Dynamic ecology in moving between teacher and teacher educator roles: Robyn Moloney
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Dynamic ecology in moving between teacher and teacher educator roles: a study of two teachers
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Becoming a teacher educator is commonly a one-way journey towards an academic role, where current knowledge of classroom context is progressively diminished. Research attention to the development of teacher educators is limited. This study examines the relationship between the roles of teacher and teacher educator, involving issues of identity and community. It investigated, through analysis of reflective narratives, the careers of two specialist English language educators, both working in dual roles as teacher and teacher educator, working in Sydney, Australia, and Jiangsu, China, respectively. The team of researchers collaborated in thematic interpretation of the two narratives. The study examines the shaping of teacher educator beliefs, and the impact of context on their pedagogy and sense of purpose. The analysis identifies in both narratives, a circular investment of learning, and a dynamic ecology occurring in the simultaneous roles, which the two teachers invest in both their language learners and in the pre-service teachers they are training. In light of the increasing trend to employ research academics in teacher education, the study argues for greater recognition of the educational outcomes of the teacher/teacher educator model.

Background

There is increasing research attention to quality practice in teacher education, considered foundational to achieving quality learning outcomes in schools. While there is attention to teacher education curriculum content (TEMAG, 2014) and meeting mandatory national standards (AITSL, 2015; Mayer Luke & Luke, 2008) there is limited attention to the teacher educators themselves and the intersection of their identity with their delivery of that content.

The process of becoming a teacher educator often involves a transition from a role of school teacher. It is acknowledged that recent classroom experience and knowledge is an invaluable element in the role of teacher educator (Williams, Ritter & Bullock, 2012). Research has noted however the lack of induction for teacher educators, the often unguided and stressful process of acquiring the required new knowledge and skills (Williams et al, 2012), and the necessary shift in identity from school teacher to teacher educator. Further, research has most commonly examined the trajectory as a one-way journey towards the new academic role. It is less common to examine the particular experience of the cohort of teachers who, in various international contexts, continue to work in both roles simultaneously. There has been very limited research attention to the dynamic and circular relationship between their professional learning and practice in both contexts.
This article reports a study which critically investigated the narratives of two teachers who simultaneously occupy the roles of English language teacher and English language teacher educator, one in Jiangsu China (English as a Foreign language hereafter EFL), and one in Sydney Australia (English as an Additional Language or Dialect hereafter EALD). The study illustrates the shaping role of social context in the development of teacher educator knowledge, practice, and professional community membership. The study throws light on practice and beliefs in English language teacher education, and commonality of experience in identity development, despite the difference in contexts. The study examines how the two teacher educators construct their dual roles and dual practice, model their identity as English language teachers, and negotiate their membership of two professional communities. The study highlights the learning potential of this situation for quality practice in teacher education internationally. In light of the trend in universities to employ research academics in teacher education roles, and to view the teacher/teacher educator as a deficit model, or as only semi-academic (Murray, 2002), the article argues for the educational value of employing greater numbers of practising teachers in teacher educator roles.

Literature Review

This study refers its analysis to Wenger’s (1998) theoretical framework of the process of identity formation within community. Wenger has described this as involving two processes: identification and negotiation of meaning. Identification is constructed from engagement (investing ourselves in our practice, as well as in relations with others), imagination (seeing our experience as part of a broader context) and alignment (connection to others when our practice is in line with a broader enterprise, involving power). Negotiation of meaning involves ownership of making meaning of experience, power processes, and, if the participant’s contribution is continually denied, possible marginalisation.

Identity is understood as multiple, fluid and often conflicted in nature (Hall, 1990), related to social, cultural and political contexts (Cummins, 1996; Lave and Wenger, 2002), and negotiated through ongoing social interaction (Bucholtz and Hall, 2003).

There is recognition in different contexts globally that teacher educators are a neglected research group, for example, in the Netherlands (Willems, Stakenborg, & Veugelers, 2000), in Israel (Ben Peretz, Eilam, Landler-Pardo, 2011) and in China (Wang, Moloney & Li, 2013). In Australia, there is inadequate acknowledgement of the cultures and contexts within which teacher educators do their work (Gore & Morrison, 2001).

