

# **Failure to Launch: A case of career transition from trade to teacher terminated.**

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## ***Abstract***

This paper tells the story of a tradesman's failure to launch into secondary school teaching. It reports on a case of career transition that was part of a larger study of the lived experiences of 16 tradespersons who were graduates from an Australian University, five to ten years post-graduation with dual qualifications to teach Secondary and Vocational Education and Training (VET) programs in schools.

However, not all tradespersons who completed this initial teacher education program with the aim of becoming secondary school technology teachers chose to enter teaching. This paper reports on the case of Joe, a tradesperson who decided to terminate his career transition into teaching soon after graduating with honours from his university degree.

A descriptive, interpretative case study method was used. Data were collected from interview and the university's archival student records. Thematic analysis was used to construct discursive interpretations of the meanings of the participants' career transitions.

The study found that Joe exhibited characteristics of a person who never felt part of the schooling community, failed to engage in the rituals of a secondary school teacher discourse; and therefore never felt that teaching was the right *fit* for him. This is a single case. It is not

possible to generalise the findings to all ‘tradees’ who have failed to launch—to those who have not made the transition to teacher. However, the findings do provide insights into the broader context of the recruitment and retention of tradees into initial teacher education programs.

### ***Introduction***

This paper critically explores the lived experiences of Joe and the notion of his failure to launch as a secondary school teacher after undertaking a career transition from a trade to a teacher. The case of Joe was drawn from a larger doctoral study that explored the lived experiences of 16 tradespersons who undertook an initial teacher education program to teach Secondary and Vocational Education and Training (VET) programs in schools, five to ten years post-graduation. The research was driven by three research questions that focused on the motivations of a tradesperson to become a technology teacher in secondary schools, what support mechanisms they required and how they created a new identity as a teacher.

This paper begins with a review of the literature concerning the motivations of ‘career changers’ who enter teaching in search of a ‘career fit’; a term used throughout this paper as a means for measuring personal career satisfaction. It charts the rise of trade based teachers and how they came to be working in Australian secondary schools, in particular Queensland. This section concludes with an analysis of theoretical literature relating to discourse and teacher identity formation. The paper then presents the research approach, encompassing data collection and analysis methods where ethical issues are also addressed. This is followed by the findings and discussion relating to the case of Joe. The paper concludes with the implications of Joe’s case for the recruitment and retention of trade based teachers into initial teacher education programs and secondary schools.

## *Literature Review*

The following section examines literature concerning who are career changers and what motivates career changers to choose secondary school teaching as their next career option.

### *Career changers and their motivations*

In this paper Joe is described as a ‘career changer’, a term used by Skilbeck and Connell (2004) and the (then) Australian Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) to describe teachers who choose the teaching profession later in life, often after experiencing a significant impetus for change, described by Cranton (2006) as a disorienting event.

There have been a growing number of career changers entering school teaching over the last ten years. In 2005 the Australian Council of Deans of Education (ACDE) commented in their report entitled: *Teaching Tomorrow’s Teachers* that, “mature-age entrants constitute around 50% of entrants into education courses” (p. 22). In a report from the (then) Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) released in 2008 entitled: *Staff in Australia’s Schools (2007)*, it was identified that 27% of secondary school teachers began their teaching career sometime after 25 years of age. Hence, there seems to be an increasing number of teacher education participants undertaking initial teacher education programs who have chosen alternative careers before entering teaching.

In 2007, the Australian Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) released a report entitled: *Research on career pathways into teaching*: which found that career change entrants had an interest and an obvious attraction to teaching. The report also stated that when career changers choose to make the transition to teaching, they often do so because they did not previously have the opportunity to take up teaching due to personal or financial reasons, and are now “returning to their true vocation” (p. 28). Priyadharshini and Robinson-Pant

(2003) support this finding, commenting that career changers choose teaching in preference to a career in which they were already established as they believe that “teaching as career still holds attractions” (p. 95).

Motivations for the transition from one career into teaching are varied. Richardson and Watt (2005, 2008), MCEETYA (2005) and DEEWR (2008) present similar findings for the motivations to enter teaching including; the enjoyment of working with children/young people (the highest indicator), job security; and more time to spend with families. This was often accompanied by a belief that they had some form of calling to the profession. Of interest, is that salary ranked as the least important factor influencing the decision to become a teacher (MCEETYA, 2005 & DEEWR, 2008).

Manuel and Hughes (2006) in a study of the motivations to enter teaching of 79 Australian pre-service teachers found that, “personal fulfilment (70.9%), enjoyment of the subject (69.6%), working with young people (65.8%), lifestyle (34%) and working conditions (19%)” were the most influential in their choice of undertaking a career in teaching (p. 10).

