



Epistemic governance of community readiness in ITE discourse

Peta Salter, Tanya Doyle & Kelsey Lowrie

To cite this article: Peta Salter, Tanya Doyle & Kelsey Lowrie (2024) Epistemic governance of community readiness in ITE discourse, Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education, 52:2, 193-206, DOI: [10.1080/1359866X.2024.2326518](https://doi.org/10.1080/1359866X.2024.2326518)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/1359866X.2024.2326518>



© 2024 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group.



Published online: 11 Mar 2024.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 72



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)

Epistemic governance of community readiness in ITE discourse

Peta Salter , Tanya Doyle  and Kelsey Lowrie 

College of Arts, Society and Education, James Cook University, Townsville, Australia

ABSTRACT

This critical discussion paper explores the epistemic governance of “community readiness” in and for teacher education. Classroom ready is often interpreted as technical skill which places emphasis on practice to the detriment of more complex interpretations of the relational nature of teachers’ work, leading to a potential narrowing of teachers’ professional roles. Importantly, classrooms do not exist in a vacuum. We seek to untangle the discursive clusters and processes that can be taken for granted in terms such as “community” and the implications for teacher education that serves quality education and teaching.

ARTICLE HISTORY



Received 13 January 2022
Accepted 19 December 2023

KEYWORDS

Community; classroom-ready; initial teacher education; policy

Introduction

Internationally, there are increasing trends of regulation and standardisation of initial teacher education (ITE). Recent reviews of Teacher Education in England, New Zealand, Northern Ireland, Scotland, and the U.S.A. seek to implement politically derived reform. The most recent review in England shares discourses of improving quality and in turn educational outcomes within a context of increased regulation and a deficit view of existing programs. Australia’s trajectory is similar, with a continuing cycle of more than 100 reviews in the Australian context in the last 40 years (Alexander & Bourke, 2021). The most recent iteration, the Teacher Education Expert Panel (TEEP) Discussion Paper (Department of Education, 2023), seeks to improve teacher education with a notable focus on “high impact” and “standardised measures,” rendering invisible the diversity and richness of students and the schools and communities in which they learn and live. This perpetuates “classroom ready” as technical skill which places emphasis on “practice” to the detriment of more complex interpretations of the relational nature of teachers’ work, leading to a potential narrowing of teachers’ professional roles (Salter & Halbert, 2019) to place-less “best practice.” In translating the goals of “our” education systems, how community is positioned as partner and context in political and

CONTACT Peta Salter  peta.salter@jcu.edu.au  College of Arts, Society and Education, James Cook University, 1 James Cook Drive, Townsville, QLD 4811, Australia

© 2024 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group.

This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>), which permits non-commercial re-use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited, and is not altered, transformed, or built upon in any way. The terms on which this article has been published allow the posting of the Accepted Manuscript in a repository by the author(s) or with their consent.

policy discourse needs to be scrutinised for the ways in which “allowable” discourses are canonised (Alexander & Bourke, 2021), and kept visible amidst the “declining breadth of sociology or socio-cultural studies in teacher education” (Lampert, 2021, p. 454). Darling-Hammond et al. (2020) assert that connections between home and school are critical to providing aligned supports for “the whole child within a whole school and a whole community context” (p. 99). We seek to resist a basic tenet of schooling as decontextualised, where community is “mere scenery” (Collet-Sabe & Ball, 2022).

This critical discussion paper explores the analytical unity in strategies of epistemic governance of notions of community in Australian education. In doing so, it seeks to establish what definitions of community are constructed and in turn the effects evoked on expectations of teachers’ professional role in relation to community. It then examines the epistemic work of policy documents that both perpetuate and challenge policy actors,’ in this case teachers,’ perceptions of community and its relevance to their work. Our assemblage consists of strategic key documents that govern discourses of quality education and teaching and inform the wider policy framework including the vision statement for Australian education. The Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration (2019), regulation of teacher quality in the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (2022), and the most recent commentary of teacher quality and work in the TEEP discussion paper (Department of Education, 2023).

Approach

Our approach to framing a critical policy discussion draws from Alasuutari and Qadir’s (2014) work highlighting the impact of systemic epistemic governance on actors’ perceptions of the world. This work is also informed by a governmentality research lens (Foucault et al., 1988; Miller & Rose, 2008; Rose, 2007). The objectives of this lens are to analyse three different aspects of the social world that actors deal with, noting that these aspects are often amalgamated. Firstly, the ontology of the environment. Here, this means asking what the existing or prominent paradigm of community is and what ways it is perpetuated in policy in relation to the work of being and becoming a teacher. The discussion point from this question is what is the definition of community that is accepted and constructed in an assemblage of key education policy, and how this discourse shapes actors’ ensuing actions and priorities? Secondly, how the paradigm works on actors of and within policy, in this case teachers’ understandings of their professional role in relation to community, and what proposed paradigms or groups might they identify with? The discussion point here is to examine how community, for example, is aligned with the nation and national interest to motivate legitimate action. Thirdly, how might actors create “ever-new ideals” that circulate and become popular as teachers look to justify goals for their roles in relation to community. The discussion point here is what “ever-new ideals” are associated with community that takes on rhetorical force as a “noble objective” in policy. Overall, we seek to analyse the evolutionary continuum of schools’ and teachers’ relationships with community through a trajectory of epistemic work that explores the following questions:

