

Chapter 6

Collaboration in a Context of Accountability: Cultural Change in Teacher Educator Practice Across University Boundaries



Alison Lugg , Catherine Lang , Jacolyn Weller , and Nicola Carr 

Abstract In this chapter, we consider the impact of implementing the Graduate Teacher Performance Assessment (GTPA) on the work of teacher educators. The GTPA was developed as a reliable assessment of preservice teachers' readiness to teach in response to a regulatory quality agenda in initial teacher education (ITE) in Australia. A unique characteristic of the GTPA instrument is the collective process of standard setting and moderation across a large number of institutions and across jurisdictions. Our study investigated the experiences of four teacher educators (the authors), involved in the development and implementation of the GTPA at two universities in Victoria, Australia. A collaborative autoethnographic methodology was used to explore the impacts of the GTPA on our professional learning and on the development of our ITE programs. Edwards' concepts of *relational agency* and *relational expertise* provided a framework for data interpretation. Our key finding is that involvement with the GTPA has resulted in a stronger collaborative professional environment and an openness to sharing expertise among teacher educators and program leaders within collective members. As teacher educators, we have enhanced our professional growth and demonstrated how collaborative work enables more robust practices in initial teacher education.

A. Lugg (✉) · N. Carr
RMIT University, Melbourne, Australia
e-mail: alison.lugg@rmit.edu.au

N. Carr
e-mail: nicky.carr@rmit.edu.au

C. Lang · J. Weller
La Trobe University, Melbourne, Australia
e-mail: C.Lang@latrobe.edu.au

J. Weller
e-mail: J.Weller@latrobe.edu.au

6.1 Initial Teacher Education in the Australian Context

Initial teacher education (ITE) in Australia is under a constant political gaze for review and reform. Teacher education programs are viewed as “low hanging fruit” when new governments, influenced by three-year terms, change education policy believing they can make “quick wins or short-term fixes” (Ling, 2017, p. 561). This ongoing review and reform of ITE in Australia is often rationalised in terms of a need to improve the *quality* of teachers and of teacher education. Researchers such as Gore (2015) and Churchward and Willis (2019), however, have argued that the emphasis should be on improving *teaching* quality rather than *teacher* quality, asserting that the latter emphasises individual performance and standardised procedures, distracting attention from the complex, diverse practices that underpin quality teaching. Like Loughran and Menter (2019), they cautioned that prevalent market-driven discourses such as *classroom readiness*, *standards*, and *effectiveness*, risk validation of a narrow set of performative practices that may limit teachers’ capacities to “establish and maintain their professional worth” (p. 259). In this contested educational arena, a federal government response to the review of ITE by the Teacher Education Ministerial Advisory Group (TEMAG) gave national oversight of ITE to the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) to progress the TEMAG recommendations across Australia’s states and territories (Australian Government, 2015). AITSL’s remit included setting national standards for ITE programs and graduates and establishing a “rigorous assessment of classroom readiness” (Craven et al., 2014, p. 33). This policy included requirements that graduates from ITE programs pass standardised literacy and numeracy tests (LANTITE), and a capstone assessment task that provides evidence of readiness to teach. The Graduate Teacher Performance Assessment (GTPA[®])¹ is a product of these changes.

6.1.1 Assessing Readiness to Teach

Determining readiness to teach is problematic. Gore (2015) acknowledged that teacher readiness and impact on student learning are difficult to define and assess within “reasonable levels of validity, reliability and fairness recognising both the desire for scientific integrity and the messy reality of the social worlds of schooling and teacher preparation” (p. 1). Similarly, Nuttall et al. (2017) questioned whether impact on learning can be readily tested in a multi-layered and complex profession, where linear cause and effect cannot be readily observed. Gore (2015) recognised that a national approach to assessment of graduate readiness to teach raises questions around the extent to which common understandings of quality teaching are held by teacher educators in diverse educational settings, especially when the Australian

¹ Acknowledgment: The Graduate Teacher Performance Assessment (GTPA[®]) was created by the Institute for Learning Sciences and Teacher Education, Australian Catholic University and has been implemented in a Collective of Higher Education Institutions in Australia (www.graduatetpa.com).

Professional Standards for Teachers (APST) do not provide a clear position on this issue (see AITSL, 2011; revised 2018). These questions draw attention to the capabilities of, and conditions for, teacher educators to prepare and assess graduates for teaching diverse learners in specific contexts against national standards that redefine teaching as a profession (Singh et al., 2019). The issues signal a need for robust, collaborative work among ITE providers to build shared understandings and robust assessment of readiness to teach.

The TEMAG recommendation for an assessment of ITE graduates' classroom readiness focused attention on differing interpretations of the concept of classroom readiness, debates about what constitutes evidence of readiness, and whether it is in fact an achievable outcome of ITE programs (Alexander, 2018). Such issues were addressed by Wyatt-Smith in a GTPA symposium in 2017 where she proposed the term "profession readiness". Charteris and Dargusch (2018) took up this concept, arguing it is more appropriate than an instrumental notion of classroom readiness. Profession readiness accounts for the range of complex skills and roles required of teachers, enabling agency and identity development, while accounting for the variables that mediate their activity, including practices, resources, dispositions, school and community cultures. Charteris and Dargusch (2018) argued that teacher educators need to be "assessment-capable" (p. 358) to model authentic assessment practices and foster preservice teacher learning. Assessment capability involves engaging in professional conversations about making judgements against standards and critical reflection on assessment beliefs and roles of the assessor.

