TEACHER IDENTITY AND GRADUATE UNEMPLOYMENT

Master of Teaching Research Project

An Exploration of Teacher Identity
and Graduate Unemployment in Ontario

By

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A research paper submitted in conformity with the requirements
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Abstract

This paper explores the professional identity development of recent teacher education graduates as they move from their teacher education program into an increasingly difficult teacher labour market in Ontario. It delves into their experiences in their initial teacher education program as well as their evolving professional identity in the current Ontario employment context. Four recent teacher education graduates were interviewed and four major themes emerged including: a strong knowledge of the local and global economy, questioning of their university program and its priorities, identity confusion and related questions, as well as mental health concerns due to feelings of loss of control and power over their economic and social situations.

Keywords: teacher education, youth, graduate, employment, unemployment, identity, self-image, self-concept, Ontario, teacher labour market
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Chapter 1: Introduction

Introduction to the Research Study

In 2011, a journalist named Neil Sandell traveled across Canada to study something that he deeply cared about and passionately advocated for, the crisis of employment among young adults in this country. He was healthily funded by a prestigious scholarship called the Atkinson Fellowship in Public Policy. When he finished, he created a blog called *Good Work Hunting: In Search of Answers for the Young and Jobless* (www.youngandjobless.ca), and many of the articles were featured prominently in a special section of the Toronto Star. What did he discover? How did I come across his research? What is the relevance of it to my exploratory study on young teacher employment struggles?

Let me begin by telling you a story about myself. In 2013, I came back from teaching English abroad in France to formally start the Master of Teaching program at OISE. During my first year in the program, I applied for a number of work-study and non-work-study positions on and off campus.

Work-study positions are part-time jobs with a guarantee of about 10 hours a week. These jobs were created and funded by the provincial government until recently when the University of Toronto took over the program for its own students. The jobs created within the framework of the Work-study program were originally intended to give students with low-income, on student loans, access to jobs and career-orientated experience during the school year. They used to pay a little above minimum wage, but now most are minimum wage.

Before applying to these positions, I studied at the University of Toronto for 5 years to earn an Honours Bachelor of Arts, and worked (mostly unpaid) in events organizing and project management for many student clubs, organizations and not-for-profits. My paid experience came
from working at minimum wage jobs on the side in restaurants or in work-study positions within the university. All were formative but only the university-based experiences were interesting and stimulating to my mind and hands at the time. After graduation, I taught English in France and then Special Education in the Bahamas.

I applied for a position to work as an academic instructor for an after school program in Markham. The employer interviewed me, asked me for my practicum evaluations and told me in the end "well, normally we don't hire people with a masters, we only hire people with a B.Ed". I also applied to a work-study position to coordinate funding applications for a committee at the university that distributed money to help student clubs run their events (the very committee that I would submit funding applications to when I ran student clubs when I was an undergraduate student). The response I got from the hiring person was, "Karen your resume seems very extensive, I am not sure if this job would keep your interested enough, maybe you would like to sit on our (unpaid) committee instead?" Lastly, I applied to another work-study position to coordinate the running of an environmental conference, a position for which I was very qualified because I had planned, organized and ran multiple conferences in undergrad. The employer said she liked my resume but realistically, "there is a Ph.D candidate who ran this conference last year who will be taking the position". At this point, I ask myself, why advertise the position at all?

I applied to about forty more work-study and part-time job applications that fall. Some people replied but most didn't. In the cases when they did reply, it was to say the position was already filled by returning students or that I was over-qualified. Or there was no response. This discouraging and stressful experience coincided with a slew of articles and research in the media on youth unemployment, credentialism, over-qualification and the struggles of young adults to
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enter a labour market that simply had no entry-level jobs for most university graduates. Anecdotal experiences from friends also confirmed this struggle.

During this period, Sandell’s (2012) articles were published in a special investigative journalism section of the Toronto Star. Being an avid reader, growing up poor in Regent Park and thus being naturally concerned about the state of the working poor in Toronto, the articles caught my eye. I read each one in detail, shared them with friends and saved them to my hard drive.

Reading the articles I came to a personal realization, that there was a strong parallel between what is happening right now: rising under and unemployment among new graduates coming out of university and rising under and unemployment of new teacher graduates coming out of university. Policy writers, government personnel and researchers were raising their voices to this very real and entrenched crisis of local and global youth under and unemployment. Young adults continue to graduate in droves from higher education institutions – predominantly universities following the advice of their parents, government, media, schools and society that going to university was the only way to a "good job." They are then told they fell into what is called a "skills mismatch". Whatever skills they learned in university were said to be economically irrelevant for the jobs available. Most graduates found themselves in debt, unemployed and struggling to explain how their life came in this direction. When did it become acceptable for example to require a 4-year BA to work as an office filing clerk for minimum wage? (The New York Times, 2012).

In 2013, one in three university graduates in Toronto were accepting and working in jobs that did not require a degree (Sandell, 2012). Across the ocean in Spain, youth unemployment reached a staggering and painful point of 55.9%. Young, degree-holding Spaniards were pouring into nearby EU countries in search or any and all jobs. Protest demonstrations called los
indignados ("the outraged") were staged across Madrid with angry placards that read "Civil Servants, it’s not your corruption I mind, it’s your mediocrity. I have a four-year degree and an MA and will never have a job or a pension" (Sandell, 2011).

However in Canada, a "skills shortage" was also claimed to exist across the country. Our Prime Minister even commented on the issue itself, "the biggest challenge our country faces... for whatever reason, we know that peoples’ choices, in terms of the education system, tend to lead us to what appears to be a chronic shortage of certain skills. They are skilled trades, scientists and engineers" (Whittington, 2012). Politicians and managers in these industries called this skills shortage as being so dire that it amounted to an "economic time bomb" (CanWest, 2008; Monsebraaten, 2013).

Meanwhile reports by United Way (2013), the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (2013), CUPE (2014) and the Canadian Intern Association (2014) were showing more signs of distress among young adults, particularly women, and the working poor.

Barely half of the working adults in the GTA and Hamilton region have what is considered full-time, permanent, steady work (United Way, 2013). Survey results show that there is a steady rise in unpaid internships taking direct advantage of young workers struggling to cobble together multiple jobs to gain skills and experience (Canadian Intern Association, 2014). Young and older women, who are more likely to take on low-wage jobs to make ends meet are becoming "de-skilled" in an economy whereby low to minimum wage jobs dominant, especially in most non-unionized child, elderly care and "helping" professions (CUPE, 2014).

Back in my classroom, I was hearing similar stories of struggle and pain from friends, colleagues and classmates. I use these terms frequently because that is what they are: struggle and pain. Emotional pain. Physical pain. Psychological pain. Much related to over-credentialism and over-qualification, but also a deep sense of angst and simply not feeling or being treated like
an adult. As if life were on hold, and being a student was extended far beyond people's actual student years. Friends were taking jobs that were always temporary, 2 to 6 months maximum, making compromises in order to have something for the time-being. Student debt gave many no choice. But how long is the "time being"? One friend related to me during a walk after school that she had been working part-time in a job in her field for the past year and a half:

Karen, I don't know how long I can do this for... also what's with all the jobs on Charity Village? They all require like 5-10 years of experience, where are the entry-level jobs? And most part-time jobs posted now seem to require full-time hours, the volunteer positions are even worst, they have positions for running and directing entire conferences, events and campaigns, like they're full-time positions... but how can you compete with that? How can you compete with people who can work for free?"

Indeed how? This is particularly interesting in teaching because we are now told to volunteer in a school for a year to even be noticed for an interview.

These stories are microcosms of what is happening at a systemic level around the world. As teachers in Ontario strike for their constitutional right to bargain, new legislations were put in place (regulation 274) that greatly reduced the ability of new graduates to gain long-term teaching employment (McIntyre, 2013). None of these deep issues – the reality that only one-third of new teachers will find jobs in their field after graduation was being discussed in our program. The voices of the young and unemployed became the voices of the young and unemployed teachers as well.

But how did we arrive at this situation? After World War II, the Canadian nation-state invested heavily into public education. People attained degrees in droves despite rising tuition fees. The current young adult generation are far more educated than their parents, following the advice of family, friends and other adults (government, media) that they needed a degree for a
good job in this new 'knowledge economy'. In step, the media was flooded with a consortium of human capital studies providing the "scientific" credibility to the popular notion that more education would lead to greater national wealth, economic growth, innovation and individual wealth (DECORE, 1992). Today the proportion of Canadian adults with a post-secondary education is double the OECD average (Boothby and Drewes, 2006). But what is the 'knowledge economy'? And how did we allow entire generations of youth to incur debt and degrees that provide no real economic practicality to meet their day-to-day needs? Entering a labour market with little to no entry-level jobs, having to choose between minimum wage earnings or unpaid labour and facing much debt, and many hurts and indignities along the way?

Credentialism and over-qualification has been an issue since the 1970s when the labour market began to show signs of difficulty in absorbing the increasing number of university graduates (Anisef, Ashbury, Bischoping and Lin, 1996). The difference today is the speed, global scale, and long-term, systemic, entrenched nature of the crisis. With the combination of global competition, demographic changes, the 2008 recession and structural changes to many organizational recruitment and hiring practices, we have created a labour situation that is simply closing the doors almost entirely to youth participation, including new teachers. Teaching is important to consider because for a long time, it has been a popular career choice for recent graduates and particularly for women. The difficulties of young teachers in entering the labour market represents both a unique yet common link to this now widely accepted phenomenon of youth unemployment.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this paper is to explore the professional identity development of recent teacher education graduates as they move from their teacher education program into an
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increasingly difficult teacher labour market in Ontario. When two-thirds of new teachers are seeking employment outside of traditional public school classrooms, the question of jobs and career choices is on every new teacher's mind. How has the current labour market context influenced candidates' program experiences? How has the employment context shaped their interactions, networking or practicum experiences with their peers, instructors and associate teachers? How has it affected their teacher identity development?

The strategies, mechanisms and thoughts expressed by graduates through this research can help inform the changes needed in teacher education. Candidates' stories of struggle, hope, despair, survival and perseverance will help inform research on teacher-identity development and social policy. These areas are important because not just anyone should become a teacher. Thirty years of research have shown that a well trained and certified teacher with knowledge of pedagogy and student learning will consistently rate higher and as more effective with students than one without teacher education training (Darling-Hammond, 2000). As teacher education gets an overhaul in curriculum content and length, what should it look like? And where does the not-so-secret reality of too many young, unemployed teachers fit into the equation? Currently the Government of Ontario is eliminating all one-year Bachelor of Education programs, replacing them instead with two-year programs that will also require students to take courses in special education as well as culturally responsible and relevant pedagogy (Brown, 2013). This research question is also relevant because of the cyclical nature of economies. The current situation and how we deal with it may help us implement social policies that are less harmful when similar patterns occur in the future.
Research Questions

My main research question is: What are the experiences of new graduates related to their teacher education programs and the development of their professional identity in the current Ontario employment context? Some sample sub-questions covering major themes include:

a) What do recent graduates know about the current employment outlook for new teachers in Ontario?

b) What are recent graduates’ views on how well their teacher education met their needs in terms of employment preparation?

c) How do recent graduates describe their personal and professional identity development from the time they began their teacher preparation program to the current time?

d) What issues or concerns do recent graduates have in the current job market?