Secondary school teachers were reported as being more motivated to become teachers because of employment conditions, job security, and the fact that they enjoyed the subjects they taught. DEEWR’s (2008) report summarizes responses from a survey of over 14,000 teachers who indicated similar motivations, citing personal fulfillment and desire to work with young people as the highest factor for primary school teachers, whereas 92% of secondary school teachers cited “enjoyment of subject areas” as the most significant attraction to enter teaching (p. 56)\

Overseas research in this area provides some additional insights into motivations to undertake a career in teaching. A study from the United Kingdom (UK) by Barnby (2007) revealed that “helping children succeed” (p. 255) was the most important factor for entering teaching while

looking for job security and job satisfaction rated in the top ten percentage responses. Studies from the United States (US) (Castro & Bauml, 2009) revealed another motivational factor for career changers entering teaching, was that they believed they understood what the role of a teacher would entail. This belief, in some cases was primarily based on the fact that they had some prior teaching type experiences or they were influenced by family members who were or had previously been teachers. Also from the US research undertaken by Grier and Johnston (2009) revealed a strong motivation to entering teaching from the participants in the study was to repay society for the educational opportunities they had been given. Hence, it would seem that the motivations for career changers to undertake a career transition into teaching are varied with the prime motivations for career changers being altruistic such as feeling the need to repay society or wanting to make a difference. (Castro & Bauml, 2009; Grier & Johnston, 2009; DEEWR, 2008; MCEETYA, 2005; Richardson & Watt 2005, 2008; Barmby, 2007; Manuel & Hughes, 2006; Priyadharshini & Robinson-Pant, 2003).

### ***Career transition and degrees of fit***

The work of key transition theorists, including Holland (1984), Schlossberg (1984) refer to the concept of degrees of fit when referring to career transition. Nicholson and West (1989, p. 193), explored this concept further concluding that “career development outcomes were dependent upon degrees of fit or misfit between character dispositions of individuals and sub cultures” Later, Peake and Mc Dowall (2012) claimed that Nicholson’s (1984) earlier theory on Work *Role Transitions* and Nicholson and West’s later (1989) *Career Transition Theory* failed to explore to causal motivations for a career transition. They concluded that successful career transitions were often ascribed to the causal factors arising from participants experiencing a series of:

... false starts to a career were a common experience prior to finding a career ‘fit’ and that career transitions, precipitated by a trigger state and/or event such as a period of disillusionment, were an important part of this ‘finding a fit’ process (Peake & Mc Dowall, 2012, p. 395).

The process of finding a fit involved positive and negative experiences. However once a fit was found it was “marked by a sense of hope, excitement, passion and fun”, followed by a “sense of enlightenment”; culminating in a “reported love of what they do” (pp. 402-404). Peake and Mc Dowall, (2012) further added that career transitions leading to successful careers were not founded on salaries, promotions or status; rather they were defined by the individuals themselves, who with the right fit, determine their own definition of a successful career.

Those who choose to transition from a career as a tradesperson to a secondary school teacher have been found to seek the right fit for themselves as individuals, where their trade skills, knowledge and experiences are valued. In this context, the term ‘tradee’ has been coined by Australian tradespersons themselves in this recent doctoral study from which the case of Joe has been drawn (Blayney, 2013). The following section charts the rise of these tradees in secondary schools with a focus on the northern Australian state of Queensland.

### ***The rise of the ‘tradee’ in schools***

In secondary schools, tradees teach vocationally oriented subjects that include, but are not limited to hospitality, metals and wood technology industries. In Queensland, where the case of Joe is investigated, the government initially responded to higher secondary school retention rates and a more diverse student population in the senior years of schooling through the launch of a futuristic vision strategy in 2001 entitled: *Queensland State Education: 2010* (Queensland Government, 2001). Soon after in 2002, the Pitman (2002) and Gardiner (2002)

reports were released hailing the beginning of school reform and pathways to higher education throughout Queensland. Gardiner's (2002) report focussed on reviewing articulation pathways from school to TAFEs and from TAFEs to universities, calling for greater flexibility in senior schooling. Pitman's (2002) report proposed major changes to senior schooling across Queensland with flexible entry and exit points in the senior years of schooling. It also recommended a new broadened senior curriculum, thus creating new choices for students who did not necessarily demand access via an academic curriculum. The report aimed to offer students a range of options throughout education, training and work while retaining students for longer periods at school (Pitman, 2002).

In addition to the above educational initiatives the Queensland Government released its 'Smart State' strategy in 2002. A significant policy initiative of this strategy was the White Paper entitled *Education and Training Reforms for the Future (ETRF)*. This paper detailed 19 specific actions intended to be implemented through partnership arrangements among schools, TAFE institutes, universities, young people, parents, employers, local communities, non-government organisations and individuals (Harreveld & Singh, 2006). In 2003 the White Paper was passed through the Queensland Parliament becoming two pieces of new legislation entitled: *Youth Participation in Education and Training Act 2003* and the *Training Reform Act 2003 (Queensland Government, 2003)*. By 2006 the Queensland Certificate of Education (QCE) now formed the basis of senior schooling throughout Queensland.

