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Abstract: The quality of graduate teachers is a significant concern for teacher educators, policymakers and the public. Initiatives regarding the quality assurance of initial teacher education (ITE) programs require critical examination to ensure that ITE programs develop proficient graduate teachers to meet the demands of modern classrooms. In this paper, we draw on Biesta's (2015, 2019, 2020) theoretical framing of purpose in education (i.e., qualification, socialisation and subjectification) to analyse the policy texts related to graduate teaching performance assessment from institutions involved in the creation and implementation of the Teaching Performance Assessment (TPA) in ITE in Australia. Researchers used document analysis to examine the publicly stated purpose of the TPA. The analysis revealed that the relevant policy texts focused much more on qualification (81%) than socialisation (8%) and subjectification (11%). The findings imply that the TPA policies may contribute to narrowing the ITE curriculum and the subsequent thwarting of teacher subjectification.

Keywords: initial teacher education, teaching performance assessment, educational purpose, subjectification

Introduction

The quality of graduate teachers defines Initial Teacher Education (ITE) programs, and for this reason, its assessment should be a major, ongoing concern for teacher educators, policy makers and the public. While policy makers and regulatory bodies tend to develop and enforce quality assurance measures, the implementation of these measures needs to be critically examined as policy initiatives do not always achieve what they aim to achieve (Spooner-Lane et al., 2023; Stacey et al., 2020). In most cases, top-down policy initiatives and measures often constrain what ITE programs should achieve and what the public wants for the educational system. In this paper, we critically examine one such quality assurance measure, namely, the Teaching Performance Assessment (TPA) in the context of Australia.

In Australia, ITE is delivered and accredited on a national scale. As “a reflection of classroom teaching practice including the elements of planning, teaching, assessing and

reflecting”, the TPA measures preservice teachers’ (PST) “classroom readiness” at the end of an ITE program (AITSL, 2022a, 2022b). The TPA manifests in a nexus of regulatory relations comprising program standards for ITE programs, Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (APST) for graduate teachers, and accreditation processes in which ITE providers demonstrate their ITE programs articulate the development of PSTs’ understandings of the APSTs. As a mandatory high-stakes capstone assessment in ITE courses to ensure that graduate teachers are *classroom ready*, such a high-stakes measure of teacher performance inevitably casts a long shadow over the purpose and program design of ITE in Australia. For this reason, it is imperative to critically examine the prescription and use of TPA in ITE as it has the potential to affect graduate teachers’ professional autonomy and dispositions upon their entry to the teaching profession in Australia. To this end, we analysed TPA-related documents in a range of Australian universities and institutions to answer the following research question:

What are the aims, means and ends of the TPA in policy?

In the coming sections, we present a contextualising discussion of the development and implementation of the TPA in Australia before we report on the critical policy analysis of the TPA in the light of Biesta’s (2015, 2019, 2020) theoretical framing of purpose in education.

Teaching Performance Assessment in Australia

In keeping with the standardised approach to ITE in Australia, considerable emphasis has been placed on the consistency of scope and reliability of different TPAs developed across the sector. The federal government funded only two consortia groups – the Graduate TPA (GTPA) developed by the Australian Catholic University and the Assessment for Graduate Teaching (AfGT) developed by the University of Melbourne (AITSL, 2017). TPAs are mandated by the federal government. A federally funded grant program supported these consortia within which ITE providers collaboratively developed, trialled, and implemented TPAs. ITE providers have to be accountable for providing classroom ready graduate teachers. Several benefits have been proposed to argue for the use of standardised TPA such as creating opportunities for PSTs to develop their active professionalism, enhance their teaching practice, connect the academic and practical components of teacher education, develop professional learning, and develop a common authentic assessment framework across institutional learning (Brett & Parks 2022; Peck et al. 2014, Wyatt-Smith, 2018). In a study on the impact of the Assessment for Graduate Teaching (AfGT) on pre-service teachers' readiness to teach, Kriewaldt et al. (2021) highlight the role of TPA in fostering reflection, professional reasoning, and understanding of teaching complexities. In another study which investigates the implementation of a capstone TPA in Australia, Spina et al. (2022) provide a constructive view on the implementation of TPAs, emphasising their role in fostering collaboration and enhancing programme quality. Further benefits such as professional growth of teacher educators through their engagement with TPA marking and moderation, collaborative practices and critical engagement in fostering professional development were highlighted in a recent study by Brandenburg et al. (2023). However, the development and implementation of TPA may not be a straightforward and fruitful process. It involves complexities and challenges such as the risk of superficiality, the potential to undermine critical thinking, the disconnection between theory and practice, fostering mistrust, compliance-driven behaviours, and compromising the quality, equity, and viability of education.