Overview

Chapter 1 includes an introduction to my background and the topic, the purpose of the study, and the research questions. Chapter 2 contains the literature review and focuses on seven areas: 1) youth unemployment, 2) higher education and the labour market, 3) defining the uniqueness of the teacher labour market, 4) the link between the teacher labour market and higher education, 5) the current teacher labour market outlook 6) current teacher education priorities and concerns and 7) teacher identity development and the practicum. Chapter 3 includes the methodology and procedures I have done to gather my data and recruit my participants. Chapter 4 presents the findings through the display of each participant's views in a portrait format revealing the following themes of : 1) knowlege of local and global politic and eocnomic issues 2) questioning of program experiences and 3) mental health and loss of power and control stresses and 4) identity confusions. Chapter 5 provides a discussion of participants' views in light of the related
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literature, including recommendations, implications and limitations for future studies. References and appendices follow.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

The literature review will be covering a large range of topics. It will begin by looking at youth unemployment among overall university graduates before moving on to teacher-education graduates in Ontario and employment as a fundamental form of social and professional identity construction.

Young, Educated and Jobless

New teacher employment needs to be placed within the broader context of youth employment. In 2012, Atkinson Fellow Neil Sandell published a series of research articles entitled, Young, Educated and Jobless in the Toronto Star. He detailed how entire generations of young people, growing up far more educated than their parents are entering an economy that is boomer-protected and told there are neither the jobs available nor the on-the-job training available for their skill level. Often deemed the "lost generation", a 2011 OECD report cited that rising youth unemployment around the world is now an entrenched global crisis with long term societal implications. Generations of young people are at risk of the "scarring effect", of complete disengagement, depression, outdated skills (or in cases of underemployment, deskilling) and other social struggles (Rachel, 2010; Scarpetta and Sonnet, 2012; Morison, 2012).

In 2009 for example, youth unemployment in Canada and the US reached 16.4-16.8%, a 30-year high, while in Greece and Spain, it surpassed 50%, with France and Britain both at 21.9% and 21.8% (Scarpetta and Sonnet, 2012). Breaking the statistics down, we can see that Toronto lost 266,000 jobs in the 15-19 age high school age bracket, at the same time one in three university graduates were working in jobs that did not require degrees – which meant they were taking away jobs from those in the high school age brackets (Sandell, 2012).
In Ontario, an hourglass effect was being created. Virtually all entry level and middle-tiered jobs were vanishing, leaving behind very high paying, in-demand jobs in the sciences, engineering, healthcare or skilled trades, or very low paying minimum wage jobs of the service sector. Many organizations including school boards (e.g. the TDSB) were also downsizing ("right-sizing") and have removed their employees' job security for 'flexible', short-term, contract-based, part-time or at-home work. Outsourcing and the elimination of on-the-job training altogether is the new corporate strategy (Harvey, 2000; Sandell, 2012). The "graduate career" no longer exists. For teachers, the news couldn't be more clear when Newswire in 2012 specified that "elementary and secondary teachers and... traditional occupations like butchers, bakers, tailors, labourers in manufacturing, office managers and clerks (that) are showing signs of labour surplus” in Canada (Newswire, 2012; Grant & Blackwell, 2012).

In a recent report called Working Women, Working Poor released in March 2014 by Unifor and the Canadian Union of Public Employees talked about the growing trend of young women graduates, as well as older, experienced women workers who are unable to find jobs that meet their skill or experience level. Instead they are being "de-skilled" in a market that does not have entry-level positions or does not value women's experiences. A market where women are more likely than men to work in low-paid positions (often in caring capacities) or take lower wages in order to make ends meet. Women across all age groups, but particularly in the acute ends of the age spectrum have lost considerable group in a workforce that is increasingly precarious in nature. They are being "squeezed" and struggling to cope with precarious jobs and precarious futures. Widespread restructuring, cutbacks and “right-sizing” have forced women to work in jobs often completely unrelated to their training or skill level.
Younger women for example are expressing frustrations about being stuck in a vicious cycle of short-term contracts and temporary jobs despite years of training, education and debt. They are being squeezed in a marketplace before even being given a chance to enter. Many trained teachers for example, with post-graduate degrees, are working in childcare, community centres, tutoring and private teaching position that pay little above minimum wage. A precarious labour force is disproportionately affecting and de-skilling women. Lead author Prabha Kholsa says:

I think the study raises the larger picture of what is happening to Toronto and Ontario’s economy... (companies) feel that a younger generation costs less, has less experience and can be manipulated more than women who have been on the job for 25 years, it's just been very degrading for a lot of them. It’s been humiliating. They’re very depressed (p.X).

Paralleling this experience was a groundbreaking report released in 2013 by United Way and McMaster University on household well-being and employment precarity. The report concluded that barely half of Greater Toronto Area and Hamilton working adults have full-time jobs with benefits that they expect to keep a year from now with the same employer (Lewchuk and Lafleche, 2013). The other half work in jobs that are full or part time with little to no benefits or job security, in contract or casual temporary positions. "Precarious" or insecure employment has increased by 50% in the past 20 years and it is impacting people's decisions to form relationships, build families, volunteer and contribute meaningfully to their community.

One of the most startling findings is that although we know employment precarity is common in lower income households, it now contributes to up to half those living in middle-income households earning between $50,000 and $100,000. These stressed out, middle-income workers are often found in colleges and universities as lecturers and research assistants, in
government offices as contract nurses and office staff, in hospitals and non-profit agencies where front line workers often depend on time-limited grants to pay their wages.

The new reality is one in which middle-income households with insecure jobs are under more stress than low-income households with secure employment. Where do teachers fit into this equation? As the report noted, people working in knowledge, service and manufacturing are equally likely to be in precarious work clusters.

With the growth of unpaid internships becoming a significant problem, researchers at the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives have noted that what use to be entry level jobs are now routinely morphing into minimum wage jobs or unpaid internships that take direct advantage at the number of university graduates who are unable to seek full-time entry level employment upon graduation (Geobey, 2013). For some of the biggest and wealthiest corporations, there are approximately 300,000 people working for free for them, much of it swelling during the aftermath of the 2008 economic recession. Lead author Sean Geobey quotes:

This is not the sort of social contract that today’s kids saw their parents and grandparents grow up under... we’re starting to see Canadians — young people and their parents in particular — seriously question what exactly is going on here, and why are we apparently returning to 19th-century labour practices (The Huffington Post Canada, 2014).

Unpaid internships in the form of volunteering for 1 to 3 years have become normalized for new teachers now wanting to get into the public school board. This contributes significantly to the youth unemployment rates and prevents young graduates from fully participating in the economy.
Higher Education and the Labour Market

With a rise in unpaid internships and volunteer labour within recent years, we must ask ourselves, has this always been the relationship between higher education and the labour market? Harvey (2000) argues for what he calls the "new realities" facing higher education and employment. Since the 1980s, pressure has been growing from government and industry to better integrate the needs of labour with the output from universities. Initiatives in the UK such as the University for Industry and the Graduate Apprenticeship Framework are working to make graduates "work-ready". However many institutions remained suspicious of this connection, viewing it as replacing "education" with "training." Not so, Harvey (2000) warns, the new realities are such that institutions needed to become more responsive to these global economic changes, it is not about being anti-intellectual or watering down academic freedom, it is about training graduates to be realistic yet positive about the fact that they will work in non-traditional areas where a degree is not necessary upon graduation. Employers are now seeking graduates with transferrable, interactive and interpersonal skills such as critical thinking, adaptability, communication, teamwork, flexibility and a desire to learn and see value through "grow(ing) the job". Danish graduates, he points out, were unaware of the demands of the work world, often choosing to work for money instead of skills development. Aside from engineering and medicine, a degree or knowledge in a specific subject area is no longer a guarantee for a job.

Many employers now specifically hire non-degree or "any discipline" graduates, valuing instead many of other soft skills. This raises the question about the purpose of higher education and where teachers fit into this category of changes. We have higher institutions ranging from providing overall liberal education to preparing graduates for hands-on, hard-skills based jobs. For Harvey (2000), higher institutions must play a transformative role in preparing graduates to adapt to this economic reality. They must teach graduates how to become lifelong critical
learners, equipped with a subset of soft skills that today's employers seek, to be able to grow a job.

"You could do it without a degree but whether you would develop it into something more I don’t know. My counterparts in other factories don’t have degrees. I don’t think it affects the job that they do. It probably affects how they develop that job, whether they go looking to add responsibility to what they have already got" says a recent university graduate and buyer for a pharmaceutical manufacturer (Harvey, 2000, p. 4).

“College graduates are just more career-oriented,” said Adam Slipakoff, the managing partner of law firm Busch, Slipakoff & Schuh in Atlanta. His firm was featured in a recent New York Times article titled *It takes a B.A. to Find a Job as a File Clerk* where even his company's lowest paid office worker, the runner, who ferries documents between offices for $10 an hour has a 4-year degree. “Going to college means they are making a real commitment to their futures. They’re not just looking for a paycheck” (The New York Times, 2012).

The model of learning that equips teacher education graduates with a sense of ongoing professional development through on-the-job learning will perhaps play a vital role in helping new teachers make sense of these economic changes.

**Defining the Teacher Labour "Market"**

The teacher labour market is hard to define. Many of the past and current studies are not relevant to the situation in Ontario. Several macro and micro level studies are largely focused on the categories of regional teacher shortages (state, provincial or urban/rural), shortages in specific fields (math or science) based on the assumption of inadequate supply, demographic measures of teacher mobility patterns, and difficulty recruiting and keeping qualified teachers (Stephen and Press, 1999; Pearce, 2012). Studies that fall under *job choice theory* on how
teachers choose their contracts based on wages, locations, pay and benefit, or *job queue theory* looking at hiring based on selecting workers from more desirable workplaces are also not relevant to Ontario (Pearce, 2012). This is because given the scale of the teacher surplus in Ontario, there is no real *job choice* or *job queue* for new teachers. There are simply a minute number of positions available in what is really a large *mass* of equally well-qualified graduates (Pearce, 2012). Additionally the teacher labour market is not a pure capitalist "market" in any sense. The supply and demand mechanisms for teachers do not operate to the same degree as other occupations. Supply is due largely to workforce demographics and opportunity costs while demand is regulated by government. McWilliams (2008) noted that demand of teachers is largely dependent on pupil enrollment, class sizes, curriculum requirements, school board fiscal capacities, government funding formulae, and the number of positions available – almost all of it is controlled by provincial government policies. For example, the cap on class size of 20 students from Grades 1 to 3, and the implementation of full-day kindergarten by the McGuinty government in the past few years provided temporary solutions to the teacher surplus in Ontario. Additionally, teachers are not a homogeneous group as they vary in expertise, qualifications. When this is combined with the localized nature of each 'market' (teachers in one province are unlikely to compete with teachers in another province) an imbalance generally occurs (Press, 1997).

**Teacher Education in Higher Education: an Overview**

Given that we can't use the current teacher labour market literature to ascertain the situation, perhaps we can look towards a different framework, the higher education framework to assess the teacher education experience. But how does teacher education fit into the higher education framework? There are still many people today who question the necessity of teacher
education in order to teach. Can anyone not just teach as long as they know a subject matter? Does it really require a 4-year undergraduate degree, then a 1 to 2 year post-graduate degree just to teach Grade 2? Darling-Hammond (2000) says that over 30 years of research have proven that despite some shortcomings of teacher education, a fully prepared teacher who is certified and knowledgeable about pedagogy, teaching strategies and student learning was consistently higher rated as more effective with teaching and working with students than one without this preparation. This is especially true in teaching higher-order thinking and problem-solving tasks. The research is also true for all subjects and levels. In this essence, we can see that teacher education is a vital component of effective teacher training, teaching and student learning in society.