Since 2002, students up to the age of 17 years in Queensland have had to be either 'learning or earning' with most of this taking place in a school environment. Thus, the entry of trade teachers into secondary schools at this time, not only provided the means for work related VET in schools pathways but also offered a different type of teacher role model previously unavailable in Queensland schools.

The changes in State Government legislation concerning the senior phase of learning in 2003 coincided with the movement of registered teachers with a trade background into schools.

The teacher role models that these tradees presented to students, along with technical and work related skills they brought to the classroom, potentially offered students the opportunity to aspire to careers they may have previously thought were beyond their reach.

There are few known studies of tradees who undertake a career transition to become secondary schools teacher like Joe. The only systematic research identified directly targeting the concept of career transitioning from *Trade to Teacher* in Australian secondary schools was a longitudinal study undertaken by Annette Green (2006–2009). She focused on tradespersons entering secondary school teaching in the State of NSW and provided an initial insight into the complexities of a tradee undertaking a career transition to teaching. Analysis of the quality of the trade to teacher transition experience in Green's (2006) study shows it to be enhanced positively when the initial teacher education program is designed to:

1. Provide extensive blocks of continuous time to observe and develop pedagogical skills.
2. Negotiate strong partnerships with specific schools that recognised that these beginning teachers came from a diverse range of trade backgrounds
3. Recruit teacher mentors to provide role models and support to contextualise the learning for the student.

Green's (2009, p. 1) later work revealed that these tradees were potentially "a new type" of teacher, who were attempting to create a workplace within the classroom as a work-oriented learning environment.

While the career transition of a tradee to a teacher is a personal choice, successful transition is dependent on the ability of the tradee to construct secondary school teacher discourses and create a different type of identity.

### ***Discourses and identity formation***

The classroom as workplace reflects discursive constructions of identity (the tradee) as it was being reconstructed or, in Gee's (2011, p. 41) notion, "infected" secondary school teaching discourses of classroom-based learning and teaching. Further, in the career transitions from trade to teacher, discourses of the university student are also mobilised as they live between three worlds of tradee, student and teacher. Conceptually, they are forming new identities through socially contextualised roles situated in the discourses of workplaces, universities, and schools.

A tradesperson transitioning to a teacher may possess the content, language and knowledge for their teaching discipline area but initially struggle to use the appropriate school teacher and university student language. As they further develop their teaching identity, and combine this acquired content, language and knowledge with the dress code, gestures, actions, responses, values, attitudes and beliefs, a discursive transformation begins to emerge; thereby melding the worlds of trade and teacher creating a form of hybrid identity.

However, unless identification of an identity is "made to matter, through the power of symbols and ritual experiences "and artefacts, there is no identity (Jenkins, 2008, p. 6). The boundaries of identification that exist between a previous and a new identity, when combined with symbolisations characteristic of the new identity, permit identification of the new identity by others (Jenkins, 2008). If the product of the new identity has the ability to appear consistently to others over time, it allows "others to decide how to act towards them" (Jenkins,

2008, p. 143). It is now timely to explore this issue further through empirically derived research findings from a qualitatively framed case study.

### ***Research approach***

A qualitative, constructivist, interpretive case study approach was adopted to explain, interpret, analyse and critique the phenomenon of career transition from trade to teacher (Denscombe, 2010; Merriam, 2009; Stenhouse, 1984). Three research questions were posed to identify the motivations of a tradesperson to become a technology teacher in secondary schools, the support mechanisms they required throughout their career transition, and if or how they created a new identity as a teacher. In the case reported in this paper, Joe (a pseudonym) was a carpenter who enrolled in a secondary teacher education program, specialising in teaching industrial technology and design (ITD) with the initial intention to work as a secondary school ITD teacher. A National Ethics Application Form (NEAF) application was approved by Central Queensland University's Human Research Ethics Committee prior to data collection in 2011.

Joe's case was chosen for this paper because even though he achieved high levels of academic success in his university studies and glowing practicum reports from schools, he was the only participant in the study of 16 tradees who chose not to enter teaching post-graduation. His case provided an alternative view of the trade to teacher transition experience that was dissimilar to the views and experiences expressed by the majority of the participants in the study.