This notion of assessment capability underscores Adie and Wyatt-Smith's (2020) investigation of conditions for authentic assessment of profession readiness and risks to fidelity of the GTPA in its implementation across diverse higher education and school placement sites. Acknowledging tensions between standardisation and situational flexibility, they examined the conditions for ensuring fair and equitable practices across state jurisdictions and universities. Drawing on the work of Gee (2000) and Fairclough (1995), Adie and Wyatt-Smith's (2020) research revealed that, during the trial period, the GTPA acted as a "disruptor to historic ways of 'doing' teacher education" (p. 279) and "being a teacher educator" (p. 274). In challenging assumptions and normalised practices, the development and implementation of the GTPA directly impacted teacher educators' roles and identities. Adie and Wyatt-Smith (2020) concluded that the GTPA trial was "an exercise in collaboration generated through stories of discomfort and dissonance within a reform agenda for teaching and teacher education" (p. 283). In this chapter, we contribute further to this story of teacher educators' collaborative work through our reflections on, and analysis of, our experiences as members of the Collective, implementing the GTPA in the state of Victoria.

6.2 The GTPA Collective

The Institute for Learning Sciences and Teacher Education (ILSTE) led a group of Australian universities to implement the GTPA and progress new conversations about competence of ITE graduates. Teacher educators from 13 universities in six Australian states and territories collaborated in 2017 to trial a culminating, authentic assessment of teaching practice (Adie & Wyatt-Smith, 2020). A unique characteristic of the GTPA is the process of moderation across the collective institutions to ensure shared interpretations of the GTPA assessment criteria (see Chap. 3, this volume, for details of this process). During this development period many layers of professional conversations resulted in academics “re-seeing through an unfamiliar lens” (Adie & Wyatt-Smith, 2020, p. 276). The authors of this chapter were each a part of the Collective at different stages, all with responsibilities to implement the GTPA in their own universities in Victoria. In this chapter we report on our experiences of working with the GTPA instrument examined through a collaborative research methodology and analysed through Edwards’ (2011, 2012, 2017) concept of relational agency.

6.3 Relational Agency in Collaborative Professional Practice

Implementing the GTPA has compelled teacher educators to work on a national level, across universities, and state/territory jurisdictions. This unique and complex situation requires authentic, collaborative practice in order to achieve shared understandings of graduate assessment processes, to maintain the quality and fidelity of the GTPA assessment instrument.

In this context, Anne Edwards’ (2011, 2012, 2017) concept of *relational agency* provides a useful lens for analysis. Relational agency refers to “the capacity for working with others to strengthen purposeful responses to complex problems” (Edwards, 2011, p. 34). It transcends individualistic interpretations of agency to embrace a broader moral framework that considers the wellbeing of others as well as the self (Edwards, 2012). Edwards’ conceptualisation of relational agency is underpinned by Engeström’s (2007) Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT), and his notion of *expansive learning*, which examines how cultural or organisational change occurs through collaborative work. According to Engeström (2007), change or expansive learning occurs when participants experience *contradictions* (or dissonance) within the activity system and work together to resolve these contradictions.

Edwards’ (2011, 2012) research produced three conceptual ‘gardening tools’ to enhance collaborative professional practice: *relational agency*, *common knowledge* and *relational expertise*. Edwards (2012) contends that relational agency develops in two stages:

1. Working with others to expand the object of activity so that its complexity is revealed, by recognising the motives and the resources that others bring to bear as they too interpret it.
2. Aligning one's own responses to the collective interpretations, with the responses being made by the other professionals as they act on the expanded object (p. 26).

Common knowledge refers to building a common language through shared experience, to enable effective, joint decision-making. Relational expertise involves moving beyond specific knowledge or specialist skills to understand *what matters* to other professionals and *why* it matters, or what they bring and want to do (Edwards, 2012). Characteristics that help build relational expertise and common knowledge include clarifying and focusing on the wider purpose; being open to alternatives; understanding one's professional values; being responsive to others, knowing who to ask; rule-bending and risk-taking; taking a pedagogic stance; developing collaborative processes; and learning from practice (Edwards, 2011). These processes require conditions that allow for dialogical interaction across practice boundaries.

As a lens for interpreting our findings, Edwards' 'gardening tools', provide a means for understanding our collective experiences with the GTPA and for identifying key features of that experience. This conceptual framework aligns well with the research methodology of collaborative autoethnography, in that both value multiple subjectivities, relational practice and understanding the conditions for engagement in joint work.

6.4 Research Approach

Several studies have investigated professional standards for teachers (Mayer et al., 2005), what constitutes evidence of profession readiness (Alexander, 2018), employment pathways and retention (Mayer et al., 2017), the impact of ITE (Ell et al., 2019), and more recently, a sharpened focus on the validity and reliability of teaching performance assessments (Adie & Wyatt-Smith, 2020; Wyatt-Smith et al., 2020). In writing this chapter, we add to the body of research related to the experiences of teacher educators, widely perceived to be under-researched (Rowan et al., 2019). Also under-researched is the professional development of teacher educators engaged in implementing graduate teaching assessments. A focus on our experiences with the GTPA necessitated a qualitative approach to the investigation and our interest in our collective understandings prompted a collaborative form of enquiry.