Ongoing concerns associated with the development and implementation of such a high-stakes assessment for future teachers in Australia prevail. One of the major concerns is the use of TPA as the mechanism for accountability in ITE (Buchanan & Schuck, 2016; Charteris, 2019; Reynolds & Park, 2021). As such, measuring performance using a standardised TPA will ensure that ITE programs focus on developing practical skills for classroom readiness, consequently increasing student outcomes. Similar to the context in the US (Cohen et al., 2020), there have been increasing concerns among Australian teacher educators (e.g., Mascadri et al., 2023; McDowall et al., 2021; Spina et al., 2022) about the limited use of high-stakes assessment such as a TPA in enhancing the curriculum and pedagogies. It is, however, questionable whether accountability-driven assessments improve the quality of education (O'Neill, 2013) and teaching (Buchanan, 2020). O'Neill (2013) argues that while accountability through assessments is often regarded as an alternative to relational trust in employment selection and performance indicators, it can also foster mistrust. Simplified information generated from these assessments for public consumption may lack the intelligibility necessary to inform decision-making, frustrating educators and undermining educational objectives. Buchanan (2020) also challenges the TPA, arguing that it may undermine the quality of teaching by reducing it to superficiality. It oversimplifies the real-world enactment of teaching by framing it in hypothetical discussions or articulations, thereby divorcing theory from practice. This approach risks turning teachers into mere imitators rather than fostering their critical thinking and sense-making about actual classroom dynamics. Further, standardised measures of this kind compromise the quality, equity, and viability of education (Conway & Murphy, 2013; Hargreaves & Shirley, 2008). Charteris (2019) raised concerns including the impact of TPA on ITE curriculum and pedagogy in Australian teacher education, arguing that “[t]here is no evidence at present whether a good TPA score guarantees a better teacher” (p.245), but instead, resort to compliance-driven behaviours to satisfy superficial systems requirements. This may also result in curriculum coverage typified by cognitively shallow thinking, low retention, and lack of transfer of understanding to new contexts (Erickson et al., 2017). The art of teaching goes beyond the presentation and extraction of information. It requires the uptake of one’s role as a public intellectual (Heck, 2022) and the location of one’s place meaningfully within existing societal roles, labels, and structures (Ryan & Deci, 2017). The standardised assessment in teacher education could potentially position a narrow view of teacher quality (Bird & Charteris, 2021; Buchanan, 2020; Madeloni & Gorlewski, 2013; Mayer & Mills, 2020; Stacey et al., 2019). Thus, although the TPA may generate a product that aims to reflect teacher *readiness*, the process through which this readiness is developed is not rigorous. On these grounds, we question the validity of the TPA as a measure of teacher readiness.

These concerns call into question the validity and reliability of TPA as an authentic assessment in ITE. As a measure of PSTs’ readiness based on the practical skills of teachers, it is far from certain that TPA has “predictive validity” (Whittaker et al., 2018, p.8) for classroom-ready teachers’ performance. It might also fail to encompass the complexity of teaching and teaching contexts. For this reason, it may not well prepare pre-service teachers for the profession (Stacey et al., 2020), and it may even diminish teachers’ professional autonomy (Buchanan et al., 2020; Buchanan & Schuck, 2016; Madeloni & Gorlewski, 2013). In a recent study (Mascadri et al., 2023) on exploring the perspectives of assessors on the oral component of a Quality Teaching Performance Assessment (QTPA), Mascadri et al. (2023) delve into the evaluative processes employed by assessors of an oral TPA component, illustrating the nuanced interplay between assessors’ use of explicit assessment rubrics and implicit, or “latent” criteria. Additionally, the study foregrounds the significance of considering preservice teachers’ “personal experience” and evolving “professional and institutional discourse competence” in the assessment process. These views illustrate tensions