### ***Data collection and analysis methods***

Multiple data sources provided a demographic and a "richly descriptive" base for research analysis (Merriam, 2009, p. 179). Interviews were the primary data collection method that

was supplemented with archival data (for example, university academic transcripts, in-school practicum reports, enrolment and graduation dates). The data were analysed thematically (Bryman, 2012; Bernard & Ryan, 2010; Symons, 2009). In the first stage of data analysis, both inductive and deductive reasoning allowed initial patterns to emerge, with tentative explanations and interpretations. In the second stage of analysis, these patterns were searched for repetitions, similarities, differences, metaphorical explanations and interpretations (Bernard & Ryan, 2010). Thus the themes were constructed and Joe's narrative developed, illuminating potential reasons for his failure to launch as a secondary school teacher.

In the text that follows, Joe's words as transcribed from the interview are presented in italics. Other data extracts are acknowledged where appropriate according to type and source.

### ***Findings and discussion***

Significantly, Joe's case exhibits characteristics of a person who perceived the transition from trade to teacher differently from the other study participants. To understand Joe and his failure to launch as a secondary school teacher and find a fit, there is a need to examine his previous work history, the roles he has played in his various careers transitions and how he found himself undertaking the transition from trade to teacher.

#### ***A nomad looking for a fit***

Starting out as an apprentice Carpenter in northern Australia at 18 years of age he completed 18 months of a four year apprenticeship before he decided to "*run away*" to Sydney and join a Rock and Roll band. After 14 years of touring with the band and experiencing as he puts it, "*little sun and living a fairly unhealthy life style*", he left and worked as a Cellar Master at a five star Japanese restaurant in Sydney. After nearly a year in that role he bought a restaurant/cafe business which he managed for three years. After selling the restaurant business he took a year off work to assist his wife with their first child. He then moved into

selling real estate with his father on Sydney's north shore at the height of the first of a number of real estate booms in the early-1980s.

*I gradually became despondent with having to rent a \$200 a week fibro box in Woop-Woop and driving in and waltzing through \$10 million houses and talking to people; it just didn't seem right. So, I left that. [Joe]*

Realising that real estate was not for him he decided to finally complete his trade in carpentry.

*I had some contacts and eventually completed my apprenticeship on paper and got myself a trade contractor's licence [Joe]*

With his apprenticeship finally completed and now equipped with a contractor's licence and a young family, he felt it was time to move back to north eastern Australia.

*We saw an ad in the paper up north, for land, \$1,000 deposit, two acres by the sea. We come up here for a holiday, put the money down and, within a month or two, we moved up here, thinking that, as a carpenter and my wife as a nurse, we shouldn't have too much trouble getting work. [Joe]*

After settling the family he gained employment with a large construction business. Within seven years he worked his way up to become the construction manager of a series of multimillion dollar projects for the company. It was at this time he decided to take some time off and become a teacher.

*After about seven years into the construction business, I took two years off, no pay, to do the degree. [Joe]*

Joe's reasoning for deciding to become a teacher is bound in the context of all of his other previous career transitions; he felt it was time to move on. The long hours as a construction manager provided him little time to spend with his wife and four children and his initial

perception of teaching was beckoning under the guise that it would offer him a better lifestyle and permanent employment.

*I thought, well, I'm going to get myself a job where I get 13 weeks a year holiday at the same time as my kids and I'm going to be in a good permanent job. [Joe]*

Joe's series of career "false starts" did not conclude with a career fit with teaching (Peake & Mc Dowall, 2012, p. 395). In fact it precipitated the trigger for a period of further disillusionment, serving as a catalyst for him to eventually achieve a more meaningful career fit in the construction industry from which he came. The process of finding a fit for Joe involved positive and negative experiences that were followed by a "sense of enlightenment" culminating with a "reported love" of what he now does as a construction manager (Peake & McDowell, 2012, pp. 403-404).

Joe did not complete the transition to teacher. His goal was not realized and he faced a level of incongruence, a lack of fit for the role of secondary school teacher (Holland, 1984). He did not experience a sense of belonging; instead he felt a sense of exclusion, the awkward suspension between this old role and his new role (Sargent & Schlossberg (1988). Joe, unlike other participants in the study chose not to use the role innovation concept espoused by Nicholson (1984), which is a response to job change where the incumbent worker moulds the role of a teacher to suit their requirements.

His disillusionment with teaching was counteracted by the world of construction where he felt a sense of belonging and value. These feelings eluded him in the teaching profession he chose not to enter.

*I was just getting hammered by the local industry people to come back. You see the thing that's been kindest to me has been construction. The thing that was probably*

*least kindest to me, apart from the lecturers which were wonderful, was the whole education thing. [Joe]*

Joe perceived the construction industry to be the “*kindest*” to him while the education industry (i.e. school) was the “*least kindest*”. Yet his in-school practicum reports reveal a different story. Joe was considered to be good teacher with a bright career ahead of him. The table below summarises supervisory teachers’ feedback.

