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# **The Changing Face of Accreditation for Initial Teacher Education Programs in Australia**

**[Terri Bourke]**

## **Abstract**

This chapter uses discourse analysis techniques associated with Foucauldian archaeology to ascertain the dominant discourses in the 2015 Australian Initial Teacher Education accreditation document. Findings reveal an overarching discourse of quality assurance anchored within the discursive themes of accreditation, evidence and impact. When these discursive themes are juxtaposed against the academic literature on professionalism it becomes clear that teacher educators are being discursively repositioned in a managerial discourse. Recommendations are given for how teacher educators can navigate this highly regulated environment.

## **x.1 Previous Research – The Policy Context**

In previous publications by the current author and colleagues (see (see Bourke, Ryan, & Lloyd, 2016; Bourke, Ryan, & Ould, 2018)), the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership's (AITSL) policy document, *Accreditation of Initial Teacher Education Programs in Australia: Standards and Procedures* (AITSL, 2011) was analysed to ascertain the discourses prioritised in positioning graduate teachers in Initial Teacher Education (ITE). Findings revealed two discourses: (1) a discourse of quality; and (2) a discourse of being professional. Not denying the interrelationship, in light of the theme for this book, only the latter is the focus of this chapter.

Policy analysis of the 2011 accreditation document revealed two themes in the discourse of being professional, namely professional knowledge and professional practice. What we wanted to find out was did the 2011 policy discourse of being professional align

with definitions of professionalism from the academic archive and, if so, which ones? Findings revealed 'practical' or 'flexible' (Goodson & Hargreaves, 1996) professionalism discourses, what Beck (2009) has referred to as 'performative professionalism'. This discourse, however, has been criticised for relying on tacit knowledge, where educators are cut off from universities. 'Democratic', 'activist' (Sachs, 2003), and 'occupational' discourses (Evetts, 2009) where teachers shape their own lives from within the profession in an 'enacted' discourse of professionalism (Evans, 2008, 2011; Evetts, 2009; Hilferty, 2008) were absent. We concluded that graduates were discursively positioned as regulated technicians in a 'managerial' professionalism (Sachs, 2003, 2016).

The purpose of this chapter is to continue the story and bring us to the current policy moment by undertaking an analysis of the *Accreditation of Initial Teacher Education Programs in Australia: Standards and Procedures* (AITSL, 2015) document to ascertain if and how things have changed and what the implications might be. This time my interest lies in the positioning of teacher educators, and so the research questions are: (1) how are teacher educators positioned within the 2015 policy document where evidence and impact are prioritised?; (2) in what ways do notions of evidence and impact from policy discourses align with the academic literature?; and (3) what type of professionalism is being promoted by their positioning? In the spirit of the archaeological approach (Foucault, 1972), recommendations are made for how teacher educators navigate this highly regulated landscape.

## **x.2 Background to Accreditation**

Education systems in many nations have been subject to the commodification of education to improve teacher quality and efficiency (Solbrekke & Sugrue, 2014). Initial Teacher Education (ITE) is no exception with externally imposed measures of accountability.

'Assuring quality' through accreditation is a method that fits well with this market-oriented

way of thinking. Some countries have a longer history with these processes. For example, in the USA the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) founded in 1954 accredited teacher certification programs in US colleges and universities. Now amalgamated with the Teacher Education Accreditation Council (TEAC), the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) is now the only specialised accreditor of US educator-preparation programs. According to Brittingham (2008), American education has become a world leader through successful accreditation processes, and as a result these moves have become widespread throughout the rest of the world.

Australian teacher educators find themselves entangled in the same accreditation net as their global colleagues. One result has been the need to convince regulatory authorities of program quality. Whilst the commodification of education and the effects on schools has been reported at length, less is documented on the impact on teacher education, especially in Australia. One recent study by Rowe and Skourdoumbis (2017) analysed the Teacher Education Ministerial Advisory Group's (TEMAG) report *Action Now, Classroom Ready Teachers* (Australian Government, 2015), and reported the concepts of quality and readiness anchored within the themes of impact, data and evidence. This chapter takes their analysis further by investigating how these discourses have translated into the 2015 accreditation document for ITE and what effect such has on the professionalism of teacher educators.

According to Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2004), teacher educators have to function simultaneously as researcher and practitioner. In what they refer to as 'working the dialectic', the third part of the job is to interrogate all policies that have an impact on education. Therefore, with the revisions outlined in the current accreditation document, using discourse analysis associated with Foucauldian archaeology, it is timely to examine how this policy shapes the professional landscape for teacher educators' work.

