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The Rocky Road: the journey from classroom teacher to teacher educator.

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the transition that classroom teachers experience moving into the academy as teacher educators, considering the change in professional identity and the subsequent alignment of
situational and substantial selves. We outline the findings of a qualitative case study that utilised self-study and teacher narrative to explore the road travelled for a group of new teacher educators in a regional university in rural Australia. To frame our work we drew from theories related to teacher professional identity and career transition. The research explored patterns of experience between ourselves and the other participants that helped to explain the transition process for new teacher educators and allowed us to see and reframe our own experiences in new ways. The significance of the study resides in the fact that new teacher educators, as a group, have not been thoroughly researched and consequently are not well understood. The academic role is also a complex one and the road from classroom teacher to teacher educator, can be described as rocky. In order to retain teacher educators in higher education we have shown it is important to recognise both the context and process of the transition.

It seems a natural move for teachers to go from teaching in a school context to becoming teacher educators in a higher education facility. The literature suggests that it is anything but
natural. The road for new teacher educators, fresh from the field, has been described metaphorically as *rocky* by Adams & Rytmeister (2000). Studies have identified that the journey towards a teacher educator identity is a complex one often associated with inner conflict and tension (Tinkerman, Margolis & Sikkhenga, 2006; Murray & Male, 2005). Further to the notion of journey, and seeking to extend the metaphor, we elaborated on it, and refer to these inner conflicts and tensions as a *rocky road*. The academic role is a multifaceted one, incorporating teaching, research, professional and administrative responsibilities (Guilfoyle, Hamilton, Pinnegar & Placier, 1995; Korthagen, Loughran, & Luenberg, 2005; Adams & Rytmeister, 2000). In the course of the move, from schools to the academy, a change takes place: aspects of the physical environment and the work context, as well as the opportunity to pursue latent ideas and thoughts, impact on the confidence and professional identity of the educator. Studies on the transition process for new teacher educators cite a multitude of challenges including the development of a new adult pedagogy, changed levels of autonomy, institutional isolation, new technologies and the pressure to enter the research culture (Martinez, 2008).

Within an organisation, corridor conversations between colleagues can begin a process of reflection and questioning, an affirmation of common concerns and ideas. As two new teacher educators fresh *from the field* (our school classrooms), these conversations opened up similarities in feelings and provided an acknowledgement of the conflicting emotions we were experiencing. We felt colleagues with more experience in the academy responded to us as *schoolies*, a term we interpreted as reflecting our very recent experiences in schools and our tendency to focus on these experiences in conversation and action. There are typically two pathways into teacher education for classroom teachers in Australia: one pathway leads directly from postgraduate research whilst the other pathway is one whereby a successful and experienced classroom teacher becomes a teacher educator (Berry, 2007). Our colleagues
seemed to have either moved beyond their classroom experiences or had followed the first
pathway into teacher education. Our discussions focussed on our feelings of new versus old
in terms of our professional identity, and the issues we noted in the new context: issues such
as time management and having time for reflection rather than reaction, and the tension
arising from the demands of often competing roles, that of teacher and researcher. Similar
responses to the change of workplace have been noted by Martinez (2008) and Murray &
Male (2005).

We decided to look further into our personal experiences of the transition into teacher
education by undertaking a form of self study to reflexively analyse our selves and our
experiences. We recognised that the “I” and “me” in the discourse of self study can be
“entwined into each persons’ character where prior to making statements their thinking is
located with their own identity” (Needham & Flint, 2006, p. 19). We begin this paper with
the first of a series of small vignettes that position us within the research.

Author One’s Story

As a classroom teacher I often found myself at odds with those around me as I
continued to look for challenge by undertaking further study, professional reading and
questioning. While teaching remained important to me the context became stale and
the lack of intellectual challenge, being in one setting, dampened my passion.
Experiences at a regional and district level introduced me to the bigger picture; to like
minds and to new projects. Now the dilemma was balancing the two dimensions. An
opportunity to mark academic assignments threw me back into the world of academia.
An advertisement for a job, at a time of personal distress and conflict, provided a
chance to at least put my hand up. Success at the interview meant a move to teacher
education; what I imagined as something simple, teaching teachers, sharing in new
discourses. When, during my first year, I found myself ‘lost’ and questioning who I
was as a teacher I could not understand why this was occurring. “Who am I?”