*Table 1: Joe’s in-school practicum reports summarised*

| <b>Teaching Domain</b>   | <b>Comments</b>  |
|--|--|
| Curriculum knowledge in this teaching area                                 | <i>Joe’s previous trade background is a huge bonus to his knowledge and understanding in this teaching area.</i>   |
| Planning preparation & record keeping                                      | <i>Joe’s planning and preparation is of a very high standard. Record keeping is sound.</i>   |
| Implementation use of technologies & resources lesson sequencing & content | <i>Joe’s lesson sequencing is well thought out with good use of resources.</i>   |
| Interpersonal skills   | <i>Joe’s interpersonal skills are of a high level, with both students &amp; staff.</i>   |
| Personal attitude & commitment to teaching                                 | <i>Joe shows a strong desire to be a successful teacher. His motivation is high.</i>   |
| Classroom management   | <i>Joe’s ability to assert control of a class is performed well.</i>   |
| Other comments   | <i>Joe would be a welcome asset to any ITD Department. His enthusiasm &amp; ability to inspire &amp; motivate those around him would make him a valuable asset to any school. Coupled with his dedication to this successful practicum experience, he has shown the ability of a teacher to achieve learning outcomes with students. These abilities will hold him in good stead for his future teaching career.</i> |

Joe was thought of as “a valuable asset to any ITD Department” – a dedicated, enthusiastic, inspirational teacher. He achieved the highest teacher suitably rating at that time from the State Education Department (S1). However, he was not prepared to accept the employment conditions demanded by the State teacher employing authority. Joe’s case was littered with issues of blame and disillusionment, a discussion of such issues follows.

### ***Blame and disillusionment***

Joe’s perceptions of what he would achieve as a teacher were very different from what he experienced throughout his initial teacher training. As a result he became extremely

disillusioned early in his studies with the educational bureaucracy that he encountered and their perceived lack of care towards teachers along with the petty controls placed on teachers in general.

*I don't think I really wanted to be a teacher. I think I was becoming disillusioned with actually being a teacher the more the degree exposed me to being a teacher, however, being the person I was, there was no way in the world I was going to do half a degree.*

*[Joe]*

Joe was also confronted with the fact that he found himself without a wage but still had a wife and four children to support. He was determined to complete his degree in the shortest possible time and in doing so placed enormous stress on his family relationships. Initially, he felt that graduating as a teacher with a permanent teaching position would offer him a lifestyle that had eluded him in his previous career choices. However, during his first practicum the reality of his career transition was starting become clearer and he was not feeling positive about his experiences.

*Well, one has a preconception about being a teacher before you start. I didn't realise that I was going to have to deal with 25 or 30 different kids every hour, changing over a five hour period day in, day out. I didn't realise I was going to have to be confronted with the staff room politics, I didn't realise the financial hardship that undertaking a job like that would have placed on that. So, those are the things you start to realise as you're doing it, you know. [Joe]*

Thus, disillusionment featured strongly in Joe's case as there were a number of issues that occurred over the course of his terminated transition from trade to teacher that made him feel totally disenchanted with teaching, university, school and the whole process he undertook. Three core issues were developed from the theme of blame and disillusionment that emerged

from Joe's case construction and they will be unpacked in the following section. They were: Institution and systemic failure, Profiling and the Realities of teaching.

### ***Institutional and systemic failure***

While Joe succeeded in 'cracking the codes' of the language of university, education and school through his studies and in-school practicums, however he failed to crack the code of the systems and the institutions that underpinned these organisations because he chose not to accept their conditions. Joe's disillusionment with the education system and teaching itself, evolved while he was studying for his teaching degree. His practicum experience led him to believe that his role as a teacher had very little to do with teaching and more about crowd control or child minding the next generation of welfare recipients.

*During the course of my degree, I had got the general idea that education, to a great respect, particularly in my area, was 80% behaviour management and about 20% teaching. [Joe]*

Joe undertook three of his four practicums at large state schools. His experiences were not favourable and he soon became disillusioned with the role he was required to play.

*Having done three of my pracs at state schools, where it was three and four generations of welfare recipients. I got quite disillusioned with the whole thing. [Joe]*

However, it was not only the state secondary school system that Joe became disillusioned with, but also the private school sector.

*It was a better level of education, the kids behaved a little better, but it was still very I don't know, what's that term still very controlling, very dictatory. You know: I'm the boss, this is how it goes. [Joe]*

Thus, his decision not to enter teaching can be understood in light of his in-school practicum experiences. However, besides the teacher-student situation, Joe is most critical about the dogmatic environment in schools commenting, “*You know: I'm the boss, this is how it goes*” yet it is this tight control that he espoused as a feature of his classroom teaching.