between policy agendas and the realities of the ITE curriculum. They also raise questions about the role of the TPA in granting graduate teachers the authority to teach, their role within the profession, and how, as individuals, they are oriented to emancipatory and reflexive practice as teachers. Since the significance of TPA in Australia's ITE programs is apparent (Wyatt-Smith, 2018; Wyatt-Smith et al., 2022), it has become necessary for us to critically reflect on the purpose of TPA and how TPA prepares teachers for the teaching profession in the context of Australia. To examine how the purpose of the TPA is represented in policy advice, we now move to present Biesta's (2015, 2019, 2020) three domains of purpose (i.e., qualification, socialisation, and subjectification) as the analytical tool for our critical examination of TPA.

Theoretical Framing of Purpose in Education

The rationale for what constitutes the aims, means, and ends of good education is entangled in questions of purpose. Gert Biesta (2015) argues that questions of purpose comprise ways we “engage with content, tradition *and* the person” (p.78). As such, questions of purpose in education are distributed among three domains: (1) qualification; (2) socialisation, and (3) subjectification (Biesta, 2015, p.77). As functions of education, these three domains of purpose will now be defined and explained.

First, qualification entails the “transmission and acquisition of knowledge, skills and dispositions” which permit people to do things in preparation for the world of work and other features of life (Biesta, 2015, p. 77). As a highly structured and organised form of education, the primary function of ITE, for example, is to provide PSTs the requisite content through which they develop “dispositions and forms of judgement that allow them” to teach students in schools (Biesta, 2010, p.20). It follows that qualification in education has implications for how people are situated within the social structures of that field and how they become subjects within a profession.

Second, as a function of education, socialisation supports people to become part of “particular social, cultural, and political ‘orders’” (Biesta, 2010, p.20). Socialisation inculcates people into existing ways of doing things in education. It supports people to represent community values by adopting and advocating for explicit practices and beliefs, whilst also sustaining implicit, or hidden facets of the cultural traditions within which they are socialised. In ITE, for example, socialisation functions as PSTs are inculcated into the collective norms and values operating within the traditions and practices of the teaching profession, albeit in relation to the political ends of nationally prescribed standards, and inevitably, social inequities manifest in different contexts. In this sense, how a person is socialised is tempered by the interplay of the qualifying function of education and how they exist as individuals in that context.

Third, subjectification describes how individuals exist in social structures. The “process of becoming a subject” emphasises the “quality” or kind of subjectivity that an individual may develop consequent to “particular arrangements and configurations” in education (Biesta, 2010, p.21). Considered intrinsic to education, Biesta (2015) argues that subjectification concerns how individuals come “into presence” in unique ways in contexts defined by plurality and difference (p.80). Biesta asserts that the kind of subjectivity that arises in good education necessarily supports a person in becoming autonomous and independent in thought, action, and judgement. Accordingly, the nature of PSTs' subjectification will support them to sustain a particular way of existing, complimented by the functions of qualification and socialisation.

The domains are intended as “analytic and programmatic” constraints that can help educators “to have more precise discussions of the aims and ends of their activities” (Biesta, 2010, p.73). The apparent elegant simplicity of these domains is deceptive, as each represent “overlapping, intertwined and to a certain extent, even conflicting dimensions of what education is and can be about” (Biesta, 2010, p.26). As Biesta argues, these domains each have their own rationales and thus have an important role in illuminating the balance of things within the education fields, which at times may be uneven. In ITE, for example, these domains provide a structure for revealing how judgements about what we as teacher educators ought to achieve in policy terms impact the collective practices of teachers and the contribution individual teachers make to schools.

Biesta’s framing of purpose, as represented in three integrated domains, provides opportunities for teacher educators to address questions of what constitutes the purpose of the TPA in ITE in Australia. To this end, we apply Biesta’s three domains of purpose as a theoretical framework to evaluate how the TPA impacts the content of ITE (qualification), activities of PSTs as members of the teaching profession (socialisation), and their identity as individuals who are ‘coming into being’ within ITE (subjectification). We are interested in revealing how the TPA shapes how a PST is enabled to ‘come into presence’ and the extent to which the TPA subjectifies PSTs as autonomous, agentic, reflexive thinkers who have the capacity and potential to make good judgements as a teacher.