- What are the existing and prominent paradigms of community in education discourses?
- How are these paradigms of community represented in and shaped by education policy?
- What are the implications for teachers who are expected to navigate simultaneous paradigms of community as actors within and of such policies?

Paradigms: community as a placeholder

This section explores how such paradigms rise to prominence and are paired with educational success. Critiques of the paradigm of community in education discourses highlight persistent divides between schools and their communities, and common tropes of disadvantage where “community” is often invoked. Paradigms of First Nations communities are entrenched in deficit discourses seeped in paternalistic colonial legacies and Westernised concepts of community (Shay & Lampert, 2022). As Shay and Lampert (2022) note, while this gap is commonly noted, it does so in discourse that “takes for granted a common definition of community and presumes an equal balance of power” (p. 48). The problematic nature of this assumption is confirmed by recent research including 11 concurrent systematic reviews of Australian Indigenous education that found “Aboriginal community voices remain largely unheard in the public policy discourses” (Lowe et al., 2021, p. 468). Paradigms of rural and remote communities are steeped in metro-normative discourses which position rural and remote communities “as an anchor, keeping the community grounded and stable” (Morrison & Ledger, 2020, p. ii). These anchors are constructed as contexts that can be known and is perceived as “‘solving’ the rural school problem in Australia” (Roberts et al., 2022, p. 17), while perpetuating assumptions of rural disadvantage. “High-poverty communities” are another essentialised stereotype of disadvantaged community and challenge teachers who seek to “‘know their community’ but are cautioned against stereotyping” (Lampert, 2021, p. 451). Community tropes are ambivalent – community is simultaneously an anchor and equal to the school, whilst also unavoidably deficit and problematic. Following this, discourses of community engagement are similarly ambiguous, and hypothesise that if schools, and by implication teachers are more engaged with community, better student outcomes will ensue (Lampert, 2021).

The possibility of community as a placeholder is that it imagines connection within and across borders – both literal and metaphoric, resonant of Anderson’s (2006) imagined communities drawing on comradeship which knits people together. This enables imagining of a great variety of communities, community membership and diasporas. Our communities are potentially limited only by our imaginations, and/or the cultural conditions for such imaginations. In everyday language, community is used interchangeably with all manner of constructs – local neighbourhood, group membership, and often descriptively – local community. A common assumption is for “community to be a geographical entity that houses a group of like-minded individuals who share values norms and a desire for generative development” (Kramer et al., 2012, p. 542). It is an ordinary language term that could be considered an “ideograph,” an ill-defined normative goal term that has a shared understanding by “society” (McGee, 1980, pp. 15–16). Ideographs can “cloud” and “hinder” the possibilities and alternative visions of

community and education identities. As such, it is important to examine what cultural conditions delimit the ways in which community is imagined.

Despite epistemological framing as apolitical, the construct of community is central to multiple forms of governing power, and in the case of emancipatory social movements, invoked as a powerful tool to challenge such governing. In discussing “The Birth of the Community,” Miller and Rose (2008) assert that community is highly morally invested and that the discourse of community was invoked in the 1960s by sociologists as an antidote to remote bureaucracy. This discourse, they note, was “deployed in novel programmes and techniques which operated through the instrumentalization of personal allegiances and active responsibilities: government through community” (p. 90). The challenge for teachers is how to engage with constructs of community that operate within contemporary power relations, which are much more than “scenery” for the students they teach. Here, we use American social theorist and scholar activist Collins (2010) exploration of the “linguistic currency” (p. 10) of community to challenge the “empty category” (p. 10).

Everyday knowledge (Collins, 2010) uses community interchangeably with place-based underpinnings such as the geospatial community. Urban, regional, remote and very remote categories for communities draw on geographical statistics to categorise place in sources such as Australian Bureau of Statistics data. Envisioned as geographic neighbourhoods, these classifications entrench how schools are categorised. Politically, Guenther et al. (2015) note that categories of remoteness are often linked as “indicators of disadvantage” (p. 66) along a continuum traversing urban advantage to remote disadvantage and are tied to policy and funding determinants that function as more than geographical measures. Constructed from outside the places they refer to, these categories perpetuate ideas of educational space that correlate degrees of remoteness with increasing educational failure and inferiority of rural others more generally. The statistical geography from which these categories are derived seems an insurmountable force supported by a range of assumptions regarding educational failure.