*I think this is a trap a lot of people fall into and I subscribe to the opposite is you can't be their friends and their teacher as well. It just doesn't work. Young people need boundaries. [Joe]*

Upon graduating, he also chose not to accept or perhaps understand the rules and regulations the Department of Education implements for the employment of teachers. He felt the hurdles a graduate has to overcome to gain employment are far too complex and unnecessary, alluding that the bureaucratic processes associated with gaining a teaching position are unnecessary and more of a deterrent than an incentive.

*When I'd come out of the degree, I really I didn't know what I was going to do. I was looking at getting a job as a teacher until I got something else, but you've got that probationary period and, Jesus, it's like you've done the degree, you've done all your police checks, you've done everything and you're still not through. I thought this is just way too hard and I think that kids in the education sector miss out because of the way the department handles it; they really do. So I just wasn't prepared to accept it. [Joe]*

Joe’s comment regarding children in the education sector that; “*miss out because of the way the department handles it*”, implies that the students miss out on good quality teachers like him. Implying that the better type of teacher possesses a valuable range of life and career experiences and will be challenged by the bureaucratic hurdles they must overcome to gain employment in the education system.

Originally, a key motivator of Joe's decision to enter teaching was a quest for a lifestyle that he had envisioned teaching could offer. This vision consisted of living and working where he resided on the north east coast of Australia and being paid for long holidays. However as he progressed through his degree he had conversations with other teachers concerning his lifestyle quest. He was sadly disappointed to find out that he could be forced to take up a teaching position anywhere in the state where he lived as per the mandatory country service directive of the State teacher employing authority. This was to be another part of the system that he chose not to accept.

*I come out, I do my degree, if I got an S2, I go to Woop-Woop and do my job and away we go. No, I'm far too critical and fussy for that. [Joe]*

Joe's pre-service school experiences are not unique, but he did gradually interpret them as significant signs of institutional and systemic failure. As he moved from school to school to complete his practicums, he was to encounter a number of instances which made him eventually decide that teaching was a career he no longer wished to pursue. Upon graduation, he was to encounter a series of obstacles that led him feel that the journey was not worth the effort for the financial reward he was being offered.

*I applied for my teacher's registration and I was gob smacked at the amount of paperwork and refresher courses and this and that that I had to do for what I considered to be equally as dissatisfying remuneration as say a nurse in the healing industry. It's wrong. It's all arse about. [Joe]*

His blame and disillusionment with the university as an institution escalated when he was not given enough direction as to his options for further study based on his high Grade Point Average (GPA) from his undergraduate university degree. He admits that he may not have

pursued further study post-graduation but felt let down by his perceived lack of guidance from the university.

*Right at the very end the program coordinator did say, "Maybe you should think about doing an Honours or this or that, but it wasn't really it was more of a token, you know. I didn't know about the fact that, in my final year, I could have done an honours and fast tracked to a PhD. I wasn't guided very well with the course. [Joe]*

After coming from an industry where he was respected, valued and nurtured, rising to become a construction manager from a Carpenter in seven short years, he found the institutions and the systems that underpin the education industry as cold and clinical, with little care for the graduates whom were willing to teach for them.

*You basically get your letter, teachers registration board says, "Hey, we've got you looking for a job and that's it" and then it's pretty much up to you. You either rely on your original contacts with your practicum or you get yourself out there. I think they did contact me and ask me if I was interested in a job or two but then they got me too late. I'd made my mind up. I'd gone by then. [Joe]*

Joe knows from his own experience that tradees have options. They can return to their industry if teaching fails live up their expectations. Joe, with a vast amount of life and industry experience, was a high performing student with excellent practicum reports who embarked on a transition to become a teacher.

*I took a lot of pride in anything I did and it was reflected I think about a year or two ago I was just reading through some assignments, the sense of ownership that doing the degree gave me was nice, but it really meant nothing to me in the scheme of things, because I couldn't actualise it. [Joe]*

Joe's hindsight is apparent in the previous comment "*but it really meant nothing to me in the scheme of things, because I couldn't actualise it*" is reflective of a man who never felt like a teacher, he never embraced its culture and chose not to create his own teacher identity.

### ***Profiling***

Joe has since used his education degree to enhance his career, yet continues to feel that he was not appropriately counselled as to alternative study options available to a person with his accumulated skill set. Joe entered university via the direct entry process as this was the desired process at the time. This process was considered to have a more 'personal touch' than the external entry system that exists today. However, he feels that he did not receive enough of this personal touch and that if he had been made aware of other study options, he may not have undertaken a teaching degree.