6.4.1 Collaborative Autoethnography

Collaborative autoethnography (CAE) enabled us to investigate and represent our individual and collective stories in a way that honoured multiple subjectivities and contextual complexity (Chang et al., 2013). Working within an interpretivist paradigm, we used CAE and dialogic analysis to better understand our shared experiences of working with the GTPA. As the name suggests, CAE is “simultaneously collaborative, autobiographical and ethnographic” (Chang et al., 2013, p. 17). While these processes may seem at odds, they are complementary when used to integrate self-reflexivity with cultural interpretation and multiple subjectivities to interrogate the meanings of our experiences. It is the “embrace of cultural interpretation that distinguishes autoethnography from other autobiographical or self-narrative writings” (Chang et al., 2013, p. 21).

In undertaking a collaborative autoethnographic method, the authors were both researchers and participants in the study. Data were generated through a process of writing and reflection, first individually then shared, on our accounts of our work with the GTPA (see also Doyle et al., this volume). The process was autobiographical in that reflections on our experiences included emotional and personal responses, as well as professional reflections on our respective roles and responsibilities in the educational context. It was ethnographic and collaborative in that we analysed the autobiographical and contextual data through an iterative process of individual reflection, dialogue, and collective thematic analysis. Throughout the process, our experiences were explored and analysed in relation to the context in which we were positioned within our institutions and the wider educational landscape. Meaning-making emerged through our attempts to collectively understand our situated experiences in the local and Australian educational contexts. Our intention was to capture both our individual and collective voices to produce a unique, joint perspective on the experiences of this group of teacher educators in the state of Victoria, engaging with the GTPA instrument between 2017 and 2020.

Following the methodology of CAE, this process explored:

1. emotional resonance: our own historical and current feelings in participating, developing and delivering the GTPA
2. experience specificity: our experiences within two universities in Victoria from 2017 to 2020
3. analytic reflexivity: an iterative process conducted through dialogue, reflecting on our individual and collective experiences of inter- and intra-university professional development and moderation activities, and
4. inter-subjectivity: interrogation of each other’s ideas to deepen our understanding of our experiences, offering “a scholarly space to hold up mirrors to each other” to explore our subjectivities and develop common themes (Chang et al., 2013, p. 26).

6.5 Method

The study was conducted in two main phases: (1) data generation, and (2) data interpretation and analysis, in line with the CAE methodology. Methods of data generation tended to evolve as the project developed. As researchers, we are aware of the limitations of purposive sampling (Creswell, 2008), and that investigating experiences of academics from only two universities would constrain the narrative and the data that emerge. However, this choice was logical because of the close proximity of our universities and the fact that we were colleagues who had engaged in shared GTPA moderation processes.

In line with the methodology, decisions were made at research group meetings to place boundaries around the nature of our individual and collective reflections. The kinds of questions and issues that were most salient to the investigation were discussed and formed the research questions:

1. How has the implementation of the GTPA impacted on our roles as teacher educators?
2. What issues arose?
3. Where did the main benefits and tensions lie in our experiences of the development and delivery of the GTPA?

Notes from each individual's reflection and each group meeting were recorded in writing and shared via Dropbox™. Participants were encouraged to reflect on the data and add comments or questions to interrogate them. In this way, narratives emerged, and themes developed over a period of six months.

Themes emerging from the data were determined from an ongoing analysis of the data including the questions and comments made by the four authors. Themes were considered by the group as they were identified, and decisions were made about which were most salient in the context of the research questions, our experiences of implementing the GTPA, and the benefits and tensions we encountered. Through iterative collaborative autoethnography methods, specific categories were identified within the key themes (see Table 6.1).

Table 6.1 Key themes and categories

Theme	Categories
Change (curriculum)	ITE curriculum and teaching practice Impact on preservice teacher professional experience Teacher educator engagement
Confidence	Imposter syndrome Uncertainty regarding assessing GTPA—making judgements public Assessing out of field Inequity due to variation between schools
Collaboration	Shared understanding of the GTPA instrument Moderation of assessment Community of assessors

These themes informed the analysis of our reflections, particularly as they related to the concepts of relational agency and relational expertise.

6.6 Findings

This section presents each theme and highlights specific elements within it. Examples from the data are used to illustrate key outcomes. Quotations of individual authors' words are indicated in brackets (e.g. A/B/C/D) according to the order in which they are listed for this chapter. The two institutions involved are referred to as university A and university B.

6.6.1 *Change*

6.6.1.1 ITE Curriculum and Teaching Practice

Implementation of the GTPA came at a time when many ITE institutions were transitioning between accrediting new programs designed specifically for the new regulatory frameworks and retrofitting existing programs. University A embarked on their accreditation work during the trial stage of the GTPA implementation in 2017, therefore construction of the curriculum supporting the GTPA occurred without the full vision of the instrument,

I recall asking questions of those involved [in the design of the GTPA] as I was trying to get a clear picture of what the GTPA would entail and what it would mean for preparation of the ITE students throughout our programs... responses to my questions tended to be vague. (A)

This quote emphasises professional learning as a feature of implementation in a period when there was no precedent for a culminating competence assessment in the history of Australian initial teacher education. Teacher educators were learning 'on the go' as they addressed different aspects of curriculum development.