Author Two’s story

I was very happy in the classroom. I’d come to teaching from a very different
profession. I had been a scientific officer in a large teaching hospital in Sydney where
I imagined I was very settled. At the back of my mind however, there was always a question, a frustration really. Whilst I loved my choice of career, I had fallen into a Science degree quite accidentally. Throughout my senior years at school I had wanted to become a Biology teacher, but life had taken me along a different path. It wasn’t until I was in my early thirties, that an opportunity to retrain as a teacher came up; I grabbed it with both hands, and enjoyed teaching secondary Science for the next decade or so. In 2006, personal circumstance, a feeling that ‘I had done all I could here’, and a golden opportunity, led me to my first teaching contract in a regional university. Suddenly I felt that maybe ‘there was still more to do’, I had been around some marvellous teachers and had learnt a lot about ‘making a difference for kids’ and the chance to teach teachers seemed an ideal way to spread this message. In that first year though I found myself unsettled; I was constantly ‘looking back’ and seemed unable to really ‘move forward’. I was caught with one leg in the academy and the rest of me back in schools.

After twelve months in the academy, our common experiences and feelings were obvious, and we started asking ourselves some questions: did others experience what we were experiencing? Were their first years the same as ours? Was the second year different? Why did students seem different? Why were the relationships different and what was it like for other schoolies that we worked with? These questions and reflections then became the impetus for the research that follows. We were interested in investigating not only our own practice and experiences but also those of our colleagues. We felt that perhaps if we could see our own experiences through new eyes, new perspectives, we could understand why we felt this sense of discomfort, this mismatch. Furthermore, if we could unravel and map the process of transition from classroom to academy, we might be able to help other new teacher educators understand their experiences and ultimately find a less rocky road.

**A Review of the Literature**

This study drew primarily from the literature around teacher socialisation (Zeichner & Gore, 1990), teacher educator transition (Dinkelman, Margolis & Sikkenga, 2006; Guilfoyle, Hamilton, Pinnegar & Placier, 1995; Korthagen, Loughran & Lunenberg, 2005 and Martinez, 2008) and the formation of teacher professional identity (Dinkelman, Margolis & Sikkenga, 2006; Knowles & Coles, 1995 and Murray & Male, 2005). Our literature search began with
the key term, *professional identity*, and a number of references in the business sector were identified (Parker & Lewis, 1981; Perosa & Perosa, 1987; Adams, Hayes, & Hopkins, 1976). While it may seem unusual to bring together such diverse literature: education and business, the work of Parker & Lewis (1981) resonated with our experiences around the seemingly oscillating nature of our career transition process. Issues of professional identity, and the impact of career change on identity, had been significant in conversations and featured largely in this literature and therefore, we have drawn from it to support our analysis.

Murray and Male (2005) discuss the concept of transition from teacher to teacher educator as being a move from first order to second order practice. Initially in teacher education the teacher educator relies on their deep knowledge and understanding of the classroom as their disciplinary knowledge. The content of their teaching revolves around their “personal values, beliefs and biographies” (Murray & Male, 2005, p. 126). Conflict arises within the teacher educator when they begin to recognise that first order practice is not sufficient for teaching students about teaching, and that they now need to include the practices and discourses of both school teaching and teacher education. Martinez (2008) questions whether this is a common pattern peculiar to teacher educators or endemic to all academics. In fact, teacher education is different from other higher education areas in that the two elements of disciplinary knowledge (knowledge about teaching) and pedagogical knowledge about teaching (teaching about teaching) are not easily separated; they are the core of both first-order and second-order practice (Murray & Male, 2005, p. 126). For new teacher educators this becomes the first challenge: the *first pothole* in the road.

It is well recognised that new teacher educators experience a career transition where they need to learn new social mores in the creation of a new professional identity (Murray & Male, 2005). Southworth (1995) uses the terms *situational* and *substantial* self when discussing this transition. The situational self is developed through interactions with others
and the setting, while the substantial self is formed through a core of solid and often unchanging, self beliefs. Career transition is considered complete when these two selves are closely aligned. This is the second pothole: the challenge of aligning these two selves in order to complete the transition and begin to form new teacher educator identities.

The literature located within the business sector seemed to add another layer to our understanding of identity formation and the alignment of the situational and substantial selves. This literature outlines that the transition to any new career impacts on both the professional identity and efficacy of the individual (Owen & Flynn 2004; Perosa & Perosa, 1987; Hopson, 1981; Hopson & Adams, 1977) and it often refers to the cognitive and emotional perspectives of the transition process (Peraña & Perosa, 1987). Parker & Lewis (1981) outlined a framework, adapted from the work of Adam, Hayes & Hopkins (1976), for career transition that included seven stages.

