Preface

Recent decades have brought about a growing awareness of the role of teacher identity in shaping actions in the classroom, and the creation of a quality learning environment, across a whole range of educational contexts from primary to tertiary. Hargreaves and Tucker (1991, p. 491) state that “understanding teaching, unmasking the mysteries of its practice, has presented a persistent and formidable challenge to those who have sought to improve the quality of teaching and learning over the years.” Teaching, recognised as one of the world’s oldest professions, has become synonymous with terms such as vocation, compassion, construction of knowledge, and continuous professional development. Shulman (1986, p. 6) established that this has been the case for centuries, going back to the days of medieval universities when there was a semantic recognition of the linkage between the possession of expert knowledge and the practice of teaching.

From the past to the present, there has been inherent recognition of this in the names we attribute to our highest degree qualifications; with the terms “Master” and “Doctor” having been used interchangeably in the medieval context. The reason for this interchange is that both words originate from the same root “dottore,” and thus share the same definition of “teacher” (Shulman, 1986, p. 6). Fittingly, the article in which these ideas are presented is titled “Those Who Understand: Knowledge Growth in Teaching,” and the objective of this publication is to contribute to the field of knowledge about teaching as a profession, in terms of both theory and practice.

This book examines a range of contexts, through presenting a series of cases and perspectives stretching across disciplines from English Language teaching to Sociology, pre-service teacher education to in-service teacher development. The chapters have been arranged in such a way as to present perspectives that climb the ladder of education in the same sequence as students traditionally progress, starting with the pre-school context and progressing right up to higher education. There are a total of 15 chapters, with each functioning as an excellent means of providing original research and ideas from a particular educational context, whilst at the same time containing knowledge transferable across other contexts. Much of the research has been qualitative, but there have been quantitative elements too, with a strong emphasis on sociocultural and narrative approaches to investigation, alongside some excellent examples, and justification for the use of insider research.
Each chapter serves as a narrative lens offering a glimpse of broader stories; small vignettes of practice and experience inviting the reader to share in the moments being described and discussed, and take from the experience some new form of knowledge. There are so many questions that could be asked of today’s teachers, as to their motivations for entering the profession, for staying in the profession, and situating traditional approaches to pedagogy with the demands of a fast-changing educational landscape. The fact that this landscape has become increasingly technological, commercial, and globalised is apparent in the majority of chapters, with contributions from authors coming from or describing contexts linked to all commonly recognised continents, excepting Antarctica (which perhaps presents a publishing challenge for the future). There is therefore a holistic international dimension to the publication that reflects the internationalisation of communication facilitated by society’s increasing digitalisation. Indeed this publication would not have been possible were it not for the affordances of the digital age, which situates it very much in the 21st century whilst at the same time drawing upon ideas old as the medieval context described by Shulman (1986).

The opening chapter by Mariam Attia takes place in the context of higher education in Cairo, Egypt and explores the role of teachers’ early learning experiences in shaping their pedagogical beliefs and practice specifically in relation to technology use. This intersection of technology, cognition, and early learning experiences resonates strongly with themes that recur throughout the publication as a whole. Mariam uses a case study approach to present vignettes of experience and narrative from the lives of three teachers of Arabic as they incorporate new technologies into their teaching. Through these cases, a strong cultural element comes to the fore alongside the role of beliefs established through an “apprenticeship of observation” (Lortie, 1975). This chapter, in its rich characterisation and description of context, makes a major contribution to addressing the issue of helping teachers to situate technology and pedagogy not only in their own practice but also in terms of how technology relates to their “selves” and traditional views of teacher identity.

