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Abstract

Why are beginning teachers leaving the profession in large numbers? Are they leaving because of their dissatisfaction with teaching? Are they leaving because of the conditions of their work that shape their identity?

Teacher identity work emphasises it is important beginning teachers understand their professional identity as something shifting, fluid and emerging – not fixed. These and other water metaphors – such as ‘washout’, ‘sink or swim’, and ‘thrown in the deep end’ – are often used to describe beginning teachers’ experiences. Such words and metaphors assist to portray the fluid and unpredictable nature of identity transformation. However, these survival terms also shape beginning teachers’ to believe that their transition to teaching will be difficult. Recently there has been an increased concern over beginning teacher attrition linked to the difficulties they encounter in their early years of teaching. Yet the conditions of beginning teachers’ work in Victorian schools in Australia – including the contractual nature of employment of first-year (1yr) teachers – encourage these 1yr practitioners to view their work as semi-permanent. As a result these 1yr teachers do not see themselves as teaching for extended periods of time, as was once the case.

Throughout 2011 twelve 1yr teachers shared their experiences of identity transformation in semi-structured interviews with the researcher. Their interview data was analysed and scripted into a theatre-based research performance, examining how ‘first’ experiences shape teachers’ future practice and identity. This presentation includes excerpts from the theatre-based research performance ‘The First Time’, and expands on the methodological approaches taken to generate data and knowledge that reflects the fluid and unpredictable nature of teachers’ identity formation and transformation. This qualitative study seeks to question what remains concealed with regard to beginning teachers’ experiences through an investigation of the differences between and within individuals, allowing categories of
description to emerge from the data rather than pre-determining categories of investigation. The processes of scripting, rehearsing, and performing, were utilised to analyse and re-present the data to expert audiences. In an aim to uncover questions that have been buried by answers, the research is oriented as a phenomenographic inquiry. This mode of inquiry seeks to describe, analyse, and understand (Marton 1981) the qualitatively different experiences 1yr teachers undergo in their identity formation and transformation.

The results of this research reveal that beginning teachers’ identity transformation through their first experiences have both individual features specific to each teacher’s roles and aspirations, and extra-individual factors such as interactions, affiliations, and status, which shape their identity. Categories of description that have emerged from the analysis include survival, liminal, and hegemonic discourses, artifacts as symbols of belonging, and the impact of the contractual nature of teaching on their willingness to remain in the profession.

Implications of this research focus on the importance for beginning teachers to develop an understanding of the transformative nature of identity in relation to the practice of teaching, to counter the negative preconceptions beginning teachers are told to expect as rites of passage upon entering the profession. The outcomes of this research have implications for teacher educators and in-service teachers in assisting beginning teachers to negotiate the waters of an ever-changing profession.
Paper

This qualitative research investigates the experiences of beginning teachers, and the transformation of their identity in their first year (1yr) of teaching. It centres on the research participants’ *firsts* as epiphanic or revelatory moments of identity transformation.

The study seeks to question what remains concealed with regard to beginning teachers’ experiences through an investigation of the differences between and within individuals, allowing categories of description to emerge from the data rather than pre-determining categories of investigation. A theatre-based research approach to re-presenting the participants’ experiences was employed, culminating in a performance of ‘The First Time’ (Ludecke 2012). The processes of scripting, rehearsing, and performing, were utilised to analyse and re-present the data to expert audiences. In an aim to uncover questions that have been buried by answers, the research is oriented as a phenomenographic inquiry. This mode of inquiry seeks to describe, analyse, and understand (Marton 1981) the qualitatively different experiences 1yr teachers undergo in their identity formation and transformation.

This research centres on the participants’ *firsts* as epiphanic or revelatory moments of identity transformation. Contemporary understandings of professional identity highlight the transformative nature of the phenomenon. These understandings posit that identity is not stable or fixed (Beijaard et al. 2004). The nature of identity has been described as multi-faceted and dynamic (Beauchamp & Thomas 2009) and explained by Alsup (2006) as holistic – inclusive of the intellectual, corporeal, and affective aspects of human selfhood. These understandings are informed by processes of fashioning and refashioning (Miller Marsh 2003), of shifting landscapes (Clandinin et al. 2009), of borderland discourses (Alsup 2006) and of being and becoming (Britzman 1991).
Teachers’ perceptions of their own professional identity affect their efficacy and professional development as well as their ability and willingness to cope with educational change (Beijaard et al. 2000). It has been reported by the Australian Education Union and in the Victorian media in recent years that up to 50% of beginning teachers are leaving the profession within their first five years. The reasons given for this level of attrition include workload, pay, and behaviour management, among the top concerns of beginning teachers. Such data has been derived through a wide and varied range of questionnaire respondents providing statistically driven, reductionist answers. This research proposes an alternate approach to understanding beginning teachers’ experiences, in the aim to question that which remains hidden. Beginning teachers are not merely a homogenous group with statistically proven tendencies. If the reasons for and solutions to beginning teacher attrition remain narrow, the discourse also narrows. Statistics can become the common basis for understanding beginning teachers work and lives, and as a result this deficit discourse surrounding beginning teachers becomes the norm.

