Educational Research Association (AERA)	6
	Other e.g. BERA, minority faculty group	12
	Cannot find a home	2

Within their home university, some were the sole full-time literacy teacher educator in their department because there were so many contract instructors (often part-time) delivering literacy courses. For some, the sense of isolation within their department was very apparent.

Most still belonged to some kind of teacher network; many felt they had out-grown very teacher-focused conferences such as the International Reading Association but had to attend fairly regularly to stay in touch with teachers. Chester admitted, 'I got the feeling a couple of years ago … that it's not moving me on. Now that may sound a bit arrogant but I really felt that's not where I am any more'.

Discussion

The literacy/English teacher educators in this study are a very heterogeneous yet talented group who have not followed a uniform pathway. Nevertheless, there are some common features among them: most were influenced by their own experiences as classroom teachers; a mentor encouraged them to pursue a doctorate; their doctoral research continues to be central to their research; they often feel underappreciated by their colleagues and student teachers; they value highly the affective qualities of being a literacy/English teacher educator; and they see being an inquirer as a necessity. They blur boundaries in a number of ways: their personal and early childhood experiences influence their work as university faculty, and they meet their student teachers on both personal and professional levels. They come to the enterprise of literacy/English teacher education as 'whole' individuals, not compartmentalised beings where research is in one silo, practice in another and personal experiences in yet another.

Furthermore, the findings of this study may not pertain solely to literacy/English teacher educators. Most likely, they are relevant and applicable to teacher educators of other subjects because issues of identity and knowledge construction cross subject/discipline lines. From the experience of the members of the research team, teacher educators in general are very committed and talented. These findings point to considerations for hiring decisions. For example, teacher educators need to be comfortable working with both fellow faculty and practitioners. Search committees should look for those who have a rich background of experiences because they will need to draw on all of these in their work. Strong interpersonal skills also appear to be important.

Literacy/English teacher educators, like other teacher educators, have an extremely demanding and complex role which includes work in the university, schools and often the community. They must hold multiple identities, but this is complicated by the fact that the reward systems of schools and universities are so different (Cuban 1998). Since most hold the dual identities of teacher and professor, they have to search for a professional home and kindred spirits beyond their department. The fact that they value the affective aspects of their role (e.g. caring) may further isolate them, in that university departmes usually privilege scholarship. This calls for support by deans, department chairs and others so that literacy/English teacher educators feel more at home and appreciated in their university.

As individuals and a collective, the participants in this study are a very resilient group. Their involvement with other literacy/English teacher educators helps them develop and maintain a positive self-image. The type of research conducted by them is labour-intensive, which has a number of implications: the entire research cycle is lengthy; the narrow focus of their research, with links to doctoral work, is perhaps the only way to make their work lives manageable; and the pressure on the new faculty is tremendous. The narrowness of their doctoral research and their continued work in this defined area raises two questions. Since they have continued with their

doctoral research to such a great extent, is their research agenda too narrow and is their knowledge base too narrow? Further, tenure and promotion committees must recognise the demanding nature of this kind of research and value the audience for whom they write. That most write for both teachers and researchers, which are disparate groups, is a significant challenge.

The kind of knowledge literacy/English teacher educators must have is extensive because literacy itself is a massive discipline. It was quite apparent that the participants in this study have much to offer the education community and policy-makers because they are a group of academics who truly bridge theory and practice. When considering Goodwin's five realms, the knowledge extends far beyond knowledge of theory and the classroom. It is unrealistic to expect every literacy/English teacher educator to be an expert in every aspect of the field; hence there is a need for team-teaching in the delivery of courses. In addition to team-teaching, induction and ongoing support must be provided in order to help them master the required (and ever-changing) knowledge base.

Literacy/English teacher educators for the most part position themselves in the literacy community, yet there is exponential growth in research on teacher education. They are often somewhat removed from this research, most likely because they do not have time to become versed in it, and also do not identify teacher education as their main academic field. Academic and professional organisations need to devise ways to bring the two fields together so academics can learn from each other. In a way, what is needed is a type of pedagogical content knowledge for literacy/English. For example, some teacher education research suggests the need to prioritise content in courses, rather than trying to cover the waterfront (Kosnik and Beck 2009). This theory needs to be applied to literacy/English teacher education so as to answer the question, 'Wwhat are their priorities in the field?' At another level, although Goodwin's realms of knowledge were helpful for the project they are very broad; much more detail needs to be added for literacy in particular. This could be a fruitful joint initiative by the literacy teacher education community and teacher education researchers.

Conclusion

This first part of this large-scale study of literacy/English teacher educators has provided a foundation for the next phase which looks specifically at pedagogy; it gives the researchers a sense of who these teacher educators are, what challenges they face and how they arrived at their current practice and view of their role.

Sara, an exceptionally able and committed professor, sees her strengths in an unusual way, one that can be a model for others in teacher education practice and policy development.

> I don't necessarily fit in any one nice category; I have the ability to bring a range of areas together, crossing boundaries and brokering change. Or I can help make change. That's my strength … Having grown up [in a poor rural area] where I had to be resourceful, I continue to be resourceful. I don't think of a boundary as a barrier, I think of it as permeable.

Teacher education alone cannot solve all the shortcomings of education, but by working together with others much can be achieved. Critics such as Arnie Duncan

and Michael Gove would do well to become better acquainted with literacy/English teacher educators (and most likely all teacher educators) because they are an extremely able group, committed to improving education for all. They eschew short-term solutions and programmes that further marginalise those most in need. Much can be learned much from the way they view their role and go about their work.

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