Those considering transitioning to a new career move through a period of numbness or shock and then into a stage of denial, that may include a return to familiar practices, before finally recognising the need to change and address the call to learn new behaviours and responses. Ibarra (1999) describes this as a process of negotiation whereby the individual tries on and rehearses various roles, imitating, mimetically, role models within the workplace. At this point the individual is still identifying themselves situationally within their earlier context. The greatest threat to successful transition is within the individual, who must be able to interpret the demands the change is placing on the self and adapt behaviours and responses to respond appropriately. There are a number of points in the transition where the individual is particularly vulnerable in terms of the redefining of their professional identity and navigating a successful transition. If the individual does not adapt their behaviours but remains tied to what has been, the process of transition is not successful (Parker & Lewis, 1981) and the substantial and situational selves are unable to align. If the
adaptive process is more successful, the individual moves into a series of stages that are uplifting and positive--change is embraced, new skills are learned and over time the fit between the two selves occurs (Parker & Lewis, 1981; Southworth, 1995).

The Purpose of the Study

In order to better understand our own transition process and to improve our practice in the new setting, we felt that it was important to reflect on not only our experiences, but also the experiences of other schoolies, within our organisation. We believed that by identifying the common patterns of experience, and the process of transition experienced by ourselves and others, we would be able to generate new knowledge about the alignment of the substantive and situational selves. It was hoped that this new understanding would lead to the proposition of solutions for our organisation to more successfully transition new educators from the field of first-order practice to the context of second-order practice--an indicator of achieving a new professional identity (Murray & Male, 2005, p135), but also to empower the new teacher educator to consider actions that facilitate their individual transition.

The questions that mapped our research were:

1. What was the experience for a group of teacher educators in a regional university as they made the transition from the classroom to the academy?

2. What is the process of transition for classroom teachers moving to the academy?

Method

We began our inquiry by looking at our own practice, choosing a self study approach to direct this research because it was our selves that were in conflict in the new setting. We needed to come to terms with what was happening to us during this transition in order to become effective teacher educators. We recognised that being stuck in a gap between the situational and substantive selves would restrict our professional growth. Self-study is
“embedded in the desire of teacher educators to better align their teaching intents with their teaching actions” (Loughran, 2007, p. 12). “Self study may also be defined as a mode of scholarly inquiry in which teachers examine their beliefs and actions within the context of their work as educators” (Loiue, Drevdahl, Purdy & Stackman, 2003, p. 150). The end result of self study research is often a “tangible product … that is transferable to colleagues” and thus answers questions that facilitate the generation of new knowledge for the profession (Louie et al, 2003, p. 151).

To complement this self-study, case studies of colleagues’ transition experiences were also used to extend the analysis. The case studies were bounded by geographical context: only those new teacher educators within the regional university where we are located were considered as participants (Stake, 1995). Loughran (2007, p. 158) reminds us “that the learning as a result of collaboration in self-study appears to be linked to the opportunity to access alternative perspectives on situations.” The mixed methods approach used in this study, a combination of self-study and case study, allowed us to see patterns of experience and the transition process through the eyes of other participants, thus enabling us to reframe our own experiences, in order to better understand the complexity of the process (Dinkelman, Margolis & Sikkenga, 2006; Loughran, 2007).

The Instrument

The primary instrument used to collect data from participants was an adapted Life Story Exercise described by Boyatzis (1998, p. 68): a self administered questionnaire that asked participants to consider, and respond in writing, to a series of questions that mapped the critical incidents (peaks and nadirs) they had experienced in their career transition to self-titled chapters in a book. The use of life story has emerged in the field of social science as an effective method of data collection reflecting the use of story telling to support the construction of personal identity (McAdams, 1985). We chose this instrument as a prompt to
encourage deeper reflective responses and participants were encouraged to use metaphor (in line with the metaphorical style of our research) as a “narrative scaffolding device” to describe significant aspects of their developing teacher identities (Weber, 2005, p. 13). For the purposes of our self study we found the Life Story Exercise framework to be crucial in the development of our personal narrative, and liberating in that it allowed us to sit outside of ourselves and reflect on our experience of transition in context.

As practitioner researchers our voices and stories are woven into the data set through a series of short vignettes drawn from our narratives, our personal journals and our reflections on corridor conversations between ourselves and the participants.