Sinclair (2013) posits that for each researcher choosing to adopt an alternative approach to research, there are a series of questions and challenges:

- What is the line of inquiry?
- How does method inform practice; and how does practice inform method?
- How is this work communicated to honour the artistic/creative practice; to honour the voices of participants?
- How is this work communicated in the academy— as new knowledge and as credible research?

And, critically,

- How does methodology support this inquiry?
I will focus on two of these points today in relation to my experiences working with a theatre-based research method to understand the experiences of 1yr teachers.

I began the research process with the understanding that the primary aim of research is the generation of knowledge, and the aim of educational research is the generation of knowledge for the improvement of the quality of educational practice. Educational research serves its most important function when it enhances people’s lives. Barone and Eisner’s conception of validity in relation to these understandings of ‘what is research?’ are grounded in the ways arts-based research helps audiences notice, understand and appraise. The employment of a theatre-based method of inquiry to this study aims to draw attention to the appropriateness of the method for the phenomena being investigated.

The process of inquiry through a theatre-based method in this instance occurred within the process of composition and vice versa. Its purpose is more than the creation of an aesthetic object, as it has been employed as a method of inquiry in itself; involving experimenting with ways of analysing and presenting, or re-presenting, the interview texts (Denzin 2003; Ackroyd & O'Toole 2010; Barone & Eisner 2012). The purpose of the theatre-based research play script and performance ‘The First Time’ was essentially as an analytic process, in which performance is an aspect of the process. These processes began with data generation, then scripting as a process that was designed to allow the researcher (and other readers) to view the data from a critical distance. It was my initial intention to employ scripting as the primary tool for me to understand the data, and at this stage I saw the performance as a tidy conclusion to the process of scripting as analysis. However, the rehearsals, and particularly the performance, became more significant tools for analysis than I had anticipated. The power of the performance was revealed through my understanding that the process of
description occurs on both the page and the stage, using language as written and spoken to re-present the participants’ experiences. The process of analysis in theatre-based research occurs in relation to both the written and performed work. Each scene in ‘The First Time’ signifies a category of identity transformation, through which the differences between and within individual’s situations is considered.

While arts-based research methods emerged from a dissatisfaction with, among others, the constraints of operationalism, and the legacies of positivism and behaviourism (Eisner 1997) my own consideration of an arts-based method was not through any dissatisfaction. On the contrary I believe there is a time and place for a variety of research approaches depending on what is being investigated and to what purpose. I employed a theatre-based method to conducting the research because I believe the connections between what phenomena are being investigated and how they are investigated needed to be harmonious. Like Mienczakowski (2001; 2009) and Saldana (1999; 2003) my background and identity as a performing arts practitioner played a large role in the selection of the theatre-based method. Theatre and dance have formed part of my core identity, and as such I ‘read’ the world through these, I ‘see’ aspects of theatre and dance in everyday occurrences and objects where others might see an algorithm, or a business model. This is my way of understanding things that are often hard to grasp, and is one reason why I felt compelled to explore a theatre-based research approach to social phenomena. I believe the play script still serves as an effective tool for data analysis, particularly when developing an understanding of the process of data reduction. Initially I was dissatisfied with the term ‘data reduction’, believing it to be counter-intuitive to ‘reduce’ the participants’ descriptions of their experiences, yet also understanding the importance of honing in on their meaning. The process of scripting allowed me to reconcile these thoughts by creating a snapshot of each participant’s first as representative of their experiences. Later, the performance
revealed more nuanced understandings of the participants’ experiences as viewed through the eyes of the teacher-actors and audiences.