Curriculum design shifted with changes to the nature and structure of the GTPA to become "a terminal assessment, not staged submission...[with] a set word count" (C). Changes to university curriculum necessitated navigation of "complex internal and external approval processes on an ongoing basis" (B) adding an extra layer of internal university approval workload beyond external accreditation requirements (see also Chap. 4, this volume).

University B undertook its accreditation journey when the GTPA design was largely settled, but at a time when there were several teaching performance assessment instruments potentially available. Decisions about which instrument to adopt were both political and practical. They were not made until very late in the accreditation process, so curriculum design was left open to accommodate different possible teaching performance assessments.

In retrofitting the GTPA to existing programs, we found that, while some skills were present within our programs, they needed to be further developed or made more explicit. For example, in some cases preservice teachers' experiences with student data were dependent on what they had been exposed to during school placements. To counter this, modifications were hastily made to the curriculum in one final year professional experience unit:

I spent a lot more time revisiting what might constitute evidence of learning as well as how to interpret and analyse learning data. I made links between the GTPA requirements... the students started to see that they had the skills and knowledge to be able to undertake the GTPA with confidence. (D)

This example highlights a recognition by the authors that preservice teachers must be explicitly prepared for the GTPA throughout their degree. This included designing sequential units that developed their skills to “articulate and justify their teaching decisions and choices ... to inform planning... [and] evidence-based teaching practices” (D).

6.6.1.2 Impact on Preservice Teacher Professional Experience

The implementation of the GTPA required teacher educators and preservice teachers to develop a common language for discussing teaching, learning, and assessment processes: “we needed to develop a metalanguage linked to the GTPA expectations across the program and amongst all teaching staff so that... it is not new language and concepts for final year students” (D). This need was exacerbated by the fact that the GTPA is implemented across states where each jurisdiction may have differing practices and terminology. One example is the requirement for preservice teachers to moderate their judgements about student performance on a classroom assessment task for summative purposes in the school setting. Moderation is a practice that involves teachers discussing how they have arrived at a decision about the quality of student work, assessed against required standards. In Victoria, although a requirement of APST 5.3, moderation between preservice teachers and their supervisors has not been common practice during school placements. Moderation therefore needed to be explicitly taught in our professional experience units and school mentors needed to be made aware of this expectation.

The GTPA required further adjustments to the ways in which placement practices are undertaken. For example, some schools were uncertain about allowing preservice teachers access to student data and mentors had varying levels of experience with the evidence-based requirements of the GTPA. This impacted preservice teachers' final placement experiences and created more stress than usual. One author noted a need to change her approach to teaching in order to manage preservice teacher stress levels:

I chose to modify the intended curriculum and spend more time on stress management and wellbeing exercises to calm the PSTs [preservice teachers] down... I was surprised at the sense of panic that characterised the first three days of the intensive course... I wonder how

much of the anxiety was related directly to the GTPA or how much was general anxiety about the final placement as well. (D)

These issues have required rethinking how our professional placement (practicum) teams and academics teaching GTPA units support preservice teachers and mentors in schools to facilitate the GTPA process so that it is a positive professional development experience rather than an onerous task.

6.6.1.3 Teacher Educator Engagement

Curriculum change of this magnitude required academics teaching within ITE programs to support the adoption of a more integrated approach to curriculum design and delivery. Such change was not without its challenges. One author recognised that it required “all academic staff involved in the GTPA teaching and marking are able to attend meetings and are clear about the institutional and cross-institutional moderation processes” (A). Some academic colleagues were critical of what they saw as a neo-liberal discourse requiring conformity to externally imposed regulatory frameworks. Others did not support the decision to join the GTPA Collective, preferring an alternative teaching performance assessment (D). Some were initially unconvinced about the benefits of the GTPA instrument. This was reported to be evident in the talk of “those who had not attended the ILSTE training sessions [and so] had a lack of confidence in the unknown and unproven tool” (C). (See Chap. 2, this volume, for a discussion of this range of potential responses to TPAs.)

The implementation of the GTPA added new challenges and rewards in the work of the authors. We all became active participants in embedding the GTPA skills and common language with students and colleagues in our respective ITE programs. We continually worked to build the expertise of academic staff who were not able to participate in the ILSTE training sessions. Through these experiences our relational agency and relational expertise developed.

6.6.2 Confidence

6.6.2.1 Imposter Syndrome

An unexpected outcome of the collaborative ethnographic experience was the finding that each of the authors, regardless of their role and length of time involved in the GTPA, expressed feelings of self-doubt about their ability to assess and make judgments. We each, initially, lacked confidence, or suffered from ‘imposter syndrome’. Imposter syndrome is defined as “a collection of feelings of inadequacy that persist despite evident success. ‘Imposters’ suffer from chronic self-doubt and a sense of intellectual fraudulence that override any feelings of success or external proof of their competence” (Corkindale, 2008, para. 3).

