

Article

“Anyone Can Stand in Front of a Bunch of Kids and Do Something”: A Bacchian Approach to Problems and Processes Involving Pre-Service Teachers Employed in a Teaching Role

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Abstract

The practice of employing education students as unqualified teachers in schools has grown over the last three years as the teacher shortage across Australia and the world worsens. This study uses a Bacchian approach to critically analyse the “problem” of pre-service teachers (PST) undertaking teaching roles as unqualified personnel whilst concurrently completing their teaching degrees through the lens of university lecturers working within the Initial Teacher Education (ITE) space. Qualitative semi-structured interviews were conducted with eleven university lecturers. A Bacchian analysis of the discourse arising from these interviews was conducted and followed two distinct groupings, those being between the student and employer, and the student and the university. The silences within these discourses were found to be the voices of the university lecturers working within the ITE programmes since they were not given a seat at the negotiation table between schools and registering bodies, prior to the student undertaking a teaching contract. These findings demonstrate the need for strategies that engender greater awareness of and support for, PST working in the school system, where all stakeholders are actively involved in the implementation of a holistic, purposeful and accountable approach to addressing the teacher shortage in sustainable, future focused endeavours.

Keywords: pre-service teachers; teacher shortage; Bacchi analysis; WPR approach; unqualified teachers

1. Background

Currently education providers worldwide are facing an unprecedented staffing shortage where early childhood services and schools are struggling to employ qualified teachers to teach across early childhood, primary and secondary school sectors. It is predicted that an additional 44 million teachers will be needed worldwide by 2030 (UNESCO, 2024). This is approximately half of the current teacher workforce. The teacher shortage in Australia, which is the context of this study, has intensified too because of increasing population, declining initial teacher education enrolments, an ageing teacher workforce, the competitive global teaching market, and the ongoing impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic (Australian Government Department of Education, 2022). It is predicted Australia will be short of 4100 teachers by 2025 (Australian Government Department of Education, 2022).

A teacher shortage threatens quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all (United Nations, 2015). Australia has engaged in a National School Reform to promote equity and excellence with the aim for all young Australians to become “successful learners,



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confident and creative individuals and active and informed citizens” ([Australian Government Department of Education, 2018](#), p. 3). Without qualified teachers in schools, these aspirational aims may be unrealistic and unachievable for many educational institutions.

1.1. Teacher Attrition

Teacher attrition has been a global concern for some time. The global report on teachers ([UNESCO, 2024](#), p. 19) confirm that “global attrition rates among primary teachers almost doubled from 4.1 per cent in 2014 to 9 per cent in 2022.” The global attrition rate for secondary teachers does not seem to be as severe as primary teachers, but are nevertheless alarming, with 5.71 per cent of lower secondary teachers attriting in 2022 (compared with 5 per cent in 2016) and 4.19 per cent of upper secondary teachers in 2018. Researchers within Europe have found similar patterns of increased teacher attrition. In the United Kingdom, teacher attrition forecasts identified 44% of teachers intended to leave the profession by 2027 ([Teachertapp.com, 2025](#)). Further research found teachers from disadvantaged schools in lower socio-economic areas were more likely to leave the profession, citing workload and disruptive student behaviour as the main reasons for leaving the profession ([Arthur & Bradley, 2023](#)). Similar patterns of increased teacher attrition have been found across Europe, in Germany, Poland and France ([Jack & Cocco, 2022](#)), Sweden ([European Commission, 2023](#)) and the Netherlands ([Den Brok et al., 2017](#)). This pattern of increased teacher attrition is replicated in the United States of America, where teachers cited overwhelming work expectations, inadequate wages and poor public perceptions of teachers, as factors which contributed to their decisions to leave the profession ([Harris et al., 2019](#)).

Teacher attrition is not a new phenomenon and has been an area studied by academics for some time now. As early as 1999, [Macdonald \(1999\)](#) undertook a review of literature relating to teacher attrition and found teacher stress was a main factor contributing to teacher attrition. In more recent years, the COVID-19 pandemic has been identified as a major contributing factor to teacher attrition ([Heffernan et al., 2022](#); [Patil, 2023](#)). From a strengths perspective [Buchanan et al. \(2013\)](#) identified categories that influence longevity in the teaching profession, those being: collegiality and support, student engagement and behaviour management, working conditions and resources, professional learning, workload and isolation.

High teacher attrition rates threaten quality education systems. Indeed, countries are reliant on a quality education system to promote equity and excellence and to ensure economic prosperity for their future. It has been widely documented that high attrition levels can adversely affect student learning ([Allen & Sims, 2017](#); [Hanushek et al., 2016](#)) and well-being ([Day et al., 2007](#); [Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012](#); [Robinson, 2017](#)). Conversely then, an adequate supply of quality teachers will have a positive impact on student learning and well-being so young people can become active and informed members of society.