### **x.3 Theoretical/Methodological Framework**

For Foucault (1995), discourses encompass more than what is said; they are also about what is thought, who can speak and their authority. Therefore, discourses are not just about spoken language but are connected to power relations making it necessary to ascertain authorial intentions (Ball, 1990) in accreditation discourses. In policy, Gale (1999) explains the interdiscursivity of discourses where dominant policy actors serve to ‘oust ... others’ (p. 400) leading to a particular group’s participation being negated (Freeland, 1994). In this way, only certain voices are heard (Ball, 1994). To this end, the voices that are privileged in the 2015 Australian accreditation policy are outlined. Furthermore, Ball (1990) articulated how policy refers to other policies, exercising power through the production of truth and knowledge as discourse. Referring to this as intertextual compatibility (Ball, 1990), the use of supporting texts is also noted. Therefore, the key players and authoritative texts are outlined in the findings before the four steps of archaeological analysis to reveal the dominant discourses begins.

Step 1 is an examination of the 2015 accreditation document for ITE, looking for statements that repeat. According to Foucault (1972), statements are the atoms of discourse so it is necessary to pay particular attention to the repeatability of terms and words, examining their arrangement and co-location within statements. When statements cohere and make repeatable claims of knowledge, they form discursive practices.

Discourses become ‘discursive practices’ or ‘regimes of truth’ as they convey the message about what is normal, here the establishment of the revised accreditation process in Australia. Foucault elaborates by saying that what needs to be looked for is the status of the truth – does the truth rest on ‘crumbling soil’ (1972, p. 137) or on solid foundations? The key question is what has allowed this revised accreditation document to be read as an unproblematic statement of fact?

Step 2 uncovers distances between statements within the document. In this step (Step 2) any words, phrases or statements which contradict the main discourses identified in Step 1 are described.

Foucault (1972) maintained that archaeology is a comparative analysis that is not intended to reduce the diversity of discourses. The intention, rather, is to have a diversifying effect. For this part of the analysis (Step 3), findings are cross analysed with the academic literature on accreditation, evidence, impact and professionalism to highlight the competing discourses in circulation. Additionally, this cross analysis refers to previous research that analysed the 2011 accreditation document to see what changes have occurred.

Finally, the analysis of transformations (Step 4) makes recommendations for teacher educators working within this accreditation environment.

Before outlining the identified discourses from the policy document, the academic literature on accreditation, evidence, impact and professionalism are overviewed so that comparisons can occur later as part of the archaeological analysis (Step 3).

## **x.4 The Academic Archives**

### ***x.4.1 Accreditation***

While there remains doubt as to what accreditation means (Collins, 2015) in common speak, accreditation is a quality assurance process under which educational institutions' programs are evaluated by an external body to determine if standards are met. If standards are met, accredited status is granted by the appropriate agency. Many of these agencies such as the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) mention 'quality' and 'standards' as their mantra and accreditation as the means by which both will be achieved. However, definitions of 'quality' and 'standards' are hard to agree upon and accreditation as the solution is still a contested space. Many writers over many years have presented

arguments for and against the process. Some see accreditation as a mechanism for enhanced transparency and comparability between institutions thus giving university courses legitimacy (Stensaker, 2011). Fertig (2007) also sees the positives, maintaining that undertaking accreditation involves institutional self-analysis which opens up opportunities for innovative initiatives and enhanced professionalism (Collins, 2015). Supovitz and Taylor (2005) and Guskey (2002) concur, saying that if accreditation is done correctly, whole of program systemic reform can be a powerful tool for effective change.

However, other writers point to the negative aspects of accreditation. Trends (2007) argues that accreditation often focuses on minimum standards instead of excellence. Rather than concentrating on the public good, the social responsibilities of higher education, such as the need for diversity in student recruitment, are overlooked (Stensaker & Harvey, 2006). What results is a self-protecting process, from an institutional perspective, rather than one of societal accountability. Others (see, for example, Ewell, 2008) further suggest that accreditation processes are neither cost effective nor value adding; instead, institutions are stifled by top down, time consuming bureaucratic processes which increase workloads resulting in staff demotivation. Some such as Shahjahan (2011) go further, saying that accreditation is a form of cultural imperialism in which Western concepts are exported globally.