*Who sits down with each applicant and susses them out, like a discussion like this, where someone with great knowledge on the other side representing the university can say, "Hey, look, we'd love your fees, but I really don't think it's going to be the right thing for you." Or, "When can you book me?" Or, "Maybe you should go and have a look at doing this and this and this for a little bit and then" yeah. [Joe]*

His blame and disillusionment with the university was also based on the university's perceived failure to profile its student intake as to the most suitable applicants for a teaching career. He believes that the current external application system only compounds the problem

*Are they appropriately or adequately qualified, or is it just they've got their MasterCard number right? [Joe]*

From his experiences, Joe believes that not everyone is suited to teaching and that if he had some in depth profiling he may have chosen a more suitable university pathway. He has firm

beliefs on what characteristics teachers need to be successful in front of a class; characteristics that he believes he possesses, even though he chose not to teach.

*You don't want a timid little mouse standing up there in front of a bunch of 25 kids. You want a charismatic person, a person that's comfortable with their content; a person that knows that, if a drama arises, then they're confident that they've got the skills to handle that. It's more about the teacher's ability rather than the teacher's knowledge. [Joe]*

The reality of Joe's comments may resonate for many lecturers at universities, where the ability to interview or counsel students as to the best possible study option to meet their career aspirations has been removed by the introduction of an external application which is processed by state government authorities. His final comments on the issue are perhaps realistic.

*That preliminary step is very important. Just profile them. You could probably weed a lot of problems out. I'm sure that you probably have students and you're thinking, "My God, why?" [Joe]*

### ***The realities of teaching***

Joe's experiences of teaching were far from what he had anticipated. By the end of his final practicum he had run out of patience and he chose to leave.

*I'd come to the conclusion, well, I'm going to be basically a behaviour management specialist for 80% of my time at school, if I decided to proceed with that, the thing that still would have stopped me was the classroom politics. It was absolutely horrific. [Joe]*

His view of secondary schooling and the teachers is also far from flattering:

*Underpaid, overworked egomaniacs, all wanting to appear to be better than everyone else, it was just horrible. [Joe]*

Joe prided himself on the skills he had acquired through his various career transitions and envisioned eager enthusiastic students eagerly wanting to learn the skills and knowledge he had to offer. However, all this started to fade during in-school practicums concluding that the majority of his Industrial Technology and Design (ITD) classes were simply child minding centres for disruptive students. He was teaching students who were not particularly interested in acquiring the benefits of his knowledge, skills and experience, and this for him was depressing. In fact it often became a battle of who was actually in charge of the class, gradually presenting him with a disenchanting view that students had all the rights and teachers had none.

*Industrial Technology and Design, that's where they sent all the kids that no one else could handle. I didn't have a problem with that, however, there were kids that knew the system and that was very hard to deal with. I think the politically correct lobbyists didn't realise how far how too far they took it. It was basically that the child had all the rights. [Joe]*

Joe's disillusionment extended to some of the courses he was expected to study as part of his teacher education degree, believing that these failed to prepare him for the realities of teaching. Classroom management and the behavioural issues that arise when students fail to be engaged, was one of the most common challenges for pre-service and early graduates in this study. However, when in-school mentoring strategies and school policies are used effectively, other participants in the broader doctoral study commented that they were able to manage disruptive behaviour from students. It would seem from Joe's comments that he was

often left to his own devices and without effective in-school mentoring, and had to figure out how to solve the problem on his own.

Although the initial teacher education program Joe undertook, provided courses in managing classroom behaviour, Joe perceives that these courses did not prepare him for the realities of teaching. He describes it as follows.

*It wasn't real. You don't really know until you've got a 17 stone Maori kid with behavioural problems telling you how it's going to be or a 14 year old girl who knows that she could probably put you in gaol if she wanted to. They're the sorts of things, serious things, and none of that in the textbooks, none of the texts or theory really assisted with that, other than helping you understand it. [Joe]*

What Joe had experienced was more than what the textbooks had described. He had not been able to use any of the suggested strategies effectively to solve the problems he was facing at the time.

*It was almost like damage control, the whole education thing. It was just putting one fire out, putting another fire out, just trying to keep some order, not about effective delivery of curriculum and fostering the learning and facilitating the kids to teach themselves how to learn. [Joe]*

Although a career in teaching did not materialise for Joe, he still has strong opinions concerning what tradees require in a teacher education program to adequately equip them for the realities of teaching. The insight he brings to this debate is enlightening because it raises a key issue long ignored by the profession, namely developing the resilience that teachers need.

*I think what they're probably forgetting is, although they're teaching the teacher how to teach, they're not teaching the teacher how to deal with being a teacher. I mean, you're a teacher, you go and you teach. You have a shit day; the kids are driving you*

*mad. You go home. Is anyone sitting down telling you how to deal with all that stuff?*

*[Joe]*

The transitional journey from trade to teacher for Joe ceased at graduation. However, Joe has no regrets about not becoming a teacher as he views life as series of experiences that you learn from to reinvent the next phase of your life.