The increased teacher attrition rate, particularly since COVID, will ultimately have a negative impact on students’ learning and achievement across cognitive, social and emotional domains of development. It has been acknowledged teachers have the greatest impact on improving student learning ([Australian Government Department of Education, 2022](#)), hence ensuring not only an adequate supply of teachers, but skilled teachers, is essential to continue improving teaching and learning outcomes for young people. There is a desperate need to examine the issue of teacher quality more deeply and to understand the problems facing teacher retention. Australia’s stability and economic prosperity is reliant on the quality education of young Australians who will become Australia’s future.

1.2. Plugging the Gaps

As teachers leave the profession and the teacher shortage intensifies, schools are turning to a variety of approaches to staff their schools. One common way of addressing the shortage was for school administrators to rely on ‘out-of-area’ or ‘out-of-field’ teachers to fulfil areas of need within the schools. That is, employing teachers to teach in a subject area or year level that was outside of their specialised training (Hobbs et al., 2022). Other targeted teacher recruitment strategies include encouraging mature age people with a degree not in education to switch careers to become a teacher (Berger & D’Ascoli, 2012), motivating teachers on parental leave to return earlier (after eight months rather than 12 months) by posting them to a school closer to home (Seelinger & Lindqvist, 2023), refusing part time positions, not offering sabbaticals, hiring academics who have studied a subject related to school subjects (Seelinger & Lindqvist, 2023), recruiting international teachers (Ingersoll et al., 2018), or employing pre-service teachers (PST) to commence teaching while they are still studying for their degree (Hudson et al., 2021). Nevertheless, even with this array of teacher recruitment strategies, the dire teacher shortage prevails.

In this paper, we focus on one initiative adopted in Australia to address the teacher employment and retention problem in schools, which being employing unqualified personnel to teach through an Alternative Authorisation to Teach (AAT) contract. The purpose of an AAT contract is to address workforce shortages and provide a pathway to teacher registration for those who are working towards an ITE qualification (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, 2017). The states and territories in Australia give different names for an AAT: Authority to Teach, Conditional Registration, Permit to Teach, Provisional Registration, Permission to Teach, Limited Authority to Teach, and Special Authority to Teach. For this paper, we refer to the national title, Alternative Authorisation to Teach (AAT), to encompass the range of terms for this teacher registration type in Australia.

In Australia, an AAT contract is granted by a state or territory teacher regulatory authority to people who are deemed to have the skills, yet have not completed an ITE degree, to undertake the role of a teacher in schools. This process includes an early registration process for PST who do not hold a teaching degree but are working towards completing an ITE degree. Unqualified teachers on an AAT contract have been approved in Australia for over 20 years. They were originally granted for a period of five years for suitably skilled teachers to fill teaching positions temporarily while they completed a teaching qualification (Watson, 2017). Initially, these roles were for instrumental music teachers, sport coaches, artists in schools, vocational education and training, exchange teachers, casual relief teachers, religious education volunteers, school chaplains, technology and languages other than English (Watson, 2017). The intention was to phase out this registration category as these specialist teachers gained a teaching degree. This has not occurred. Nowadays, with the teacher shortage, AAT contracts continue to be consistently offered for these roles and have expanded to generalist classroom teachers.

In the state of Queensland where this study was undertaken, the Queensland College of Teachers (QCT) reported that over 70 unregistered teachers were employed under an AAT contract in 2015, which was a 30% rise since 2013 (Queensland College of Teachers [QCT], 2024). Since the inception of the AAT in 2013, the number of applications has steadily increased. In 2019 and 2020, 178 and 211 AAT positions were approved, respectively. There was a 144% increase in the number of AAT contracts approved in Queensland in 2022 compared to 2021 (Queensland College of Teachers [QCT], 2024). The overwhelming majority of individual AAT applicants were enrolled in ITE programmes, with 84% in 2019 and 90% in 2020. For all individuals undertaking an AAT contract in Queensland, approximately 30% were for less than two school terms (Queensland College of Teachers [QCT], 2024). This infers then, that 70% of those undertaking AAT still had more than

one semester of their ITE program to complete. Nevertheless, even with these concessions made to allow unqualified staff to teach, Queensland schools remain understaffed. In 2023, there were 190 teaching vacancies in Queensland.

1.3. Aim and Significance of This Study

There is a staffing crisis in schools, hence there is a pressing need requiring ongoing attention by ITE providers, Teacher registration boards and schools to ensure pre-service teachers employed in schools prior to the completion of their studies, are supported to ensure their success and longevity in the education profession. Currently ITE providers are required to ensure graduates are classroom ready, yet ITE providers are not part of the decision-making process, nor part of the discussion between the employing body (the schools), and the teacher registration boards, who grant permission for PST to teach in schools on an AAT. This research identifies the gap in the processes relating to employing PST on AAT contracts by examining the challenges presented to ITE providers, particularly university lecturers who are at the front lines of ensuring PST are classroom ready. This research highlights the dilemma the teaching profession faces relating to teacher shortages, classroom-ready graduates, and PST being ready but not ready to teach in schools.

This research explores the phenomenon of unqualified PST undertaking teacher employment while studying, through the perspective of ITE providers. This research is significant in that it gives voice to ITE providers by exploring the impact of this phenomenon on ITE lecturers, PST, their courses and programmes and the status of the teaching profession.