In higher learning, teacher education has traditionally been one of the single largest sources of employment for university graduates, especially for women. Wolfe (1980) notes that 1 in 5 university graduates were employed as teachers in public schools between 1978-79 in Ontario, accounting for more than 10% of the employment of "professional" occupations. More than 50% of teachers were women and it was one of the few professional occupation categories (aside from health care) where women were represented by at least 50% of the employed labour force. In Canada, the first studies into our higher education labour force came from the 1970 Canada's Highly Qualified Manpower report which noted the teaching workforce tripled to meet the baby boomer demands of the 1950s and 70s, making up the largest single component of the country's highly qualified manpower (DECORE, 1992). Kushner, Masse, Blauer and Soroka's (1971) The Market Situation for University Graduates study also concluded that an overall excess of university graduates was present, with the most severe area of surplus in the field of education. Geographic nuances however are important, with provinces like Alberta facing a lesser degree of surplus. What these studies indicate is the historical significance of teacher
education, and its graduates as *indicators* of the labour market conditions for overall university graduates.

**Teacher Labour Outlook: Past and Current**

The current teacher labour outlook in Ontario is dismal. Given the demographic changes of declining enrollment, funding cuts, low birth rates and an aging but still working older teacher population, all signs point to a long-term problem.

There were rumblings that year amongst our professors that something was different (in the job market) from previous years. 35 people out of 40 from the previous year got selected for an interview with the TDSB... in my year, 3 were selected...We felt like the first cohort (2009) to not be guaranteed work after graduation. – Tallulah Hershorn, York B.Ed graduate (The Reeves Report, 2013, p. 1).

In 2011, there were 9000 new teacher graduates competing for only 4,500 teacher retirement jobs in Ontario (MacDonald, 2011). In 2012 only 1 in 3 teachers found a job in their profession, and first year teacher unemployment grew from just 7% in 2008 to a whopping 37% in 2012 (McIntyre, 2013). Now nearly 1 in 3 first year teachers and 2 in 3 unemployed teachers work outside of teaching (McIntyre, 2013). How did this come to be? The trend started in the 1970s, a drastic drop in teacher demand after the baby boomers left the public education system. The difference now however is the scale and the long-term implications of it. Researchers have also begun to question the effectiveness of teacher education and planning when government did not keep data about where teachers went after graduation until 1972, when a ministry was still yet to be formed (Wolfe, 1980). Additionally, just like in all other boomer-protected professions, new grads are being constrained from getting jobs as many older teachers choose to stay in their positions and work past retirement age. Last year, in British Columbia, the number of senior
citizens still teaching tripled, producing for the very first time in public schools, more teachers over 65 than ones under 25 (Steffenhagen, 2010).

**Teacher Education: Current Priorities, Concerns and Influences**

Given this assessment, there is no doubt that employment for new teachers is on every teacher candidate and recent graduate's mind. Thus what are the current priorities of the teacher education system? Are the economic realities of the workplace taken into account?

In 1989, Fullan, Connelly and Watson's *Teacher Education in Ontario: Current Practices and Options for the Future* report became a blueprint for teacher education in Ontario (Kosnik & Beck, 2001). The report touched on three core areas that are still very relevant today. First, education was to be a lifelong learning process, whereby faculties do not “produce fully formed” teachers, and graduates needed to look forward to ongoing professional development and learning in order to become successful teachers. Second, practicum and campus programming needed to be better integrated. Candidates often see their practicum as "the most important part" of teacher education and focus heavily on it as a site for learning (Britzman, 1986). Third, it called for an overarching, coherent statement or vision for each teacher education program. The move in 1966 of teacher education from public schools and the government to universities was symbolic of the complexity of this type of training. However despite this blueprint, lack of direction is still a problem in today's faculties (Kosnik and Beck, 2009). The guidance they receive is frequently inconsistent. Teacher educators’ views about what is important vary even within the same preparation program, and these views in turn are often at odds with government and school district policies and practices and parental expectations. (Kosnik and Beck, 2009).

Kosnik and Beck (2009) then identified seven priority areas to focus teacher education including: 1) program planning, 2) pupil assessment, 3) classroom organization and community,
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4) inclusive education, 5) subject content and pedagogy, 6) professional identity, and 7) a vision for teaching – each priority to be implemented through a coherent and integrated program that prioritized a connection between theory and practice.

The Practicum Experience

Over two decades ago Zeichner (1990) argued that many obstacles existed within the practicum component of teacher education. This included the lack of explicit curriculum, the unevenness of supervision, the low status and priority accorded to clinical studies and professional experience in universities and schools, and the struggle to understand the role of the teacher.

Axford (2005), and Beck and Kosnik (2002) discussed the tensions that often arose from the political and ethical dimensions of professional experience relationships. A common dilemma is the struggle of pre-service teachers to act as both a technician and a reflective practitioner. Pre-service teachers expend great amounts of energy consciously negotiating their roles on a daily basis, in order to "play the game" well enough for a favourable assessment. Contradictions arise when they are not yet teachers and are expected to perform as such. Recognition from associate teachers, school leadership and students was cited as a critical factor to pre-service teachers in creating and maintaining the authority they need to act in their roles.

Axford (2005) says that the traditional pre-service teacher and associate teacher relationship also restrict TCs from acting the way they believe is right. As a result, the power relationships that play out can often have a negative impact on pre-service teachers' perceptions of who they are or want to be as teachers. Tensions can thus arise from within this traditional apprenticeship model of the professional experience. Keogh (2005) found that, associate teachers often positioned themselves as the "expert" - unloading wisdom onto pre-service teachers, while
pre-service teachers were positioned as the "novice". Mentorship, collaboration and reciprocity were often absent. A pre-service teacher's freedom is restricted in experimenting or implementing innovative strategies taught at the university when they are expected to "cooperate" by responding to their mentor's advice.

As collaboration and teamwork are becoming core skills required in society and education, Le Cornu and Ewing (2008) and Ferrier-Kerr (2009) argue for a change from professional experience to communities of practice. Deliberately building personal relationships between mentor teachers and pre-service teachers in professional placements is essential to breaking down the hierarchical structure and moving towards a collegial learning relationship that is based on sharing through communities of practice.

In discussion with pre-service teachers, Patrick (2013) also found similar themes surrounding issues of power, recognition and collaboration within the practicum. Pre-service teachers were often prevented from implementing innovative practices learned at the faculty, and instead expected to toe the line and agree or compliment their associate teacher's methodologies in order to ensure a positive assessment. Pre-service teachers also spoke about their desire to be respected and recognized by the school leadership. They wanted their voices to be heard and their professional ideas welcomed. When this did happen, their professional experiences were viewed as more successful, useful and authentic. Collaboration and resource sharing did not exist because the majority of mentor teachers did not see their relationship with pre-service teachers as one where sharing occurred.

Based on interviews and questionnaire data with pre-service teachers, Beck and Kosnik (2002) found that, several key components provide for good practicum placements, these included: 1) emotional support from associate teachers, 2) a strong peer relationship with their associate teachers including being treated as a teacher, 3) real collaboration with the associate
teacher, 4) flexibility in teaching content and method, 5) sound feedback from ATs, 6) a sound approach to teaching and learning on the part of the AT, and 7) a heavy but not excessive workload during the practicum. These characteristics of the practicum experience are often reflected in the literature on teacher education with the call for a respect for practice, a strong theory-practice connection, teachers as researchers, an integrated curriculum, and a caring, supportive, teacher-student relationship.

**The Faculty Experience**

The value of the university component of the pre-service program has often been a source of debate among writers of teacher education (Beck and Kosnik, 2002b). Some have argued that teachers learn mainly from practice during the practicum and after graduation, therefore the time spent at the faculty for coursework should be reduced. Others have argued that though there is always room for improvement, university programs have proven their worth. The linear fashion in which teacher education courses are taught is also a source of concern: theory first and practice later, student teachers are often left to apply pedagogical theory on their own rather than see it implemented, modeled, and implications discussed first at the university. Lack of support often experienced by student teachers in their professional placements also means that they often reproduce the practices of their mentor teachers, rather than implementing and advocating for what is studied at the university. Faced with these problems and concerns, members of the teacher education community have proposed a number of changes including: 1) effective teaching practices need to be modeled effectively by faculty for student teachers to experience firsthand; 2) instead of covering the entire curriculum within a few courses, fewer topics and principles should be explored in depth so that a vision and approach can be developed to sustain new teachers through their professional growth; 3) the campus program and faculty need to have
constant interaction, with faculty members at practicum sites regularly, and 4) and lastly there should be strong sense of community experienced within the pre-service program so that student teachers feel supported and can learn to work together.

Within the faculty, many of the past concerns about teacher education programs remain. Kosnik and Beck (2009) noted that teacher candidates have expressed continual concerns with: difficulty and fragmentation in integrating pedagogy, subject matter and content, the divide between university and school-based training, the lack of adequate clinical training, and insufficient funding and resources. Many candidates see their programs as "cash cows" for the larger university, perpetuating much of the above (Darling-Hammond, 2000). In addition, many complex issues are operating on the teacher education system, these include: societal changes such as an increasing number of special needs students; growing cultural diversity among pupils; social issues such as bullying, abuse and poverty in the classroom; the use and abuse of social media; strong American influences on teacher education and research; provincially administered certification systems that prevent national teacher "work mobility"; the practical applicability of technology in classrooms; accommodating diversity in teaching; issues facing clinical practice length, quality and type; the acceptance of too many candidates despite the lack of teaching positions; the urban-rural divide; and the diversification of teacher education programs and its accessibility (Van Nuland, 2011). It is in this context of employment difficulties, and teacher education concerns, priorities and influences that this study hopes to explore how new teachers experienced and navigated their program given the current state of the Ontario teacher employment outlook its implications on their employment prospects as well as on their personal and professional teacher identities.
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Identity Development

Smit and Fritz (2008) cited from Vryan, Adler and Adler (2003) an appropriate working definition of identity: “… identity establishes what and where the person is in social terms… when one has identity, one is situated” (Vryan et al. 2003, pg 367). Quoting Turner and Reynolds (2010), Schöb (2013) says one’s self-image depends crucially on how we are embedded in social groups and our self-awareness of this embeddedness. Belonging in a group is important for the individual self-concept, as the “norms, values, beliefs and ideologies are socially transmitted through influence and are internalized, fundamentally affecting one’s psychology – creating socially shared regularities that affect the content, structure and function of the mind” (p. 24). From social psychology theories of “self identity” – individual identity is constructed from social solidarity and belonging, as well as from individual tendencies. Self-actualization, conditioned by social and political processes, is a process that serves to re-compose the self when personal or situational factors are altered.

Smit and Fritz (2008) identify three constructs of identity: situational, personal and social identity. *Situational identity* comes from collective meaning making and behaviours, this is especially important in face-to-face communication. People are sometimes tourists, students and motorists. *Social identity* is shaped by being within socially constructed categories of people (e.g. teachers) or a position within a socially structured environment (e.g. in a school). This category will remain stable if the position in the social structure is stable. Social identity is interesting because there are roles attached to certain tasks or positions whether or not the person identifies with them or not. You are a teacher because you are trained as one, even if you no longer want or can identify as one. Much about identities also result from the internalization of role expectations. The last construct, *personal identity* comes from the person’s individual uniqueness such as personal history, name and personality. It is a narrative of the self that
chooses, frames, filters, selects and deselects information. People choose to reveal what they want to reveal to others depending on who the other is.

**Work as Identity**

Employment as composed of an agreed upon set of social relationships and social definitions is thus a fundamental part of one’s self-concept. Thirty years ago Kelvin (1981) wrote about the illuminating question of “what does he/she do?” for work as a source of information about the other. What a man or woman’s work is, whether or not he or she can work, need to work or have work is a symbolic extension of their social situations and life experiences. One’s self-concept and its functions come from what we do. We are what we do.

Three themes arose from his analysis. One: work is a socially recognized set of activities (e.g. teaching in a classroom) that at its core separates those who have work from those who don’t. Second: an assumption exists in society that people need to work or else they will discharge their responsibilities onto others. Third: due to the inherent social division of labour in society, the nature of work becomes relevant and a hierarchy of relationships develops.