Stensaker (2011) posits a useful classification for the key policy drivers in accreditation: (1) accreditation as window dressing; (2) accreditation as organisational adaptation; and (3) accreditation as networked governance. The first one has already been discussed – issues around status and legitimacy. However, according to Stensaker (2011), this could equally relate to external agencies' need to 'portray themselves as guardians of the public interest' (p. 762). The second two categories (organisational adaptation and networked governance) also refer to the role of external agencies. Often, regulating authorities will turn

to accreditation processes as a way to strengthen their control over academe. Deem, Mok, and Lucas (2008) argue that these administrative processes are part of neo-liberal economic and business practices, what they refer to as new managerialism.

To date, there has been little evidence of the correlation between educational improvement and accreditation (Shah, 2012) and indeed the ever-shifting landscape of accreditation makes it hard to conduct timely relevant research. This is true in the Australian context where processes and procedures changed remarkably in the period from 2011 to 2015 with an updated version of the 2015 document this year (2018). These changes are outlined later. It is also noteworthy as part of this rapidly changing environment that the Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2015 is also under review.

#### ***x.4.2 Evidence***

In the current era, evidence-based education, policy and decision-making are increasingly capturing the support of many politicians, policy-makers, practitioners and researchers (Biesta, 2010; Shahjahan, 2011). The origins of this trend vary, some attributing it to Western countries' need for greater accountability (Levin, 2003), others relating it to the influence evidence-based practices have had in other professions such as medicine (Biesta, 2007; Simons, 2003). Whatever the origin, like accreditation, evidence-based education has proponents and opponents.

Through the years, governments and teacher educator researchers alike have been critical of research in education. Many phrases have been used for this including 'small-scale', 'out-of-touch', 'low quality', and of 'little obvious policy relevance' (see, for example, Biesta, 2007; Rowe & Skourdumbis, 2017; White, 2016). In response to this, proponents for evidence-based practices argue that experimental or randomised control trials are preferable research designs, as they are less biased by researchers' interests (Blunkett,



2000). Indeed, Shahjahan (2011) notes ‘survey data’ as the most common research design for supporting federal policy. This shows that quantitative research (Slavin, 2002) is foregrounded in policy decision-making and promoted ‘as the only method capable of providing secure evidence about what works’ (Biesta, 2007, p. 3).

However, many writers from a critical perspective have argued that the delegitimisation of educational research is not true (see Olson, 2004; Ryan & Hood, 2004; Simpson, 2017) with an emerging body of literature growing that challenges evidence-based policy and practices. Some writers, for example Biesta (2007) whilst acknowledging that evidence-based practices have made improvements in other professions such as medicine, questions their use in education. He argues that interventions to increase effectiveness which are premised on if ‘we do A, B will follow’ (Biesta, 2010, p. 494) won’t work in education as there are too many factors to consider in the learning process. Other opponents to evidence-based practices allude to further deficits, for example Luke (2003) maintains that evidence-based approaches further marketise education through textbook production, consultancies and in-service training. Shahjahan’s (2011) view is that evidence-based education merely perpetuates a colonial discourse. This writer calls for a deceleration around evidence-based educational policy and practice. In line with this way of thinking, Marilyn Cochran-Smith has highlighted the absence of cultural understandings in approaches to use evidence. With her colleagues from the Boston College Evidence Team, they identify four dimensions for a more nuanced approach to evidence involving: (1) development of a portfolio; (2) recognition that teacher education always poses values and empirical questions; (3) an exploratory, open-ended approach to evidence construction; and, (4) multiple structures for evidence collection, locally and beyond (Cochran-Smith & the Boston College Evidence Team, 2009). With their reference to include values-based questions in teacher education, it appears that they concur with Biesta (2007, 2010).

Basing professional practice on evidence appears as a very sound argument. However, there are many questions for consideration, including what counts as evidence, where does the evidence come from and how is the evidence used? Regardless of which side of the debate you sit on, calls for evidence-based practices in education are persistent.

### ***x.4.3 Impact***

The word impact is Latin in origin stemming from the word *impactus*, the past participle of *impingere* which means to push against. The definition that aligns most closely with the rising importance of impact in education is to have an effect or to influence. In the most recent accreditation document, this is spelled out in terms of the impact teacher education programs based on the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (APSTs) must have on the learning of pre-service teachers. Then as graduates, it is assumed that they will impact on school-student learning.