Data from the narratives, ours and the other participants, was analysed in order to identify common patterns of experience as the “use of dialogue can be seen as basis for making meaning, establishing the validity of ideas and promoting action” (Guilfoyle, Placier, Hamilton & Pinnegar, 2002, p. 97).

The Participants

The participants in this study comprised a group of four teacher educators who were experienced classroom teachers new to the academy (less than three years) and included both of the researchers. They had taught across disciplines and contexts and were invited to share their stories of transition with us.

Author 1 moved from early childhood into primary education over a period of 25 years, completing a Masters Degree in Education and postgraduate study while teaching. Feeling stifled in the school environment she randomly responded to an advertisement and procured her current position in the academy.

Author 2 initially trained as microbiologist but transitioned into education through a Diploma degree and taught biology in secondary schools for over ten years. To facilitate the
completion of her doctorate, and for a *sea-change* she took up an opportunity to work in the academy on a teaching contract.

Sarah began her teaching career as an elementary school teacher in the United States, teaching in the classroom for ten years. She eventually achieved the position of principal but felt that further employment options with her school board were limited. She left classroom teaching to take up a two year secondment position in the academy.

Jane was a special education teacher who had worked in rural primary special schools (schools with a significant number of students with disabilities) for a number of years. She moved to the academy because she was frustrated about the organisational structures in schools and was passionate about making a difference for students. She felt that as a teacher educator she could have more impact in this area.

Pseudonyms were used to ensure anonymity and in order to ensure an authentic interpretation of data participants were invited to view, and comment on, our interpretations of their narratives as a form of member check after the analysis (Boyatzis, 1998).

**Discussion of Findings**

Our discussion follows the framework of our narratives, and emergent patterns of experience were identified through our choice of metaphors, the titles of our book chapters and the accounts of our nadir and peak experiences. While we gathered data from a set of participants that informed our analysis, we found that we were best able to re-frame our experiences through the data of Sarah and Jane.

*The Metaphors*
Whilst participants commented that the instrument used to collect their narratives enabled them to reflect deeply on their experiences, they also noted that it took an extended period of time and it was challenging to consider their transition in this way. As participant researchers we were very comfortable using a metaphorical approach, comparing our transition to a glass of wine and an open window whilst Sarah compared her transition to the metamorphosis of a butterfly.

Author One’s story--Chapter One--A spilled glass

My journey to teacher educator began in my final year in school when I was appointed Assistant Principal and thought I had achieved my goal. My glass tipped over when the year started as I was given many extra roles and had no time to do things I had been promised. A number of extremely unpleasant episodes with a colleague who questioned my expertise, my standing with the staff and my whole person had a profound effect on me. I had been asked to mark assignments for a local University and was finding this exciting, and as the pleasure dribbled from my upturned glass, I noticed an advertisement in the newspaper for an academic teaching position. I applied without telling anyone at the school and was thrilled to be offered the job. The glass stood again.

For Author 1, the “spilled glass” represented a professional crisis where the situation she found herself in, back in school, had become drained of purpose and future: this became a strong motivational force for career change.

Author Two’s story--Chapter One--A window opens

After feeling that my job as a secondary Head Teacher within my last school had run its course, and due to personal circumstances (the loss of my mother and a feeling of being “used up”), the opportunity to try something new, to professionally develop in other areas and to work on a slow moving doctorate, was a Godsend.

Author 2 recognised an opportunity for change through the metaphor of “an open window”, implying an escape from a situation that “had run its course” in terms of professional growth and the move to the new context was seen as a “Godsend”.

Sarah’s story--Chapter One--The hungry caterpillar

During the induction phase of my new teaching position, I was immersed in books and technology. As I began to learn new pedagogies, and studied for hours in my office, I felt that great growth in my personal/political intellect was taking place…I felt very content and at home during this stage in my metamorphosis. All the while I felt that I was almost ready to emerge into my new role at the faculty.
Sarah’s choice of metaphor indicated that she felt a very strong impetus to change, almost a physical desire as evident in her use of the term “hungry”. She identified her initial stage in the transition process as a period of growth and development: a “cocoon” and a “metamorphosis”.