As social creatures, humans need the social and physical structures that work provides. “Not being at work” is more of a problem than “being unemployed” since the lack of structure is also a problem for the retired. Thus the type of work one does affects their social standing in the community and their expectations of their relationships with others. On the extreme ends are unemployment and employment. When external factors such as plant closings or changes in technology, outsourcing of labour and the growth of unpaid and precarious work take hold, stigmatization lessens. As more “normal” people lose jobs due to rising unemployment from the 2008 recession for example, the fact that any one of us can imagine ourselves unemployed also reduces stigmatization. It becomes less potent, more accepted and fewer faults are placed on the
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individual. The current long-term surplus of teachers in Ontario makes it very hard for new teachers to find a position, in such case, the status of the "unemployed new teacher" becomes normalized.

Psychologically however, a person’s past experiences with unemployment will negatively impact their perceived future work prospects. Coping strategies see people retreating into other, non-work centered roles. These can be parent or spouse, graduates may tell themselves that they are still looking for the right job and the elderly will consider a lay-off the right time to retire. For unemployed new teachers, the hurts and indignities of being unable to find work in their trained profession can have long-term implications on mental health. Frustration, anger, exhaustion and depression set in as questions about personal and professional identity and self-concept begin to mount.

Schöb (2013) wrote about how unemployment reduces the immediate meaning from day-to-day existence and threatens the individual self-concept and identity, extracting a psychological cost that is far beyond the monetary. Five unintended consequences emerge: lost of time structure, social contacts beyond family, the experience of social purpose, status and identity as well as regular activities.

No longer in the teacher education system, and not embedded in the teacher professional community, it can become harder and harder for a graduate to see themselves as a teacher. Being unemployed removes the teacher from the taken-for-granted system completely, setting him or herself apart from those who have work, regardless of what it is. She or he is stigmatized, seen as deviant, lacking ability to take responsibility for oneself (let alone others), he or she is different, ineffective and often excluded from the “normal” patterns of life, of “normal” people.
Teacher Identity: The Professional and the Personal

Teacher identity is a combination of an individual's perception of himself or herself as a teacher, the personal identity, and as the teacher he or she wishes to become, the professional identity (Chong, 2011). The personal is the emotional intelligence and social experiences of the candidate, most teachers, before applying to a teacher education program, are guided by three common sets of personal and social experiences: early childhood school experiences, experiences with teachers as role models and previous opportunities to teach. The professional is a complex mix of cultural, contextual and placed-based experiences. It comes from numerous learning and teaching contexts, the mastering of skills and knowledge in pedagogy, and the conformity to norms and values of the profession.

The ability however to regard oneself as part of the teaching community, to develop a positive sense of collective identity within the profession requires contextual experiences with others in the profession, as well as recognition from the community for having the necessary professional qualities and disputations (Chong, 2011). Viewed from the lens of social theory on social space, a teacher's identity then is placed-based, meaning within the professional arrays of possibilities, where is the teacher spatially and therefore socially located? It comes from learning and being a teacher in a professional landscape. This identity alongside practice is the lens, in which teacher-candidates (TCs) perceive and give meaning to their development as a new teacher.

Teacher Identity: The Practicum

The practicum is a crucial component of a TC’s professional and personal identity. Fazio, Melville, and Bartley (2010) said that given the right alignment of philosophy and teaching styles from associate teachers (ATs) and practicum schools, TCs can be taught to effectively
implement specific teaching strategies and philosophies such as inquiry-based science teaching. However issues of AT subjugation, availability of resources, time, and the need to address curriculum expectations remain barriers.

In Ontario, like Australia, it is normal for universities to offer teacher education on a large scale, competing with each other to place hundreds of student teachers in a limited number of schools with only an administrative partnership, often leading to an "apprenticeship" type model. TCs observe mentor teacher practice and they perform in the manner which the school community and mentor teacher has deemed appropriate (Patrick, 2013).

This conflicting relationship is based on two narratives: TCs often see the practicum settings as places to innovate and collaborate while ATs often see these as places for induction and assimilation into the profession (Patrick, 2013). Explicit support from schools and associate teachers is required to move towards a solution.

The practicum thus is also a problematic space for TCs and new teachers to develop and negotiate their professional and personal identities. Teachers as human beings do not operate as autonomous agents, relationships between the intrapersonal and factors such as views, values, and emotional states impact and influence actions in setting such as the practicum. Human functioning is not entirely determined by situational influences either, instead it is a product of a reciprocal back and forth of the intrapersonal, the behavioural and environmental determinants (Fazio, Melville, & Bartley, 2010). For TCs, the complexity of their knowledge, beliefs and motivations, their capabilities and skills in a particular pedagogical area, the AT in the practicum classroom, their practicum experience, and their philosophy form an intertwined web of dialectical interactions that help determine their reflections and reflexive actions – actions which work to inform the development of their personal and professional identities.
Teacher Identity: Struggles and Redefinitions

Identities are not static, they shift and change within a variety of contexts, changing professional demands and increased accountability, discourses of theory in teacher education, practice and experiences from fieldwork, and socialization during teaching (Chong, 2011). Studies have shown that due to difference between new teachers’ values, beliefs and expectations about the profession, many novice teachers become disillusioned, frustrated, lost and start doubting their career choices, hurting their professional and personal identities. Teacher identities are not static, they need constant nurturing or will deteriorate or diminish (Chong, 2011; Chong & Low, 2009).

Authors also write about a need for professional learning communities and continuum from initial teacher education to early years of teaching. Putting all these factors within the Ontario new teacher employment context, some serious questions are raised: What does it mean for newly graduated teachers and their evolving identity development if they cannot visualize their future self in a traditional classroom and yet are placed, trained and practicing in one during their initial teacher education program? What does this mean for their teacher-identity as newly graduated teachers enter non-traditional teaching fields outside school classrooms with different work demands? Where and how do newly graduated teachers imagine themselves within this professional learning community if they don’t see themselves practicing in its traditional and physical landscapes of the public school classroom?

For new teachers, a range of complex identifications with peers, students, administrators, community and supervisors is the context for the enactment of their professional teacher identity and culture. It involves practical experiences and theoretical issues, all within an ever changing educational landscape.
Society also often looks to teachers to fix the educational problems of the past while providing the accelerated learning and development of learners for the future. Schools are now becoming a place for all things and everything. Research into teacher knowledge, practice and identity has shown distressing signs of teacher breakdowns, suggesting a fragmentation of identity. What does "teaching" mean when identity is shaped by the personal, professional and situational narratives of our daily lives?
Chapter 3: Methodology

Procedure

The methodology of this research project was to address the question of how new teachers experience their identity and their program under the current Ontario employment context. Given the paucity of direct prior knowledge related to this topic, this study was qualitative and exploratory in nature, using semi-structured interview questions to give recently graduated teachers a chance to speak freely and openly about their experiences. First I conducted a literature review on the topic, followed by creating a set of interview questions and prompts, and then I contacted 2 potential participants and conduct the interviews for about 45min each. The interview questions and literature review was then updated and edited to cover new themes and sub topics that initial interviewees brought up. The new questions were then asked to 2 additional interviewees, with the updated questions also asked to the first set of 2 interviewees. Next I transcribed the interviews, drew out the central themes and categories through coding and explored them in Chapter 4. In Chapter 5, I made connections between the themes to the literature conducted above, and my research question.

Instruments of Data Collection

The instrument of data collection I used was a semi-structured interview process. It began with an introduction questions of "What is your previous education background?" and "Can you tell me a little bit about how you decided to go to teacher education program?" Then I moved on to more structured and topic-specific questions about what participants have heard in terms of the current teacher employment situation in Ontario and "thinking about all the components of your teacher education program, can you tell me a little about whether it is meeting or did it meet your
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needs as a candidate in terms of employment preparation?” Using that as a guiding question, I then probed candidates for specific examples and details in areas where candidates see themselves in terms of their careers as teaching professionals, whether it's in a traditional classroom or not, how important that is, their expectations from the program in terms of employment preparations, and strategies they are using to prepare themselves in and out of the program for employment. Lastly I asked and probed how the current employment situation has affected any changes in their professional and personal teacher identity development.

Participants

I interviewed 4 participants who met the criteria of:

a) Recently graduated teachers certified in Ontario

b) Graduates of a consecutive (post-baccalaureate), concurrent or graduate teacher education program

c) Graduated no more than 3 years prior to the beginning of the study

Data Collection and Analysis

After the interview, I transcribed the data electronically by hand in conjunction with the Audacity software. I then read through them and manually highlighted and underlined common themes and patterns that arose on how pre-service teachers make meaning from their program experience given the current employment outlook. I highlighted significant quotes, observed the data for how frequent a particular theme emerged and made notes as I went along on how this relates to the research question, the literature and the topic.
Ethical Review Procedures

Before the interview, participants were given a consent form to read and sign, following the Master of Teaching ethical review procedures for research approval. One copy was provided for the participant to keep while another was kept on record for the study. The participants were also given information on the purpose of the study and the confidentiality of their responses to ensure that they could speak freely and within a safe and comfortable space.

Before beginning the interview, I reviewed my research topic and purpose to participants and reminded them that if they felt uncomfortable with a particular question, they can refrain from commenting. Additionally they had the opportunity to change or revise any of their responses throughout the course of the research. For confidentiality and anonymity, participants and institutions were identified using pseudonyms, my research supervisor reviewed all the results prior to being finalized, and the participant were made aware of and have given consent for this process.

Limitations

Given the small sample size of this research project, I will be unable to make generalizations based on the data. However, given the nuanced and personal nature of this research topic, one that focuses on identity and employment, each interviewee will respond to their own situation as filtered by past experiences, networks, outcomes and backgrounds that are generally very individualized in nature. The exploratory approach is suitable and will be used to analyze each candidate's response to their employment situation and identity struggles. The goal of the research is to draw together links between the literature on youth unemployment, higher education, teacher education, and how they impact personal and professional teacher identity developments. The goal was not to discover generalizable results, it is to look at how as
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individuals, with similar academic backgrounds are responding and coping with these economic changes (youth unemployment) and the consequences of them on their self-concept (teacher and self identity).
Chapter 4: Findings

Introduction

The perspectives and thoughts arising from interviews with recent graduates are arranged in a portrait format for each participant, touching on the four main themes that emerged, including: 1) teacher education program experiences, 2) fitting into the political and economic context, 3) identity transformations, and 4) mental health stresses and loss of control.

Background information the four participants is included in the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Background</th>
<th>Education prior to Teacher Education</th>
<th>Work Background</th>
<th>Teacher Education Program</th>
<th>Current Economic Situation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amarah, 43</td>
<td>White male, immigrated from Iran to study at OISE, lives with wife and two children</td>
<td>B.A. in English Literature; TESOL certification</td>
<td>Taught English in Iran privately for 15 years</td>
<td>2-year Master of Teaching degree at OISE (2013), I/S teachable in English, ESL AQ</td>
<td>Student, completing his PhD in Language and Literacies in Education at OISE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drake, 25</td>
<td>White male, from Canada, living with parents</td>
<td>B.A. in Theatre Arts</td>
<td>Worked in theatre administration for 2 years</td>
<td>1 year post-baccalaureate BEd degree at OISE (2013), J/I teachable in Drama</td>
<td>Unemployed, volunteers at intermediate school in Grades 7 and 8 rotary English and Library periods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keven, 48</td>
<td>White male, from Canada, lives with wife and two children</td>
<td>B.A.; TESOL certification</td>
<td>Worked as a film executive for 20 years</td>
<td>1 year post-baccalaureate BEd degree at OISE (2013), P/J and J/I certified</td>
<td>Part-time adult ESL teacher, hoping to get onto supply list this year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sue, 24</td>
<td>White female, from Canada, living independently with some parental support</td>
<td>B.A./B.Ed. from Canada</td>
<td>Worked as children's camp instructor for several summers</td>
<td>Concurrent BA/BEd at Queen’s University (2013), I/S teachables in History and Math</td>
<td>Unemployed, looking into doing an MA in History</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Background of Participants
Two of 4 participants, Amarah and Keven are older graduates. Keven decided to change careers in his 40s, coming from a corporate environment to teaching. Another graduate, Amarah is trying to continue his teaching career that he began in Iran. He is the only participant with full-time teaching within a classroom as he taught in a private school for 15 years before coming to Canada. These two older graduates also each chose to obtain TESOL certification prior to their teacher education program. Sue and Drake are more traditional, younger students entering teacher education directly after completing their undergraduate studies. All candidates are English speaking and were motivated to enroll in a teacher education program because of positive experiences in schools either as students, volunteers or teachers. The participants recruited are certified to teach at different levels including K to Grade 6, Grades 4 to 9 and Grades 7 to 12. The participants are graduates of the three major teacher education program types in Ontario. Amarah holds a Master of Teaching completed over a 2-year period; Keven and Drake have a BEd which they obtained in a 9-month post-graduate program, and Sue completed her BA and BEd within the framework of a 5-year concurrent teacher education program. All candidates also have a strong desire to teach and reside in Ontario.