1.4. Theoretical Framework

Earlier research into the root causes of teacher attrition by [Hargreaves and Fullan \(2012\)](#) led to the development of the Professional Capital Framework, which redefined the teaching profession as multifaceted and interconnected, and attested all factors needed to be addressed if it were to effect long-term change that addressed the teacher shortage. The framework consists of three components: human capital, social capital, and decisional capital ([Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012](#)).

Human capital refers to the knowledge and skills possessed by teachers for effective teaching and learning. While the quality of teaching is imperative, [Patil \(2023\)](#) notes it is crucial to understand that the challenges facing the education system extend far beyond the competency of individual teachers, so cannot be addressed in isolation of the remaining two capitals.

Social capital pertains to the quality and quantity of interactions and relationships amongst educational stakeholders ([Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012](#)). Social capital attests to the need for education to be a collective effort, not one that relies solely on the teacher to improve learning outcomes for their students. [Patil \(2023\)](#) asserts that schools with high social capital can compensate for the absence of human capital. For example, sustained high-quality interactions amongst stakeholders can compensate for a lack of specialist subject knowledge in a particular school context.

The third type of capital in the Professional Capital Framework is referred to as decisional capital, and incorporates the impact of experience, practice and reflection as part of the ongoing professional cycle of educators to enable them to make informed decisions, particularly in the rapidly evolving climate of the classroom ([Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012](#)). [Patil \(2023\)](#) highlights the complex demands of the teacher's role and espouses the need for more decisional capital to transform this complex space into an area offering more professional freedoms and greater simplicity.

Viewing the teacher shortage through the Professional Capital Framework ([Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012](#)) offers further insight into how the teacher shortage crisis might be addressed

by focusing on a multidimensional approach to improving human, social and decisional capital in the education sector (Patil, 2023). Examining the rising phenomena of PST undertaking AAT through this same framework, might deepen understandings of the complexity of these issues. If solutions focus on improving the human, social, and decisional capital of PST undertaking AAT, then it may have a positive influence on their longevity in the teaching profession.

2. Methodology

This project is a phenomenological study of the lived experiences (Miles et al., 2020) of university lecturers pertaining to their work with PST on an AAT contract, prior to the completion of their teaching degree. The collection of data for this research received University Ethics approval (A231863). Project information and informed consent was sought and received by all participants who acknowledged they could withdraw at any time, and it would not prejudice participants relationship with the university.

Participant recruitment was by convenience sampling where colleagues within the university who taught into ITE courses were invited to participate in the research. Eleven lecturers volunteered to take part in the study. The phenomenological approach of this research was embedded in the method of data collection since participants were invited to discuss their lived experiences relating to teaching PST on an AAT contract. Probing questions were used so that participants could elaborate deeply on their experiences. The qualitative data that was collected through this grand tour approach in the semi-structured interviews and provided a rich description of the behaviour, dispositions and interactions university lecturers had with PST studying whilst working on an AAT contract. Following transcription, the data were critically interrogated through adopting a “What’s the problem represented to be?” (WPR) (Bacchi, 2012) analysis. This approach enabled the data to be analysed through Bacchi’s six key questions to think beyond current policy and confront the underlying assumptions and methods in place to formulate an array of solutions. Bacchi’s WPR framework is outlined as follows:

1. What is the problem represented to be?
2. What pre-suppositions or assumptions underlie this representation of the problem?
3. How has this representation of the problem come about?
4. What is left unproblematic in this problem representation? Where are the silences?
5. What effects are produced by this representation of the problem?
6. How/where has this representation of the problem been produced? disseminated? defended?

The participant responses from the interviews were transcribed then coded in terms of their alignment to the six questions posed by Bacchi’s framework. The interview transcripts were meticulously examined iteratively and where participant responses aligned to any of Bacchi’s six questions, they were coded to that question. Once the interview data were coded within Bacchi’s six step WPR framework (2012), a further reflexive iterative thematic analysis was conducted using emergent coding (Miles et al., 2020) for all of the responses within each of Bacchi’s six key questions (Bacchi, 2012). Allowing the themes to emerge after data collection strengthened the methodological approach in that core ideas and meanings provided an interpretive story about PST on AAT contracts, a process supported by Braun and Clarke (2023). Furthermore, using reflexive iterative thematic analysis avoids the use of developing topic summaries from pre-determined questions and allows for a deep interrogation and interpretation of the data thereby strengthening the methodological approach (Braun & Clarke, 2022). Adopting an iterative approach to data analysis and using reflexive thematic analysis is specifically suited to this research as it is focused on the lived experiences and perspectives of the participants allowing the themes to arise

after data collection and hence provided a robust method of analysing qualitative data, as supported by Archer (2025).

This two-pronged analysis of the data used Bacchi's framework to classify the responses in the data then examined each of Bacchi's steps using an iterative thematic analysis which allowed for the broader structural conditions relating to PST undertaking AAT to be considered within the analysis (Kemmis et al., 2014) and provided a deeper insight into understanding the intricacies of practices. The results of this research report on the analysis of the first three key questions within Bacchi's six question process, whilst the discussion focuses on the final three questions of Bacchi's process to reframe thinking around the findings from this research. In this way, this research focuses on transforming processes to replicate those practices that enable success, and work towards adjusting those practices that constrain or pose as a barrier to PST successfully completing studying while teaching on an AAT contract.