Williams Ritter and Bullock’s (2012) review of around sixty self-studies by beginning teacher educators concludes that becoming a teacher educator involves several complex and challenging tasks: examining beliefs and values grounded in personal biography, including those associated with being a former schoolteacher; navigating the complex social and institutional contexts in which they work; and developing a personal pedagogy of teacher education that enables construction of a new professional identity as a teacher educator. Beginner teacher educators identify strongly with their school teacher identities and rely upon their experiences in the classroom to guide them in their early work as teacher educators (see for example, Dinkelman, Margolis, & Sikkenga, 2006; McKeon & Harrison, 2010). Beginning teacher educators’ learning is essentially a social practice. Wenger (2000) argued that learning lies in the interplay between social competence and personal experience, and as
such is a dynamic, two-way relationship between people and the social learning systems in which they participate.

The teacher educators in this study move, and learn, between two communities, acquiring what Wenger (1998) terms ‘multimembership’. By coordinating connections across communities (termed ‘boundary encounters’, (Wenger, 1998)), participants are able to open up possibilities for learning, and to gain new perspectives that are not apparent within one community alone. The nature of practice in these circumstances also changes, as interactions and connections enable new ways of learning and new practices to emerge, enabling identities of participation to be constructed and modes of belonging to be strengthened. Wenger (1998) argues that newcomers to a community of practice not only learn for and about themselves, but their knowledge impacts on the organization that they are entering. Williams et al (2012) similarly conclude that the potential for teacher education to be enriched by the experiences brought in by former schoolteachers is enormous.

To capture the function of societal issues in shaping teacher knowledge, qualitative interpretive modes of enquiry are important research tools (Ben-Peretz, 2011). In particular, narrative research has been recognised to be of significance in capturing language teacher development (Barkhuizen, Benson and Chik, 2013; Golombek and Johnson 2004; Harbon & Moloney, 2013). In our work situated within two different national educational communities, we have endeavoured to avoid essentialization of educational schema. The next section briefly describes current issues in English language teaching in Australia and China.

Teacher education for Australian EAL/D and Chinese EFL

In New South Wales Government schools 30.9% of students are identified as coming from a Language Background Other than English (LBOTE), with the majority living in the greater Sydney region (CESE, 2013). New Arrivals Program funds secondary school preparation for up to 55 weeks learning in an Intensive English Centre. Students then transition to secondary school, and may be supported by EAL/D specialist teachers (ACARA, 2013, p. 9). The rationale, and method of EALD teaching is thus to equip students with academic English language skills and an understanding of Australian culture.

In Australian universities, pre-service teachers may include a ‘specialisation’ in EALD teacher training in addition to their principal Key Learning Area (subject they intend to teach) within their undergraduate teaching degree. At the University of Authors 1 and 3 this involves the inclusion of units of study in Linguistics, a unit of study in EALD methodology and a short school practicum.

EFL teaching in China is in a process of change, driven by the National English Curriculum Standards (NECS hereafter; Ministry of Education PRC, 2012). The curriculum promotes intercultural language learning, the need for differentiation, and for use of language in authentic contexts. Following the NECS, there has been only limited research attention to EFL teacher education. Zheng (2015) provides research insight into the beliefs of Chinese EFL teachers and their pedagogical choices, and offers a systematic framework of how teacher beliefs and innovation may be applied in Chinese
educational contexts. EFL teachers should seek to strengthen their intercultural competence through training, further education abroad and self-study (Ding, 2013).

At Author 2’s university, EFL teacher education involves two semesters’ study of EFL pedagogy, including school practicum. Pre-service teachers are encouraged in the role of facilitator instead of being merely a knowledge imparter. In employment of language teacher educators, in Chinese universities, there is a trend to employ postdoctoral students and academics without teaching experience in primary and secondary education (Wang, Moloney and Li, 2013), thus recent field experience may be limited in many teacher educators. This project seeks to contribute particularly to change in China’s English curriculum reform, its impact on teachers and teacher education.