Collins (2010) notes the “construct of community is versatile, malleable” and used “descriptively, so it seemingly needs little analysis or explanation” (p. 11). For example, when interrogation does occur, descriptions of complex communities can be used to denote a point on a continuum anywhere from a source of richness through to a foundation of insurmountable impediments. The pervasive and convenient “complex” community is malleable. To be complex is to be made up of interrelated parts, which by its very nature describes how schools and their communities can be organised and function. Even when celebrating the relative educational success of poor schools, attention is diverted from the relative poverty they experience, and how community is positioned as barrier, rather than enabler to this success (Power & Frandji, 2010). The ideographic rhetoric here is that complex schools are problematic schools, and complex communities, such as high-poverty communities are difficult or “too hard.” However, it could be that what in part leads to describing settings as complex is the realisation that they are dynamic living entities that do not fit the simplified two-dimensional interpretations policy represents them to be.

Collins (2010) also draws attention to the “construct of community” which “holds varied and often contradictory meanings that reflect diverse and conflicting social practices” (p. 11). Take for example the school community. This appears relatively straightforward – but is it the community of the school, within the school gates, or the community

within which the school resides? Furthermore, what elicits a sense of belonging with a school? Shields (2000) suggests that rather than a normative concept of school community where bonds are assumed and boundaries such as the school gates are imposed, a conceptualisation of a school community of difference, in which bonds are forged and boundaries are negotiated may better reflect the rich interplay and complexity of individuals and groups that engage with schools. As Power and Frandji (2010) note, there is “impossibility” in separating a school from its context.

Furthermore, Collins (2010) notes that community is “infused with emotions and value-laden meanings” (p. 11) and is “central to how people organise and experience social inequalities” (p. 12). An important question Shay and Lampert (2022) ask is “community according to whom?” (p. 1) and what impact this has on calls for community engagement. For example, drawing attention to the way that community in Indigenous education policy can be used generically to whitewash, with pervasive narratives of dysfunction which silence strength, pride and knowledge (p. 9). Community engagement, if “represented as a means to an end, even in purportedly equity-orientated politics” can render “other purposes for community engagement ... unimaginable, irrelevant or misappropriated” (p. 13).

The role of language in discursively constructing the concept of community as knowable by its deficit and dysfunction is formative in the evolutionary discursive continuum of schools’ relationships with community. As Everingham (2001) notes, in Australia, community has long been a dynamic terrain of political contention and site of social problems. The refrain that teachers must engage with community is unquestioned, but to what extent and how is contentious. Somerville and Rennie (2012) note teacher community engagement can take “two powerful storylines: one ... as a comfortable and familiar space of belonging, and the other ... as abject and other to the self” (p. 197). A similar tension regarding the unfamiliar and other is inherent to both. In the former, unproblematised assumptions about known places and experiences are privileged and fail to question places and experiences teachers have been previously unexposed to. This is magnified in the latter where the discrepancy is more explicit around whole communities “imagined as ‘other’ to themselves” (p. 203), for example urban discourses of rurality (Adie & Barton, 2012). In mobilising community, many teachers demonstrate that their pre-existing attitudes to community become more “fixed, rather than less as the teacher becomes more socialised into the stories and attitudes of experienced teachers” (Somerville & Rennie, 2012, p. 205). Zipin (2009) notes “dark” and “light” knowledge as ways of considering how cultural capital is mobilised in such interactions. “Dark lifeworld knowledge” refers to the “dark edginess of students’ lives” (p. 320) that suggest a “dark side of place” (p. 322). The authenticity of the “dark side” to student experiences is mediated by the need to protect students (a good intention), however led to a rationale where “lifeworlds are what students need to disengage from” (p. 322), and despite strong social-justice orientations, were “short-shrifted” (p. 325) as community is intertwined with problematic lifeworlds to disengage from.

Broadly, community is often simplified to a local place, or abstracted to ambiguous references to cultural and/or social relationships that unite groups across places and in diaspora. These relationships may reflect discreet memberships, and positive as well as negative aspects of communities. Community can also represent populations to be governed. Shay and Lampert (2022) note, the discourse of “community is used both to

unite and embrace, and to differentiate and exclude” (p. 253). A governmental notion of community risks an “us” (teachers and the school) versus “them” (the community) mentality. As a result, the existing and prominent paradigm of community in education discourse can be viewed as a loaded ideograph; recognised and commonly accepted as important, with varying interrogation and engagement.