3. Findings

Results of the research are represented to align with Bacchi (2012) questions 1, 2 and 3, accompanied by the detailed thematic analysis of each question.

3.1. Question 1: What Is the Problem Represented to Be?

Participant responses related specifically to teaching students on an AAT contract in ITE programmes and courses and the problems they saw for themselves, their students, including those on an AAT contract, schools, school mentors and school students. The major issues emerging from the thematic analysis are ranked below in order from highest (1) to lowest (8) frequency of responses.

1. Problems with processes and expectations for AAT students with limited minimal benchmarks for schools and AAT students
2. Overwhelming/excessive workload for AAT students, often resulting in extension requests for assessment tasks
3. High stress levels and greater risk of burnout
4. Varying levels of support mechanisms across university and work
5. One size fits all approach to pedagogy students experience in schools which undermines their confidence and prohibits creativity, innovation and critical thinking
6. Student disengagement and failing or withdrawing
7. Concerns for how far along in their studies they are before undertaking an AAT
8. Difficulty to asynchronously teach practical components of courses

The results of the thematic analysis are further represented visually in the diagram in Figure 1, where the size of the box is indicative of the frequency of occurrence.

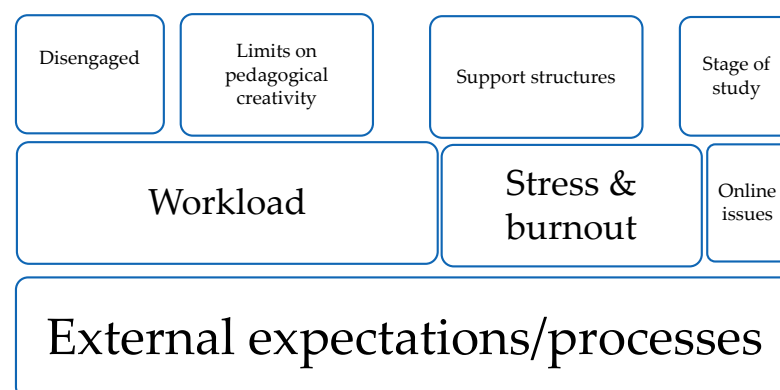


Figure 1. Thematic analysis of perceptions of problem representations.

3.2. Question 2: What Pre-Suppositions/Assumptions Underlie This Representation of the Problem?

Analysing responses to this question required an examination of the conceptual logics' participants attributed to the problem they had identified from question 1 (Figure 1) and how pre-formed assumptions exacerbated these issues. Participants attributed the pre-suppositions relating to the problems they identified in question 1 (Figure 1) between two distinct fields, the first being between the AAT student and the employer, whilst the second field was between the pre-service teacher on an AAT contract and the ITE provider. Participants attributed the top five problems identified in the WPR question 1 (Figure 1) to being rooted in pre-suppositions made between the employer and the AAT students. The second field identified pre-suppositions that contributed to the issues faced with AAT contracts, were between the AAT student and the ITE provider, aligning with items 6, 7 and 8 from the WPR themes from question 1 (Figure 1). Clearly, there was a greater prevalence of issues between the AAT and employer than there was with the AAT and the ITE provider. University lecturers identified a greater number of assumptions that were made between the employer and the pre-service teacher undertaking the AAT contract. To summarise, a greater number of issues were attributed to have arisen between the AAT and employer than the AAT and the ITE provider and is demonstrated visually in Figure 2 below.

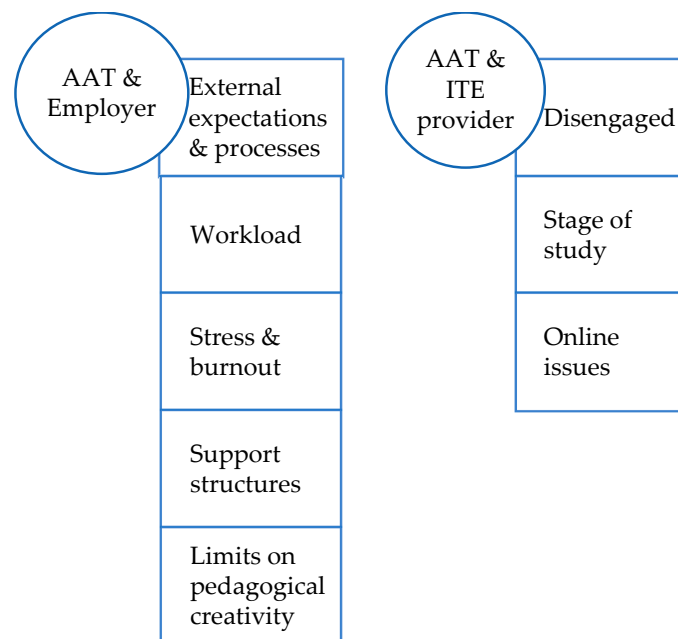


Figure 2. Thematic analysis of perceptions of pre-suppositions/assumptions underlying identified problems.

