

On Becoming Teacher: Re/conceptualizing the Encounters, Entanglements, and Expectations of Early Career Teachers

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Context

- **Early career teachers: zero to five years of teaching experience** (e.g., Lavigne, 2014).
- **High attrition rates in the first five years of entering the profession** (e.g., Kutsyuruba et al., 2018)
- **Uneven and inconsistent support upon entry into the profession: induction practices, mentoring, and professional development** (e.g., da Cruz et al., 2022; Luong, 2025)

Rationale & Purpose

- **Expectations of early career teachers, produced through dominant discourses, construct problematic narratives that limit the possibilities of the work of teaching and what it means to be, and become, teacher through prescribed ways of knowing and being.**
- **This collection of four manuscripts sought to unsettle the tacit and obscured forces that shape and constrain the becoming of early career teachers.**

Overarching Research Interests

- **In what ways are the expectations of early career teachers constructed, produced, maintained, and re/produced?**
- **What are the implications for early career teachers when they encounter (problematic) expectations as they are becoming teacher? Specifically, how do expectations inform, interfere, and impede the teaching subject's becoming and the work of learning to teach?**
- **How can expectations of early career teachers be deconstructed and re/considered to make space for other productive and generative possibilities ways of becoming teacher?**

Common Threads

- Early career teachers
- Language & Power
- Gendered Profession
- Bad Feelings
- Becoming Teacher
- (Hidden)Struggles & Dilemmas
- Expectations

1 - Disturbing Discourses

A Literature Review of the Facets, Frictions, and Fractures of the Research on Early Career Teachers

- **Rationale & Purpose:** Provide a robust survey of the current research on early career teachers, an overview of the thematic topics, and critical discussion of the themes and tensions to situate the manuscripts.
- **Methodology**
 - Hybrid strategy and snowball strategy (Mourão et al., 2020)
 - Texts gathered between October 2023 and July 2024
 - Utilized UM Libraries' database search tools
 - Texts published within approximately the last ten years
 - Search terms: *beginning teachers; early career teachers, first-year teachers, new graduates, newly qualified teachers, novice teachers*
- **Inclusions & Exclusions**
 - English-language
 - Peer-reviewed scholarly texts
 - Teaching in the context of k to 12 schooling
 - Canadian and international settings
 - Texts published between approximately 2014 and 2024
- **Search Results**
 - 420 peer-reviewed articles and books
- **Impressions of the Literature**
 - Two contrasting perspectives
 - Inquiring into external aspects of teaching that are observable and sometimes measurable or quantifiable.
 - Seeking to make meaning from the internal thoughts, experiences, and perceptions of teachers.
- **Themes and Tensions**
 - Neoliberalism and neoliberal education reform
 - Teacher identity
 - Transition to in-service teaching
 - Learning to teach versus teacher development
 - Becoming teacher
 - Addressing complexities or diagnosing and "fixing" perceived ills
 - Decontextualized accounts of teachers and teaching
- **Opportunities & Gaps**
 - **Critical inquiry** into the topic of early career teachers through a feminist lens
 - Engage with **arts-based approaches** to re/present complexities
 - Utilize **affect theory** to unsettle affective complexities
 - Distinguish terms in the literature to establish a **common language** (e.g., induction versus mentoring)

2 - Reading Expectations

A Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis of Handbooks for Early Career Teachers

- **Rationale & Purpose:** Critically examine induction texts (handbooks and guides) produced for early career teachers and foreground the ways in which the gendered work of teaching discursively constructs the teaching subject and learning to teach (becoming teacher).
- **Theoretical Framework**
 - Feminist poststructuralism
- **Methodology**
 - Feminist critical discourse analysis (CDA) –*description, interpretation, and explanation* (Fairclough, 2023)
 - Data source: publicly available handbooks or guides for early career teachers in Canada
- **Research Questions**
 1. How is the **teaching subject**, and the **work of teaching**, discursively **constructed** in texts written for early career teachers (i.e., induction handbooks and guides)?
 2. How are **expectations** of early career teachers **discursively constructed** in these texts?
 3. How are the **implied expectations** problematic for early career teachers and their becoming?
 4. How might these **expectations** be **deconstructed** and **re/considered** in order to produce other ways of welcoming early career teachers into the profession?
- **Findings**
 - **Dominant Discourses**
 - The Gendered Teacher
 - The Desired Docile Diligent Daughter
 - Discovering How to Teach
 - **Indirect Mentoring**
 - Through objects and experiences
 - Unintentional, accidental, spontaneous
 - **Induction Texts**
 - Can be contentious and problematic but generally assumed to be neutral and helpful; require critical consideration.

3 - Interrupting Expectations

A Critical Analysis of the Dominant Discourses of Women in Early Career Teaching

- **Rationale & Purpose:** Foreground the dominant discourses that construct "bad feelings" in the experiences of early career teachers; deconstruct the underlying assumptions, render the discourses as problematic, and provide a **critical analysis** of the ways in which dominant discourses limit an early career teacher's becoming.
- **Theoretical Framework**
 - Feminist and affect theory (Ahmed; Berlant; Ruti)
- **Methodology**
 - Critical analysis
- **Research Questions**
 1. Where do the "bad feelings" come from? In what ways are they discursively produced through expectations?
 2. How might we understand the material and embodied manifestations of "bad feelings"?
 3. How might we re/consider the ways "bad feelings" are produced and experienced by women in early career teaching?
- **Dominant Discourses**
 - The Ready-made Teacher
 - The Competent Teacher
 - The Happy Teacher
 - The Natural Teacher
 - The Motherly Teacher

4 - A Year In

A Fictional Impression of Becoming Teacher

- **Rationale & Purpose**
 - Articulate the experiences of early career teachers through a **fictional narrative writing piece** (i.e., short story).
 - Create an object of study for teachers (pre-service and early career) to critically engage with.
 - **Challenge conventions of academic writing** by using a first-person fictional narrative to inquire into the experiences, thoughts, and feelings of an early career teacher, as well as using it as a **vehicle to mobilize theory and research.**
- **Research Questions**
 1. How do **expectations** of early career teachers compound and complicate the work of becoming teacher?
 2. How might an **arts-based approach**, such as narrative fictional writing, create **conceptual spaces to engage with and re/consider the hidden dilemmas** produced through expectations of becoming teacher?
- **Theoretical Framework**
 - Feminist theory
 - Affect theory
 - Feminist poststructuralism (e.g., Weedon, 1997)
- **Methodology**
 - Arts-based approach
 - Academic Fiction
 - Fictionalized narrative writing
- **Contributions & Significance**
 - Fiction as a **pedagogical tool**
 - Fiction as a **research mobilization tool**

Conclusions: Implications

- **Teacher education programs** should consider how the coursework and practicum experiences support the cultivation of early career teachers who can bring a **critical lens** to their experiences, knowledge, and work of learning to teach as they enter the profession.
- **Unions, school divisions/districts, schools, principals** should consider how **handbooks and guides** shape and influence (**indirect mentorship**) early career teachers and **critically reflect** on the documents to consider the expectations that are embedded.
- **The profession of teaching** must re/consider how early career teachers are **welcomed into the profession** and the **expectations that are commonly enacted.**
- **The next steps for the collective work** of this project is to:
 - Present the short story to pre-service and inservice teachers and engage them in critical discussions that engage with the complexities and contradictions of learning to teach.
 - Utilize the dominant discourses in the analysis of interviews with women in early career teaching.
 - Develop a critical reflection tool for use with the development and writing of documents for early career teachers.

References

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Complete dissertation available: <http://hdl.handle.net/1993/39674>