6.6.2.2 Uncertainty Regarding Assessing GTPA

Despite being accomplished academics, each with many years' experience in tertiary and/or teacher education, our feelings of uncertainty and a lack of confidence at times came to the fore. This lack of confidence was attributed to internal and external factors. One author, despite being involved in the trial process from the beginning, commented,

Being new to ITE I often felt under-prepared when attending the workshop and planning days. I was in the room with educators who had been teaching preservice teachers for a lot longer than me. I had been a teacher in secondary schools but had not taught preservice teachers, and, in particular, I had not taught any of the method subjects. (B)

Another, who became involved with the Collective later than her colleagues, said she felt “a bit nervous because it felt a bit like jumping in at the deep end” and she did not know what to expect (A). This feeling of uncertainty was not uncommon because even those who were leading the process commented that “we were designing a plane while flying it” (B). A third author who was a program coordinator and new to the GTPA in 2019, commented,

I wasn't confident in my understanding of the GTPA, marking and moderating or indeed how it worked across institutions. Throughout the workshop a number of issues related to implementing the GTPA caused me to think about possible implications for my own degree program. (D)

These comments demonstrate how, as experienced academics, we grappled with learning the structures related to implementation of the GTPA while, on a second level, we were pragmatically considering its impact on our programs and students.

6.6.2.3 Assessing Out of Field—Making Judgements Public

While we each had confidence in our skills and abilities in our respective discipline specialisations, we were all challenged in some ways at the Collective's workshops run by ILSTE. We were marking GTPAs that had been completed in primary schools, grades 1–6, or in secondary schools in unfamiliar disciplines such visual arts, science, or history. In the statistical evaluation process, we were called upon to argue whether a submission met or did not meet standards. One author commented, “I was in awe of the depth of knowledge and subject specificity of many others in the room. I felt underqualified to contribute many times over” (B). Those of us who were secondary teacher educators were not confident to make judgements about primary school samples and the reverse. However, throughout this process, the passion of the educators in the room was always evident and inspiring. We forged a learning community: on reflection, our shared feelings of uncertainty were important in making us more open to other people's perspectives on the GTPA tool and to contributing to a robust final product.

6.6.2.4 Inequity Due to Variation Between Schools

Lastly, we were not confident that our students would have equitable experiences in the many primary and secondary school classrooms. We questioned whether preservice teachers undertaking the task in schools that understood and aligned with the GTPA practices were advantaged over those in schools where less emphasis was placed on using evidence-based teaching practices. We were not confident that our students would be equally supported in this final placement, raising some uncertainty about equity of opportunity and how that related to our assessment of the GTPA.

Our concerns about the equity and efficacy of the tool opened up new levels of conversations within the Collective monthly meetings, as well as between academics in our respective universities. This constant reflection that crossed university silos was an additional process that contributed to our relational agency development.

6.6.3 Collaboration

Our experiences of working in the GTPA Collective highlighted that engagement with developing, refining, and implementing the instrument has enhanced our professional development as teacher educators. This work has operated on multiple levels within and between our universities.

6.6.3.1 Shared Understanding of the GTPA Instrument

Participation in the Collective and the implementation of the GTPA instrument in our respective universities created a “steep learning curve for all stakeholders” (C) that, perhaps, generated an increased openness to learning among participants. The cross-institutional assessment was new to us, so we needed to learn with each other. Our participation in the GTPA Collective necessitated sharing of expertise, enabling rich and robust conversations about quality in teacher education and assessment of graduates’ readiness to teach. Through supportive collegiality we were able to build shared understandings of the GTPA instrument, criteria, and standards. While the impetus to develop the GTPA can be sourced to the ITE program standards (AITSL, 2015, revised 2018, 2019), the collaborative process was facilitated and modelled by ILSTE’s leadership of the Collective. The leadership team genuinely sought input and feedback from university and jurisdictional representatives. This recognition of participants’ collective expertise was a strong feature of the GTPA experience for all of us.

One of the most positive aspects of my involvement in the GTPA has been the opportunity to collaborate with academics from other universities about ITE, schools’ expectations of preservice teachers, assessment processes, interpreting assessment criteria and related

issues... there has been a willingness amongst participants to openly discuss concerns and to contribute productively to the development and improvement of the GTPA. (A)

The meetings saw an unprecedented process of collaboration between Australian ITE providers to produce a quality assessment instrument for determining profession readiness. Different practices and expectations of preservice teachers in professional experience were discussed among teacher educators, and we gained a more holistic educational perspective across discipline areas, primary/secondary levels, and university and state jurisdictional boundaries. Differences in regulations around preservice teacher registration and placement practice were surmounted.

6.6.3.2 Moderation of Assessment

Moderation was the critical process that brought people together. New territory was entered when academics debated, “What constitutes an overall pass in primary and secondary preparation programs?” The question was understood to include all discipline specialisations. This understanding was reached collectively where academics “were called upon to argue our positions” (B). This was a significant learning curve and professional development process (C).

6.6.3.3 Community of Assessors

The vision of collaborative learning extended beyond the face-to-face workshops. The Collective met regularly online where concerns “were openly discussed” (A). This was the generous sharing of “professional learning... required for fidelity and practices [that] would need to change” to achieve rigorous teaching of the skills embedded in the GTPA (D) which were not routinely taught in programs to date. The sense of belonging to a community of GTPA assessors was extended through participation in supplementary activities such as presentations and panel participation at conferences; as one author noted, “I was feeling part of a cohort and co-delivered/co-presented at AARE [Australian Association for Research in Education] at the end of 2017” (B).

In the sites of our own universities, conversations about assessment of graduate readiness and the GTPA instrument have opened up spaces for ongoing dialogue about quality assessment and ITE program design. Author A initiated a joint moderation process across our two universities, which are geographically located in the same suburb. This moderation process was facilitated by author B, who welcomed academics from university B and another university to participate in a moderation process for our own professional development purposes. Academics involved saw this as an important learning experience that encouraged their confidence in the GTPA instrument and in their capacities to prepare preservice teachers to undertake the assessment. It also increased their sense of being part of something bigger than their own institutions. These forms of collaboration highlight how the ‘ripple effect’

of the implementation of the GTPA brought people together to form a professional community.