For each of these three participants, a pattern emerged around the recognition, or motivation, to voluntarily change careers from classroom teacher to teacher educator. Participants described an almost euphoric feeling: they were “thrilled” and felt “very content” as they left their classroom contexts behind to enter the new context of the academy. At this early stage in the transition process participants were not questioning their professional identity: anticipating a seamless, linear transition into teacher education. Parker & Lewis (1981, p.17), in a study of the transition problems associated with promotion, refer to this state of euphoria, as the “rosy positive picture”, whereby individuals do not actually recognise, or acknowledge, the negative aspects potentially associated with the new position.

Theories around planned behaviour (Khapova, Arthur, Wilderom & Svensson, 2007) identify intention as a primary antecedent to career change, and in turn, argue that career change intention can be predicted by the extent to which a person has a positive or negative perception of change, their perceptions of the social pressures to change and their career self-efficacy.

The Chapters

Author One--Chapter Two--A glass of champagne

My first year at ***** could only be described as champagne- personally I bubbled, and it seemed to be one huge glass of constant pleasure and surprise. I thrived on the challenge, the people and the feeling of ‘fit’ that I experienced and had to keep taking another sip to reassure myself that I had filled my glass with the right thing. I realised how much I had lost my zip and how bored I had been in the school environment I had been in and spent the first semester with a permanent grin and a feeling of renewal.

Author One--Chapter Three--An unsteady glass

The glass remained champagne filled but during the second semester I began to wonder whether I was actually capable of doing the job. I felt very unsure- although an enormous amount of trust was placed in me (something I found amazing), I doubted my ability to do the job well. Students responded to me very positively and my classes were exciting and engaging but I felt I could not live up to the expectations placed on me. The glass often wobbled…I felt very alone and unsure on the inside… I did much reading and study to ensure my teaching was current and found many articles on teaching in higher education to see what I needed to do and do it right.
Author 2--Chapter Three--Missing the familiar

This was quite unexpected, I was dealing with personal grief but I was also dealing with professional grief. I had been in my last school for eight years, I was established, I felt that I was effective and I had good relationships with staff, parents and students. I had this uncomfortable feeling that I was a ‘fish-out-of-water’ here.

The key pattern of experience to emerge from our stories that resonated most strongly for us was the seemingly wavering nature of the transition process, evident through words such as “pleasure and surprise” and “thriving on the challenge” followed closely by “unsure and doubt”. We experienced periods when we questioned our identities, identifying some form of discomfort (or critical incident), then a feeling of alignment between situational and substantive selves (a sense of fit) followed by another period of questioning and doubt. For Author 1 the change between Chapter Two and Three was unexpected. The euphoria of the initial change was beginning to wear off and there was the recognition that first order practice (Murray & Male, 2005; Dinkelman et al, 2006) had become inadequate.

Through an analysis of participants’ peaks and nadirs, we were able to confirm this pattern of peaks and troughs in the transition process. For Sarah the peaks centred on her positive relationships with her students and her growing confidence in the classroom, and her troughs came when student feedback contradicted this:

*After a highly successful first semester of teaching, I felt on top of the world until I was given a copy of my student subject evaluations. Seven of the sixty subject evaluations were scathing…the other fifty five evaluations were spectacular…the seven are the ones I still remember.*

(Sarah)

Jane’s cycle of peaks also centred on positive student feedback but her troughs reflect her grief when a supportive colleague moved on and she was left feeling alone and isolated:
My peak experiences are when students contact you to thank you for your input into their professional lives. My nadir came when a colleague left… I didn’t think I’d survive as she had been such a wonderful mentor and friend… I felt depressed and unable to cope.

(Jane)

Finding evidence for such a wavering process of career transition for teacher educators was a surprising, but significant finding and was not evident in our search of the literature around early career teacher educator transition and identity formation despite its prevalence in the business literature. Parker & Lewis (1981, p. 17) suggest that how well an employee survives the problems of transition is “not simply a question of competence but a combination of competence, the degree of perceived change, the degree of self knowledge and the support and guidance that is provided for them during transition”. The situational self gets on with the job: the routines and expectations are managed and the necessary skills needed to carry out teaching are quickly developed. The substantive self, meanwhile, has to navigate through the euphoria of the change, manage the constant questioning of one’s capacity to do the job and integrate this knowledge of the new self into a professional identity as a teacher educator. This duality between the selves comes through clearly in a journal entry by Author 1 shortly after commencing the new position as a teacher educator:

*The transition from teaching in schools to teaching in a tertiary institution appeared to be relatively easy – for teaching is teaching. However, on reflection it is a major transformation and requires one to learn new skills, to develop a new balance between teaching and organisation and offers greater freedom than I have ever had. Learning to teach in a new position has taken time to adapt to – something I had not given any thought to when I commenced the position.*