Portraits of Participants

Below the thoughts and perspectives of each interview participant is organized in a "portrait" of sorts according to four major themes.

Amarah

Amarah, 43, is a newcomer to Canada from Iran where he taught English for over 15 years. Prior to his teacher education at the University of Toronto, he completed a Bachelors degree in English Literature and a TESOL certificate. He struggled to find ESL teaching jobs and
worked a few months in food services jobs before entering the Master of Teaching program at OISE. He graduated in 2013 with his graduate degree, and is currently completing a PhD in Language and Literacies Education at OISE.

**Theme 1: Teacher Education Program Experiences**

Amarah’s teacher education experience was shaped largely by his practicum and research interests. Difficult and short, he felt that relationships between him and his associate teachers and their students were meaningless because there was not enough time to develop and nurture these relationships. He struggled with classroom management and often felt more like an apprentice than a teacher, "carrying out the leftovers of what your teachers were doing, rather than really teaching." Within the faculty, his experiences were better but not great. He discussed how in second year when he decided to go into academia, the research component of his 2-year Master of Teaching program at OISE was not taken seriously. There was a profound lack of support for his research goals, and so he had to present at conferences and take additional research courses on his own. He dismissed much of the content in classes that were not pertinent to his research focus, and instead focused on classes that did cover his research topics of literacy and ESL teaching.

When asked about how the program could be improved to better support graduates for the current employment market, Amarah openly questioned the lack of transparency, noting that the faculty was not entirely honest about the job market for new teachers: "they say the figures are getting better, but they are getting worse, some boards are actually shrinking! Sometimes they really deny that it is (now) practically impossible to get a job..." This lack of transparency meant that he was unable to prepare early enough for alternative employment. The topic of alternative jobs was only raised during the second half of second year. Lastly Amarah questioned why the research component of the program and alternative practicum possibilities were not taken
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seriously. Given the mandated increase in the length of teacher education in Ontario, he said "this can become a real Master's level thing" if they stopped focusing on public school boards and instead provided students like himself alternatives. He would have liked to join an ESL research team with professors he knew at OISE, or complete his practicum sessions in alternative or private school settings. Additionally he questioned why the research component of the program was not more carefully structured within the framework of the program. His experience was that he and his colleagues had to fend for themselves in order to complete the MTRP. He also wondered about the quality of his 2-year teacher education program: "it is fair to say that because they are advertising this program as academic and professional, so why not give us opportunities to do other things? ... Stop focusing on the TDSB."

Theme 2: Fitting into the Political and Economic Context

All the participants possessed a strong knowledge of the Canadian economy, including the difficulties and saturations facing Ontario's teacher labour market. Amarah referenced teacher union corruption, decreasing funding towards education, the growing social and professional pressures that teachers are under, shrinking boards and questionable hiring and employment processes.

When referencing his own economic and political situation, Amarah spoke about how most of his peers failed to get hired in the public boards and that he didn't get a single reply to many ESL teaching positions that he applied to. Competition wise, he sees himself in a "losing match" when it comes to competing with his Canadian-born or educated peers for a job. He doesn't know how to "play with the language" and felt that the overly complicated and "closed" nature of the Ontario employment process for teachers unfairly shuts him out as an
internationally educated teacher who hasn't been in Canada for long enough to develop a good network. He describes what he understand as discrimination:

because the market is sealed, new teachers are treated as people with inadequate knowledge and skills... because we are not in the system, we cannot voice our opinion, we cannot criticize the judgment... and I'm new to Canada so I don't know the systems, I haven't been networking for such a long time, and I don't believe in networking as a teacher, as a good teacher who wants to teach, I don't have to jump over 200 hoops to teach a Shakespearian sonnet.

As a result, in order to survive as a new immigrant with a family, he may as well invest the same amount of energy into a PhD program that may eventually open up the global marketplace for him, providing him with the most stable and longest term return economically and professionally.

**Theme 3: Identity Transformations**

A third theme that arises is a sense of identity loss, confusion and transformation. The difficult job market and negative practicum experience have forced Amarah to consider alternative employment as a researcher in order to survive as a new immigrant with a family. He spoke about the contradictions and identity crisis he faced after teaching for 15 years and being forced to become a researcher: "suddenly I am doing research and reading and writing which is fantastic, I'm really enjoying it, but I really think I need to talk to people, to share experiences with them, learn from them, to teach them." He feels that the discriminatory hiring practices of Canada has robbed him of his right to teach and alongside that his identity as a teacher; he is prevented from doing a job that he feels he deserves and is good at. Amarah also questions whether or not he is a true researcher at heart, and discusses the possibilities of teaching
undergraduate students or teaching ESL teachers as a way to create a hybrid identity of his past and current self.

**Theme 4: Mental Health Stresses and Loss of Control**

Amarah spoke about the stress he and his peers experienced during the 2-year teacher education program. As most of his peers in the MT program were close in age to his former students in Iran, he saw them as children and felt their anxiety, stress, sadness and depression in their struggles to complete the program without any real guarantee of a future in teaching. For him though, once he decided to focus on his PhD in second year, he was very much "over it." However, in discussing his personal identity crisis, he also delved into the topic of power and voice. For new teachers graduating and having no real chance of teaching in a classroom, he discussed the very real and great possibility of professional teacher identity damage. New teachers are essentially unable to practice and improve their skills in order to become good teachers, they have no voice in the conversation and can easily see themselves as "bad teachers" or "not as a real teacher" as a result. He noted that

> gradually, particularly if you're younger, and you're less experienced and you're not as sure about how successful you could be in the classroom, I think gradually you might believe that you're not a very good teacher so your identity might be seriously damaged."

New teachers are essentially being denied the professional landscapes in which new teachers require in order for their skills, confidence and teacher identity to develop, growth and flourish.

**Drake**

Drake, 25, is a Canadian-born and educated teacher from Waterloo, Ontario. Prior to teacher education, Drake completed his Honours Bachelor of Arts at York University, specializing in Theatre Arts. After graduation, he worked a couple of years in theatre
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administration and developed an interest in teaching, so he decided to pursue his teacher education at OISE. He graduated in 2013 with a Bachelor of Education and is currently unemployed, volunteering each week at a local intermediate school in Grades 7 and 8 classrooms, as well as at a safe haven for women who have been abused sexually.

**Theme 1: Teacher Education Program Experiences**

Drake's experience teacher education program was also shaped strongly by his practicum. Working within a school where he experienced homophobia, racism and discrimination against students and teachers alike, he struggled to connect with peers, his associate teachers and students. This level of difficulty was extended to his experience with his peers within the faculty, he said,

I probably did less networking than I could have, honestly because I hate networking, what's the point? And I don't like these people, it's sometimes hard to be in a racist or homophobic school environment, so it's hard to network with those people when you don't get along with them.

When asked about his faculty experience, he expressed the fact that he thought the faculty did what they could to prepare candidates for the job market. However, when probed about any shortcomings, he discussed openly and strongly about how unrealistic alternative job prospects were for new teacher graduates due to more structural economic barriers that prevent good jobs from being created or maintained. He felt that the alternative employment sessions that OISE provided were a "scam," with presenters who "drank the kool-aid about what it takes to get a job in the new knowledge economy." He questioned this neo-liberal thinking, the need for everyone to be "self-made... do the network thing, to be constantly on social media, engaged, talk yourself up." For him it was devoid of the more fundamental issue of where all the good jobs went. Drake explained,
it amounted to telling a room full of unemployed people, without very good job prospects that, unless you have French, that they need to be sharper, more focused, and razor-edge, that you won't make it, why is there a room full of unemployed people who are going to be competing for a finite number of jobs? There's going to be winners and there's going to be losers.

**Theme 2: Fitting into the Political and Economic Context**

Drake spoke about the fact that the teacher labour market is essentially a political one, not purely economic one. More funding could easily drop class sizes and increase teaching positions, a situation he would like to see. Noting that a full three quarters of new teachers are unemployed, he spoke about funding cuts to higher education, the future of education as the main battleground for neo-liberal capitalism, questions about whether private schools can truly provide an equitable alternative to publicly funded education, and the erosion of public goods such as public education.

Drake questioned what it means to be a social justice teacher, especially once you leave the system. The problem is immense and not having the opportunity to practice is challenging. French teachers have better opportunities, he said, as do high school math and science teachers, and Mandarin teachers. The pressures of unemployment weighed heavily on Drake, his status as an unemployed person has now superseded his status as an unemployed new teacher. He felt discriminated against by society, a profound sense of loss of voice and social status when people didn't see him as someone valuable to network with, and the teacher profession as one that cares little about its unemployed members. He said, people sort of.. treat people differently based on their employment status, like if you're employed, you have more power, you're a network person whose in the know, versus someone who you don’t want to network with, it is a question of extending or shining.
In addition, he questioned how society has come to undervalue people who can work but have no work, "I think this economy doesn't value workers, it doesn't value people who provide labour, and I think the (teaching) profession doesn't value people who are not currently working."

**Theme 3: Identity Transformations**

Asked about his personal and professional identity, Drake spoke about a strong and persisting desire to do equity and social justice work. As he cannot get a teaching position, it is not possible for him to be the social justice educator he has always wanted to be. He explained,

I think it's safe to say my priority is much more focused on equity issues than when I was going into teacher's college, I was less concerned about job prospects, getting a job, than those issues... I think once you stop writing papers and essays, it starts to become a lot more of a concern!

When probed further, he noted that being unemployed "changes your professional identity, and that's a challenge for me, I had hopes and dreams associated with this program, how do I continue? Where do I fit in? Do I fit?" This identity crisis is connected to being an unemployed teacher and an unemployed person. Once you stop going to class he noted, and once you stop reading about how to teach something, and you're not teaching, then you're not a teacher. He doesn't enjoy unemployment or underemployment, and doesn't feel valued by the profession, his status as a teacher is questioned when he says,

I see myself in an amorphous blob of teachers, I feel kind of like I'm a dime a dozen, it's hard... I feel conflicted about just who I am, where I stand with it, both within the teaching profession and outside of it, you stake it out, it's day-to-day. I want to see myself as a teacher, but for me, that's more linked to a job, I base teaching as being at a school, I don't think it's completely accurate, but that's where I am stuck at the moment.
Drake’s teaching identity is tied to working in a classroom as a teacher, without employment, he struggles and his professional identity is weakened.