Method

This study used document analysis as a method to meet its aim of examining the publicly stated purpose of the TPA (Bowen, 2009). Guided by Biesta’s framing of educational purposes (Biesta, 2015), we used a thematic analysis approach to identify how and to what extent the published purposes of the TPA represented Biesta’s three themes of qualification, socialisation, and representation. To identify documents for analysis, we searched the websites of the institutions involved in the creation and implementation of the first two TPAs in Australia. It is reasonable to assume that the websites of the national initial teaching regulation authority (AITSL) and the two federally funded TPA consortias (Australian Catholic University and University of Melbourne) would contain descriptions of what they think is the purpose of the TPA.” Table 1 shows the eight online documents used in the analysis.

Document Type	Institute/ Organisation	Document Title
Webpage	Melbourne Graduate School of Education, The University of Melbourne	What does ‘classroom ready’ mean? Assessment for Graduate Teaching (Melbourne Graduate School of Education, n.d.-b)
Transcript	Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership	Edmund Mission explainer video: Teaching Performance Assessment (AITSL, n.d.-d)
Blurb	Institute for Learning Sciences and Teacher Education, Australian Catholic University	Graduate Teaching Performance Assessment (GTPA) (Institute for Learning Sciences and Teacher Education, n.d.)
Blurb/ Infographics	Queensland College of Teachers	Building Classroom Ready Teachers: Teaching Performance Assessment (TPA) (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, n.d.-a)
Fact sheet	Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership	Teaching Performance Assessment in Schools (AISTL, n.d.-e)
Fact sheet	Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership	Teaching Performance Assessment: Program Standard 1.2 (AISTL, n.d.-c)
Summary	Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership	Spotlight: Initial Teacher Education Today (AITSL, n.d.-b)
Summary	Melbourne Graduate School of Education, The University of Melbourne	AfGT: Assessment Task Summary (Melbourne Graduate School of Education, n.d.-a)

Table 1: Online Documents Used in the Document Analysis by Institutions

When conducting document analysis, we employed open, axial, and thematic coding based on Biesta’s (2015) theoretical framing of educational purposes, namely qualification, socialisation, and subjectification. While this interpretative framework provides an overview of the presence of each purpose in the TPA, some data could not be easily isolated into one theme, and thus was categorised into more than one theme (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008; Kyngäs et al., 2020). Moderation on these contentious codes then occurred through discussion by the panel of researchers. In the analysis, the research team went through the data and engaged in a “dialogic reliability check, where agreement between researchers is reached through discussion and mutual critique of the data and each researcher’s interpretive hypotheses” (Åkerlind, 2005, p. 331). One researcher coded a random selection of data extracts using Biesta’s (2015) theoretical framing (i.e., qualification, socialization, and subjectification). A second researcher re-examined the same data to explore face validity, discussing the resolution of discrepancies and challenges at this stage with the first researcher. For example, the GTPA blurb (Institute for Learning Sciences and Teacher Education, n.d.) defines GTPA as the “use evidence of student learning during their final-year professional experience placement.” In the related discussion, the research team reached a consensus that the definition focussed on how PST’s are expected to demonstrate their understanding of teaching and learning in the final assessment of their teaching practice prior to professional accreditation. For this reason, the statement should be put under ‘qualification.’ In the reporting stage, the researchers used a tabular representation of the three themes, showing the proportionate representation of coding references for each.

Results

To identify the aims, means and ends of the examined documents, the open codes identified in the first line of analysis were then organised into the three themes of qualification, socialisation and subjectification in the second phase of analysis. The proportional representation of the total coding references is represented in Table 2 below. The open codes in each theme are explained in this section, beginning with qualification and followed by socialisation and subjectification.