Methodology

Narrative enquiry identifies experience as a story which becomes meaningful through interpretation. The narrative enquiry researcher tracks process, experience and progress of the work through narrative writing. Building on recommendations (Barkhuizen, Benson and Chik, 2013) and the methodology of other studies (e.g. Clandinin and Connelly, 2000; Liu and Xu, 2013; Moloney & Wang, 2016; Tsui, 2007) this study designed its process into three methodological steps:

(1) Authors 2 and 3 acted as narrative writers. They independently wrote texts of first person reflective narrative exploring their history and relationship with EFL and EALD teaching respectively. These texts are the data of the study.

(2) Authors 2 and 3 individually and alone, read the other’s narrative data carefully. This involved reading and making sense of the narrative data, coding for themes and recurring concepts, and writing up an interpretation of each other’s text. Author 1, a university academic involved in language teacher education, acted as critical friend, collaborator in analysis and research mentor.

(3) Using face-to-face and email communication, the three authors compared the thematic interpretations, engaged in dialogic negotiation, and developed a collaborative analysis. Through categorization and classification, perceptions in the data are linked to more theoretical concepts, and relationships can be identified between background influence, community membership and identity. Below, the narratives have been placed within a third person framework of analysis and commentary. We have endeavoured to view the narratives, not as factual accounts, but as constructions reflecting the investments and values of the narrators, as well as the narrator’s awareness of the collaborating readers’ perceptions.

Analysis of data and Findings:

Interpretation of Author 2 Narrative data

Author 2 begins her narrative by reflecting on her childhood experience of the significance of EFL education in China:
I had my primary education in Anhui Province in the 1980s. I was enrolled in one of the top junior high schools there when my family moved back to my hometown in Jiangsu Province. My parents were so confident that they would get me into one of the top high schools in Jiangsu with my previous scores, but I was rejected simply because I had learnt no English in my primary schools, while my counterparts in Jiangsu had already completed two years’ English learning. Two months later, by the time I was admitted to a nearby ordinary junior high school, they had already finished learning phonetic symbols. I was left behind.

This extract shows both the value attached to EFL study, and the early confidence and expectation of success, instilled in Author 2 by her parents, a recurring theme in her narrative.

Author 2 soon encountered Mr Pan, the first of her important role models:

My English teacher Mr Pan was my class teacher, strict and energetic at his late 20s. I owed my early learning success to Mr Pan. He set high standards for us and made a good effort to vary his teaching activities with singing, rhymes and games. He was lively and humorous. I reckoned him to be an early experimental practitioner of EFL pedagogy. We had many chances to present our dialogues to practise speaking although the classroom was still highly teacher-centred ... he was a role model as EFL teacher , he had his own way and methodology to achieve desired outcome in his teaching...we felt encouraged.

The qualities of Mr Pan which Author 2 most valued were his innovation, his expectations of his students, his independence in his pedagogy, and the motivation engendered in students.

In senior high school Author 2 began to appreciate the value of authentic texts and contextualised learning in the study of language. This informed her future education and teaching, as Author 2 implemented these methods in her own teaching. At university, Author 2 majored in English, but, noting the ‘boring theory-based linguistics courses’, she chose strategies such as listening to and reading authentic texts. When she began her teaching practicum she was ‘taken aback with no idea how to start teaching’, however her ‘passionate and caring’ supervising teacher provided ‘hands-on practical suggestions and advice on lesson planning and classroom management’.

As a beginning teacher Author 2 was provided with support and professional development activities. She notes the value of learning in seminars and workshops during which ‘new approaches and lively methods’ were demonstrated and she was ‘inspired and eager’ to try these methods in her classroom. However, constraints of education policies which focussed on summative examinations meant that Author 2 was unable to practise new teaching strategies in the classroom, resulting in frustration and a need for change.

Author 2’s Masters study in English Language and Literature at the East China Normal University (ECNU) was a contrast to her previous tertiary study.