**Theme 4: Mental Health Stresses and Loss of Control**

The topic of loss of control and agency was expressed earlier when Drake spoke about feeling under represented, discriminated against and not treated as an equal among peers due to his unemployment status. Within the teaching profession, he doesn't feel represented or sure of his status within it, when asked whether he felt he was a part of the professional teaching community, he replied, "I think so, but in a bottom rung kind of way." There is an overwhelming sense of struggle as he feels he must find a teaching position without the benefit of a supportive networking and compete ferociously within a very competitive and often impossible marketplace full of over-qualified, under-employed teacher graduates. Expressions of stress, mental health difficulties were also discussed. Drake spoke to his struggle with depression,

especially last year, during my program, for a variety of reasons that didn't involve job prospects necessarily, but it certainly played a role, affected my performance, sometimes the phrase, you got some lemons and need to make some lemonade, I find it takes a lot of emotional effort to always be perky and happy when the market is so difficult.

**Keven**

Keven, 48, is a Canadian-born and educated teacher from Newmarket, Ontario. Prior to teacher education, Keven completed his Honours Bachelor of Arts at York University and worked as an executive in film exhibition and distribution for over 20 years. He volunteered at his son's school for several years, completed his TESOL certificate and then decided to go into teacher education at OISE. He graduated in 2013 with a 9-month Bachelor of Education and is
currently teaching part-time adult ESL English night and day classes in York Region north of Toronto.

**Theme 1: Teacher Education Program Experiences**

Keven had very positive practicum experiences, ones that definitely defined and solidified his desire to teach in a traditional classroom setting. He spoke fondly of how he meaningfully contributed to several Grade 4 and 5 units on media literacy, and about how important it was that his associate teachers were supportive to him. They gave him consistent positive feedback and reinforcement, and despite several days of stress where he questioned his decision to make a career change in his 40s, his students always got his best performance and his students made him feel he had made the right decision. He said,

> my associate teacher, she was fabulous ‘cause during my first practicum she would take notes each day on the lesson and hand me back the book so I could read it, so I have the book at home and towards the end, she said, I'm taking less and less notes cause you don't need it, she said you would be an exceptional teacher and I got teary.

These experiences in which he had tremendous support from his associate teacher provided the confidence and cemented the desire for Keven to persevere and get into a classroom.

On the job preparation side, Keven spoke about how the faculty did what they could to prepare students. He pointed out that they do not control the market, so the job search falls to the students. He explained,

> the whole job market thing I think, a lot of it was on the students ... I mean the market is what the market is, there is not much more than could be done in any class to prepare people for the market, I think the school is doing the best to prepare people for it, it is not an encouraging job market for teachers, they do have to hire, it's just not going to be low-hanging fruit!
Keven said he had no expectations from the program in terms of helping with job prospects.

**Theme 2: Fitting into the Political and Economic Context**

Keven highlighted the barriers that Regulation 272 created for new teachers. He questioned the strategy behind the previous provincial government led by Dalton McGuinty when they created this legislation, which prevents principals from interviewing new graduates since they must now go through a seniority list. Boards are very confused and must be more careful about their hiring practices than ever before as there is a new regulated process in place. Keven said,

it's less than rosy... with McGuinty's suicide pact as he was leaving, hoping I think for whatever reason the public schools are on board, the legislation he put in place have made it very difficult for new teachers... unless as they're fond of saying at OISE, unless you teach French, it's very difficult, this is the liberal government sucking up to the teacher's union, putting legislation in place to make sure their members will get work...it's very challenging for new teachers, and... It’s putting school boards in awkward positions.

Keven spoke about the difficulties he and his peers had in finding employment after graduation, the desirability of French as a way in, and the struggle he faces in cobbling together multiple part-time supply jobs teaching ESL (not his desired teaching position) in order to make ends meet and to keep himself in the teaching profession until his next "kick at the can." He referenced his desire to "do more." He frequently repeated phrases such as, "I want to do more" and "I look forward to doing more". Keven made it clear that he wants to be working in a traditional school classroom full-time because his part-time adult ESL teaching position is not enough with at most 3 hours during the day and 2 hours per evening. He outlined his plan as,

my goal is to be a teacher, if it was in a private school, it would be absolutely fine... I mean right now I teach adult ESL, once I get on this for the next little while, I'll
volunteer, so I'll teach for 3 hours wherever I'm teaching, then I'll volunteer morning or afternoon to get more experience with either P/J or J/I, that's my plan, to have the next kick at the can, I'll have experience in the classroom, and hopefully they'll look at this and say okay, we should get this guy in the board.

He also pointed out that the market will change, as teachers retire and new positions open up, "I will be the oldest, youngest teacher on staff and I think so if people are consistent and it is an honest passion, eventually it will work out."

**Theme 3: Identity Transformations**

In speaking about this identity transformation, Keven discussed the difficulty he faced in his trajectory from corporate executive to teacher candidate and then to struggling part-time teacher. He discussed how his previous identity was one that was very strongly tied to working as a film executive at Famous Players until a shift in this industry changed his career path. Keven explained,

I say to friends, if you go back in a time machine, to like 6 years ago, 10 years ago and say you’ll be teaching 10 years from now, you’ll take a year off, go to school, and you’ll be teaching, I would have gone, I don’t think so! I mean I was vice-president of film at Famous Players, I was wooed by Paramount, the career I had was pretty— you could see the career path, and then there was bump and bump and bump, and then all of a sudden the road wasn’t there anymore, so it has been an opportunity to do something new that I wasn’t expecting. So .. here I am.

Asked whether as a part-time adult ESL teacher, Keven felt he was part of the teacher professional community or how strong his professional identity was, he spoke about his passion for teaching despite not having an ideal position. His passion for teaching is such that he accepted a part-time adult ESL teaching position for 2 hours a day in spite of the 3.5 hour
commute required. In addition, Keven felt professionally obligated to provide his adult ESL students with some sense of stability because three instructors had left the position before he accepted it. The lack of professional community for Keven, however, has been a challenge. As a part-time adult ESL teacher, he often worked alone and didn't have access to the kind of collaboration or teacher community he would expect in a regular teaching position. In spite of this Keven's professional identity as a teacher remained strong,

there's no community to speak of, I mean I'm not in a school with a staff who I share the experience with teachers, I'm going in teaching and leaving, I see the support staff in the office when I use the photocopier preparing materials and things like that, but there are no interactions with other teachers so it's strange in that sense, (but) I'm a teacher as much as the other teachers are.

Keven identified his teaching passion clearly by his connection with his own children, his decision to have children, and his volunteering experiences in schools as a coach and teacher. He spoke positively about being a husband and father first, and then a teacher second. He explained how all those experiences had allowed him to become a passionate, enthusiastic, energetic teacher and male role model. Lastly he spoke about not being as concerned about his professional identity as in the past and valuing his relationship with his family, which he hopes to bring into this teaching career,

I've been through a period where I found it very, very difficult after being let go from my former job, I was VP at Famous Players, I was VP at GM, and that was a lot of my identity, and it was difficult to bounce back, figuring out who I'm going to be, and as a friend of mine said, that's gone, that's gone okay, but you're still who you are, so you know, I'll be a teacher and I'll enjoy being a teacher, but I hope I won't wrap it up in my personal identity as I did in my formal job, I mean I am a good dad, ask my boys ten
years from now if I was a good dad or a great dad, I try to be a good dad, again ask my wife if I'm a good husband or an excellent husband. Those are the things that are most important to me, and I will be an excellent teacher.

**Theme 4: Mental Health Stresses and Loss of Control**

Keven spoke to the stress he experienced in his program. He explained that at one point he broke down during practicum when he struggled to handle his workload and questioned his career decision,

I remember a couple of days where I was like what is going on, you know so I had one really really really really bad day at OISE during practicum, I was just devastated, it was a bad day at school, one of my lowest days, I was wasting my time and my children were at home and I'm 48 years old and I'm back at school, what the hell was going on?

He also spoke about the struggles and sacrifices he has had to make in order to remain in the teaching profession often taking several part-time adult ESL teaching jobs with little financial gain.

**Sue**

Sue, 24, is a Canadian-born and educated teacher from Kingston, Ontario. In concurrent studies, she completed her teacher education at Queen’s University with a joint Bachelor of Arts/Bachelor of Education degree with a specialization in Outdoor Education. During and after graduation, she worked as a children's camp instructor for several summers. Currently she is unemployed and thinking about pursuing a Master's degree in History.
**Theme 1: Teacher Education Program Experiences**

Sue explained that she felt her teacher education program had prepared her well for the job hunting process. She felt that the program did its best to prepare students for the market. As she had no expectations from the program in terms of employment preparation, she was pleasantly surprised when the topics of resume and interview tips were covered. In addition, she felt that it wasn't really the faculty's job to help graduates land a job - it was simply their job to teach how to teach.

When asked if she felt the program could better prepare graduates for the competitive teacher labour marketplace in Ontario, she spoke to how it was no secret that the new 2-year Bachelor of Education program was legislated because there were too many unemployed new teachers in the market. She believed, however, that the teacher's union wasn't being fully transparent on employment prospects when they presented to new teacher graduates. During one particular presentation for example,

the OSSTF came and spoke to us and they had this whole slide show and they were like, don’t worry, you’ll get a job! And then one slide was like, last year there were 2000 teachers hired! And then like 3 slides later, they were like, last year we certified 8000 new teachers! And somebody’s like, hm there’s a slight difference in numbers there...

In terms of content, Sue did question what she saw as an rigid curriculum which did not reflect the new reality that very few graduates will be teaching full-time for several years to come. As she was active in student government, she often heard the complaints and frustrations of classmates who disagreed with how certain courses only made sense for experienced teachers, "sometimes the mood would be kind of morose and people would be kind of like, why are we learning this now when we're not going to be teaching for 10 years, so yeah, the content never seem to change."
As for practicum placements, Sue wished there were more opportunities for non-traditional placements and more of a focus on pedagogy for non-traditional teaching. She said,

I feel like they could have encouraged us more to look at jobs outside of traditional teaching, because the reality is that, that is where most of us are going to find work over the next few years... it would have been nice to talk some more about what you can do with a BEd other than classroom teaching ... we could have had some class that was like what does it look like when we're in corporate education? What does it look like when you're in alternative education? And then talking about strategies that could be used there.

Theme 2: Fitting into the Political and Economic Context
Sue talked about how it was inevitable that the market would be saturated with teachers as universities have historically pushed for new and more places in teacher education because it was seen as a one-year income generating program. Referencing how her mother struggled to find a job in the 70s when she was a family doctor due to surpluses and lack of patients, Sue believed that the bubble would eventually burst for teachers as well. These economic cycles are such that in 10 to 15 years there will be jobs everywhere. She also pointed out that in 2015 when there are no teacher graduates due to the new 2-year program changes, there may be a greater number of jobs available for existing graduates.

She expressed how concerned she was in the first year of her concurrent teacher education about job prospects and that each year after that the situation worsened. Part of the reason for the recent labour strife of 2012 she replies was due to the difficulties new teachers faced in getting jobs. Most of her classmates did not get on any supply list, some went abroad and many are still looking, or volunteering in schools in May and June in hopes of getting a
position for September. Her job seeking goals have changed as she no longer feels ready for a full-time job. Thus, Sue is using this downturn in the market for teachers, to explore the possibility of completing an MA in History, a lot changed during my pre-service teaching year. I no longer think I belong, right now, at least, in a regular classroom. The plan had always been to start teaching right away the following September, but I realized that I’m not ready for the challenge of finding a job, so that’s why I’m back in a Master’s program right now. Part of me still wants to be a classroom teacher, but I’ve come to realize that that’s simply not a realistic goal, for the time being.

Sue referenced however how important it was that she found work in Ontario, "I have really strong feelings about finding work in Canada, so that is why I chose not to go abroad, but a lot of people, went abroad”.

