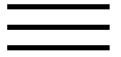


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Valuing practice over theory: How beginning teachers re-orient their practice in the transition from the university to the workplace

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Abstract

This paper is about the experiences of beginning teachers in turning theory learned in universities into practice in the workplace. The research is situated in the context of a pre-service teacher education programme that explicitly and deliberately seeks to bridge the theory-practice gap in teacher education. The paper argues that, despite long-standing awareness of the theory-practice gap as a central issue faced by beginning teachers, attempts by teacher educators to address this issue remain thwarted. The argument draws on interview and focus group data collected via a study of 1st year graduate teachers of an Australian pre-service teacher education programme. The

theoretical perspective of symbolic interactionism is used to focus on the meanings that graduates have of their experiences of turning theory into practice. The data suggest that prospective teachers during pre-service training value both the theory that they learn on campus and the practice that they observe in schools. However, once they become practitioners, they privilege the latter. Upon entry to the workplace, graduates come to associate good practice with that of the veteran teacher, whose practice and cache of resources they seek to emulate.



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Keywords

Pre-service teacher education; Theory-practice; Symbolic interactionism; Teacher pedagogy

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