Theme	Codes	Key Phrases	Number of Files Coded	Percentage of Total Code References
Qualification	Teaching cycle, classroom-ready, quality, graduate standards, performance assessment, student impact, authentic assessment, competence (<i>n</i> =8)	"Demonstrate core teaching competencies" (AITSL, n.d.-d), "Ready to teach from day one" (Melbourne Graduate School of Education, n.d.-a), "Strengthen public confidence in the quality of teacher education" (Institute for Learning Sciences and Teacher Education, n.d.), "Proficiency in lesson planning and delivery" (AITSL, n.d.-e)	8	81%
Socialisation	Learnification, school induction, accreditation (<i>n</i> =3)	"Facilitating learning" (AITSL, n.d.-b), "Effective induction into both the school and the profession" (AITSL, n.d.-e), "Supported to continue to develop their capabilities to reach proficiency" (Melbourne Graduate School of Education, n.d.-b)	4	8%
Subjectification	Reflection, own knowledge, context (<i>n</i> =3)	"Critical appraisal" (AITSL, n.d.-b), "Draw on their professional knowledge and skills" (Melbourne Graduate School of Education, n.d.-a), "Understanding of the context" (Melbourne Graduate School of Education, n.d.-a)	4	11%

Table 2: Proportional Representation of Themes in Total Code References

Qualification

Qualification was the dominant theme of the TPA texts, as measured by 81% of the coding references made in the analysis. The codes assigned to the theme of qualification were teaching cycle, classroom-ready, quality, graduate standards, performance assessment, student impact, authentic assessment, and competence.

17% of coding references had to do with the teaching cycle, which consisted of planning, teaching, assessing, and evaluation, the key elements of the TPA. AITSL's representative claimed that "when all these elements are in place, we can be pretty confident of the quality of graduates" (AITSL n.d.-d). This is strong evidence that the regulatory body for ITE see only qualification as the purpose of the TPA.

17% of coding references were grouped under the code of 'classroom ready,' which was part of the title of the Teacher Education Ministerial Advisory Group (TEMAG) report into ITE (Craven et al., 2014). The report was used as one justification for the creation of the TPA. In return, AITSL and the two main TPA consortia have used the slogan 'classroom ready' throughout their documentation to ensure that graduate teachers are "ready to teach from day one" (Melbourne Graduate School of Education, n.d.-a). Classroom readiness is the policy response to the confected crises in ITE that have been a political staple in Australia for decades (Louden, 2008).

11% of coding references concern statements that associate the administration of the TPA as a quality assurance tool for ITE. This is evident in the GTPA consortium's claim, that the purpose of the GTPA is "to strengthen public confidence in the quality of teacher education" (Institute for Learning Sciences and Teacher Education, n.d.). This claim is mirrored in the AITSL fact sheet for schools, "to pass a TPA before graduating lifts the standard of graduates leaving ITE programs" (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, n.d.-e). The quality argument, nebulous though it appears, constitutes a bold claim about the utility of the TPA as a quality assurance tool for ITE across Australia.

Another 11% of coding references can be classified under the code of Graduate standards. These focus on the role of teacher standards as assessment criteria for the TPA. The AITSL fact sheet for schools (AITSL, n.d.-c) states that "all evidence of practice must be aligned to the Graduate Teacher Standards" and the GTPA website boasts that "a comprehensive audit of the GTPA against the Graduate Teacher Standards was undertaken by the Queensland College of Teachers in 2016" (Institute for Learning Sciences and Teacher Education, n.d.). There is no validation evidence offered for the graduate standards themselves which seems to be a glaring omission.

9% of coding references relating to performance assessment are where "a pre-service teacher illustrates their skills, knowledge, and teaching practices through evidence of their performance" (AITSL, n.d.-b) and "demonstrate a range of authentic teaching practices" (AISTL, n.d.-b). The claim of authenticity is contestable, as is the capacity of a performance assessment to simultaneously illustrate skills, knowledge, and teaching practices, especially if actual evidence of classroom practice is absent from the assessment.

Student impact was not as prominent as expected relating to only 7% of the coding references in this analysis. We expected it to be more prevalent as the appraisal of one's impact upon student learning is a more significant feature of the teacher standards. Instead, there is a reference to the "positive impact on student learning from day one" (AITSL, n.d.-b), "evidence of student learning" from the GTPA website and "appraisal of impact on student learning" from Queensland College of Teaching (QCT) TPA information sheet (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, n.d.-a).

References to the TPA as an authentic assessment make up 6% of coding references. GTPA present their TPA as "an authentic culminating assessment" (Institute for Learning

Sciences and Teacher Education, n.d.) with only evidence of the culmination aspect provided, and AITSL, in their program standard 1.2 fact sheet which stipulates that all TPAs need to be “in line with concepts of authentic assessment” (AITSL, n.d.-c), without explaining what authentic assessment is.