**Theme 3: Identity Transformations**

Sue spoke about the change in her from the first year in the program when she was afraid to make mistakes, to the end of the program. Through various practicum experiences she became more confident and realized that she could learn by making mistakes. She did not worry as much about her performance during the practicum because of the poor market for teachers. Her professional identity as a teacher has solidified over the years,

I did a con-ed program, so I guess the beginning was back in my first year of undergrad...I definitely had a starry-eyed, naive, ‘teachers change the world’ kind of approach to teaching. At the same time, though, I think that my need for perfection also held me back, because in my first few teaching placements I was very shy and nervous. Now I think I’ve become more realistic about teaching, more professional, don’t want to be their friend as badly, but also in a way more willing to make mistakes, because I’ve
realized that everyone makes mistakes and my chances of being hired again are so low anyways. So if anything I think my teacher identity has become more realistic and focused.

Lastly, Sue felt that the labour problems really bought her closer to the teacher professional community. As a result of the opportunity to hear several experienced teachers speak at the faculty about why and what they were fighting for, she felt a strong sense of solidarity with them.

Theme 4: Mental Health Stresses and Loss of Control
Sue spoke about the mental stress that she and her classmates experienced. In addition to the fierce competition, there were elevated levels of anxiety and jealousy "just knowing that, it was one of those, look to your left, look to your right, like none of you will get a job." At one point she remarked that, to some extent, she was trying to prepare herself psychologically for unemployment because the outlook was so dismal,

I wouldn't have been so adamant about finding something else to do had I thought I could get a job, but I kind of knew by January that I wasn't going to be teaching in September so yeah, I don't know, just kind of getting myself ready to be unemployed I guess, figuring that out psychologically.

Cross-case Analysis
Below is an overall compare and contrast analysis between each participant's thoughts and perspectives organized under the four main themes discussed above.
Theme 1: Teacher Education Program Experiences

All participants with the exception of Keven, who didn't have any expectations, expressed concerns over how their teacher education programs were not responding to the urgent and changing needs of the economy in terms of new graduate employment. Amarah and Sue both expressed a desire for serious alternative practicum components and different course content from their faculty. Amarah questioned why his program, a 2-year graduate level program, did not take its own research component very seriously. He also wanted practicum experiences outside of traditional public school classrooms. Similarly Sue sought different teaching strategies and pedagogy that would be useful in settings other than the classroom, e.g. in the corporate world. Sue and Amarah both called for more transparency on the part of their program administration as it relates to job prospects for graduates. They believe that their faculty and program heads were not entirely honest in communicating about the fact that it was extraordinarily difficult, if not impossible to get a job on the supply list after graduation.

Drake differed from all participants by asking deeper, more political and policy-level questions about the economy that he believed the faculty failed to address. Questions surrounding why there were so many teacher education candidates, why there were a lack of good paying jobs in the economy overall, and the push of debt-laden graduates to additional studies in teacher education in efforts to seek decently paid employment.

All the participants explained how their practicum experiences that had left a strong impression on them and to a certain extent, defined their career paths. Drake and Amarah each had negative practicum experiences in which they struggled to connect to peers and students due to power struggles and value differences. Drake experienced discrimination, homophobia and racism, while Amarah experienced alienation, subordination and power struggles with associate teachers because he wanted to teach rather than apprentice. Keven's positive experiences with
great moral support from associate teachers really built up his confidence, motivation and drive to become a strong teacher. Through her practicum experiences Sue learned to be less hard on herself and more focused and realistic in her approach to teaching.

Both Sue and Keven agreed that it was not the job of the faculty to prepare them for the market. They believed that their faculties did the best they could as they cannot control the market. Both Drake and Amarah expressed difficulty in playing the networking game that is now required to even get a teacher interview.

**Theme 2: Fitting into the Political and Economic Context**

All four graduates have some kind of action plan to get a job in or related to teaching. Drake planned to volunteer, Keven was already working part-time in alternative teaching and both Amarah and Sue were either already enrolled in graduate school or planned to do so. None of the graduates have given up fully the notion of teaching in a traditional classroom, however, except for Keven they are considering alternatives. Both older participants, Amarah and Keven expressed more realistic goals with greater certainty and less anxiety including working part-time, volunteering and applying to the supply list, or completing a Ph.D in the hopes of landing an academic position outside Canada. Both younger candidates, Sue and Drake expressed greater uncertainty, anxiety and stress with their educational and volunteering plans.

All four participants referenced the political and economic nature of the teacher labour market in Ontario, including issues of teacher saturation, funding cuts, labour strife and economic trends. Drake and Amarah spoke more to fundamental questions about the economy and faced discrimination based on their status as a new immigrant or newly unemployed.

As the only international teacher graduate, Amarah spoke about the barriers he faced to get on the supply lists as well as the complex and discriminatory nature of the teaching
application processes in Canada, that, he feels shut out people without particular cultural
knowledge and soft networking skills.

Sue and Keven both agreed that the market will change as older teachers will eventually
retire and positions will open up. Sue differed from other participants by making analogies with
her mother's experiences as a family doctor in the 70s struggling to find patients due to the
doctor surplus. Keven highlighted the role of Regulation 272 and how it has already negatively
impacted new teachers.

**Theme 3: Identity Transformations**

Amarah and Keven both expressed their passion for teaching that grew from very
different personal and professional experiences. Keven's teaching identity is strongly connected
to his identity as a father, husband and role model to his sons. Amarah's teaching identity has
grown from his 15 years of English teaching in Iran before coming to OISE.

All graduates displayed differing degrees of identity crises. Amarah felt a great sense of
professional identity loss, change and confusion from his movement as a teacher of over 15 years
to his new role as a researcher in a foreign country that, he feels, has denied him the right to
teach despite his more than decade long experience. Drake is struggling to come to terms with
his identity as an unemployed person, something that supersedes his identity as an unemployed
teacher. He faces much hurt, stigma, status loss and questions whether he is still a teacher at all.
Sue spoke briefly about how her identity as a teacher has in fact solidified over time due to
practicum experiences and feeling a sense of solidarity with older teachers during the labour
disputes when she was a teacher candidate. Keven's identity is very strong now but it took time
as he went through years of identity crisis in his transition from corporate executive of 20 years
to new teacher graduate at 48.
TEACHER IDENTITY AND GRADUATE UNEMPLOYMENT

Amarah differed from everyone else by speaking to the loss of voice and agency that new teachers may feel if they are not allowed to practice and become good teachers - a kind of professional identity damage that puts at risk new teachers’ confidence in themselves and their ability to grow.

Theme 4: Mental Health Stresses and Loss of Control

All graduates expressed some levels of anxiety, stress and depression arising from the competition they experienced in their programs due to the difficult job market. Amarah and Drake each expressed a great sense of loss of voice and power when it came to competing because of barriers they faced in networking with others. Amarah's newcomer status meant he didn't have the same level of knowledge or as much time to learn to network or to learn the professional discourse necessary to get into the system. Drake's unemployment status has had a negative psychological impact on him.

In Chapter 5, participants' views as they related to the four core themes of the study are discussed in light of the literature in the field. This is followed by a list of recommendations for teacher education, limitations of the study and directions for further research.
Chapter 5: Discussion

Chapter 5 encompasses a discussion of each participant's views and experiences as they relate and connect to the literature. This discussion is organize according to the four core themes of: 1) teacher education program experiences, 2) fitting into the political and economic context, 3) identity transformations, and 4) mental health stresses and loss of control.

Theme 1: Teacher Education Program Experiences

Mirroring the findings of Fazio, Melville and Bartley (2010), all four participants experienced practicum experiences that defined their professional and personal identities as new teachers. Whether it was negative or positive, the practicum contributed significantly to each participant's growth and vision as a teacher within the classroom. In agreement with Axford (2005) and Keogh’s (2005) studies on the difficult relationships and political tensions that often exist between associate teachers and pre-service teachers, both Amarah and Drake experienced this power struggle to gain control over their practicum classrooms and to assert their own philosophies and teaching practices. Amarah in particular felt like he was reduced to an apprentice, reflecting Keogh’s (2005) research on the traditional apprenticeship model that is often imposed on pre-service teachers. Drake felt he was unable to act the way he felt was right when faced with homophobic and racist practices within schools, reflecting Axford’s (2005) research on how poor practicum experiences can negatively impact a teacher candidate’s perception of himself as the teacher he is and wants to be. Being told he was too “experimental” by his mentor teachers, Amarah’s experience connects to the literature which describes the lack of collaboration and recognition inherent in the traditional apprenticeship model (Patrick, 2013). Similarly Drake struggled to create a meaningful relationship with his mentor teacher due to the
politically oppressive nature and values that his school espoused. Consistent with the literature, Drake chose not to subvert or speak out against the homophobic and racist values of the school because of his status as a pre-service teacher within a school where he had no power to challenge. Keven's strong and positive relationship with his mentor teacher that included respect, recognition, encouragement and positive feedback reflects Patrick (2013) and Kosnik and Beck’s (2002) studies on the need for pre-service teachers to feel recognized in their professional placements by their mentors, pupils and school administration. Positive feedback is also one of the key components highlighted by pre-service teachers as necessary in a good practicum experience (Patrick, 2013; Kosnik & Beck, 2002).

Diverging from the literature on the top priorities in teacher education (Kosnik & Beck, 2009), three out of four participants questioned the lack of an alternative practicum, research and content options available in their program to meet the changing needs of the economy. In addition, Drake put forward bigger political questions about job opportunities for all graduates which seem to lead many to further study in teacher education programs. He also questioned the many funding cuts to education which are not discussed in relation to teacher education programs in the literature.

Theme 2: Fitting into the Political and Economic Context

All participants' knowledge on the political economy of the teacher labour market in Ontario mirrored the studies of McWilliams (2008). Drake, Amarah and Keven in particular made references that reflect McWilliams' (2008) study that almost all aspects of the teacher labour market is controlled by provincial government policies. In acknowledging the struggles and surpluses of the teacher labour market, all participants reflected MacDonald (2011) and McIntyre’s (2013) research on the growing trend of new teacher graduates struggling to break
into the teacher labour market, contributing to the figure of two in three teachers not working in their fields. As the only international candidate, Amarah’s experiences are similar to those described in the 2013 Transition to Teaching Report that specifies that 79% of new Canadian teachers are unable to find teaching jobs in their field and are not even successful in making it on the supply list. Amarah's situation also mirrors Lewchuk and Lafleche’s (2013) report on precarious employment, whereby newcomers are more likely to end up in precarious employment than their white, Canadian-born counterparts. However, Amarah extends this literature on discrimination by pointing out the nuanced nature of the teacher hiring process with a particular and complex set of language and networking barriers that excludes internationals. In the area of overall university graduate unemployment, Drake's comments on the lack of good jobs, cuts to higher education funding and the economic push of university graduates towards teacher education mirrors studies by Sandell (2012), the OECD (2011), Geobey (2013) and Lewchuk and Lafleche (2013) on high youth unemployment and a rise in credentialism.

As the teaching profession is predominantly women, Sue extends Khosla’s (2014) Working Women, Working Poor study on the de-skilling of young female graduates before they even enter the labour market. She highlights the fact only three of 365 graduates she knew got on the supply list. Drake and Amarah also extend this literature. Amarah says 60% of his classmates "failed" to get the type of public school classroom job they wanted, and Drake pointed out that three quarters of his classmates were going to be unemployed. Sue also points out that the great majority of her cohort now work abroad teaching English, a job that does not require a post-graduate teaching degree (and in some cases a degree at all). Many are also volunteering in schools from May to June before the next school year begins in the hope of landing a job. Sue herself will be working unpaid at a camp this summer.
Keven’s work as an adult ESL teacher with two to three part-time jobs reflects Lewchuk and Lafleche’s (2013) *Employment Precarity and Household Well-Being* report on how precarious employment in the GTA has now crept into middle and upper income households. The experiences of all four participants lent credence to McWilliams (2008)'s report on the importance and variances of teacher expertise that make the teaching profession a less than homogenous group. All participants pointed out that a French teachable was a "lifeboat" in this precarious job market and Drake also noted out that the ability to speak Mandarin could lead to a teaching job in some boards with a concentration of newcomers from China.