I enjoyed my study in ECNU...my teachers were superb...I was struck by their passion and reflection in teaching.

The pedagogy taught at the university closely aligned with Author 2’s own preferred teaching strategies and this enhanced her learning enjoyment, and sense of belonging to this EFL pedagogy community.
As her narrative progresses Author 2 demonstrates that she has become more confident as an EFL teacher educator: ‘I came to realise what an important job I have been doing’. She is gradually acknowledging that she needs to shift ‘deeply rooted ingrained habits’ in order to provide the best possible outcomes for her students. Those habits are a fundamental aspect of her growth and progression towards becoming an accomplished teacher educator. Even now, Author 2 views herself as not yet having achieved best practice in her chosen vocation: ‘Although I had been teaching EFL pedagogy in my university for 5 years, I still found myself less-equipped as an EFL teacher educator’.

Recently, Author 2 received a scholarship to further her studies in Australia as a visiting scholar. She comments that she is curious to learn about the latest trend in EALD education in Australia… and how that differs from the EFL education in China. I am learning from attending tutorials, exploring and thinking how all these activities and theories can better fit into my EFL context in China.

Such reflective comments show Author 2’s commitment to her students and her desire to ensure she is maximising their success by furthering her own learning.

In occupying both roles of EFL teacher and Teacher educator, Author 2 recognises that teaching and learning is a partnership where all stakeholders work together to acquire new skills: my students learn from me as well as their peer learners…what happens in classroom is a dynamic two-way interaction….peer learning is equally important resources [sic] in tutorials. She acknowledges that she cannot teach her students everything and has shifted her thinking to understand that her students need to be guided to reflect on their learning, to challenge existing pedagogical practice and to take risks with their teaching. She places value in teaching her students how to learn.

We observe tension in Author 2’s narrative between her admiration for aspects of teacher-centred traditional teaching methods (Halpin, 2014) and her desire to embrace new EFL pedagogy. Throughout her narrative, Author 2 highlights features of the traditional teacher in her admiration of some teachers: ‘well-organised and did everything neatly,’ ‘she had good control of the teaching space and students…..listened to her disciplined [sic] and attentively’; and yet, as a teacher educator, she views one of her own student’s attempts to scaffold and differentiate as ‘daring’ and appealing to students with ‘restless minds’. The interpretation of Author 2’s narrative brought up some dialogic negotiation amongst authors. Author 3 observed what have been termed “traditional Chinese values” arising from a Confucian- influenced background, in Author 2’s narrative. Author 2 was surprised, and resisted the observation. She thought of herself as having moved away from such values and positioned herself within a “Western” pedagogical approach to teaching and learning.

There is an underlying sense of frustration in Author 2’s narrative in that she recognises that current EFL teaching pedagogy, while breaking free from formal grammar and rote learning, remains constrained by an education system which is moving ahead at a slow rate of reform. It may also be suggested that communities of teachers like Author 2, however, have the capacity to bring about change. This tension has been noted also in China-educated teachers of Chinese as a foreign language,
in studies of teachers adapting to the pedagogical expectations of global teaching contexts (Xu & Moloney, 2016).

Despite some lack of confidence in her English learning, Author 2 has consistently continued to pursue excellence in her work, and shows passion to learn. This is evident in her on-going pursuit of higher order skills through academic progression and research. It may be suggested that the high aspirations and expectations held for and of her by those whom she respects, have underpinned her will to be successful, setting examples of excellence and influencing her choices.

Author 2 has attained a high level of professionalism and confidence in her ability. As her education progressed she drew on her ability for English teaching and learning as well as being able to identify good pedagogy. She views herself as having a responsibility to educate her teachers in pedagogy which she understands/knows to be effective even though she herself has had little opportunity to practise these skills in the classroom.

Author 2 is a member of an EFL professional community in flux. She displays aspects of Wenger’s model of identity formation within this community. She shows engagement, deeply invested in improving her practice as a teacher educator, imagination (perceiving the broader significance of teacher education) and alignment (connection to others who are developing innovative pedagogy in EFL). She feels conflicted in her negotiation of meaning, within her broader China EFL context, as she struggles to achieve innovation in EFL, which, although growing in acceptance at the university teacher education level, may still occupy a marginalised place in school classroom practice.

