

Reimagining a different way of doing, of researching, to learn more

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The factors that contribute to teacher attrition are well understood and documented in the literature, yet the rates of teacher attrition have not changed over the past thirty years. Why? Why the continued loss of passionate and driven teachers? Do we really know why teachers leave; whether early career or continuing teachers? How and why do continuing teachers remain in the profession? We survey and interview them with questions that introduce response boundaries and biases into our research. What if we approached this differently?

Imagine a different way of conducting qualitative narrative research. One in which there is no methodology, no method, no prescribed way of doing, no format or formula to follow. What if we stopped and considered what we are doing and why, and questioned the very nature of the qualitative research we undertake? What if we shift away from qualitative approaches that are themselves positivist and reconsider our research practices? You open the space for uncensored and unbound stories of lived experience that enrich our knowledge and understandings. The challenge for educational researchers is to move beyond the traditional ways of practice and methodologies that have become systematised and formulated to ensure those qualities sought and required in contemporary qualitative research - rigour, validity, reliability and trustworthiness - are met.

In this presentation, I explore and challenge the positivist constraints that impinge on the exploration and interpretation of lived experience. I venture into the post-qualitative space described by Elizabeth St Pierre and the autoethnographic storytelling approach of Carolyn Ellis and Arthur Bochner, finding a new space to explore and share the stories of teachers' experiences in the workplace that significantly impact on their decision to remain in the profession. What they share with us is unexpected, rich, and complex. They share the challenges and key issues that impact on them and what drives them to continue. How we respond to these findings is our challenge.