The approach to ‘teacher quality’ in Australia has been heavily influenced by the work of John Hattie who is the chair/non-executive director of AITSL. Hattie’s research focuses on effect size studies which estimate the educational impact of interventions. This has centred on his meta-analyses of learning and achievement (2003, 2009). Hattie (2009) advocates for learning that is visible – in other words, impact that is demonstrated statistically. However, as already mentioned, there are many objections to this way of thinking in education. Recently, Simpson (2017), referring to policy contexts in education, has suggested that ‘educational policy has fallen prey to metricophilia, the unjustified faith in numerical quantities as having special status as evidence’ (p. 14). Moreover, statisticians such as Bergerson and Rivard (2017) have criticised Hattie’s work for being methodologically flawed. Nevertheless, organisations like Evidence for Learning, (with links to Hattie) and their toolkit of 34 evidence-based teaching approaches have entered the Australian

educational landscape. This organisation, supported by Social Ventures, Australia, the Commonwealth Bank of Australia and the Education Endowment Foundation from the UK, has limited grounding in education revealing further concerns about market-based approaches in education.

The 2015 accreditation document acknowledges the challenges of measuring teachers' impact on student learning and indeed the Teacher Education Ministerial Advisory Group -TEMAG (Australian Government, 2015) identified a lack of research about what practices result in impact. In the light of this, AITSL released position papers in their 2015 Insights publications detailing strategies for demonstrating impact such as classroom observations, portfolios and satisfaction surveys. Although these strategies were put forward as viable measures for demonstrating impact, many criticisms were posited. For example, classroom observation instruments often lack reliability and credibility (Caughlan & Jiang, 2014), portfolios can privilege good writers over good teachers (Gore, 2015) and satisfaction surveys reveal inadequacies in terms of response rates, biases and power relations (Gore, 2015). In more recent work, the Australian Teacher Educators' Association's (ATEA) publication titled *Teacher Education: Innovation, Intervention and Impact* (Brandenburg, McDonough, Burke, & White, 2016a), presented an array of research projects from all over Australia showcasing strategies for impact such as paired placement models (Gutierrez, 2016), and carefully constructed internships (Jervis-Tracey & Finger, 2016) to name but two. This shows that universities are trialling different teaching approaches for measuring impact. However, the guidelines for the 2015 accreditation document, particularly Program Standards 1.4 and 6.3 list employment data, registration data, principal and graduate satisfaction surveys, student experience surveys, case studies, aggregated assessment data on for example the Teaching Performance Assessment as mechanisms for demonstrating impact. Therefore, it appears that for the most part, evidence of impact is limited to data collections.

#### ***x.4.4 Professionalism***

Throughout the years, much has been written on the concept of professionalism, with many attempts to provide a definition for this term, and even more government-led agendas calling for higher degrees of professionalism in education. The academic literature around professionalism has been reported at length elsewhere (see Bourke, 2011; Sachs, 2003, 2016) so will be summarised in the interests of space and confined to discourses from the 1990s onwards as this is when various types of professionalism were posited by writers in response to criticisms of the classical/traditional discourses of professionalism based on medicine and law. Over many years, various nomenclatures have been used for professionalism discourses, but most academics agree on two schools of thought on how the concept is viewed – a ‘new professionalism’ discourse and a ‘managerial’ discourse. These are summarised in Table x.1.

**Table x.1** Discourses of professionalism

<b>‘New Professionalism’ Discourses</b>	<b>‘Managerial’ Professionalism Discourses</b>
Flexible, practical, extended, complex and post-modern (Goodson & Hargreaves, 1996)	Commercialised (Hanlon, 1998)
New and principled (Goodson, 1999)	Managerial (Sachs, 2003, 2016)
Transformative, democratic, collaborative and activist (Sachs, 2003, 2016)	Compliant, controlled (Sachs, 2016)
Enacted (Evans, 2008, 2011; Hilferty, 2007, 2008)	
Occupational (Evetts, 2009)	Organisational (Evetts, 2009)
Deduced, assumed (Evans, 2008, 2011)	Demanded, required, prescribed (Evans, 2008, 2011)
New/classical/practical discourses of (Bourke, 2011)	
Reflexive (Bourke, Ryan, & Lidstone, 2013)	

‘New professionalism’ discourses equate to teachers as professionals working with the cognitive dimensions of knowledge and the emotional dimensions of teaching for the

greater good of the teaching profession. Alternatively, in response to accountability agendas, professionalism has been colonised by governments, rewritten and redefined in a managerial discourse that sees teachers as unquestioning supporters and implementers of a competency-based, outcome-oriented pedagogy related to the world of work (Robertson, 1996). Nevertheless, despite these competing discourses, there is some agreement between researchers that three criteria are essential for being professional: knowledge, autonomy and responsibility (Leaton Gray & Whitty, 2010). However, as Furlong (2005) reminds us, ‘the nature of teacher professionalism, [and] what it means to be a teacher [educator], has been a central area of concern for successive governments’ (p. 120) for the last 30 years. In 2018, this still appears to be the case in education.