In considering the phenomenon of identity transformation under investigation, phenomenology was recognised early on as a valid paradigm to shape the analysis and discussion of 1yr teachers’ identity transformation. This was namely a ‘phenomenology of practice’ (van Manen 2007) that encourages the exploration of a variety of possibilities for investigating relations between being and acting. However, it became evident upon further consideration that an inquiry of the identity of 1yr teachers might be better oriented as an inquiry into how 1yr teachers describe their experiences of identity transformation, as phenomenography is the study of how people experience a given phenomenon. As such the orientation of this study shifted to an inquiry into how individual 1yr teachers describe their experiences of identity transformation through their firsts.

The theatre-based research method employs developing the work around a specific controlling insight or issue. Within a phenomenographic paradigm it is important to ensure all participants are talking about the same phenomenon. In this research 1yr teachers’ firsts are a lens through which the teachers’ identity transformation and related discourses are investigated. These firsts are revelations in multiple senses. They are epiphanic moments (Denzin 2003) belonging to the participants that reveal aspects of their practice and identity. Firsts are also temporal in that they are frozen in a particular moment in time and place. And firsts are also highly dramatic anticipated or unpredictable liminal moments. These firsts as revelations speak to the heart of practices as embodied; shared discourses of in-being (Heidegger 1985, p. 161) that shape, and are shaped by, what practitioners do in specific moments in time. The aim in employing firsts was to unearth questions that have been clouded by perceived ‘problems’ of beginning teachers as identified in the literature, as firsts are individual, allowing variation to emerge between participants’ experiences in the understanding and categorising of meaning of the phenomenon.
This study asks participants for a retrospective reflection on their lived experience. *Firsts* are retrospective, but they are more than just looking back at a particular moment. They also look back from a specific context in which they re-emerge. The 1yr teachers in this study were asked to describe their past *firsts* in response to the present moment. In making use of *firsts* we can see a way of how to describe and reflect on experiences that have already been lived. In a Heideggerian sense a first is ‘that which shows itself in itself’, a revelation whereby the object announces itself by an internal idea or representation (Heidegger 1985). *Firsts* are in this sense an announcement – a lens through which an understanding can be reached of what is told as a guide to what is done, and therefore what is known. A *first* can be considered an appearance or a presupposition whereby something beyond itself is being indicated. A *first* in this study indicates how individuals think, how they position themselves, their sense of agency, and understanding of their identity. *Firsts* are a revelation of what is important at a particular moment in time. Often the most compelling stories are those that help us understand better what is most common, most taken-for-granted, and what concerns us most ordinarily and directly (van Manen 1990, p. 19).

A number of aspects of a practice approach (Schatzki 2001; Kemmis 2010) are present as investigative lenses, focusing the inquiry into *firsts* on specific aspects of the participants’ experiences of identity transformation. Aspects such as the temporal, corporeal, and dramaturgical nature of practices, and the way practices are reproduced and transformed over time through solidarities and forms of social integration are some of the lenses through which this investigation into epiphanic moments of liminality have been considered. Also relevant as an investigative lens is the notion that a practice approach recognises that practices prefigure identity, and practice ‘grasps’ the world pathically (van Manen 2007, p. 20). A pathic understanding highlights relations and situations through corporeal, temporal, and actional knowing, and is situated within an empathic and sympathetic approach to
understanding 1yr teachers’ practice. The embodiment of practice is also central to
this research, in that the act of practice depends on the sense and sensuality of the
body, personal presence, relational perceptiveness, tact for knowing what to say
and do in contingent situations, thoughtful routines, and other aspects of
knowledge. This aspect of embodiment was particularly relevant to the re-
presentation of the data in the theatre-based research performance, as the teacher-
actors’ ‘tact for knowing’ resulted in a sensitive and evocative portrayal of the
participants’ experiences.

A main ethical consideration was that the participants’ stories were to be re-
presented in a play and performance. Denzin (2005, p. 952) describes an ethical
and moral stance for the performance ethnographer that transcends traditional
ethical models of do no harm, and the maintenance of anonymity. He argues that
the researcher needs to be accountable, caring, value individual expressiveness
and have empathy for those studied, thereby focusing also on possibilities when
considering ethical approaches to performing the research. Above all it has been
my aim to ensure that I, and the performer(s), always respect the differences
between our own stories and the stories of those we were presenting (Denzin
2003). After many years of schooling most of us have an idea of what teachers and
students look like. There are (often stereotypical) actions and reactions that we
recognise as belonging to classrooms, a vocabulary of educational habits that is
inscribed in and on the body as the subject lives through certain experiences
(Hewson 2007, p. 3-4). Boal recognized that we have physical traits based on our
social and work experiences, a kind of ‘muscular alienation’ (Boal 1985, p. 127), a
telling way people of a particular profession physically present themselves. Dwyer,
following Boal, wanted to test the underlying assumption at work in Forum Theatre,
that enactment is worth more than speech, as if bodies ‘speak more’, and more
accurately, than mere words (2004, p. 200).
It was with these thoughts in mind I considered carefully the implications of employing actors to portray the teacher characters in the performance. My previous experience working with Forum Theatre consisted of employing undergraduate drama students as actors to portray scenarios of beginning teachers’ feared prospective teaching experiences to undergraduate pre-service teachers. I found the actors’ portrayals, while skilled and engaging, to be deficient in their embodiment – the combined physical and cognitive understanding of, and sensitivity to – their teacher characters. As a result of these and similar observations and experiences I decided against employing actors to portray the teachers’ characters in this study, and instead employed teachers with an understanding of performance. The teacher-actors’ experiences of rehearsing and performing, and the process of employing teachers as actors, have been identified as an opportunity for further research.