There were two mentions of graduate competence (4% of coding references) in the documents analysed for this study. The TPA spotlight refers to graduate teacher competence as an argument for the TPA and the GTPA website links graduate teacher competence as “measured against required standards” (Institute for Learning Sciences and Teacher Education, n.d.).

Socialisation

Socialisation was the overall theme for 8% of the overall coding references. The codes for this theme were learnification, school induction and accreditation.

Learnification, which is associated with 4% of coding references, is Biesta’s term for the shift in education discourse towards the prioritisation of the learner and devaluing of the role of the teacher and teaching (Biesta, 2017). In this analysis, learnification was evident in two different AITSL documents (AITSL, n.d.-b, AITSL, n.d.-c) with the same text, “Candidates need to demonstrate what they want students to learn, how they will facilitate this learning, and how they will know if students have achieved this learning”. The use of the verb facilitate is a key marker of learnification and an interesting socialisation into the profession for a teacher (not facilitator) Performance Assessment.

There was one mention of school induction (2% of coding references) in the TPA fact sheet for schools provided by AITSL, “their development should be further supported by an effective induction into both the school and the profession” (AITSL, n.d.-e). This socialisation move is a rare break from the qualification theme in most TPA public documents.

The role that the TPA plays in the socialisation of graduates into the career long process of accreditation was mentioned but once in the AfGT FAQs (2% of coding references) as follows:

this means that graduate teachers must be able to demonstrate the complex skills, knowledge and capabilities required for teaching. Once they enter the profession, graduate teachers must then be supported to continue to develop their capabilities so that they are able to reach proficiency. (Melbourne Graduate School of Education, n.d.-b)

There is also the mention of the support that needs to be provided for graduates to reach the next stage of accreditation in proficiency.

Subjectification

Subjectification was the parent theme for 11% of the overall coding references. The codes for this theme were reflection, own knowledge and context.

Reflection (7% of coding references) was the most prevalent sub-theme with the AfGT visual sequence mentioning critical appraisal and the AITSL Spotlight reference to reflecting and “observation notes and reflection” (AITSL, n.d.-b). We also considered reflection to be a key step in graduates’ seeing themselves as a teacher.

In addition, we associated one AfGT reference to graduates using their own knowledge (2% of coding references) as a sub-theme of subjectification: “Pre-service

teacher's ability to draw on their professional knowledge and skills, as well as their understanding of the context" (Melbourne Graduate School of Education, n.d.-a). This excerpt seems to represent a TPA process that might help graduates regard themselves as a subject of the profession rather than just a qualified competent actor. The AfGT (Melbourne Graduate School of Education, n.d.-a) mentioned "their (graduates) understanding of the context" (2% of coding references) once, suggesting that the AfGT graduate is given the scope to develop an agentic view of themselves as a professional, a key aspect of subjectification.

Discussion

We applied Biesta's (2019) theoretical framework to evaluate the purposes of ITE in Australia concerning qualification, socialisation, and subjectification as documented in the TPA-related resources and advice. As can be seen in Table 2, the analysis identified that the policy texts heavily focused on qualification (81%) and were less concerned with socialisation (8%) and subjectification (11%). It is important to note that these three aims of Biesta's framework – qualification, socialisation, and subjectification, do not exist in isolation but instead together constitute a more integrated understanding of the purpose of education. Nevertheless, the identified emphases in the TPA-related policy texts imply a narrowing of the ITE curriculum and the subsequent thwarting of teacher subjectification.

When Biesta refers to subjectification, he is essentially referring to professional autonomy and the freedom to act as an agentic being (Biesta, 2020). This implies that teachers act with volition, personal choice, and in congruence with their own values as opposed to feeling coerced or pressured to behave in particular ways (Ryan & Deci, 2017). In doing so they develop professional agency to recognise what is important in one's profession and nurture the commitments and values of teaching (Edwards, 2015). Biesta (2020) places importance on subjectification on the grounds that it is about qualified freedom which permits a sense of connection to one's own self as well as a sense of connectedness and integration in the social world in which we live. We contend that the TPA runs counter to Biesta's notion of teacher subjectification.