Interviews with university lecturers clearly identified specific assumptions they faced regarding the reliance on AAT contracts to address school staffing issues. University lecturers clearly felt teacher quality was undermined and the reliance on PST to fill the vacancies within schools acted to destabilise the teaching profession that was already struggling to cope with the excessive demands of the job. The following quotes from university lecturers provide further insight into their frustrations which, in part, they attribute to the limited communication and collaboration between all stakeholders to formulate a considered and sustainable approach to the teacher shortage crisis.

“The reliance on AAT passively suggests that anyone can step into a classroom and do the job of a teacher before they have completed their teacher training”.
(Participant Z)

“The overuse of AAT actively undermines the value of the education system because we are saying well actually, you know what, you don’t need a four-year degree to do the job of a teacher”. (Participant Y)

“Not sure if students on an AAT contract understand that they are in schools on an AAT because of the teacher shortage, not because they are already great teachers before they have completed their training”. (Participant X)

3.3. Question 3: How Has This Representation of the Problem Come About?

University lecturer responses to how this unprecedented rise in AAT contracts came about fell across three themes, all identified as a derivative of the teacher shortage crisis. Schools were finding it increasingly difficult to attract and retain quality teachers for several reasons, including workload issues, teacher status, and external pressures on PST to work and study concurrently. These findings echo those of recent research (Patil, 2023; Heffernan et al., 2022; Hudson et al., 2021). These themes are further elaborated in Figure 3.

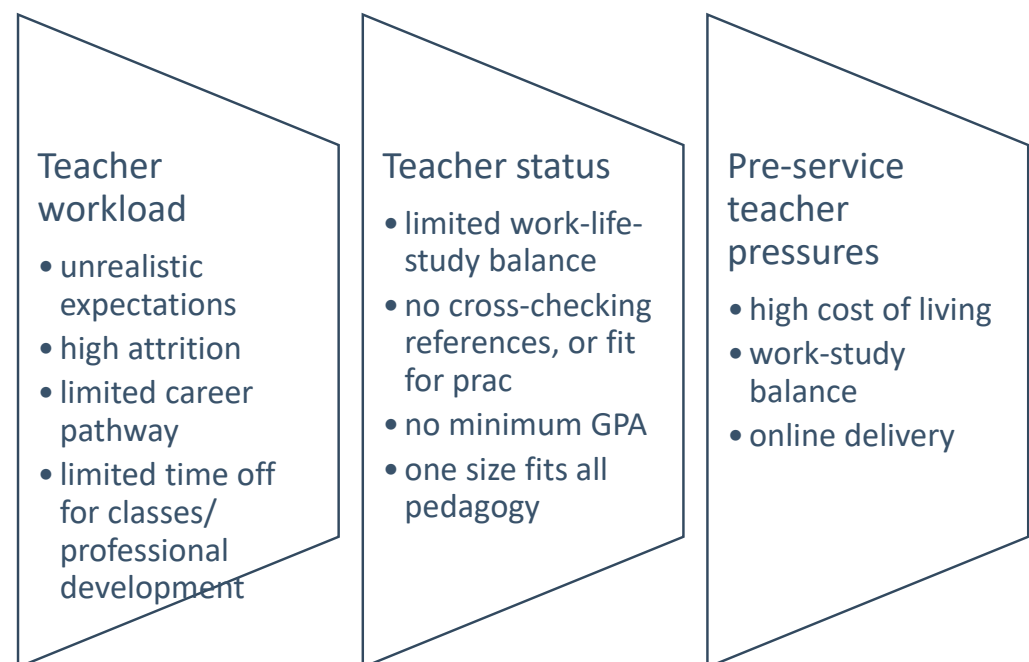


Figure 3. Perceived factors contributing to the growth of AAT.

University lecturers voiced their concerns about these ongoing factors that acted to perpetuate the problem of over-reliance on PST on AAT contracts in our schools, evidenced in the following quotes relating to each factor.

3.4. Teacher Workload

Unrealistic workload demands placed on PST on an AAT seem to be a cause for concern amongst university lecturers. Furthermore, these PST, in their eagerness to enter the teaching profession early, do not fully comprehend the demands of the job and are ill-equipped to meet the expectations of the job. These quotes relay the unrealistic expectations students and employers have regarding the demands of teaching.

“If pre-service teachers think they can study full time and work full time on an AAT contract, then teaching is such a demanding job, that to me shows a lack of respect for what the job entails, and they are definitely not prepared to do the work of a teacher.” (Participant U)

“Anyone can stand in front of a bunch of kids and do something. I think that idea is demeaning and devalues our academic staff and our qualified teachers, it is frightening.” (Participant S)

3.5. Teacher Status

University lecturers were disturbed about the status of the teaching profession and were actively considering ways to elevate the role of teachers in the wider society. Many suggested the need for a change in how teachers are perceived and felt they had to continuously promote the high level of professionalism required by teachers. University lecturers felt they were often the last ones to be consulted about ways to support and enhance the teaching profession. The following quotes reflect the impact of excluding ITE providers from the AAT appointment process, has on the perceptions of the job of teaching and how this is perceived to contribute to diminishing the status of the teaching profession.