Representations: untangling community discourse in teacher education policy

This section explores the ways teachers’ roles in and with community are represented across a trajectory of macro education policies. We interrogate the policy assemblage both as Discourse which “articulates and constrains the possibilities and probabilities of interpretation and enactment” and as text that is always “becoming” and is interpreted and responded to within relation of power in various complex contexts (Ball, 1993, p. 15). Analysis of policy assemblage allows “us to think about policy as a permeable, fluid, strategic and technical ‘arrangement of elements and forces, practices and discourses, power and knowledge (Foucault, 2010, p. 29), which enables the “emergence” of games of truth, functions and subjectivities” (Ball, 2021, p. 388) to be navigated by policy actors. Policies included in the assemblage are prominent national statements informing discourses of teachers’ work at the macro level. The pivotal reference point for what constitutes quality education across Australia is The Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration (Council of Australian Governments Education Council [CoAGEC], 2019). Quality teaching is defined by the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership [AITSL], 2011) that regulate teachers’ work, and further elaborated in a collection of reviews into Initial Teacher Education (ITE) from 2015 to 2023 concluding with the most recent commentary of teacher quality and work in the Teacher Education Expert Panel (TEEP) Discussion paper (Department of Education, 2023).

Alice Springs (Mparntwe) education declaration

The declaration asserts aspirations for and of school communities and the imagined Australian community. It is the macro policy document that shapes the educational goals translated into national and state education policies. The term community is used 43 times mostly in relation to taken for granted and implied school/education communities, invoking social networks and largely geographically distinct communities. In a significant discursive shift from the previous Melbourne Education Declaration the term “citizens” has largely been replaced by “community members.”

The two goals are:

Goal 1: The Australian education system promotes excellence and equity

Goal 2: All young Australians become: confident and creative individuals, successful lifelong learners, *active and informed members of the community.*

[emphasis added] (Council of Australian Governments Education Council [CoAGEC], 2019, pp. 4–5)

In elaborating on the attributes of students and citizen subjects, there are:

- Value-laden moral discourses, to “act with moral and ethical integrity”
- different geospatial imaginings of “contributing to local and national conversations,” and “informed and responsible global and local members of the community,” and placeholders of complexity, such as rich social, cultural, religious and linguistic diversity, and richness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and culture. (Council of Australian Governments Education Council [CoAGEC], 2019, pp. 5-6)

In the declaration, community and participatory democracy are bundled together as “aspirational constructs that inform one another” (Collins, 2010, p. 25). The prevalence of community as a discourse of “natural” affinity but also governance invokes a closeness and a comfort “that appears less ‘remote,’ more ‘direct,’ one which occurs not in the ‘artificial’ political space of society, but in matrices of affinity that appear more natural” (Renshaw, 2003, p. 91).

On the one hand community in this policy can represent and speak inclusively to the mobile, transnational identities of everyone participating in Australian schooling. Discursively, this constructs community as shared goals and aspirations realised through shared values. On the other hand, neoliberal discourses attribute responsibility of community members to contribute to a knowledge-based economy, as compared with a community and in doing so leverage “connections and associations [that] can facilitate development, training and employment opportunities (Council of Australian Governments Education Council [CoAGEC], 2019, p. 10). The positionality of the community as an assumed shared identifier is different to the roles of community members in taking up multiple affiliations as they read the text and read their social ties and aspirations into the goals. In doing so, the Mparntwe Declaration deploys community as an ideograph which governs the aspirations for both bounded and “imagined” communities.

AITSL professional standards

The Australian Professional Standards for Teachers consist of a framework of seven standards across four career stages and “are a public statement of what constitutes teacher quality” (AITSL, 2011, p. 3). As such they work as technologies of governmentality and technologies of self with a powerful role in accountabilities, norms and ideals of teacher identity and relation to community (Foucault, 2010). Across career stages from Graduate to Highly Accomplished Teacher there is a discursive continuum from understand, to participate, to contribute, to lead that positions the relationship between teacher and community. The most explicit attention to community is Standard 7.4 *Engage with professional teaching networks and broader communities* where community is acknowledged as part of professional engagement, professional learning and improving practice. Teachers might take up notions of broad engagement as necessary for “enabling” their work in the classroom and therefore recognise that the notion of “community” is central to subjectivity and responsive classroom practice. On the other hand, this standard invokes community as a separate and somewhat peripheral domain in relation to the work of teachers.

Across the other standards, community is positioned as distinct from the school and mostly the domain for highly experienced teachers. For example, in relation to Standard 1.4 *Strategies for teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students*:

- a Proficient Teacher is “responsive to the local community”
- a Highly Accomplished Teacher supports colleagues to teach “with the support of community representatives.”
- a Lead Teacher “works in collaboration with community representatives.”