Lara’s scene is crafted to highlight how different she perceived herself from her more experienced colleagues. The monotone delivery of the Teachers’ dialogue accompanied with synchronised and stylised movement contrast with Lara’s more naturalistic portrayal. This scene is also designed to encourage the audience to empathise with Lara, to put themselves in her situation, and for the audience to recall their own similar experiences of the frustration felt at feeling like she had to be like the other teachers in her team. In all the performances we have presented to date, the lunchbox section of this scene has struck a chord with many audience members.

When she began teaching Lara looked to the other experienced teachers and saw how ordered their classes were. Because the classrooms were open plan – essentially four classrooms in an L shape with the walls removed, so she and her

1 View scene at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=apQlwSfbAk&list=PLB1ED0FDEF2AA8836&index=5
students could see the other teachers and their classes – Lara attempted to create a similar environment to those adjacent to her by embodying the practices of the other teachers in the hope that both she, and her students, would appear the same as the other teachers and students. Allen (2009, p. 653) found that beginning teachers re-create their roles on entry into the workforce through adopting the practice of peer and expert teachers. This occurs as they actively play a role in their development by endeavouring to make sense of their physical and social environment. However, Lara found it difficult to embody the sayings and doings of the other teachers and after a while she decided to stop trying and started thinking things through for herself and what worked best with her students.

In addition to re-presenting the ‘scenes’ I creates a trio of narrator characters to represent each interviewee/participant. The Interviewee characters were divided into three to reflect the way each participant thought aloud – to highlight how ‘When I speak I discover what it is I wished to say’ (Merleau-Ponty in van Manen 1984, p. 4) – in the interview when describing their firsts. Interviewee 1 expresses a desire to go back and assist their past self with the knowledge and experience of the present self. She represents key moments of shifts in identity, with a particular reference to time and place. Interviewee 2 speaks of the different emotions experienced in coming to terms with the shifts in her identity. She often contradicts what she has said as Interviewee 1, expressing the awkwardness that comes with liminal experiences. Interviewee 3 captures the way the participants have reflected on the achievements and areas for improvement in their practice as conditional to making progress. She expresses a sense of hope that is present in all the participants’ experiences, and has shaped the structure of the scenes with respect to how each experience begins, develops, reaches a turning point, and resolves. The Interviewee characters look back on their past selves recognising the transformations that have taken place in their practice, and the shifts in their identities.
Beth’s scene² is constructed to enhance the contrast between her predictions of the kind of teacher she thought she would be, and the kind of teacher she felt herself becoming, particularly in relation to the students. This scene draws on data from two different interviews – one before Beth began teaching and one after. The moment of transition between the two is ambiguous, depicted almost imperceptibly through the change between the mime sequence and Beth’s dialogue in sending the students off to rehearse. We then see the strategies Beth employed in ‘becoming’ a teacher, such as writing explicit instructions on the board and taking on the character of teacher through costume, props and facial expression. The division of the Interviewee characters into three voices heightens the way Beth described in her interviews her awkward, yet revelatory, liminal feelings of transition from who she thought she would be to who she is becoming.

In the analysis I investigated Beth’s teacher identity development as ‘character creation’, drawing on some of the concepts of teaching as a performance, as well as theatrical notions of creating a character for performance, in order to understand how she sees her journey of ‘becoming’ a teacher. The analysis draws attention to both the benefits and pitfalls (Sawyer 2011) Beth encountered in the transformation of her teacher identity. Beth created her ideal teacher character primarily on an outward-in model, preparing a façade through costume, props and an ‘ideal’ script (DeZutter 2011). When she turned her focus to the foundations of her character such as the ‘actual’ script and the other characters, her character underwent a transformation more relevant to the context.