## ***x.5 Findings – Discourse Analysis of Accreditation of Initial Teacher Education Programs in Australia: Standards and Procedures, 2015***

### ***x.5.1 Key Players and Authoritative Texts***

The *Accreditation of Initial Teacher Education Programs in Australia: Standards and Procedures* (AITSL, 2015) is an online policy consisting of 31 pages and divided into five sections: the Preamble; Explanatory Information; National Program Standards; Graduate Teacher Standards; and National Accreditation Procedures. Since the implementation of the original accreditation process in 2011, AITSL have conducted a number of reviews.

However, there are limited details about what the review processes involved. Apart from saying that the ‘expertise and vision of teacher educators, employers of teachers, those in the teaching profession, in schools and early childhood settings and the broader education community’ (p. 2), stakeholders are not named in the policy. Thanks are given to the expert input from state and territory education authorities, teacher regulatory authorities and the Australian Council of Deans of Education (ACDE) but again with no stakeholders’ names it

is difficult to determine the authority behind these voices. Interestingly, the expert group were specifically named and acknowledged in the 2011 accreditation document, therefore authority was known.

With regards to authoritative texts, six are referenced in the 2015 accreditation document, namely the threshold Higher Education Standards as established by the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Act 2011 (TEQSA Act 2011); the Education Services Overseas Students Act 2000 (ESOS Act 2000); the 2014 TEMAG report *Action now: Classroom ready teachers* (Australian Government, 2015); the Australian Curriculum (Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA), 2014); the Early Years Learning Framework for Australia (EYLF), 2009); and the Australian Children’s Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA), 2012) guidelines. These are all either government reports or curriculum documents; there are no references to academic literature.

### ***x.5.2 Dominant Discourses in the Accreditation Document***

There is one overarching discourse in the 2015 accreditation document – a discourse of quality assurance. For clarity, the critique of this discourse is divided into four discursive themes, namely: (1) accreditation; (2) evidence; (3) impact; and (4) assessment. The latter discursive theme of assessment is minor and confined to the Program Standards so will not be reported here due to word length restrictions.

#### **x.5.2.1 Discursive Theme of Accreditation**

The word accreditation or some form of it, for example ‘accrediting’, appears 100 times in this document leaving the reader no doubt that accreditation is the chosen mechanism for ‘quality assurance’. The repetition of statements (Step 1) such as the ‘accreditation process’ and ‘accrediting ITE programs’ (p. 2) makes it clear that all ITE providers must undertake accreditation ‘to ensure every program is preparing classroom ready teachers with the skills

they need to make a positive impact on school student learning’ (p. 2). Described as ‘essential’ (p. 2) and ‘rigorous’ (p. 2), accreditation is said to contribute ‘to the improvement of the quality of ITE’ (p. 3). The notion conveyed is that accreditation will solve the current perceived lack of quality in ITE. This reveals that teacher educators are positioned in a deficit discourse and in need of help from the outside. Statements such as regulatory authorities will ‘actively lead and implement’ (p. 2) the standards support this deficit notion, further marginalising teacher educators from the discourse.

The rhetoric of agreement at a national level in accreditation is evident in statements such as ‘nationally accredited’, and ‘nationally consistent assessment of evidence’, ‘assuring robust and nationally consistent decisions’ (p. 3). However, education in the federation of Australia, has always been the realm and the responsibility of the state governments. Even though it is explained that ‘jurisdictional teacher authorities ... in their local (state) context’ will be in charge (p. 2), the messages appear to be in contradiction to each other. The burning question is: can we be sure that all state-based regulatory authorities and their panels, interpret and evaluate evidence in the same way?

In the Explanatory Information and National Accreditation Procedures sections, accreditation is mentioned a further 62 times co-located (Step 1) with ‘application for accreditation’ (p. 26), ‘panel’ (p. 27), ‘report’, ‘recommendation’ (p. 28), ‘decision(s)’ (p. 28, 30) and ‘status’ (p. 30). What is clear from the repetition and co-location of words is that accreditation is a defined procedure and ITE providers must apply to gain accredited status. This is in contradiction (Step 2) with the use of the word ‘flexibility’ (p. 3) where providers are encouraged to be ‘innovative’ (p. 3) in their practices.