Drake, Keven and Sue’s experiences in volunteering in classrooms for upwards of 1 to 3 years parallel Geobey’s (2013) report on the problematic nature of unpaid, full-time internships that are now expected of new university graduates. Many of these internships were once entry-level jobs. Drake extends the literature on unpaid internships by pointing out that because most jobs are now very low paying or unpaid, the unpaid volunteer labour of new teachers is often not valued very highly.

**Theme 3: Identity Transformations**

Mirroring Schob’s (2013) discussion that self-identity comes from one's self-awareness of embeddedness within a social group, all participants reflected openly on their emotional state, the process of their identity transformation and the self-doubt they experiences in their teacher education program and employment seeking process. Amarah for example spoke about knowing his own limitations, including the fact that he struggled to 'network' with people he did not naturally get along with. He also said he may not be "obedient enough" to compete with his classmates within a process that is “inauthentic at its heart”. Keven mentioned that he often questioned his own perseverance in his difficult job search process, only to realize later that
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holding two to three part-time jobs is a form of perseverance, patience and hard work. Sue exclaimed that many of her classmates were going a bit overboard in terms of seeking out reference letters, taking additional courses, completing specialized training and volunteering, all in the hope of being more competitive in this poor job market for teachers. Consistent with Chong’s (2011) notion that it is personal identity in combination of emotional awareness and social experiences that lead many graduates to apply to teacher education programs, all participants spoke fondly of the role of their past childhood, school, and previous teaching and working experiences in inspiring them to apply to teacher education. To develop a professional identity however, Chong (2011) says that one must practice within the professional landscapes of the profession as well as possess many qualifications. Professional identities require contextualized experiences with others in the same profession. Usually for teacher graduates, this would come from the practicum and then employment experience immediately afterwards. As there are so few employment opportunities after graduation, one wonders about the fate of profession identity among recent graduates.

Amarah and Drake’s difficulties in creating a balanced relationship with their associate teachers in their practicum schools reflect the social hierarchies that exist within each social group. Reflecting Schob’s (2013) study that suggests the norms, values and beliefs of each group can become internalized and have a profound effect on individuals, Amarah’s decision to not pursue a teaching career within public boards due to his negative practicum experiences is in line with this research.

As all participants were unable to find full-time work teaching in a school board after graduation, each spoke to the indignities and hurts they incurred along the way and how their self-image was affected by their experiences within a social group. When each of the four participants was unable to situate themselves professionally within the teacher profession after
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graduation, there was a disruption to their sense of self and professional identity. Amarah in particular must now try to realign his past self as a teacher with his new self as a researcher. Keven's experience as an ESL teacher, his desire to "do more" extends the literature by Chong (2011) in noting that despite the fact that he is teaching, his adult ESL job lacks the kind of contextualized teacher community he needs to develop and nurture his professional teacher identity.

As the only participant struggling with total unemployment, Drake’s experiences with stigma, depression, loss of social contact and status connect to Schob (2013) and Kelvin’s (1981) studies that suggest that social identity as work identity is located within a socially recognized set of activities which fundamentally sets the employed teacher apart from the unemployed person and teacher. Thus unemployment can threaten one's self-concept and identity despite the fact that certain trends such as new teacher unemployment have become normalized.

Theme 4: Mental Health Stresses and Loss of Control

The literature highlights the frustrations, illusions and doubts that often form when new teachers' values and philosophies don't matchup with those of the profession. However, there is little discussion of new teacher graduates who experience identity struggles, changes, loss, damage and confusion as a result of being nearly completely barred from entering the profession in a dismal job market. Each of the four participants shared their stories and their profound loss of power and voice as they grappled with their inability to enter the teaching profession upon graduation due to factors beyond their control. Within each participant's narrative is a tale of struggle, a fight for control and agency over their lives, their employment situations and their changing self-concepts. The literature provides little coverage of the mental health issues that arise from this strong under and unemployment trend. Diverging from the literature then, all
participants spoke openly about the stress, anxiety and pressure that they and their peers experienced.

**Recommendations**

Greater transparency regarding the poor job market is required and preparation for non-traditional teaching careers needs to be integrated across all years of teacher education programs. Some recommendations include letting teacher candidates know that a job is no longer guaranteed, providing accurate figures on employment upon graduation and providing content, teaching and practicum opportunities to seek out alternative routes for job opportunities. This could include 1) a greater focus on research and further graduate education, 2) workshops and courses to provide candidates with alternative teaching paths, such corporate teaching or community teaching, and 3) teaching practicum placements beyond traditional classrooms such as outdoor education centres, community centres, after-school programming, youth work or international school placements.

It would be important to teach networking skills for international candidates with opportunities to practice networking with peers and classmates. School board application procedures should be carefully outlined as part of the employment preparation process.

Critical questions regarding what it means to “work for free”, the nature and value of volunteering within a school should be a part of the teacher education curriculum. Teacher candidates need to be given a space to voice their concerns and discuss the political nature of their future paid and unpaid work.

Professional and personal identity discussions should take place from the very beginning of the year to the end of the program. Questions about what it means to be a teacher outside of a
regular classroom context should be discussed as most graduates will likely not end up teaching in a traditional classroom environment after graduation.

Enhanced counseling services and increased mindfulness among faculty would help to ensure that teacher candidates and recent graduates can voice their concerns and develop strategies to cope with the difficult job market and stay mentally healthy.

Limitations and Directions for Further Study

As mentioned previously, the number of participants and literature sources in this research is limited by the time constraints of the project. Three of the four research participants were also male, white and able-bodied. A future study could benefit from a greater number of more diverse participants. Furthermore, this study focused on the immediate years following graduate employment, a next step could be to compare and contrast the identity transformations and strategies of graduates 5 or 10 years after graduating into this difficult labour market. This study could also benefit from focusing greater detail and time on one of its major themes, such as fitting into the economic picture, identity transformations or mental health implications of being a new teacher graduate within such a difficult employment context.

The implications of the increasing number of unemployed teachers could also be explored along with the experiences of recent graduates who have found work in non-traditional teaching settings. The similarities and differences between overall university graduate unemployment and overall teacher education enrollment and graduate employment is another area for further study.
References


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Appendices

Appendix A: Interview Questions

Interview Questions

1. What is your previous education background?
   Probe for year, major, how long they have been out of school if recently graduated

2. Can you tell me a little bit about how you decided to go to teacher's college?
   Probe for why MT, B.Ed., M.A., Con-Ed etc,
   Is it their goal to be a teacher? What kind?

3. What have you heard about the current employment outlook for new teachers in Ontario?
   Probe for specific details / real examples

4. Can you tell me what your thoughts are on this situation?

5. How important is/was it that you find work in a traditional / i.e. Ontario public school classroom as a teacher upon graduation? Why or why not?

6. Do/did you see yourself in an alternative employment setting outside of the traditional public school classroom upon graduation (i.e. in museums, libraries, camps, community centres)? Why or why not?

I would now like to hear some details about your experience during your teacher-education program in Ontario within the context of the current Ontario teacher employment outlook. Each question I ask will be within this context. The words, “the program” is in reference to your Ontario “initial teacher preparation program”.

7. Thinking about all the components of your Ontario teacher-education program, how is/did the program meeting/meet your needs as a candidate in terms of employment preparation? Probe for specifics.

   a. Do/did you feel the employment prospects has had an impact on ... your experience in practicum? How so or how not?

   b. Do/did you feel the employment prospects has had an impact on ... how you experience(d) your courses? How so or how not?
c. Do/did you feel the employment prospects has had an impact on your interactions and relationships with your peers? How so or how not?

d. Do/did you feel the current employment prospects has had an impact on your interactions and relationships with your instructors? How so or how not?

8. What were your initial expectations for the program in terms of teacher employment preparation?
   Have this changed since then? How?

9. Are/were there specific actions you are/were taking in this program to prepare yourself for the current Ontario teacher labour market? What kind?
   Probe for specific physical, psychological, social ... strategies
   e.g. networking, requesting specific placements, AQ plans, peer counselling

10. Are/were there specific actions you are taking outside of this program to prepare yourself for the current Ontario teacher labour market? What kind?
    Probe for specific physical, psychological, social ... strategies
    (e.g. networking, getting perspectives from friends, doing extra volunteering in non-classroom placements, choosing summer jobs differently, obtaining different skill sets to set self apart, going abroad...)

11. Is there anything you think your initial teacher education program could have done differently to better support your employment preparation?

**Now I will ask you some questions about how your teacher-identity has changed within this difficult employment context**

12. How would you describe your personal and professional teacher identity at the beginning of your program?
   How would you describe it now? Why?

13. Do you feel the current employment context (i.e. you may not be working in a classroom upon graduation) has changed any part of your teacher-identity? (personal, professional)

14. How did you see yourself within the professional community at the beginning of the program? And Now?
15. Do you conflicted in any sense?
    I.e. with different parts of your identities?
    I.e. do you see yourself as a teacher in the same way? What kind of teacher?
    I.e. is the original vision the same? Have you re-interpreted your teacher-identity? How?
    I.e. is still based on teaching and being in a school classroom?

16. Do you have any further comments you’d like to make for any of the questions we covered?

17. Do you have any questions for me before we wrap up?
Date: November 1, 2013

Dear Participant,

I am a graduate student at OISE, University of Toronto, and am currently enrolled as a Master of Teaching candidate. I am studying teacher education and the labour market for the purposes of investigating an educational topic as a major assignment for our program. I think that your knowledge and experience will provide insights into this topic.

I am writing a report on this study as a requirement of the Master of Teaching Program. My course instructor who is providing support for the process this year is Dr. Kim MacKinnon. My research supervisor is Dr. Antoinette Gagné. The purpose of this requirement is to allow us to become familiar with a variety of ways to do research. My data collection consists of a 40-minute interview that will be tape-recorded. I would be grateful if you would allow me to interview you at a place and time convenient to you. I can conduct the interview at your office or workplace, in a public place, or anywhere else that you might prefer.

The contents of this interview will be used for my assignment, which will include a final paper, as well as informal presentations to my classmates and/or potentially at a conference or publication. I will not use your name or anything else that might identify you in my written work, oral presentations, or publications. This information remains confidential. The only people who will have access to my assignment work will be my research supervisor and my course instructor. You are free to change your mind at any time, and to withdraw even after you have consented to participate. You may decline to answer any specific questions. I will destroy the tape recording after the paper has been presented and/or published which may take up to five years after the data has been collected. There are no known risks or benefits to you for assisting in the project, and I will share with you a copy of my notes to ensure accuracy.
Please sign the attached form, if you agree to be interviewed. The second copy is for your records. Thank you very much for your help.

Yours sincerely,

Researcher name: Jia-Yun Karen Cao

Phone number, email: (647) 720-9381, karenj.cao@mail.utoronto.ca

Instructor’s Name: Dr. Arlo Kempf, Ph.D., University of Toronto
Phone number: 416.978.0078 Email: arlo.kempf@utoronto.ca

Research Supervisor’s Name: Dr. Antoinette Gagné, Ph.D., University of Toronto
Phone #: (416) 978-0283 Email: antoinette.gagne@utoronto.ca

Consent Form

I acknowledge that the topic of this interview has been explained to me and that any questions that I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I can withdraw at any time without penalty.

I have read the letter provided to me by ____________ (name of researcher) and agree to participate in an interview for the purposes described.

Signature: ______________________________

Name (printed): __________________________

Date: ______________________________