Before she began her first year of teaching Beth formed an ideal picture of herself as a teacher. This was partially based on her relationship with her influential drama teacher while she was at secondary school, where the relationship between teacher

² View scene at: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4rz_hfsLL_g&list=PLB1ED0FDEF2AA8836&index=10](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4rz_hfsLL_g&list=PLB1ED0FDEF2AA8836&index=10)
and student appeared to her to be casual, adult and therefore fun. She imagined herself as the kind of teacher who would be called Beth, as opposed to Miss Emerald, by her students, and where ‘fun’ was the main objective of the class – for the students and for her. She saw herself as having fun with the students, and pictured that as this fun teacher she would be able to give the students a stimulus at the beginning of class and they would be inspired to create and play together. It was important for Beth to clearly visualise herself as a teacher, and in the classroom, in order to allay her anxieties regarding her ability as a teacher. At times she felt confident about her ability, and at other times she felt like she wasn’t experienced enough. She developed her character consciously through her voice, dialogue, costume and props, in order to imagine herself in her teacher role. In essence she created a teacher character for herself based on an ideal script to perform. In the early weeks of term one Beth began to feel as though her character was in a different script to the one she imagined. This actual script represents the realities of the school context, often in contrast to Beth’s imagined script.

Beth imagined her students as either young adults, or cute year 7 students fresh out of primary school. She had a romantic image of what her students and classes were going to be like, as well as herself as a teacher. After a few days she realised that her year 7s were not so cute. The realisation that they were not yet teenagers, and they couldn’t cope with the lack of structure in her classes had quite an impact on Beth. In those first few classes the students “went a bit crazy”, and after a few weeks Beth felt she needed to develop some class rules, particularly for the year 7 drama classes. When I met with her in term one her teacher diary was full of behaviour contracts that she had each student sign. At this stage she was making an attempt to change her ideal script by making the student characters fit in with her ideal teacher character. It was soon after that she came to realise it was her character that needed to change. She had a strong emotional attachment to her previous character and was obviously hesitant to let it go, as it provided some security in preparing to face the new situation, and she had formed this attachment
to her teacher character over a number of years, which until beginning her first year of teaching, had remained unchallenged.

This research brings together a theatre-based research method within a phenomenographic paradigm to analyse the data by each individual participant. Participants’ *firsts* as re-presented in the performance ‘The First Time’ highlight one aspect of their understanding of identity transformation. The findings of this research contrast the participants’ experiences in their 1yr of teaching with the current conditions of their employment. Findings revealed discourses of power, such as feeling like a ‘real’ teacher or ‘just a grad’, and draws attention to the importance of interactions and affiliations in individual participant’s understanding of identity transformation. Findings also bring to light the ways individuals understand being a role, or aspiring to be..., and their embodiment of learned capacities and competencies as significant moments in the process of becoming a teacher. The individual themes identified in the analysis formed a basis for categories of description derived from the analysis structure a further consideration of the experiences of 1yr teachers. These categories focus on the extra-individual features of 1yr teachers’ practice, namely how cultural-discursive, social, and material-economic contexts shape the identity of 1yr teachers individually and collectively. Three main themes emerged, prompted by the participants’ responses to viewing the performance ‘The First Time’, and are supported by comments from other members of the expert audiences. These themes are: the discourses surrounding 1yr teachers’ work and identity, 1yr teachers’ experiences of mentoring and induction captured through moments in time that reflect the nature of 1yr teaching, and the conditions of 1yr teachers’ work.

Initially this research was undertaken in order to respond to the relatively recent concern regarding beginning teachers’ attrition. While this research was not designed to confirm or refute statistics that suggest up to 50% of beginning teachers leave the teaching profession within the first five years, the data reveals that these
beginning teachers still harbour concerns over the conditions of their work, and that their transition to teaching can shape their future practice and commitment to a particular school, or teaching as a profession. The experiences of these 1yr teachers as they described them, and as re-presented in ‘The First Time’, demonstrate that indeed, as reported in the literature, experiences of liminality, survival, and the absence of status were also borne by the participants in this study. Yet these experiences alone are not the sole contributing factors to their retention. The stark revelation from this research is the extent of the impact of the conditions of these teachers’ employment terms on their understanding of identity transformation and the commitment to teaching. The impact of the participants’ terms of employment has had a profound effect on some participants’ willingness to commit to, and remain in, the profession.