Following Mariam’s study, the second chapter again explores themes connected to the early stages of education, both in terms of the pre-service context described by the authors and teachers’ beliefs about preschool teaching identity. Authors Sanja Vorkapić, LidiJa Vujičić, and Renata Ćepić discuss the identity of contemporary preschool teachers in the Croatian context which itself is interesting because of its newness and emergence as an independent, European nation. However, this chapter makes a contribution to knowledge transcending the boundaries of its local context because of its theoretically informed emphasis on the characteristics of preschool teachers, and simultaneous extensive investigation into which aspects of these the research participants find most desirable. On the whole then, this is a chapter that can contribute much to the field of preschool teacher development and to the broader literature on teacher education across contexts.
Patricia Dickenson, in the third chapter, once again changes contexts and continents, though carries on previous themes relating to technology, pre-service teacher development, and teacher identity. Working in the highly digitalised arena of Silicon Valley, Patricia’s chapter examines the profiles of second-career pre-service teachers participating in a blended online program, which makes the context doubly non-traditional in that these are teachers entering the profession late, and choosing to train in a manner enabled by technology. Examining this phenomenon from a sociocultural perspective, the voices of participants are synthesised to offer evocative insights into beliefs, motivations, and expectations of those who choose this route. As such, this is a chapter of value both to teacher educators and to those considering changing careers so as to follow the call of a teaching vocation. Those who choose teaching as a career later in life deserve the attention this chapter gives them. Very often educators enter the profession straight out of college or, as in the case of my own 2013 study on trainee English Language teachers, fall into the profession by chance and circumstance. In Patricia’s chapter, the teachers have chosen to move into the field after spending the earlier part of their career in other professions. This raises the question of why people might choose such a career path and connects to issues also discussed in Patrick Healy’s study of motivation in chapter 15.

Following this, Donna Velliaris and Craig Willis take the reader on an autoethnographic journey to Australia where they present narratives of teacher identity. Linked into the previous chapter through its investigation into motivations for choosing to teach, this research story takes place in a higher educational context of providing foundation courses to international students. As with Mariam Attia’s study, the authors explore the ways in which early learning experiences have shaped participants’ beliefs about teaching and goes on to examine social, cultural, and educational experiences, which have shaped their decisions to enter the profession. Added to this, there are important lessons to be learned from the role these different factors play in attracting teachers to the higher educational context and in particular the teaching of international students. Themes within this area resonate with several subsequent chapters, but also offer a source of reflection, comparison, and contrast with earlier chapters by Patricia Dickenson, and Sanja Vorkapić et al. This then raises an interesting question, later explored by Patrick Healy, about whether there is something fundamental to the character disposition of teachers, and the nature of teaching itself, regardless of the particular context being studied. Finally, the chapter also introduces some thought-provoking perspectives on technology, as seen through the eyes of teachers, and the role it plays in relation to traditional pedagogy.

Alex Kumi-Yeboah, in the next chapter, conducts a study of teacher experience amongst higher education faculty in the United States, drawing on a theoretical framework shaped by Mezirow’s transformative learning theory, which first emerged in the late 1970s and has seen subsequent adaptations. This is a chapter more
concerned with how development, rather than primary motivation, shapes teacher identity in terms of both educational and non-educational factors. Further, it examines the roles played by reflection, rational discourse, and emancipatory action in the professional journey taken by faculty after they enter the profession, working within higher education. The context is of particular relevance here because traditionally there has been more of a focus on research than teaching within the domain of higher education, but in recent times, particularly in Britain, there has been an increasing emphasis on developing academics not just in terms of their theoretical knowledge but also their practice in the classroom. Alex’s chapter thus serves as a useful barometer and vignette of faculty experience.

Magdalena Rostron returns the reader’s attention to an Arab context in the subsequent chapter, whilst addressing a series of issues that follow succinctly the previous chapters. Magda’s work examines the setting of teaching English in Qatar, which serves as an exemplar of the sweeping changes affecting English Language teaching and education as a whole in the 21st century. Aside from technological change and a growing emphasis on continuous professional development, the role of non-native speaking teachers of English has been re-examined in the past decade to the extent that NNESTs (Non-Native English Speaking Teachers) are now rightly seen to hold equal status in the field. The fact of this has given rise to exemplary cases of practice but perhaps not enough of these cases have been captured and documented. This then makes Magda’s study both timely and significant, though it is not limited to this alone. Aside from offering insight into the work and beliefs of NNESTs, this chapter also contributes to an increased knowledge of how teachers formulate their practice and philosophies.