**Interpretation of Author 3 narrative**

Author 3 grew up in Sydney Australia. As a small child she was an avid reader. She recalls an anecdote from her mother: ‘when I was supposed to be asleep in my cot, as a 2 year old, apparently I could be heard turning the pages of a magazine, looking at its content’.

This developed into a lifelong passion for reading and texts. Author 3 completed the Higher School Certificate (HSC) and later went to university part time to complete a Bachelor of Commerce. She worked as an accountant for 20 years as it ‘helped me to support my family better financially. But when my daughter grew up, I decided that I could do what I really wanted to do, which was teaching’.

Returning to university, she then completed a Bachelor of Arts with double majors in Linguistics and History followed by a Graduate Diploma of Teaching. She also completed a Masters of Applied Linguistics.

I am good at language learning, and that passion for literacy followed me right into high school. In linguistics, I am keen on learning how to use English properly. Exactly. That is what I have to do. I always read. I am an avid reader.

Author 3 is also a keen traveller. In her travel, she seeks out experiences of “discomfort”, for example trying to read newspapers in other countries, considering how to apply that experience in her teaching. Learning a new language is like stepping out of your “comfort zone” and by experiencing new
cultures and languages (albeit for short periods of time) she is trying to seek commonality with her EALD students. Her own intercultural experience enables her to identify more with EALD students who are struggling with language communication as well as cultural acclimatization.

I love travel, cultures. I am brought down-to-earth when travelling. It is about knowing the people, the culture. I always buy a newspaper, and try to read or scan it for gist. These efforts remind me of the difficulty of speaking a second language. In speaking English overseas, I am conscious that I need to slow down, to use words that are easier for people to follow. Travel is a great reminder of what I need to do in the classroom. However uncomfortable the travel may be, it influences me, it gives me great understanding.

Author 3 trained in EALD methodology and completed her practicum teaching at a local Intensive English Centre (IEC), a turning point for her. She established a close working relationship with her mentor at the school, who was the Deputy Principal of the Centre. The Deputy Principal gave her opportunities to develop:

She recognized early on that I was passionate about teaching, when I did my practicum with the IEC. I did a lot more than was expected. As a mentor, she was tough. I strongly suggest one should grab hold of a mentor, as a young and new teacher because mentors know how far to push you. I have learnt a lot from her.

When Author 3 finished her university training - five years ago from time of writing - she was offered a position as a teacher at the IEC. She has been there ever since, and has moved into leadership roles, including the coordination and support of incoming practicum teachers. At school she sees her primary role as ensuring newly arrived students from diverse backgrounds are supported in acquiring the English language, social and cultural skills they will need to access the high school curriculum and succeed in their new life in Australia. This is her vision in EALD teaching.

It’s language competence. I want to give young learners opportunities to start a life in their new country.

The process of understanding the situation of EALD students and identifying with them is to make connections. As Fenner (2013, p. 62) noted ‘quite often, the empathy facet of ESL teachers’ role can be just as powerful as their expertise in language acquisition and teaching technique’. Author 3 reflects:

When it comes to the most important qualities as EALD teachers, I think it is definitely empathy, the knowledge to work with students who have settlement, social and emotional issues. They are isolated... Empathy is the key element to push students to learn. In that sense, you have to respect students; you have to give them all the support.

Author 3 was invited back to the university as an occasional guest speaker to the EALD methodology class, and was eventually invited to become the teacher of the EALD methodology class, two hours per week. She has taught in this additional role for the past three years. Despite her short working hours, her accrued experience and participation in the university staff activities over three years positions her as a legitimate community member. She reflects on her enjoyment of both roles, her projection and investment of her ‘self’, and how each role enriches the other:

I enjoy being with young people, both teenagers and young adults. Young people are the present, unaffected. To be passionate, sharing your knowledge with them. That has been a dream all my life. It is also because I waited for so long, so I enjoy it even more. For both my university students, and transferring to my staff, I can give them knowledge. I keep my knowledge up to date. I am learning from my university students. It keeps me interested as well. When I talk to the university students, I can feel the passion, nurture the inspiration. If I inspire somebody to do something further, I have done my job.
Author 3 sees a continuous learning cycle between herself, her school students, mentoring her staff at school, teaching and mentoring the pre-service teachers at university.