“You wouldn’t have an apprentice work alone on a job you were paying a tradesman to complete, without proper checks and balances by the tradesman and his company.” (Participant T)

“Once they are in schools, they are teaching, already doing the job and can’t learn anything more from uni. They have no interest in their classes and see themselves as a teacher in everything but a piece of paper.” (Participant W)

In addition to the perceptions of teaching as being viewed as a low-status occupation, university lecturers felt this further extended to lecturers working within initial teacher education institutions, since they were rarely consulted on pedagogical matters within schools and education departments. Many commented on the one-size-fits-all pedagogical approach some schools have adopted which limited access to a range of diverse pedagogical approaches that are applicable across different contexts and further impacted quality teaching. This notion is exemplified in the following quote:

“Pre-service teachers on an AAT contract might spend a year in one school that becomes their ivory tower, in a school environment and don’t see a wider picture of how things could be ... Not exposed to other trains of thought, it is like being the target of a propaganda machine, ... big brother saying this is the framework and this is what you will do, until the next government come along.” (Participant V)

3.6. Pre-Service Teacher Pressures

University lecturers further commented on the personal struggles many PST faced as they attempted to juggle work, study and life commitments. Often economic pressures pushed PST to undertake an AAT and they were so concerned about meeting the expectations of all stakeholders, they often lacked agency and control over establishing a work/study/life balance. These quotes reflect the stories told to the university lecturers by PST and demonstrate the lack of agency PST possessed:

“Students have told me how they were attending online tutes in a broom cupboard so that they weren’t asked to do additional duties after school.” (Participant X)

“Students are trying to support their families while studying so need to take up any employment offer they get in order to put food on the table, they choose an AAT because the hours fit with family demands.” (Participant Y)

These reports are concerning although understanding that these PST need to take on an AAT contract to financially support themselves and their families throughout their university studies. However, this has consequences as these PST take on too much work

and cannot devote sufficient time to their studies which inevitably results in them not developing the human and decisional capital as required for the teaching profession.

4. Discussion

When considering the representations of the problem and assumptions related to PST working on an AAT, there seems to be a disconnect between PST, employers and ITE providers and was perceived to have a negative impact on the PST to successfully navigate teaching on an AAT contract and their studies.

Statements made by university lecturers in response to question 2 (what pre-suppositions/assumptions underlie this representation of the problem), attest to the notion that being a good teacher does not necessarily require a great deal of human capital (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012), that is, the content knowledge and skills or a deep understanding of how students learn. More so, it requires decisional capital (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012), that is, directing and managing students. Furthermore, these statements allude to the eroding of social capital of teachers (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012) as the teacher's role in society at large is devalued as perceived by university lecturers teaching PST on an AAT contract.

Furthermore, when reviewing question 3 and the perceptions of how the problem came about, Hargreaves and Fullan's (2012) PCF can be applied to suggest underlying reasons for the growth of AAT contracts. When considering teacher workload, university lecturers perceived these PST to demonstrate a lack of human and decisional capital (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012) whereby PST have the knowledge and skills possessed by teachers and the experience, practice and reflection of teachers when making considered decisions about their teaching.

When reflecting on teacher status, again, university lecturers perceived students on an AAT contract to lack human decisional capital (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012) as they perceived those PST considered they already possessed the knowledge and skills of a teacher and had nothing more to learn from their university studies. The situation of PST on an AAT contract in these university lecturers' classes seems to have eroded the social capital (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012), that is, the relationships between pre-service teachers and university lecturers. In addition, the further erosion of teacher status can be seen when pedagogical approaches were restricted which further devalued the human capital (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012) of the teaching profession, that is, the knowledge and skills required by teachers.

Furthermore, when reviewing the external pressures PST face, the complexities of such disparate challenges emerge. With such limited inter-institutional collaboration, PST seem to be prevented from attending, or indeed valuing completion of their studies, the situation thus eroding their human capital (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012) or a willingness to enhance the knowledge and skills as required by teachers.

The remainder of this discussion focuses on Bacchi's (2012) final three questions relating to what has been left unsaid, what is unproblematic, or undisputed, and where indeed are the silences to date. To move forward to find solutions, this discussion reviews the possible ongoing effects of this representation of the problem, in order to question and disrupt the current state of play regarding the unprecedented and unfettered growth in AAT students in the school system.

4.1. Question 4: What Is Left Unproblematic? Where Are the Silences?

Clearly this paper does not contest the teacher crisis or the need for qualified teachers. Similarly, this research does not contest the need for both schools and universities to support PST on an AAT contract, to ensure their longevity and sustainability in the teaching profession.