(Author 1, journal entry Feb. 2006)

This extract highlights that at this point in the transition Author 1 was wondering why when she was doing the teaching she still did not fully identify as a teacher educator, or in fact realise that she would need to change her substantive self in order to achieve that identity. The two selves are obviously not yet in alignment.
The similarity between Parker and Lewis’s (1981) model of career transition (Figure 1) and our findings was significant: the troughs of discomfort identified through our research equate to their stages of immobilisation, denial of change and a sense of incompetence, whilst the peaks or feelings of fit relate to their stages of acceptance of reality, testing new behaviours and the internalisation of meaning. These findings indicate to us that an area for further research would be to explore the transition process identified in our data in more depth with an expanded field of participants, and to use the Parker & Lewis (1981) transition stages as a lens for further analysis.

**Conclusion**

This study has reiterated the findings from the literature that the road for new teacher educators can indeed be a *rocky one* as they struggle to align their situational and substantial selves (Southworth, 1995). The struggle is in fact ongoing and dependent on both context and individual resilience. In our data, varying degrees of support from mentors as well as the impact of student evaluations set the context whilst the individual’s capacity to both reflect on and address emerging issues of adjustment resulted in differing experiences of the struggle. Our data showed that participants such as Author 1 and Sarah entered the academy with a euphoric view of their career change. However, the optimism was not necessarily sustained. Their assumption of a seamless transition from the classroom to the academy and their inability to predict a struggle in the alignment of selves compounded the depth of the nadirs they experienced.

While there are commonalities in the transition experiences of participants, it must be acknowledged that differing nadirs and peaks are evidence of the multiple and complex nature of the alignment of selves. Our data suggests that there are particular points in the
transition process when a teacher educator is vulnerable to internal (aspects of personality including coping mechanisms and personal resilience) and external (end of session student evaluations, emergent research demands and changing support networks) factors that may impede the development of their new professional identity. Figure 1 indicates points where vulnerability may be most keenly felt. During the phases of “incompetence” and “acceptance of reality” the two selves are in tension and do not begin to align until the phases of “testing” and “searching for meaning” (Parker & Lewis, 1981, p. 18).

The literature primarily acknowledges the impact of external pressures, such as new demands on time, new pedagogies and understanding the differences between first order and second order practice; and the research/teaching dichotomy (Murray & Male, 2005; Dinkelman et al, 2006). Our study suggests that there are also individual internal pressures that need to be considered. It is the changes in the self and the way one perceives oneself that contributes to the depth of the peaks and troughs in the process of career transition and professional identity alignment. The extent of self knowledge and the support provided during this time is vital if the alignment of situational and substantial selves is to be successful. It is the responsibility of both the organisation and the individual teacher educator to recognise the rockiness of the transition and to put in place strategies and processes to address the struggle. The effective strategies identified in participants’ stories included the support of a mentor and opportunities for professional development in the areas of teacher education and research. While student evaluations enabled the participants to gauge their success as teacher educators a more strategic use of these and a more reflective stance, might also facilitate a stronger sense of substantial self.

In this article, we have contributed to the literature on teacher educator identity formation by making links with a career transition model more commonly discussed in the literature of business and management. We have adapted this model to describe the process of alignment
between a teacher educator’s *situational* and *substantial* selves. It can no longer be assumed that the transition for teacher educators is a linear process. The oscillating nature of the transition has implications for teacher education institutions as they design and deliver induction programs for those entering the academy and support new teacher educators as they struggle to align their situational and substantial selves over the period of their career transition. We also argue that the individual needs to be aware of the nature of the transition and develops personal strategies to cope with the *rockiness* of the transition when the initial euphoria of the career change wears off.

Through the process of self study, we now have a deeper understanding of our own transition process, enabling us to reframe our professional identities as teacher educators. Acknowledging the non-linear nature of the transition process has allowed us to be more resilient as we manoeuvre the continuing process of our alignment. When either of us experiences a low point we now have a common language for sharing it, and this has allowed us to mentor each other through these periods. Whilst this learning has provided us with the confidence to talk to other new teacher educators about their transition, we feel that further studies in the context of teacher education, examining the oscillating nature of the career transition process and the strategies individuals use to facilitate identity alignment, are needed. The road for new teacher educators in transition from the classroom need not be a *rocky one* if the *potholes* in the road can be recognised early by both the individual and the institution.

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