In contrast, a Graduate Teacher must “Demonstrate Broad Knowledge and Understanding of the impact of culture, cultural identity and linguistic background on the education of students from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds” (AITSL, 2011, p. 11). For Standard 1.3 *Students with diverse linguistic, cultural, religious and socioeconomic backgrounds* “community” does not feature until the descriptor for Lead Teacher who is to: “Evaluate and revise school learning and teaching programs, using expert and community knowledge and experience, to meet the needs of students ... ” (AITSL, 2011, p. 10). In this descriptor, “community knowledge” is positioned as key to revising learning and teaching programs and to meeting the needs of students, however left uninterrogated. What is “community knowledge”? Knowledge about, and/or from a community? Which form(s) of “community knowledge” will allow teachers to meet the needs of students? For example, will knowledge about a community signal “complexity” and “challenges”? Or, might knowledge from a community inform approaches to pedagogy that are valued by community? Moreover, this work is aligned with the work of a Lead Teacher, rather than a Graduate Teacher.

Privileging of the more experienced teacher in relation to community is a potential limitation in conceptualising and enacting teachers’ work in, with and for community across careers as well as in the imagining of learning communities. In developing practice aligned to the AITSL standards how does one unpack the ideograph of community? It can be a storyline of strength or a storyline of dysfunction. Is the role of community knowledge to reimagine curriculum, or passively provide knowledge of community? The power relations of these roles are diverse. At the graduate standard, preservice teachers should be prompted to recognise the relevance of their agency in relation to community, and this should not be relegated to later career development. For example, in many hard-to-staff schools, graduate teachers often make decisions in the absence of guidance from more experienced colleagues (Downes & Roberts, 2018). Furthermore, in Queensland, a fully-registered teacher may seek Lead teacher status after three recent annual performance reviews – so, Lead teacher status may – by eligibility criteria – be sought by graduate teachers within five years of entry to the profession. As key regulatory and core curriculum constructs in ITE the APSTs govern the ways in which teachers might imagine their role in relation to community. In doing so, they direct conceptualisations of ‘community as “complex” which suggests that engaging with community becomes most relevant once classroom-readiness is mastered.

Teacher education reviews (2015, 2021, 2023)

This section examines three recent iterations in the discursive cycle of Teacher Education in which “classroom readiness” has rhetorical force, increasingly perpetuated by narrow critiques of teacher education. Alexander and Bourke’s (2021) comparative analysis of the 1978 Basset policy and 2015 ITE review found that “a self-referential use of policy has been employed to exclude academic voices” (p. 471). This echo chamber continues to contract notions of readiness and its relationship with and for community. As national policy documents each of the recent iterations is overtly political and work on “community” in two key areas: invoking a national problem that requires action in ways that narrow the discourses of teaching and learning as bound to the classroom while simultaneously invoking community in discrete “challenging” communities.

The 2015, report *Action Now: Classroom Ready Teachers* from the Teacher Education Ministerial Advisory Group (TEMAG) mentions community 43 times in the 126-page document. Deployed as a governmental, technical operation of power, this notion of community intersects with capital, contracts and commodification of education (Miller & Rose, 2008). Rationales for ITE review invoke the nation in a neoliberal contract as “the Australian community does not have confidence in the quality and effectiveness of new teachers” (Department of Education, 2015, p. 1). Community confidence invoked in political discourse conjures opaque notions of responding to community but with no transparency as to the source or validity of such a claim.

In terms of placeholders of community, complexity and diversity present challenges in that “teachers were not adequately equipped to address diverse student learning needs and work *with cultural and community complexities*” (italics added, Department of Education, 2015, p. 20). The report also asserted that ITE providers need to ensure an “appreciation of the *diversity of students and communities* which schools serve (e.g., rural and metropolitan settings, culturally and linguistically diverse communities, Indigenous communities, etc.)” (italics added, Department of Education, 2015, p. 80). Appreciation of diversity aligns with the normative work of the Mparntwe Declaration. There are discourses of inclusion/exclusion and placeholders of race. The assertion above positions the relationship between the novice teacher and a discrete student or group of students in a complex community, rendering invisible structural and institutional processes, supports and intersectional identities and normalising diverse or culturally “othered” communities as deficit.