Continuing this theme of non-native English speaking teachers and identities in a changed context, Ambreen Shahriar synthesises the stories of three Pakistani teachers who travelled to the United Kingdom to undertake PhD studies and then returned to their home country to find themselves caught between two different cultural perspectives in both societal and educational terms. Drawing on Bourdieu’s notion of *habitus* as the analytic tool, Ambreen’s study focuses on, firstly, the dilemma faced by these teachers in the UK due to the cultural and educational differences, and secondly, how each of them learned to cope with it. There are valuable lessons to be learned from this study, particularly the challenge it presents to the idea of cultural differences having been reduced due to globalisation, and the ways in which it is then possible to address differences, which clearly still exist.

The theme of differing cultural perspectives is continued in the next chapter authored by Theron Ford and Blanche Glimps. Their chapter brings us back to the United States context and the experience of faculty members within higher education, focusing specifically on the African-American female experience of working in religious institutions. As with Ambreen’s chapter, the authors chart feelings and
instances of seeming to be outsiders in their home context. In this case though, the situation has not arisen through exposure to a different culture but through what the authors present as higher education’s historical inability to assimilate the needs and experiences of minority voices into the mainstream. This then is a chapter that challenges orthodoxy, although not simply by highlighting issues, and historical grievances. Rather, Blanche and Theron have sought to present a call for change and potential solutions to overcome barriers to integration and self-actualization so that African-American females and African-Americans generally will have a more established role within higher education faculty in the future.

Sutapa Dutta, author of the next chapter, again touches on an issue that resonates through the previous two chapters, which is the sociocultural legacy of colonialism in societies that paradoxically are striving for holistic post-colonial redefinition. Writing about the teaching of English Literature in the Indian context, Sutapa explores the challenges of teaching a very traditional subject in a multi-cultural, multilingual, multi-ethnic classroom. One of the strongest features of this is the transferability of themes from English Literature to other disciplines, particularly questions regarding the ownership of particular subjects or disciplines. As in the case of Magda Rostron studying the narratives of non-native teachers of English, there is a growing sense of ownership of the English Language being slowly dispersed around the world, partially as a legacy of Britain’s imperial past. This means that over time, not only is the language changing but also the cultural and historical perspectives of the language and its canonical literary texts. This, by Sutapa’s rationale, may even culminate in a shift away from an emphasis on “English” Literature to a more egalitarian sense of studying “literature in English.” By doing so, it serves to open up the study of literature to richer, more global perspectives, hopefully taking into consideration a broader range of cultural voices.

The next chapter, by Catherine McLoughlin and Prathiba Nagabhushan, focuses on the evolution of teacher education courses and new approaches to their delivery. These new models, which emphasise teacher “education” much more than “training,” now recognize the disconnect that has occurred between theory and practice, and the focus on purely theoretical aspects of the learning context, as opposed to developing student teacher dispositions, skills, and attributes. The authors argue that there is a growing recognition that new teachers need a combination of theoretical, technological, and pedagogical knowledge before they enter the classroom, in order to understand the realities of the 21st-century classroom and to be able to connect theory to practice. Following this, they outline the development and implementation of a model of teacher education for the 21st century in Australia, through firstly reviewing recent models of teacher professional development for 21st century schooling across the globe. In doing so, they provide an example of how we can all learn from best practice utilized across different contexts and continents.
Significantly, this chapter stresses the importance of educating rather than training teachers, which echoes the thinking of many in the contemporary literature, such as Julian Edge, who states that “to train is to instil habits or skills, and the word collocates just as happily with dogs and seals as with teachers” (Edge, 2003, p. 7). Thus, it presents an important argument not just for Australian teacher education but also for the broader milieu of teacher education, whether in-service or pre-service.

