

# Work of Teacher Educators Aotearoa New Zealand

## The study

We have been studying the cultural constructions and material realities of university based initial teacher education (UBITE) and teacher educators (TEs) work in Aotearoa New Zealand (NZ). We have been able to consider how teacher education work and the academic category of teacher educator is constructed, maintained and practiced within the institution of the university. Exploring TEs work, including teaching and learning activities from perspectives of both student teachers (STs) and TEs has provided us with new insights into teaching and learning within UBITE. Our research questions have been:

1. How is ‘teacher educator’ constructed and maintained as a category of academic work?
2. What do university-based teacher educators do? What are they working on?
3. How do the pedagogical activities of teacher educators shape opportunities for student teachers’ learning?
4. What are student teachers’ interpretations of and motives towards artifacts and activities within ITE?

## The design

We undertook a two-phase mixed methods exploration of TEs work that focused on the nature, scope and conduct of TEs work so we could more fully understand teaching and learning within UBITE. Replicating and expanding upon a UK based WoTE study (Ellis et al., 2011, 2012) this project:

- Extended existing knowledge of the discursive constructions and material conditions of TEs work in UBITE (RQ 1);
- Provided understandings of university-based TEs work relative to ST learning by exploring practical activities of TEs (especially their teaching) in

## References

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conjunction with accounts of their work and artifacts that mediated those practical activities (RQs 2 and 3)

- explored STs interpretations of, and motives towards, activities and artifacts encountered in ITE (RQ 4);
- enabled us to make comment on the historical evolution of UBITE in Aotearoa and its potential for development in light of recent policy initiatives and STs learning (RQs 1, 2, and 3).

## The implications

Universities' employment practices have been observed to be bi-furcating the TE workforce along academic and professional lines. Questions are therefore raised about the sustainability of the practice for quality UBITE; the ability to move beyond traditional theory and practice dualisms within UBITE; and potential impediments to Universities' contributions to system-wide improvement via research and effective interventions.

TEs and STs may work more critically and effectively within UBITE if strategies designed to reveal their different objectives are made explicit and used to expand understandings of the practices of teaching.

A system-wide approach to TE workforce planning is needed. This may require key actors in the system (ITE providers, the Ministry of Education, Representatives of the Profession) to plan career pathways from teaching into ITE that support research and contribute to a valid and reliable evidence base for the education system.

*Cultural historical activity theory* (Engeström, 1987, 2001) and *Developmental Work Research* (Engeström, 2013) have proved useful tools for researching ITE and should be more widely adopted, particularly if Universities' desire to act with the profession to expand and transform education in New Zealand.