*I've never regretted anything. So, having left education and never taught, I do not regret it. [Joe]*

He has used the skills he learned at university to assist him in gaining further employment advancements and he has now carved out a highly paid, satisfying career as a senior construction manager. His disillusionment with a number of the aspects concerning his transition is complex; however, they are real for him and he *needed to debrief* as he puts it. In his final comments he asks a very pertinent question of the university.

*Why did no-one from the university follow up on why a student, who graduated from an education degree with honours in record time, not take up a teaching position, nearly ten years after his graduation? [Joe]*

Joe *didn't leave without the medal* on his chest, graduating with honours within three years.

After all, being the person he was, "*there was no way in the world*" he "*was going to do half a degree*" [Joe].

### ***Conclusion***

This paper has told the story of Joe, a tradesman who failed to launch into a secondary school teaching career after graduating with honours and gaining the highest teacher suitability rating available at the time. While he completed the teacher education degree, he never actually transitioned to become a teacher. He did not feel a sense of belonging or value in any

school where he undertook a practicum, although he received glowing reports from his supervising teachers. In fact the more time he spent in schools the more disillusioned he became at the thought of teaching being his next career.

Hence, the transitional journey from trade to teacher for Joe ceased at graduation from university. He had no regrets about not becoming a teacher as he viewed life as series of experiences from which you learn. Skills learned at university assisted him in further employment advancements and carved out a highly paid satisfying career as a senior construction manager. His disillusionment with this transition was real for him and formed the basis of his eventual decision not to launch into a career as a secondary school teacher.

This finding presents one person's account of failure to launch his career transition from trade to teacher. At no time during Joe's university studies or during his on-the-job in-school practicums, did he reveal dissatisfaction with his experiences as a trainee trade-based teacher. His university grades and his practicum reports revealed a well-prepared, highly skilled tradee who, from the available documentation appeared to be transitioning well. It was not until a decade later at the time of interviewing Joe for this case study research that he shared his perceptions of disillusionment of both the university and the school learning experiences.

In conclusion, the findings revealed that Joe failed to achieve his ambition to be a teacher for three reasons. First, the lifestyle choice of teaching was important but because it did not come with what he perceived to be a decent salary and conditions he was not prepared to compromise the standard of living he had worked so hard to achieve. Therefore he was not prepared to return to a first year apprenticeship teacher status in a secondary school after years establishing his industry credibility.

Second, Joe blamed the university because he was not provided with a range of study options other than teaching that he perceived may have been more suitable for him. However, Joe entered the program through a direct entry application that was followed up with a phone call for the Head of Program and the school administration support officer. He attended the orientation week at the university to gain an insight into what the degree would entail and what the expectations were of him and the university. He participated in professional development workshops where he engaged with other tradees throughout the degree. He was supervised by the university on every in-school practicum and supplied with a teacher mentor. His in-school practicum reports revealed he was becoming an exceptional teacher who had a rich career ahead of him. His academic transcript revealed he was an exceptional student.

Yet during his interview, Joe claims to have observed only a few lessons from other teachers. He chose not to seek out a mentor relationship with other teachers as he felt they had enough to do and he felt that a mentor was not required. The result was that Joe believed he was ultimately left to his own devices, did not connect with other teachers and had little respect for them. So without revealing his frustration to anyone who could have assisted him, it would have extremely difficult to ascertain his level of disillusionment and hence provide him with an alternative career pathway. There were no warnings of growing disillusionment with teaching as a career.

Joe's case demonstrated a strong sense of personal pride by not walking away from a decision once made. He had taken two years off from a well-paid career, therefore failure to complete his university studies would have not been an option for him. This is revealed in his comments: *"I didn't want to leave without the medal on my chest"* [Joe] signifying he was determined to finish the journey he had started, however he required an artefact (the symbolic medal on his chest).

Third, while universities prepare teacher graduates for the education profession, they are powerless to influence employing authorities as to the terms and conditions to which their graduates should be entitled. The transition process from university graduation to employment as a secondary teacher is long and arduous serving as a detriment for graduates with other options. For people like Joe, there also is a perceived lack of financial reward and recognition for such highly valued skill sets required in secondary schools. This means that the return to being treated as a first-year apprentice with low status, minimal remuneration, and lack of recognition, leads only to blaming others and a sense of disillusionment with this type of career transition.

Joe's failure to launch as a secondary school teacher demonstrates that the search for a career fit is an important component of our working lives. Undertaking career transitions in search of a "sense of enlightenment" (Peake & Mc Dowall, 2012, p. 403), culminating with a reported love of what you do, is a journey that many are prepared to take; even if the outcome is unexpected. In Joe's case, the outcome from his transition experiences was unexpected. He rediscovered his fit in the construction industry. While on the one hand, this may be construed as a negative outcome – a failure to launch; on the other hand, it is a positive outcome for a deeper understanding of the complex phenomenon of career transition.

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