#### **x.5.2.2 Discursive Theme of Evidence**

In the Preamble, evidence is mentioned five times (Step 1) specifically pointing out two distinct but related types of evidence: (1) evidence of pre-service teacher performance from

within a program; and (2) evidence of graduate outcomes collected at the completion of a program. Throughout the rest of the document, evidence is mentioned 45 times in total (Step 1) with various co-locations: ‘interpretation of the evidence ... collected (p. 5); ‘evidence of program impact’ (p. 7, p. 29); ‘evidence of the validity and reliability of the teaching performance assessment’ (p. 8); and ‘evidence supplied against the ... standards’ (p. 30). The lexical linking across these statements reveals that not only do teacher educators have to deliver quality courses and graduates but they have to provide reliable evidence of doing so. This evidence must show impact on outcomes and be measurable against the standards, locking academics in a never-ending cycle of reporting their worth. While there are no specific contradictions within this discursive theme, what is noteworthy is that the word ‘data’ is often used interchangeably. Co-located with words such as ‘publically available’ (p. 2), and ‘aggregated’ (p. 7) and mentioned 27 times in the program standards, data collections such as satisfaction surveys and employment and registration data are prioritised as mechanisms for showing impact. Teacher educators must use data to provide evidence of ‘what counts’.

#### **x.5.2.3 Discursive Theme of Impact**

The word impact is mentioned 38 times (Step 1) and prioritised as a principle linked to the first two discourses – accreditation and evidence. Co-located eight times with ‘demonstrating’, the notion conveyed is that ITE courses must have a ‘positive impact’ (p. 3) on pre-service teachers’ performance and graduate outcomes so that they in turn will have a ‘positive impact on school student learning’ (p. 2) ‘throughout their career’ (p. 9). It appears that the taken-for-granted solution to produce impact is using evidence through accreditation processes, where impact, for the most is narrowly defined as numbers.



### ***x.5.3 Cross Analysis: Structural Changes and the Key Players and Authoritative Texts in the Accreditation Document – 2011 to 2015***

The 2015 accreditation process is made up of the same elements as the 2011 document, namely the National Graduate Teacher Standards; National Program Standards; and the National Accreditation process. However, there is a distinct change in the order of these elements. The 2011 document foregrounds the Graduate Standards whereas the Program Standards are given priority in 2015. This shift foregrounds teacher education and represents a direct intervention into the programs delivered by universities in terms of development, design, entry, structure, content, outcomes and the reporting of such.

There is also a move towards a more prescribed process with the addition of an Explanatory Notes section and a guidelines manual (*Guidelines for Accreditation of Initial Teacher Education Programs in Australia (2016)*) outlining in more detail than ever before what ITE institutions have to do to obtain accredited status. It is clear that these notes/guidelines with associated templates eliminate state variations and put forward compulsory ways of working at a national level so that regulatory authorities can steer at a distance on behalf of the government. Rowe and Skourdombis (2017) describe the use of ‘numerous, sizeable, lengthy documents’ as ‘confounding’ in accreditation processes (p. 8). However, as revealed in *Insights: Outcomes of the 2015 National Initial Teacher Education Accreditation Panel Review, November 2015* this prescription was requested by teacher educators ‘to support a consistent layout and ordering of content to enable panels to more efficiently navigate applications’ (p. 5). However, what often results from such prescription is a genre focused less on improvements in quality, the espoused aim, and more on the management of the accreditation process. Obtaining accreditation becomes operational and more about how effectively ITEs can follow the guidelines (Rowe & Skourdombis, 2017).

What the 2011 and 2015 documents do have in common are short consultation times. Commentators such as Louden (2000) have criticised short timeframes contending that time must be taken to consult to the depths required. Although different policies are used as supporting texts, like in 2011, they are all government documents continuing the self-referential policy cycle of accreditation as the truth; academic research is absent. On closer analysis of, for example, the authors behind TEMAG, one of the authoritative texts, it becomes apparent that only two members of the Advisory Group have ever had any classroom experience – as Rowe and Skourdombis (2017) report, the ‘specialism of education, with a professional knowledge base that requires expertise and first-hand experience, is largely omitted’ (p. 7). All these moves position teacher educators as deficit. This logic of deficiency then allows the so-called necessary intervention of accreditation. Ball (1995) maintains that this indicates a transition away from ‘intellectual intelligence to technical rationalism’ (p. 267) reshaping the professionalism of teacher educators.