I have something to teach, to share. It was only five years ago that I sat there, in the university class. I know the difficulties. I can sympathise, I can give them the pedagogy they need. On the last student evaluation of my teaching at university, the students voiced their appreciation. They value the information I give them. I constantly update the unit guide to ensure relevancy and to reflect changing pedagogy.

We note here again a further instance of negotiated narrative analysis making traits visible. To her surprise, and in contrast to how she believes she teaches, it was pointed out to Author 3 her unconscious frequent use of “I” in her narrative, and her tendency to position herself as the source of knowledge, and the centre of the classroom.

We briefly note as a continuous theme in Author 3’s narrative, her passion for high level literacy and linguistics knowledge, which is a feature of both her personal and professional identities. Together with her own passion for reading and linguistics study, Author 3 believes that high level of literacy, content knowledge and teaching pedagogies are essential for EALD pre-service teachers, in order to be able to impact EALD students’ rapid language acquisition.

What they (pre-service teachers) are lacking is content knowledge. It becomes clear in assessment tasks when grammar and vocabulary, often are not used correctly. How can you teach English if you don’t know it very well? Students who choose the unit must have completed some prerequisite linguistics units. Linguistics is the backbone of language. We should incorporate more grammar learning into the unit.

Author 3 sees all of these activities as part of her professional development and responsibility. She stresses the importance of further education and argues that an EALD teacher must be someone who loves challenges. Author 3 has enjoyed the challenge of career change, of travel and of postgraduate education.

We have observed Author 3’s construct of her identity as EALD teacher and teacher educator. The narrative provides insight into the ecology of development occurring in language teachers interpreting their own teaching modelling, pedagogy, teaching beliefs and professional development. Notions of teacher learning and its relation to teacher’s professional development are recurring themes in her narrative. She believes that her movement between the role as EALD teacher and teacher educator is an active catalyst for learning and development. She places value on pre-service teacher needs in EALD teacher education and is also aware of new innovative methodologies which can be introduced and practised in the real classroom.

Author 3 values learning from community, from school colleagues and from her pre-service teacher students. She holds that the EALD teacher community in particular should stick together to assert their status as specialists, in view of their sometimes marginalized position in the Australian school system:

Some schools will devalue the work of EALD teachers. They need encouragement and support from the top. They should get involved and change attitudes.

Author 3 is active in advocating, raising public and political awareness of the importance of EALD education. It is a challenging role which requires the community to stand together (Morgan, 1998).
Discussion and concluding remarks

This study investigated the narratives of two teachers who simultaneously occupy the roles of English language teacher and English language teacher educator. Despite differences in background and contexts, the study illustrates the shaping role of social context in the development of teacher educator knowledge, practice, and professional community membership. The study examines how the two teacher educators construct their dual roles and dual practice, model their identity as English language teachers, and negotiate their membership of two professional communities. The study demonstrates a dynamic ecology of learning occurring in the interchange between teacher and teacher educator roles, and shows the learning potential of this situation in quality practice in teacher education.

There are a number of differences and commonalities in the narratives above. The narratives are firstly clearly grounded in very different social and educational backgrounds which have shaped particular beliefs and practice. The two narrators are diverse in age, life experience, and professional experience. The learning contexts of EFL and EALD are also very different, in rationale, student motivation and demands. For Author 2, English is a second language, whilst for Author 3 a first language. From her linguistic studies, Author 3 however has a critical perspective on the language learning task for EALD students, and deliberately exposes herself to experiences of the learner position, when in a non-English speaking country. The curriculum they teach, both in their English language teaching, and their teacher education role, also differ. They differ also in their relationships to their professional communities. Author 3 exhibits a strong alignment and belonging with her EALD community, where her pedagogies are accepted and applauded, her leadership admired, her identity confirmed. Author 2 however has experienced some dissonance and ongoing negotiation with the EFL community to achieve widespread adoption of innovative pedagogies.