Magdalena De Stefani, in the eleventh chapter, continues with the theme of teacher development through presenting the case of Mariana, a Uruguayan non-native speaking teacher of English working at Lake Primary School in Uruguay. Touching on themes similar to those of Magda Rostron and Mariam Attia, Magdalena takes the reader on a journey through a cycle of insider action research in which she draws on innovative approaches to data generation and analysis in order to capture the story. Amongst these approaches is an emphasis on the aforementioned Julian Edge’s CATRA framework, according to which Copying, Applying, Theorising, Reflecting, and Action are considered to be interacting elements within a “working approach to teacher learning” (Edge, 2011, p. 19). This chapter then not only serves to inform the reader about the case of one teacher, and the use of action research as a spark for professional development, but also gives valuable insight into the research process. Magdalena very effectively synthesises Mariana’s journey of personal development with the story of her own entwined journey as researcher. Thus, this is a story not only of immense benefit to teacher educators but also to teachers and students of research skills, methods, methodologies, and as with the chapters by Mariam Attia; Donna Velliaris and Craig Willis; and later Phillip Martin, a good example of the benefits brought about by conducting research studies in our own workplaces.

Phillip Martin, mentioned above, conducted his research in a context similar to that of Donna and Craig, through interviewing colleagues who have made the transition from General English teaching to more specific English for Academic Purposes. This growing field of practice and study, which crosses the bridge between the teaching of language and the teaching of other disciplines, offers fertile scope for investigation. Phillip, having chosen to focus on motivations and perspectives, analyses the stories of four teachers working in a United Kingdom higher educational context, comparing, contrasting, and synthesising their ideas and voices where appropriate. Added to this, there is an excellent contextualisation of the setting and the subject at the outset which is a significant contribution to knowledge, particularly in terms of highlighting the historical and ongoing role of BALEAP (British Association of Lecturers in English for Academic Purposes) in shaping the United Kingdom EAP context and the standards expected of practitioners in this field of English Language teaching. The stories themselves, as told by teachers, further serve to bring authentic voices straight from the classroom to the page because this need to hear the voices of teachers has been recognised throughout much of the literature on teacher identity.
Phillip’s chapter then makes a positive contribution to a growing research field, and addresses a need for greater reportage of cases in the actual voices of EAP teachers. Following this study of English teachers’ transitions, my own chapter examines developments that occur in terms of EAP teachers’ actions, knowledge, and professional practice after a teacher education programme on the use of technologies in the classroom and how these developments shape or reshape cognition regarding the specific practice of using technology in association with traditional EAP teaching approaches. These developments have been studied through a sociocultural lens, drawing on Mishra and Koehler’s (2006) theoretical framework of Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK), which evolved from Shulman’s (1986) earlier Pedagogic Content Knowledge (PCK) framework. Interestingly, one of the main developments to come from this study has been the teachers’ moves towards self-directed learning, and the development of individual teaching philosophies, as the participants come to a stronger sense of personal and professional identities. The stories of three teachers were studied in depth in the final analysis, and though each had a different tale of development, a few common features emerged, including a burning desire to centre practice around pedagogy and to avoid the “bear-pit” of “using technology for technology’s sake” in the words of one teacher. Most interestingly though, in light of work by other authors, the findings reveal that pedagogy and philosophy are still as essential as they were in the medieval days, written about by Shulman (1986). Though the instruments may have changed the landscapes within which we operate in contemporary education, the “science” of teaching remains the same: a case of same rules, different tools. Once this is accepted by teachers and they see tradition and technology working in synch, rather than in competition, they should feel better equipped to operate in the digital age.