### **x.5.3.1 Competing Discourses in Circulation (Step 3)**

When the identified discourses from the 2015 accreditation document are juxtaposed against the accreditation academic archive, the intent of this document becomes clear – quality assurance. Here, accreditation is not seen as a contested space but as the taken-for-granted solution to assuring ‘quality’ and ‘being professional’ (the discourses from 2011) in ITE. Using Stensaker’s (2011) classification, it is obvious that organisational adaptation and networked governance are adopted by regulatory authorities to position themselves as powerful actors, the document categorically stating that they will ‘lead’ and ‘implement’ (p. 2). They are the ultimate authors as they approve or reject applications. There are also elements of accreditation as window dressing: regulatory authorities portraying themselves as the gatekeepers of the public good. This is evident in statements such as [re]‘accreditation

will provide assurance of graduate teacher quality and building public confidence in the profession' (p. 3).

In terms of evidence, it is very clear that regulatory authorities determine 'what counts' as evidence – here narrowly defined as evidence of pre-service teacher performance and graduate outcomes. The language used is that of performativity which privileges measurable outcome goals (Ball, 2003). 'Data' and evidence are used interchangeably, foregrounding quantitative ways of working. Rowe and Skourdoumbis' (2017) analysis of TEMAG (an authoritative text) revealed that evidence was mentioned 134 times and data/datasets mentioned 82 times in statements such as 'pre-service teachers must learn how to collect, use and analyse student data to improve student outcomes and their own teaching' (p. 20). This is indicative of a clinical practice model for teaching which TEMAG openly advocates. As already pointed out, Biesta (2007, 2010) warns that evidence-based practices and medical model approaches are not appropriate in education. He maintains that evidence cannot replace value judgements by autonomous professionals. Moreover, Biesta (2015) contends that defining education as achievement alone is one-dimensional, negating the other purposes of education like socialisation (ways of being and doing) and subjectification (student as person). The language of performativity, calculation and effectiveness in this document sees value replace values (Ball, 2003; Biesta, 2010). However, when the discourse of evidence is viewed in the light of work by Cochran-Smith and colleagues from the Boston College Evidence Team (2009), the inclusion of Teaching Performance Assessments (TPAs) as a type of portfolio fulfils some of the principles for a more nuanced, exploratory, open ended approach to evidence gathering.

The last discursive theme from the accreditation document for cross analysis is that of impact. To recap, 'teacher quality' has been defined in terms of the impact teacher education programs have on pre-service teachers (PSTs) who, as graduates, will impact on school-

student learning; impact defined as qualification only (Biesta, 2015). However, the circular logic portrayed here is problematic as it assumes a simple and simplistic continuity from initial teacher education to school-student learning (Fenstermacher & Richardson, 2005) which is difficult if not impossible to identify (Meiers & Ingvarson, 2005). As Brandenburg, McDonagh, Burke, and White (2016b) argue, 'the research, policy and practice connection is often non-linear, complex and cyclical' (p. 1). Biesta (2010) reminds us that education is a moral non-causal practice with a lot of factors in need of consideration in the learning process.

So far, we have seen that teacher educators have been silenced, positioned as lacking and in need of help from external authorities to improve quality, in effect marginalised from the policy discourse. We have also ascertained that the policy discourses around accreditation, evidence and impact promote accreditation as quality assurance, evidence and impact as quantifiable. This short summary answers the first two research questions: (1) how are teacher educators positioned within the 2015 policy document where evidence and impact are prioritised?; and (2) in what ways do notions of evidence and impact from policy discourses align with the academic literature? The next section responds to the third research question: what type of professionalism is being promoted by their positioning?

Professionalism was once seen as a discourse of resistance or the 'enemy' of economic rationalism and the discourse of performativity (Sanguinetti, 2000, p. 241). However, as can be seen in this analysis, governments, through the use of various policy technologies such as intertextuality and interdiscursivity, have hijacked and remodelled the notion to promote their redefined version of professionalism - a managerial, controlled or compliant professionalism (Sachs, 2016). Evetts (2009) refers to this as organisational professionalism or professionalism from above. This is visible in the top down bureaucratic standardised work procedures imposed by external authorities to make teacher educators

auditable and accountable. Accreditation anchored in evidence/data and impact discourses and enshrined with distrust for academics is a blatant attempt to codify the work of teacher educators so that they can be controlled from a distance, what Beck (2009) refers to as performative professionalism. A decade ago and in reference to teachers, Evans (2008) named this as a process of de-professionalisation at work. Teacher educators are now in the same position.