The Quality Initial Teacher Education [QITE] Review 2021 Discussion Paper (DESE) reasserted a governmental discourse and narrow focus on classroom readiness and the governance of diversity. The focus on attracting and selecting high-quality candidates into the teaching profession, where the placeholder of diversity presents itself in relation to attracting “a more diverse cohort so that teachers better mirror the diversity in school students and society” (Department of Education, Skills and Employment, 2021, p. 25). The tension is the default attraction with whom diversity candidates identify (Somerville & Rennie, 2012), leaving unchallenged how they imagine others. The governance of diversity in the TEEP paper (Department of Education, 2023) mirrors the previous ITE reviews reiterating that “diverse candidates” can address the problem of “challenging” communities:

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers can help meet student and community needs and provide culturally responsive educational experiences that authentically connect schools with local First Nations communities to promote educational opportunity and respect for cultural ways of knowing, being and doing. (Gruppetta et al., 2018, p. 3 as cited in Department of Education, 2023, p. 30)

The assertion above dismisses the contextual and relational knowledge and skills that all teachers should be able to bring to their work. This also invokes established tropes of an anchor and equal to community while simultaneously other. Beyond the workforce solution to diversity, the “challenge” of community diversity is reinforced overtly and narrowly in relation to the placement experience:

Stakeholder consultation highlighted the unique and significant role RRR schools play in community life means that ITE students need to be not only be “classroom ready” but “community ready” to be set up for success (Le Cornu 2015). This is particularly important for practical experience placements in remote First Nations communities, and many ITE students may lack cultural competency. (Ure et al., 2017) (Department of Education, 2023, p. 55)

The excerpt above presents community and classroom readiness as connected for these “unique” contexts. “Community readiness” is acknowledged where it is positioned as necessary for specific “challenging” communities. However, all teachers should be equipped to navigate the cultural interface and the complexities of contested space that is the locale of the Indigenous student learner (Nakata, 2007) which can be found navigating different knowledge systems in their everyday lives and relationships in geographical locations beyond the remote. While some teachers already familiar with the locale may be able to navigate different knowledge systems and relationships, this capacity is still positioned as separate from community rather than part of more holistic paradigms.

The other key focus of the 2015 ITE review was on “Preparing ITE students to be effective teachers.” Arguably the 2021 Department of Education, Skills and Employment Discussion paper further narrows the scope of teachers work and decontextualises the notion of effective classroom practice. Taking up a technical pipeline to represent readiness, there is an absence of any considerations of graduate teachers’ effectiveness in relation to and situated in learning communities, or the impossibility of separating school from context (Power & Frandji, 2010). The most recent TEEP Discussion Paper (Department of Education, 2023) – reasserts the taken-for-granted narrow construction of, and classroom-bound subjectivities of, teaching. This epistemic governance works on perceptions of the established and publicly accepted problems and even proposed actions:

The effective pedagogical practices defined in this paper are inclusive only of practices that directly relate to the learning, retention, and application of curriculum content. It does not seek to describe broader influences, content knowledge, family and community engagement practices or other enabling factors that foster engaged learning environments. (Department of Education, 2023, p. 11)

This disclaimer does the epistemic work of narrowing the discourse of teacher readiness even more than predecessors. While acknowledging the contextual and relational “factors” that shape learning and engagement in schooling, it then dismisses, or at best marginalises, their role in the public debate and devalues

the relational processes and potential ideals of “engagement” required in being and becoming a teacher. Such policy discourse takes up previous policy scope and imagining of teaching in problematic ways that perpetuate the governance of teachers work as technical practices removed from community. Broadly, and not surprisingly, paradigms of community represented in education policy resonate strongly with existing and seemingly ambivalent paradigms of community in education discourses. This ambiguity works in symbiosis with how engagement with it is subsequently framed, and how community engagement comes to be constructed, mobilised and entwined with notions of both deficit and educational success.

Discussion – implications for ‘ever new ideals’ and teacher education responses

We must consider what rhetoric we embrace and resist moving forward. Is the noble objective for teachers to “save” students from deficit communities, or to engage purposefully with context and community? Teachers as policy actors in schools make contextual decisions within and for an imagined community. ITE has a role in developing the decision-making capital (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2013) of teachers *for* community; to shape teaching, learning and assessment experiences that will see students either engage and be successful, or disengage and no longer have the same opportunities as those in their “community.” ITE programs often afford minimal attention to both the preparation of teachers to work with families and communities (Guillen & Zeichner, 2018), and to community field experiences as a source for PST learning (Salter et al., 2013), which has impact on the limits of their imagination for communities. Without engagement with the discourse of community, it is difficult for PSTs to make discerning decisions around which strategies, techniques and approaches are most purposeful when working with students, families and communities, in any given context. Knowing about a range of strategies is different from knowing which strategy might work best at which point in time, and why. To support PSTs in their career trajectory, it is important that ITE curriculum prompts PSTs to work towards identifying opportunities to sensitively engage with communities about students’ learning and to evaluate teaching, learning and assessment decisions within their own classrooms through a lens of “community readiness” (Salter & Halbert, 2019). Given the imperatives of the APSTs, there are challenges to: (a) assure graduate standard capacities while not being limited by them; (b) find space and time to theorise community to translate into accredited ITE programs. As Lampert (2021) notes, this “requires explicit and authentic effort, as well as political and institutional intent” (p. 453).