Continuing with this theme of technology and teaching, in the penultimate chapter Efi Nisiforou and Nikleia Eteokleous discuss the role of educational blogs in higher education and their use as a Web 2.0 tool. As part of this study, they discuss the necessity of finding a specific pedagogical framework for the integration of blogs and cite instances of practice as well as theory regarding their use in higher education. Although the use of technologies in education is not new, this chapter offers insight into ways in which tools can evolve from one Web generation to the next. As discussed in other chapters, this sense of evolution and continuation is important because technology changes so rapidly and there is a need for philosophies rather than individual artefacts to guide its usage. Efi and Nikleia illustrate this through practical examples of using blogs in association with other technologies, offering examples of how an established tool can be integrated with those that are newer. With further advances expected in mobile technologies over the coming decade, this chapter serves as a good lesson in extending the lifespan of learning technologies over several generations rather than being swept up by the latest fad. Again, as with my own chapter, the authors emphasise the eminence of pedagogy in practice.
The final chapter in the book, written by Patrick Healy, threads together a number of the contexts that have featured from start to finish. Looking at the field of teaching as a whole, from early childhood education to the tertiary sector, Patrick explores the phenomenon of positive reinforcement. He raises the issue of whether or not teachers and indeed institutions lose a sense of this on students’ journeys through the different stages of their educational lives. This feeds in well to themes contained in earlier chapters, such as in Mariam Attia’s study of cognition being shaped by earlier learning experiences, the Croatian preschool context, and the story of an English Language teacher’s travels in the work of Donna Velliaris and Craig Willis. We are all shaped to a large extent by the experiences we have in our early lives, but we are no less in need of positive reinforcement as adults than as children, so perhaps there needs to be a sea change in approaches to fostering educational development. This might not only bring about a sea change in the culture of student education but also in the way in which teachers are educated too, regardless of the context. Patrick’s chapter then manages to close the collection on a positive note, and one which echoes a recurring sense, throughout, of teachers overcoming challenges in order to achieve the maximum results for themselves and their students.

In summary then, the process of putting together this collection of chapters has been an enlightening one, telling the stories of teachers who provide exemplars of best practice, strive for professional excellence, sometimes break the mould, and always place learning, for themselves and their students, at the very heart of their practice. There is no single definition of what constitutes a good teacher, no quantitative formula for producing and educating good teachers, and no single case that could possibly capture the motivations and experiences of such a diverse profession. Indeed, as shown in the range of cases herein, profession seems an impoverished term for teaching. Vocation, from the Latin vocātiō, “a call, or summons, originally in the sense of a religious devotion, and more contemporarily framed in the language of career guidance” (Parsons, 1908), seems a more appropriate term., teaching could even be seen as an instance of combining vocation and avocation (personal interest), referred to by Robert Frost (1934) as two eyes made one in sight.

Going back to my reference to Shulman at the outset, the highest level of educational attainment is a doctorate. In gaining one, we become masters of our craft. Yet the cases in this book reveal that there is more to teaching than simply qualifications. There is something particular to the profession, indeed peculiar about it, which drives its practitioners to constantly seek betterment for themselves and for students. Few professions place such emphasis on continuous professional development, or require such a recognised integration of personal and professional identity in order to be successful at what we practice. As someone who has managed teachers for the past four years, after several years of lecturing rather than managing, I remain unsure as to what exactly makes a teaching professional good at what they do, or how that
can even be measured. One thing I am sure of is that teachers require knowledge, which has traditionally been composed of content and pedagogical knowledge, but more recently has included technological knowledge alongside these. This though, on its own, is still not enough to capture a sense of what a teacher needs in order to be good at what they do. I would suggest that one vital ingredient is passion, for the subject, the practice, and the goal of seeing students learning.

Within this work, there are many instances of such passion combined with teacher knowledge, and indeed the process of putting it together has been another instance of passion. Returning to roots, as Shulman did at the outset of his article on Knowledge Growth in Teaching, it is interesting that the Latin verb from which passion originates comes from the term *patī* meaning to suffer, in the original sense of the word, which was to possess an intense, almost compulsive feeling for something. This book and these cases demonstrate how teachers across contexts share this intense feeling for their profession whether in Egypt, India, Australia, the United States, Qatar, Croatia, Cyprus, Uruguay, or the United Kingdom.

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**REFERENCES**