Currently, PST wishing to undertake a professional experience placement in a regional, rural or remote (RRR) location and some physical distance from the university, are required to apply to the ITE providers. Pre-requisite requirements for PST to undertake these placements include an above average grade point average, successful previous professional experience reports, references from university lecturers or previous mentor teachers, and fit for placement checks. Once these requirements are met, PST must also undergo an interview prior to being accepted for a RRR professional experience placement. These checks and balances ensure the ITE provider, and the PST have a clear line of communication and support mechanisms in place to provide the foundations of success for the pre-service teacher.

When considering Hargreaves and Fullan's Professional Capital Framework (2012) these checks and balances afforded by the ITE provider ensures PST have the human capital, that is the knowledge and skills, to undertake a supervised placement in a RRR location. This extra care is taken to place students in RRR locations, since they will be supported by the ITE provider via telephone, email and online, rather than face-to-face, due to their distance from the ITE provider. Further to this, all PST, regardless of the location of their placement, are appointed a mentor who actively supports them whilst on placement by overseeing their lesson plans and teaching and providing feedback on their development to guide their learning. In addition, PST are appointed an ITE liaison, who checks in regularly with both the pre-service teacher and their mentor to support both for the duration of the placement. This practice directly fosters the development of social capital (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012) for the pre-service teacher as it encourages professional engagement and interaction across all stakeholders prior to, during and after the placement. PST on placement are also required to reflect on their experiences and practices during and at the conclusion of their placement, so that they can continue to improve their performance and make informed decisions about creating a learning environment that supports their practice and improves learning outcomes for their students. This process undertaken by the ITE providers ensures PST are developing their decisional capital (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012) through experience, practice and reflection. All these processes implemented by the ITE provider ensures a balanced development across all three domains of professional capital that strives to increase the human, social and decisional capitals of PST.

When considering how the professional capital framework (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012) might be applied to the context of PST undertaking an AAT contract, it becomes evident that scant attention is paid to the development of the human, social and decisional capitals of those PST. The absence of consultation and communication with ITE stakeholders in the AAT selection process by employers and registering bodies unconsciously devalues the importance of professional knowledge and discourse within the teaching profession. For those PST applying to undertake an AAT contract, no such checks and balances are conducted to ensure the pre-service teacher has developed the human capital to enable them to succeed in teaching and studying concurrently. A gulf of silence exists between the ITE provider and the employer, to the extent where the ITE provider may be unaware that a pre-service teacher is undertaking an AAT contract until they begin to struggle to complete their assessment tasks. As they struggle with their studies, their human capital is reduced as they fail to develop the knowledge and skills needed for the classroom.

In relation to this research, the silences are the voices of university lecturers within ITE programmes and courses, since an AAT contract is an agreement between the registering body and schools, the voices of ITE providers are unheard. PST on an AAT contract are caught in this silent void and are often too frightened of losing their job to speak up and ask for help, hence their social capital is reduced as the pressure on them to achieve negatively impacts their health and well-being.

4.2. Question 5: What Effects Are Produced by the Representation of the Problem?

The discourse relating to the impact of PST on AAT contracts on university lecturers' centres around unrealistic workload expectations. University lecturers are often asked to modify teaching delivery to meet the needs of PST on an AAT contract, with little attention to the work and time attached to these demands. Without a unified policy, university lecturers struggle to meet the cacophony of demands made by PST on an AAT contract, particularly around assessment time. The voices of university lecturers are not heard because the decisions regarding AAT appointments are made outside of the ITE provider. With little involvement over the selection of the quality of pre-service teacher for an AAT contract, the success of the pre-service teacher in both teaching and studying is even more precarious as they struggle to balance work-study-life commitments.

The discourse relating to academics' perceptions of the impact an AAT contract has on PST, noted the pre-service teacher often became so overwhelmed they struggled to pass courses and began to lose their drive to complete their degree. All university lecturers in this study noted a decrease in the quality of these PST' work and felt they were opting for surface level survivability rather than deep level learning and doing just enough to get through the course.

Furthermore, PST on an AAT contract often reported feeling frustrated because they were already doing the job of a teacher and questioned the need to complete their degree. Academics further reported that these PST were often impacted by the power dynamics that exist within schools and were hesitant to speak up when they were struggling or to request reduced teaching loads to allow them to complete their degree. PST become embedded in their school culture and the pedagogy it espouses, which may be positive and uplifting, but can also be very negative, and have a deleterious impact on the quality of their teaching and their longevity in the profession. These effects combined point to the need for greater attention to be given to developing the decisional capital (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012) of PST undertaking an AAT contract. To enhance the professional capabilities of PST on an AAT contract they need to be provided with opportunities for structured and unstructured reflection to develop knowledge and expertise and make decisions on how they can improve their practice and develop decisional capital.

Establishing a discourse of collegiality can be integral to the development of the pre-service teacher on an AAT contract in both the university and school settings. When attending classes with their peers, PST on an AAT contract should be encouraged to share their authentic, real-world experiences so that all PST can examine the theory and practice nexus. This sharing and collaboration should be a two-way process, where current theoretical frameworks are shared with peers in the school workplace to inform and promote professional development and career progression for practicing teachers. This merging of PST on an AAT contract, other PST, and practicing teachers can be a valuable tool to promote collegiality and build professional educational networks that enhance sustainability and longevity in the teaching profession. Such a practice would see the fostering of human, social and decisional capital (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012) and may lead to a more sustainable and sufficient teacher supply, post AAT contract.