As can be seen in Table 1, participants’ conditions of employment over three years varied greatly, and is dominated by short term and fixed term contracts.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher, Teaching Category, Age bracket</th>
<th>Sector &amp; Region</th>
<th>Previous professional experience at employed school</th>
<th>Condition of employment 2011</th>
<th>Condition of employment 2012</th>
<th>Condition of employment 2013</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Janet Primary 26-29</td>
<td>Government Melbourne Metropolitan</td>
<td>Yes 2010</td>
<td>6-month short-term contract, rolled over.</td>
<td>1 year fixed term contract.</td>
<td>Family leave replacement (between 6 months and 7 years)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maggie Primary &gt;25</td>
<td>Government Melbourne Metropolitan</td>
<td>Yes 2010</td>
<td>6-month short-term contract, rolled over.</td>
<td>New school, 1 year fixed term contract.</td>
<td>1 year fixed term contract, rolled over.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lachy Secondary &gt;25</td>
<td>Government Melbourne Metropolitan</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>6-month short-term contract, rolled over.</td>
<td>1 year fixed term contract, rolled over.</td>
<td>1 year fixed term contract.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lara Primary &gt;25</td>
<td>Government Melbourne Metropolitan</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>6-month short-term contract, rolled over.</td>
<td>Family leave replacement (between 6 months and 7 years)</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cassidy</td>
<td>Government</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>6-month</td>
<td>2 year fixed term</td>
<td>2 year fixed term</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Positive responses to gaining ongoing status were expressed by participants such as Sari, Amelia whose ongoing status has allowed her to travel and teach overseas knowing that she can return and “I’m going to be a better teacher for it” (email, 17th February 2013), and Lara, who wrote

the ongoing is a relief. It’s nice to know that I would never have to apply for a position again if I didn't want to. Having just bought a house, it also meant security...[and if] I ever want to start a family, I will get some paid maternity leave, as well as a position [held] for 7 years if I wanted it. It’s also nice to know that if I do decide to move schools, the ongoing comes with me. I feel I have worked hard for it and believe every graduate who has been at a school for two years or more should get ongoing. (email, 25th February 2013)

These responses reveal an optimistic outlook with regards to their future in teaching. Conversely, less positive responses from Maggie, Beth and Lachy align

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher, Teaching Category, Age bracket</th>
<th>Sector &amp; Region</th>
<th>Previous professional experience at employed school</th>
<th>Condition of employment 2011</th>
<th>Condition of employment 2012</th>
<th>Condition of employment 2013</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Secondary &gt;25</td>
<td>Regional Victoria</td>
<td></td>
<td>contract, successfully applied for 2 year fixed term in April.</td>
<td>contract</td>
<td>contract, rolled over for another 2 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richard Primary &gt;25</td>
<td>Government Metropolitan</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>6-month short-term contract, rolled over.</td>
<td>6-month short-term contract, rolled over.</td>
<td>1 year fixed term contract.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sari Secondary &gt;25</td>
<td>Catholic Metropolitan</td>
<td>Yes 2010</td>
<td>1 year fixed term contract.</td>
<td>1 year fixed term contract.</td>
<td>Ongoing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tash Primary &gt;25</td>
<td>Government Metropolitan</td>
<td>Yes 2009</td>
<td>6-month short-term contract, rolled over.</td>
<td>1 year fixed term contract.</td>
<td>Rolled over to ongoing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sebastian Primary &gt;25</td>
<td>Government Metropolitan</td>
<td>Yes 2008</td>
<td>1 year fixed term contract, rolled over.</td>
<td>1 year fixed term contract, rolled over.</td>
<td>Rolled over to ongoing.</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Table 1. Overview of participants and employment conditions
with Janet’s description, that contrasts with Lara’s, when Janet states “it sux [sic] not being ongoing!! Especially because we are starting to think about having children, and I won’t get the 7 years no pay held for me when I leave ☹” (email, 5th February 2013). These participants’ experiences demonstrate that the continued contractual nature of their employment is a negatively contributing factor towards their attitude towards teaching.

Looking back at their 1yr experiences now, in their third year of teaching, many participants who remain on contract employment terms report a sense of dissatisfaction with teaching as a profession. Conversely the participants employed under more secure terms report a greater sense of satisfaction towards their work, and also resilience in the face of difficult experiences. As a result of this research I contend that the conditions of beginning teachers’ work, namely their employment terms, directly impact on how they view, respond to, and describe their experiences and the transformation of their identity.