Nevertheless, we find a surprising number of commonalities also in the narratives. Both teachers share a passion for what they do, and a commitment to teaching and learning, both in themselves and their students. Both have created some degree of freedom for themselves in their teaching and their teacher education. Both are actively involved in seeking out continuous learning, through travel and further study, at considerable personal cost. They both see this continuous learning as integral to their personal and professional development, and to what they can offer to their students. In particular, they both have understanding of their own critical intercultural learning and the role this plays in English language learning. Freeman and Johnson (1998, p. 407) have argued for the need for teachers to be learners: ‘the knowledge base of language teacher education must account for how individuals learn to teach and for the complex factors, influences, and processes that contribute to that learning’.

There is also in both narratives, a sense of agency and of creating their own independent space in leadership: Author 3 has agency in EALD leadership within her immediate school community, in mentoring and bringing her young teachers to new practice, insisting they keep up with new research developments. In Author 2, this is being achieved more in isolation, as a one-woman initiative, but with a strong sense of what she can contribute in the future to new development in her broader EFL community in China, especially through her work with pre-service teachers.
With their connections across communities, both teachers are able to open up possibilities for learning, and they have new perspectives that would not be apparent within one community alone. In their ‘boundary encounters’ (Wenger, 1998), we can see that they construct new meanings and understandings of their practice within the respective communities. The nature of their practice in the two teaching contexts also changes, as interactions and connections enable new ways of learning and new practices to emerge.

Most importantly, despite the differences in background, education and beliefs, we find a common understanding of the learning ecology occurring in the circular dynamic between their roles of teacher and teacher educator. There is learning occurring for multiple stakeholders at multiple points in the relationships.

Author 3 uses her teacher educator role to both teach, and learn more from, pre-service EALD teachers, and thereby produces effective new members of the EALD teacher community. In this way she nourishes her own teaching and ensures a quality start for new teachers into the community:

I learn a lot from others and now I bring it back, it is a cycle. I also bring something to my staff meeting. It is like an eco-system; it develops in all ways.

To mentor and to be mentored is a fluid multi-directional process, in that Author 3 is guiding pre-service teachers and her staff, and receiving guidance herself from her mentor on staff. The shift of roles nourishes her in her professional development and her concept of EALD teacher education. Similarly, Author 2 recognises that she has been mentored by various figures in her background. She revises her teacher education practice through learning from her pre-service teachers, and this also prompts continuous development of her own practice in EFL classes. And both teacher/teacher educators contribute to an enclosing professional community of peer teachers, staff, community leaders, researchers. This is represented in Figure 1.

![Figure 1](image.png)

**Figure 1.** Multi-directional learning, for teacher/teacher educators.

This study’s use of a learning ecology metaphor, seeks to express the interdependencies between learner and context(s) in producing developmental change. We have seen in the two narratives that
cross-context links, and individual agency play an ongoing role in teacher/teacher educator development. An ecology metaphor helps us to conceptualize teacher educator development as complex and interdependent. Such a metaphor is appropriate to capture the ever-unfolding learning interactions of teachers, students, and communities and the consequent fluidity of teacher educator identity.

While a case study, we believe the findings have relevance to a broad audience, in global attention to quality teacher education provision, and in particular to global EFL practice. The study raises questions in teacher education practice, in light of the increasing trend in universities to employ research academics who may become in time increasingly distanced from the school context, in teacher education roles. While the focus of this study was on the teacher educators, it is clear that pre-service teachers’ skills, knowledge and professional identity may benefit from the dynamic ecology created by their instructor moving between school teacher and teacher educator roles. The study suggests there is a strong rationale for the employment of greater numbers of practising teachers in teacher educator roles.

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