In discussing the preparation of pre-service teachers for rural and remote teaching, Hudson et al. (2020) presents “four constructs to support preservice teachers to be ready for teaching . . . : self-ready, classroom ready, school ready, and community ready” (p. 54). In this model, the self sits at the nexus of community, classroom and school. Such frameworks disrupt some of the narrow policy discourses and have utility for reframing the domains of ITE. We argue that for graduate teachers to enact thoughtful, purposeful, curriculum decisions, the entangled nature of classroom readiness and community readiness must be recognised. The graduate teachers’ adaptive expertise (Timperley et al., 2018) too, is critical to their capacity to respond to the demands of the curriculum and to

reconcile that demand with responding sensitively to the needs of learners – rather than simply accounting for or meeting student needs, as is the requirement of policy. Moreover, such theoretically informed conversations bring to light the opportunities, tensions and challenges faced by teacher educators and PSTs alike in navigating policy and praxis in relation to the work of PSTs as novice practitioners in classroom and community settings.

Concluding thoughts

Within the classroom ready ideal, the call for the community-ready teacher is fragile, but **not** in competition with the former. There are constructs of community that we can potentially look to as “template[s] for both relational thinking, an increasingly necessary skill for navigating social relations of interdependence” (Collins, 2010, p. 23), and, most importantly we might argue – “as a template for aspirational political projects. Community can never be a finished thing but is always in the making” (Collins, 2010, p. 23).

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

ORCID

Peta Salter  <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-4643-734X>

Tanya Doyle  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-8032-1335>

Kelsey Lowrie  <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-6347-4367>

References

- Adie, L., & Barton, G. (2012). Urban pre-service teachers' conceptions of teaching in rural communities. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 37(6), 111–123. <https://doi.org/10.14221/ajte.2012v37n6.7>
- Alasutari, P., & Qadir, A. (2014). Epistemic governance: An approach to the politics of policy-making. *European Journal of Cultural and Political Sociology*, 1(1), 67–84. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23254823.2014.887986>
- Alexander, C., & Bourke, T. (2021). It's all just a little bit of history repeating: 40 years of political review and reform in teacher education. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education*, 49(5), 471–486. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1359866X.2021.1895968>
- Anderson, B. (2006). *Imagined communities*. Verso.
- Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership [AITSL]. (2011). Australian professional standards for teachers. <https://www.aitsl.edu.au/docs/default-source/national-policy-framework/australian-professional-standards-for-teachers.pdf>
- Ball, S. (1993). What is policy? texts, trajectories and toolboxes. *The Australian Journal of Education Studies*, 13(2), 10–17. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0159630930130203>
- Ball, S. (2021). Response: Policy? Policy research? How absurd? *Critical Studies in Education*, 62(3), 387–393. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17508487.2021.1924214>
- Collet-Sabe, J., & Ball, S. (2022). Beyond school. The challenge of co-producing and communing a different episteme for education. *Journal of Education Policy*, 38(6), 895–910. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02680939.2022.2157890>