6.7 Discussion

The authors' professional development journeys, as teacher educators and colleagues involved in GTPA implementation, varied according to our respective roles. However, the themes explained in the findings indicate key common elements of our shared experiences. In this section we discuss the implications of the key findings for our own work as teacher educators, for ITE programs, preservice teacher development and the wider profession of teachers and teacher educators. The discussion is informed by Edwards' (2011, 2012) "gardening tools" (relational agency, relational expertise, and common knowledge) and Engeström's (2007) concept of expansive learning.

6.7.1 *Artefacts and Agents of Change*

Over the journey of being GTPA initiators in our respective universities we have been active innovators of change in developing new curricula, identifying gaps in existing courses, socialising our colleagues and students to the metalanguage related to the GTPA, and negotiating internal and external accreditation requirements. We have traversed the multiple discourses that impact policies governing accreditation of, and practices within, ITE programs. Churchward and Willis (2019) noted that "for teacher educators, the complexity of teaching and teacher education in a policy climate with competing agendas creates disequilibrium" (p. 260). This investigation of the authors' experiences of the GTPA revealed that, in this case, disequilibrium resulted in productive outcomes. This productivity in the face of disruption to past procedures and practices is supported by Engeström's (2007) theory of expansive learning that suggests participants engaged in joint activity respond to dissonance or disequilibrium by solving problems and finding new ways forward. It also reflects Adie and Wyatt-Smith's (2020) finding that engagement with the GTPA trial, disrupted teacher educator's normative assumptions and practices, prompting a "reshaping [of] professional identities... rethinking ways to practice and talk about practice" (p. 283). Our reflections revealed that, in implementing the GTPA, the authors faced challenges at a local level within our universities and, to a lesser extent, at the Collective level. The strength of the Collective and of our collegial relationships, was such that, as problems or questions arose, we were able to share our experience and expertise to respond to issues and to mutually support each other.

The authors' experiences enabled improved quality in the provision of initial teacher education at our universities. Notwithstanding Churchward and Willis (2019) and Loughran and Menter's (2019) concern about the constraints of standardised ITE practice, we found that the nature of the GTPA instrument and the structures of the

GTPA Collective afforded positive change and professional growth. The compulsory nature of the GTPA made it a non-negotiable and powerful instrument in shaping program content and pedagogy, particularly in professional experience (also known as fieldwork, practicum, or placement) units. As a high-stakes assessment for preservice teachers, the GTPA has prompted ongoing pedagogical and curriculum development by teacher educators.

The GTPA has provoked important professional conversations about assessment of “profession readiness” (Charteris & Dargusch, 2018), including reliability and fidelity of assessment (Adie & Wyatt-Smith, 2020) within ITE programs and among colleagues in the Collective. Like any cultural artefact, however, the ways in which it was conceived by the Collective and interpreted by teacher educators in the respective universities also shapes teaching, learning and assessment practices within and across institutions. The Collective played a central role in framing the GTPA practices and assessment processes. To this extent, we can be seen as having agency within our spheres of influence because of the need for ITE providers to address the national policy agenda.

6.7.2 *Uncertainty and Ambiguity*

All four authors engaged in this GTPA work experienced times when we felt uncertain, lacked confidence, or were unclear about particular aspects of the GTPA processes. The effect of working across differing areas of expertise within ITE was that we needed to consider our own professional knowledge and values as well as different points of view in making our judgements. Acknowledging doubts, openly questioning, working to understand the views of others and respecting differing voices have been part of this process. To this extent, following Edwards’ (2011, 2012) concept of relational agency, we needed to exercise relational expertise by recognising the knowledge and skills that colleagues brought to the conversations and also to develop a shared language, or common knowledge, in order to work towards a reliable, shared assessment instrument.

Our initial discomfort was bound up with our identities as academics in a wider, national educational context. Historically, teacher educators have tended to work in their institutions and, more broadly, within their jurisdiction, a point Hattie notes in his Commentary (this volume). The opportunity to collaborate across jurisdictions, universities, and state borders was a new and positive experience for us. Our reflections revealed the affective nature of our professional work as well as cognitive implications for our senses of professional self. As Loughran and Menter (2019) asserted, this public work is “at the centre of the teaching of teaching... sharing, critiquing and building a knowledge base is a crucial aspect of scholarly development and... shifts the focus from job ready training to professional development of pedagogical expertise” (p. 225). Making our judgements public within the Collective involved risking our feelings of professional competence and identities as experienced teacher educators.

However, this work was an essential feature of building the fidelity of the GTPA instrument across a range of contexts (Adie & Wyatt-Smith, 2020). The disruption to identities and accepted practices was uncomfortable at times but, in our experiences, led to growth and professional development. Over the journey of working with the Collective, the authors found it was a safe space for discussing different perspectives and that moderation and validation of the GTPA instrument contributed to our professional learning and sense of belonging. The holistic experience of discussion and development of the GTPA tool, enhanced by moderation across states and universities, has been critical in the development of our relational agency and expertise.