When considering the discourse of pre-service teacher well-being, it seems this is relevant to all stakeholders, with university lecturers concerned for their success as a pre-service teacher as well as their future sustainability within the teaching profession. The conflicting roles of teacher and pre-service teacher places PST in a void, where they are not seen as PST by their schools, but as qualified teachers, and not seen as teachers by their university lecturers, but as a pre-service teacher. This role conflict for the AAT pre-service teacher is likely to impact their identity as an educator. How this affects their well-being

and longevity in the teaching profession is yet to be investigated. Concerns of university lecturers for PST are demonstrated in the following quote:

“Their passion and desire to make a positive difference in the lives of our kids and our profession were quite admirable, but to have the life, the passion, the desire, bled from their souls whilst doing an AAT is soul destroying for us.”
(Participant W)

4.3. *Question 6: How Can This Representation of the Problem Be Questioned, Disrupted and Displaced?*

When considering how university lecturers might disrupt notions of the teaching profession “eating their young” and teaching being about “survival of the fittest” it is important to recognise PST on an AAT contract, schools and ITE providers all face different sides of the same beast. If all parties agree to unite to fight this beast, then questions must be raised as to how the problem can be thought about differently. How can better communication occur between all stakeholders so that partnerships can be formed that enhance the experiences for PST on an AAT contract and contribute to their longevity in the teaching profession? A systematic and planned approach placing PST at the centre of a support hub that embraces input from ITE providers, employers and registering bodies, has the potential to create positive change to ensure the longevity of PST which would contribute to combatting the teacher shortage crisis. Such a model needs to include benchmarking standards for PST on an AAT contract along with clear expectations of all stakeholders within the partnership. Furthermore, all stakeholders need to report on the achievement of these standards and expectations to ensure they are all accountable for their contribution to, and support of the AAT process.

4.4. *PTT and the Professional Capital Framework*

Clearly, teaching is a multifaceted and complex profession that is open to scrutiny by all who have attended school and have an opinion on how they were taught. The practice of placing ‘warm bodies’ in front of a group of school students does little to dispel the myth of teaching as an easy job. For PST undertaking an AAT contract, it should be recognised by all stakeholders that they are stepping into a role they are not yet fully prepared for or qualified to undertake. Indeed, further research could be conducted with PST to examine their experiences whilst studying and teaching, and how the challenges and opportunities they face might lead to conflicting roles and expectations they face and how this might impact the formation of their teacher identity. As such, it is imperative that all stakeholders recognise the need to support the ongoing professional capital of PST, through providing opportunities for them to develop their human, social and decisional capital. If all elements of professional capital are developed holistically, then it may go some way to enhancing the status of teaching whilst supporting teachers and PST in the classroom and stem the flow of attrition from the teaching profession.

4.5. *Limitations of the Study*

Bacchi’s WPR approach has been previously used as a methodological process when reviewing policy, particularly within the health field, hence adapting it to educational research that is not directly policy related, can be seen as a limitation to the study. However, this paper applies Bacchi’s model to education to attempt to address newly emerging problems within education. Furthermore, this research attempts to apply Bacchi’s model to qualitative phenomenological research, as both a method and a means of data analysis, to provide new ways of thinking and problem solving within educational institutions and research methods.

5. Conclusions

This research used a Bacchian approach to critically analyse the “problem” of pre-service teachers (PST) undertaking teaching roles as unqualified personnel whilst concurrently completing their teaching degrees. Understanding what the problem is, what assumptions surround the problem, and how the issue has arisen, provides a solid foundation on which strategies can be developed that engender greater awareness of and support for, PST working in the school system on an AAT. Examining this “problem” through the lens of university lecturers working within the Initial Teacher Education (ITE) space allows for the previously silenced, unheard or neglected voices, the opportunity to be heard and furthermore, invited to the decision-making policy table. Taking such an approach, where all stakeholders are actively involved and expertise is recognised, allows for a strong defence of the teaching profession and can bolster teacher quality within our schools.

The teaching profession has become so focused on ways to fill the gaps and address the teacher shortage; we seem to have lost sight of why society needs high-quality teachers in our schools. Employing a Bacchian analysis to the issue of a global teacher shortage crisis may help to better inform policy and practice from all stakeholders within the teaching profession. Adopting a “What’s the Problem Represented to be” (WPR) approach to the issues surrounding the growth of AAT contracts will enable all stakeholders to reconnect with the importance of teachers and teaching in our schools. Using a Bacchian approach to the teacher shortage crisis, will help to cultivate a holistic, purposeful and accountable approach to addressing the teacher shortage in sustainable, future focused endeavours.

The WPR model enables educators to challenge the system through discourses which address underlying issues that arise and exacerbate the teacher shortage crisis rather than alleviate it. The implications for a model of discussion and support around PST on an AAT contract which reframes issues and becomes solution focused, will encourage all stakeholders to take ownership of the problem and can only serve to recharge and invigorate a flagging teaching profession.

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