The last step in archaeology is the analysis of transformations (Step 4) which makes recommendations for teacher educators working within this highly regulated environment.

## **x.6 Recommendations**

It is important to stress that academics should be held accountable but how this is achieved will make a difference for the preferred version of professionalism for teacher educators.

Accountability according to Halstead (1994) can be either contractual or responsive.

Contractual accountability is bureaucratic and usually takes the form of standards and is measurement driven. Responsive discourses rely on self-regulation, are process oriented; a democratic culture of accountability. Writers such as Ravitch (2010) maintain that a good accountability system needs professional judgement; one of the major characteristics of professionalism, not just a score based on achievement. So what discourses of professionalism can teacher educators promote despite prescription by accreditation?

Research by Furlong (2013) and Ellis and McNicholl (2015) argues that teacher education has to 're-tool' in this highly accredited environment. By this they mean working in collaboration with education stakeholders for knowledge mobilisation and research.

Furlong (2013) promotes Hoyle's (1974) notions of extended professionalism and Hirst's (1996) practical theories to advocate for practical wisdom. This means teachers and teacher educators partnering to develop state-of-the-art practices underpinned by research.

One way of doing this is by working with partners – teachers in schools - to implement the new elements of the 2015 accreditation process, for example primary specialisations. Research around the enactment of these new policy elements will be crucial for bridging the divisions between teacher education at university and practices in schools. These collaborative partnerships will result in collective wisdom with associated transfer of knowledge to inform teaching practices in original and creative ways for the good of universities and schools. Collaboration and collegiality are key characteristics of new or collaborative professionalism, to use Sachs' (2016) terminology.

A second way is within the university itself. Rather than academics working in silos which has often been commonplace, a process of 'joint inquiry' (Stosich, 2016) should be adopted where teacher educators work together across courses for teaching the knowledge and skills necessary for the TPA, for example. Rather than seeing the TPA as a compliance mechanism, it could be a chance for innovation, improvement and effective change (Guskey, 2002; Supovitz & Taylor, 2005). All policies are interpreted and translated in local contexts so teacher educators have 'wiggle room' to craft and maintain a strong sense of local identity and integrity of practice. In this way transformative professionalism discourses are dominant, where inquiry, discretionary judgement, and being policy active are foregrounded (Sachs, 2003).

Recently I have been part of my university's panel to assess the TPA which includes an oral dimension. Not only did the pre-service teachers' presentations display knowledge and skills to demonstrate impact, Evans' (2011) three components of professionalism, namely behavioural, intellectual and attitudinal, were clearly evident. New professionalism discourses (Goodson, 1999) embrace the emotional as well as the cognitive dimensions of teaching and should not be excluded just because they are difficult to measure. We cannot lose sight of the moral and social purposes of education.

Rowe and Skourdoumbis (2017), in response to recent educational reform in Australia including accreditation, set a challenge stating:

It is important ... for scholars to disrupt and interrupt these proposed imaginaries, by endeavouring to influence not only how they become established as policy truths but also by exposing the power relationships that they exert on people and particular fields of scholarship like education. Scholars need to consistently illuminate the discrepancies within these reforms to the broader public. (p. 12)

This chapter has responded to this challenge through the lens of activist professionalism (Sachs, 2003, 2016) by revealing repetition and co-location in policy documents, the silencing of academic voices and self-referential policy cycles as the strategies to establish accreditation as a discursive practice, a productive form of power. Teacher educators have been discursively repositioned as being out of touch, side-lined and condemned to window dressing the implementation of top-down directives from regulatory authorities. By ‘working the dialectic’ (Cochran Smith & Lytle, 2004), the truth of accreditation as necessary rests on shaky ground. However, the discourses around accreditation, evidence and impact have been normalised, the regime of truth for quality and professionalism in tertiary education. Sachs maintained that all teachers should be involved and respond to issues that relate to education and schooling, reclaiming the professional agenda to ‘make things happen rather than to let things happen to them’ (Sachs, 2003, p. 144). The paper provides a strong argument that echoes this call to action and urges teacher educators to become part of the culture that expects to challenge and interrogate taken-for-granted practices and enter the public sphere in doing so.

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