- Collins, P. H. (2010). The new politics of community. *American Sociological Review*, 75(1), 7–30. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0003122410363293>
- Council of Australian Governments Education Council [CoAGEC], (2019). Alice Springs (mparntwe) education declaration. <https://www.dese.gov.au/alice-springs-mparntwe-education-declaration/resources/alice-springs-mparntwe-education-declaration>
- Darling-Hammond, L., Flook, L., Cook-Harvey, C., Barron, B., & Osher, D. (2020). Implications for educational practice of the science of learning and development. *Applied Developmental Science*, 24(2), 97–140. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10888691.2018.1537791>
- Department of Education. (2015). Action Now, classroom ready teachers- report of the teacher education ministerial advisory group (TEMAG). <https://www.dese.gov.au/uncategorised/resources/action-now-classroom-ready-teachers-report>
- Department of Education. (2023). *Teacher education expert panel: Discussion paper – Executive Summary*. <https://www.Education.gov.au/quality-Initial-Teacher-Education-Review/resources/teacher-Education-Expert-Panel-Discussion-Paper>
- Department of Education, Skills and Employment. (2021). Quality initial teacher education review 2021 discussion paper. <https://www.education.gov.au/quality-initial-teacher-education-review/resources/quality-initial-teacher-education-review-2021-discussion-paper>
- Downes, N., & Roberts, P. (2018). Revisiting the schoolhouse: A literature review on staffing rural, remote and isolated schools in Australia 2004-2016. *Australian and International Journal of Rural Education*, 28(1), 31–54. <https://doi.org/10.47381/ajre.v28i1.112>
- Everingham, C. (2001). Reconstituting community: Social justice, social order and the politics of community. *Australian Journal of Social Issues*, 36(2), 105–122. <https://doi.org/10.1002/j.1839-4655.2001.tb01316.x>
- Foucault, M. (2010). *The government of the self and others: Lectures at the college de France 1982-1983*. Palgrave.
- Foucault, M., Martin, L. H., Gutman, H., & Hutton, P. H. (1988). *Technologies of the self: A seminar with Michel Foucault*. Tavistock.
- Guenther, J., Halsey, J., & Osborne, S. (2015). From paradise to beyond: Geographical constructs and how they shape education in the Bush. *Australian and International Journal of Rural Education*, 25(3), 62–79. <https://doi.org/10.47381/ajre.v25i3.104>
- Guillen, L., & Zeichner, K. (2018). A university-community partnership in teacher education from the perspectives of community-based teacher educators. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 69(2), 140–153. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022487117751133>
- Hargreaves, A., & Fullan, M. (2013). The power of professional capital. *Journal of Staff Development*, 34(3), 36–39.
- Hudson, S., Young, K., Thiele, C., & Hudson, P. (2020). An exploration of preservice teachers' readiness for teaching in rural and remote schools. *Australian and International Journal of Rural Education*, 30(3), 51–68. <https://doi.org/10.47381/ajre.v30i3.280>
- Kramer, S., Amos, T., Lazarus, S., & Seedat, M. (2012). The philosophical assumptions, utility and challenges of asset mapping approaches to community engagement. *Journal of Psychology in Africa*, 22(4), 537–544. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14330237.2012.10820565>
- Lampert, J. (2021). A community-engaged framework for the preparation of teachers for high-poverty communities. *The Australian Educational Researcher*, 48(3), 449–46. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13384-020-00406-8>
- Lowe, K., Skrebneva, I., Burgess, C., Harrison, N., & Vass, G. (2021). Towards an Australian model of culturally nourishing schooling. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 53(4), 467–481. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00220272.2020.1764111>
- McGee, M. (1980). The 'ideograph': A link between rhetoric and ideology. *The Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 66(1), 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00335638009383499>
- Miller, P., & Rose, N. (2008). *Governing the present*. Polity.
- Morrison, C., & Ledger, S. (2020). Community as an anchor, compass and map for thriving rural education. *Australian and International Journal of Rural Education*, 30(30), i–vi. <https://doi.org/10.47381/ajre.v30i3.292>

- Nakata, M. (2007). The cultural interface. *Australian Journal of Indigenous Education*, 36(S1), 7–14. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1326011100004646>
- Power, S., & Frandji, D. (2010). Education markets, the new politics of recognition and the increasing fatalism towards inequality. *Journal of Education Policy*, 25(3), 385–396. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02680930903576404>
- Renshaw, P. (2003). Community and learning: Contradictions, dilemmas and prospects. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, 24(3), 355–370. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0159630032000172533>
- Roberts, P., Downes, N., & Reid, J. (2022). Engaging rurality in Australian education research: Addressing the field. *The Australian Educational Researcher*, 51(1). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13384-022-00587-4>
- Rose, N. (2007). *The politics of life itself: Biomedicine, power and subjectivity in the twenty-first century*. Princeton University Press.
- Salter, P., & Halbert, K. (2019). Balancing classroom ready with community ready: Enabling agency to engage with community through critical service learning. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education*, 47(1), 5–17. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1359866X.2018.1497771>
- Salter, P., Hill, A., Navin, F., & Knight, C. (2013). Wider professional experiences: The value of pre-service teachers learning in wider contexts. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 38(12), 80–96. <https://doi.org/10.14221/ajte.2013v38n12.2>
- Shay, M., & Lampert, J. (2022). Community according to whom? An analysis of how indigenous ‘community’ is defined in Australia’s through growth to achievement 2018 report on equity in education. *Critical Studies in Education*, 63(1), 47–63. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17508487.2020.1786709>
- Shields, C. (2000). Learning from difference: Considerations for schools as communities. *Curriculum Inquiry*, 30(3), 275–294. <https://doi.org/10.1111/0362-6784.00166>
- Somerville, M., & Rennie, J. (2012). Mobilising community? Place, identity formation and new teachers’ learning. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, 33(2), 193–206. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01596306.2012.666075>
- Timperley, H., Ell, F., & Le Fevre, D. (2018). Developing adaptive expertise through professional learning communities. In A. Harris, M. Jones, & J. B. Huffman (Eds.), *Teachers leading educational reform* (pp. 175–189). Routledge.
- Zipin, L. (2009). Dark funds of knowledge, deep funds of pedagogy: Exploring boundaries between lifeworlds and schools. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, 30(3), 317–331. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01596300903037044>