6.7.3 Collaborative Professional Development

We believe that the GTPA experience has enabled us and our initial teacher education programs to grow stronger, primarily because of the collaborative work it has entailed. In part, collaboration was encouraged by the conditions in which we worked. The practice structures, the range of expertise within the Collective and the research processes set up by ILSTE, both necessitated and enabled collaboration. Our GTPA experiences exemplified relational expertise in professional practice where “different specialist expertise is brought to bear on both interpreting and responding to a complex problem [and] joint interpretations are crucial to ensure that as much complexity as possible is revealed” (Edwards, 2017, p. 1).

Collaboration emerged over time through an “alignment of effort” and a “common sense of mutuality” (Edwards, 2017, p. 2) between colleagues in the Collective. Our mutual need to moderate GTPA work and strengthen our own and our colleagues’ understanding of the task within our universities, generated collaborative work. In so doing we traversed what is often seen as competitor status between ITE providers. We combined our knowledge for our common purpose. This level of collaboration was assisted by the authors’ pre-existing relationships that had developed previously when both were working in the same university. The collaboration continued when one author moved to a different site. These collegial relationships enabled a level of trust and openness to working together on a joint moderation exercise that facilitated the professional development of the authors and their colleagues. This example illustrates the impact of the GTPA in fostering collaborative academic learning and relational agency among ITE academics across universities.

Our relational agency is demonstrated through increased openness to negotiation and a willingness to understand different perspectives, valuing the skills and what matters to others (Edwards, 2017). In so doing, we increased our understanding of the complexities of implementing a fair and reliable assessment of preservice teachers’ profession readiness. Relational agency was also evident in the leadership roles we have each undertaken within our institutions to actively petition for the GTPA within our programs and among our colleagues.

Further, the collaborative autoethnographic methodology used within this research project has contributed to our professional learning and development of relational agency. By reflecting on our individual and collective experiences with a focus on emotional resonance, experience specificity, analytic reflexivity, and intersubjectivity, we have been able to explore, on a range of levels, our different roles, perspectives and motivations for engaging with the GTPA. In this process we recognise multiple subjectivities and a range of educational opportunities and challenges arising from the GTPA project.

6.8 Conclusion

In this chapter we have presented our experiences as four academics tasked with the implementation of the GTPA in two universities in the Australian state of Victoria. We have explored our different involvements with the program, our experiences in developing new units to meet ITE accreditation requirements, as well as retrofitting the final assessment task to existing units. We have presented this collaborative autoethnographic research to contribute to the body of literature that explores the experiences of teacher educators, noting that our discipline is one of the most reviewed and politically charged in universities.

In relation to the questions framing this research, we concluded that our engagement with the GTPA has impacted our roles as teacher educators by increasing our understandings of complexities related to assessment of profession readiness, deepening our awareness of colleagues' knowledge and perspectives, and expanding our respective leadership roles in our universities. Issues arising from implementing the GTPA were multi-faceted. These included preservice teachers' anxieties and capacities to negotiate differing conditions in school placements, academic colleagues' levels of engagement with the GTPA, and traversing different jurisdictions and university regulations. Some of the key tensions experienced by all four authors at different times were feelings of uncertainty around making public judgements in moderating assessment and engaging with colleagues who saw the GTPA as representing a regulatory regime to be resisted.

The key outcome of our GTPA collective experiences is that it has been a powerful professional development opportunity. It enabled us to engage in educational dialogue with colleagues across Australia and to take ownership of the conversations and judgements about assessment of graduate teacher profession readiness. Our capacities for relational agency in program review and curriculum renewal have, by necessity, strengthened through this process, as has our relational expertise and common knowledge. We posit that this collaborative inter-university work has positively influenced teacher educators' practices and is impacting cultural norms within ITE.