More specifically, we assert that the high-stakes nature of the TPA with significant emphasis on qualification may serve to amplify the controlling atmosphere of ITE. Policy makers, teamed with assessment partners, decide in a top-down fashion what the content for ITE should be, and these contents for which teachers are held 'accountable' and therefore qualified. We note that this approach is grounded on two implicit assumptions: 1) that outcome-focussed measures effectively promote teacher learning and readiness, and 2) that these narrow content goals of assessments reflect the most important products of ITE programs. We find both of these premises questionable.

With the purpose of the TPA in policy discourses weighted heavily on qualification, limited attention is given to the role of the TPA in socialising new teachers into the profession. Given TEMAG (Craven et al., 2014) has focussed on ensuring pre-service readiness is measured through a high-stakes assessment, PSTs are rewarded in accordance with the outcomes produced: pass the TPA and one is deemed ready to be a teacher, fail the TPA and one is judged unprepared. Such approaches are flaunted as effective because the outcome presumably controls the behaviours that lead to the valued outcome which is then rewarded. However, research shows that when outcomes are rewarded, individuals take the shortest possible path to the rewarded outcome (Ryan & Deci, 2017). This path manifests in myriad ways including the choice of easier tasks which means the desired competencies are not developed. In this case, pre-service teachers may tick the boxes but be unprepared for

their educational role (Kriewaldt et al., 2024). Thus, the responsibility for educating teachers may shift from ITE to ongoing professional learning in schools (Heimans et al., 2022).

A further issue of concern with a focus on performance measures such as the TPA is the increased likelihood of engaging in nonconstructive immoral behaviours such as cheating (Vansteenkiste et al., 2009) and an undermining of intrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Because the content of the TPA is supplied (often mandated) from the powers above, the internal basis for engaging in the task is often unclear. Thus, pre-service teachers who may begin as autonomous learners who are developing their practice with the social structures of the profession may refocus their motivational energy towards pressure and controls imposed from others around qualification. The pre-service teacher becomes unintended collateral damage in a high-stakes test environment which undermines the very function it was intended to serve.

Finally, the issue of quality in ITE is not without its problems (Biesta, 2019). The battle to control the field of judgement (Ball, 2000) about what counts as teacher education continues. On a societal level, there is great investment in education, which manifests as ongoing dialogue exemplified by competing values and judgements. We argue that the imposition of the TPA moves the initiation and maintenance of teacher readiness to others, as opposed to the individual teacher which runs contrary to one's autonomous functioning. The use of the TPA, although somewhat informative, may yield several unintended consequences such as ineffective behaviour change, or poorer long-term outcomes (Ryan & Weinstein, 2009). Yes, it may prompt immediate compliance, but may also lead to diminished motivation, investment, value, and performance (Ryan & Weinstein, 2009). We question this as a measure of quality.

Conclusion

We speculate that the purposes of ITE are to shape the development of the whole teacher, affecting intellectual outcomes as well as motivation, self-concept, and the vitality and integrity of self-development. The present regime of strict overnment accountability in ITE, as exemplified by the TPA, places teacher educators in an invidious position where we feel that we are complicit to a process that prevents our graduates' subjectification as teachers. If we wish for intellectual thinking that has utility value in students (i.e., similar to Biesta's notion of *qualification*, Biesta, 2019), then we must first and foremost facilitate and develop this capacity in pre-service teachers through *autonomy supportive practices* which promote need satisfaction (Reeve & Jang, 2006), self-regulation, learning, achievement, and well-being (Cheon et al., 2012). The TPA, due to its controlling nature, may frustrate autonomy whilst arousing emotions such as anxiety (Reeve & Tseng, 2011) and disengagement (Soenens et al., 2012).

The purposes of ITE have become too easily distracted by the dominant ideological agendas of those shaping policy leading to an ever-increasing focus on teacher quality, teacher accountability (Reid, 2022) and performance measures (Lim et al., 2022). Although well-intentioned, this discourse only serves to undermine teacher autonomy and position the teacher as a functioning cog in the production of educational outcomes. We argue that the TPA may undermine the subjectification of pre-service teachers as they move towards their roles and identities as educators.

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Conflict of Interest

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