References

- Adie, L., & Wyatt-Smith, C. (2020). Fidelity of summative performance assessment in initial teacher education: The intersection of standardisation and authenticity. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education*, 48(3), 267–286. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1359866X.2019.1606892>.
- Alexander, C. (2018). Conceptions of readiness in initial teacher education: Quality, impact, standards and evidence in policy directives. In C. Wyatt-Smith & L. Adie (Eds.), *Innovation and accountability in teacher education: Setting directions for new cultures in teacher education* (pp. 97–113). Springer.
- Australian Government. (2015). *Australian government response: Teacher education ministerial advisory group, action now: Classroom ready teachers*. Australian Government Department of Education and Training. <https://docs.education.gov.au/node/36789>.
- Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL). (2011; revised 2018). *Australian professional standards for teachers*. <https://www.aitsl.edu.au/teach/standards>.
- Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL). (2015, revised 2018, 2019). *Accreditation of initial teacher education programs in Australia: Standards and procedures*. <https://www.aitsl.edu.au/docs/default-source/national-policy-framework/accreditation-of-initial-teacher-education-programs-in-australia.pdf>.
- Chang, H., Ngunjiri, F. W., & Hernandez, K. C. (2013). *Collaborative autoethnography*. Left Coast Press.
- Charteris, J., & Dargusch, J. (2018). The tensions of preparing pre-service teachers to be assessment capable and profession-ready. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education*, 46(4), 354–368. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1359866X.2018.1469114>.
- Churchward, P., & Willis, J. (2019). The pursuit of teacher quality: Identifying some of the multiple discourses of quality that impact the work of teacher educators. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education*, 47(3), 251–264. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1359866X.2018.1555792>.
- Corkindale, G. (2008, May 7). Overcoming imposter syndrome. *Harvard Business Review*. <https://hbr.org/2008/05/overcoming-imposter-syndrome>.
- Creswell, J. W. (2008). *Educational research: Planning, conducting and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research* (3rd ed.). Pearson.
- Craven, G., Beswick, K., Fleming, J., Fletcher, T., Green, M., Jensen, B., Leinonen, E., & Rickards, F. (2014). *Action now: Classroom ready teachers*. Teacher Education Ministerial Advisory Group (TEMAG). https://docs.education.gov.au/system/files/doc/other/action_now_classroom_ready_teachers_accessible.pdf.
- Edwards, A. (2011). Building common knowledge at the boundaries between professional practices: Relational agency and relational expertise in systems of distributed expertise. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 50(1), 33–39. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijer.2011.04.007>.
- Edwards, A. (2012). The role of common knowledge in achieving collaboration across practices. *Learning, Culture and Social Interaction*, 1(1), 22–32. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lcsi.2012.03.003>.
- Edwards, A. (Ed.). (2017). *Working relationally in and across practices: A cultural-historical approach to collaboration*. Cambridge University Press.
- Ell, F., Simpson, A., Mayer, D., McLean Davies, L., Clinton, J., & Dawson, G. (2019). Conceptualising the impact of initial teacher education. *Australian Educational Researcher*, 46(1), 177–200. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13384-018-0294-7>.
- Engeström, Y. (2007). Enriching the theory of expansive learning: Lessons from journeys toward co-configuration. *Mind, Culture and Activity*, 14(1), 23–29. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10749030701307689>.
- Fairclough, N. (1995). *Critical discourse analysis*. Longmans.
- Gee, J. (2000). Identity as an analytic lens for research in education. *Review of Research in Education*, 25, 99–125.
- Gore, J. (2015). *Evidence of impact of teacher education programs: A focus on classroom observation*. Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership. <https://www.aitsl.edu.au/>

[tools-resources/resource/evidence-of-impact-of-teacher-education-programs-a-focus-on-classroom-observation.](#)

- Ling, L. M. (2017). Australian teacher education: Inside-out, outside-in, backwards and forwards. *European Journal of Teacher Education*, 40(5), 561–571. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02619768.2017.1385599>.
- Loughran, J., & Menter, I. (2019). The essence of being a teacher educator and why it matters. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education*, 47(3), 216–229. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1359866X.2019.1575946>.
- Mayer, D., Dixon, M., Kline, J., Kostogriz, A., Moss, J., Rowan, L., Walker-Gibbs, B., & White, S. (2017). *Studying the effectiveness of teacher education: Early career teachers in diverse settings* (pp. 1–136). Springer Singapore. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-3929-4>.
- Mayer, D., Mitchell, J., Macdonald, D., & Bell, R. (2005). Professional standards for teachers: A case study of professional learning. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education*, 33(2), 159–179. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13598660500121977>.
- Nuttall, J., Kostogriz, A., Jones, M., & Martin, J. (2017). Teacher education policy and practice. Springer. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-4133-4>.
- Rowan, L., Brownlee, J. L., & Ryan, M. (2019). Teaching teachers: What [should] teacher educators “know” and “do” and how and why it matters. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education*, 47(3), 210–215. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1359866X.2019.1601837>.
- Singh, P., Allen, J., & Rowan, L. (2019). Quality teaching: Standards, professionalism, practices. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education*, 47(1), 1–4. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1359866X.2019.1557925>.
- Wyatt-Smith, C., Humphry, S., Adie, L., & Colbert, P. (2020). The application of pairwise comparisons to form scaled exemplars as a basis for setting and exemplifying standards in teacher education. *Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy and Practice*, 27(1), 65–86. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0969594X.2020.1712326>.

Dr. Alison Lugg research spans sustainability curriculum in initial teacher education, professional development of preservice teachers, curriculum and assessment in initial teacher education, and outdoor environmental education curriculum and practice. Alison is an Honorary Fellow at RMIT and previously at La Trobe University, Australia, where she engaged with the GTPA as a Program Leader, lecturer and researcher.

Catherine Lang research spans the Computing and Education disciplines. Her publications focus on the under-representation of women in computing; preservice teachers’ STEM pedagogies; and intercultural competencies. Her contribution to this book focuses on her experiences while implementing the GTPA in her position of Director, Teacher Education Programs at La Trobe University, Australia. Currently her work and research focus reside in a STEM Practice and Innovation Academy, and the experiences of implementing a STEM spine within undergraduate degrees.

Dr. Jacolyn Weller is a senior lecturer in STEM education in initial teacher education and the Director of Professional Experience at La Trobe University, Australia. She is a mid-career researcher with more than 20 years of secondary school teaching experience. Her discipline repertoire includes science, chemistry, mathematics, and information technology teaching. A strong philosophy of a practical approach frames her advocacy of experiential teaching. Her research focus is based on the sustainability of teachers in the teaching profession and extends into innovative teaching and assessment, professional development, and partnerships inclusive of partnerships that include professional experience.

Dr. Nicola Carr research spans the role of digital technologies and online learning in schools and higher education, STEM education, intercultural competencies, and the professional development of preservice teachers. Her recent research extends into innovative practices in the co-construction of the professional experience component of preservice teaching programs with schools as partners. Nicola is an Honorary Fellow in the School of Education at RMIT University, Australia.