Teaching academics in higher education: resisting teaching at the expense of research

Bev Rogers¹ · Katharine Swain¹

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Abstract

The experiences of academics caught up in the rise of teaching academic (TA) (teaching-only) roles in Australia, the UK, the USA, and Canada, are not well documented in the literature. This paper describes a recent university restructure that resulted in a significant increase in teaching-only positions being created. Despite the claims by the university that teaching-only roles demonstrate excellence and innovation in teaching, the actual experiences of TA in the last few years have highlighted a common finding of “the perceived low value of the TA role and confusion about what the role entails” (Bennett et al., 75:271–286, 2018, p. 271). We use a more local conception of regime of truth as a tool (Gore, 1993) for reflecting on possibilities for resistance and re-imagining how we might think about ourselves beyond ‘second tier’. By understanding that a reconceptualisation of ourselves is simultaneously within a given regime but also outside of it, allowing for reading the regime and thinking about the production of that regime in ways that open up possibilities for creating a space for talking and sharing both research and teaching, which is also within the ‘cultural web’ of the university.

Keywords Academic workforce · Higher education · Teaching academics · Subjectivation · Truth regime

Introduction

The experiences of academics caught up in the rise of teaching academic (TA) (teaching-only) roles in Australia, the UK, the USA, and Canada, are not well documented in the literature (Bennett et al., 2018). Even less well documented is the

✉ Bev Rogers
bev.rogers@flinders.edu.au

Katharine Swain
katharine.swain@flinders.edu.au

¹ College of Education, Psychology and Social Work, Flinders University, Bedford Park, SA 5043, Australia

experience of people, formerly in ‘balanced’ roles who make the transition to teaching-only roles. This paper describes a recent restructure (2018-ongoing) at an Australian University that resulted in a significant increase in teaching-only positions for both new people and those in formerly balanced roles. It has now resulted in an increasing separation of teaching and research. The paper seeks to contribute to the literature on teaching-only roles from the perspective of those who feel marginalised by the ‘loss’ of research. The paper is therefore partly auto-ethnographic from the reflections of two university academics impacted by the restructure and also conversations with other Teaching Specialists (TS) in the same College who met regularly over this time (and currently). It is also partly an investigation of the literature that informs the choices we might make, as a collaborative group, to question, resist, reflect and talk together to understand how the ‘truth’ of TS is established and how we might re-imagine ourselves beyond ‘second tier’ excluded from research. The gap between rhetoric and reality, as evidenced by the discrepancy between the stories “organisations tell” about valuing teaching and research equally, and the narratives “their employees feel part of”, is not new (Ramsden, 1998, p. 76). The tension between teaching and research remains “one of the few areas of consensus in the literature on higher education” (Young, 2006, p. 191).

In 2016 the Vice Chancellor of the university, launched the *2025 Agenda* which, in effect, restructured the entire university, firstly from four Faculties and fourteen Schools to six Colleges, then professional services throughout every College as well as centrally. After that, the academic restructure occurred throughout each College. This paper, specifically focuses on the last 3 years (2018–2020), which is the period of time in which, through the academic restructure, a significant number of TS positions were created and filled by a process which initially, included Voluntary Redundancies and threatened disestablishment of ‘balanced’ positions. It left little choice for some, who despite being ‘research active’ according to the definition used by the university at the time (and therefore able to supervise HDR students), were, in effect, identified as potential TS (yet un-named) through ‘draft’ Academic Structure documents, published for each College. These new TS roles actively exclude research (the ‘research’ tab was recently removed from web profile pages so that no research or publications are visible for TS) and limit access to Higher Degree Research (HDR) supervision, through moving students who had not yet completed their proposal to other supervisors and in most cases preventing access to new supervisions. Other students who had completed the proposal could continue to be supervised by TS.

Along with freezing funding to universities (McGowan, 2018, Jan 17) and increasing measures to rank universities on scholarly outputs (Zardo, 2017, Nov 28), an environment of hyper-competition induces strategising by universities, electing to spend more on HR, Marketing, Legal and other managerial processes and “employ fewer but ‘higher-producing’ researchers” (Zipin & Brennan, 2019, p. 2). This provides a context for what happened at the university central to this paper. Dominant rationales for attracting ‘star’ researchers, argue that not all universities in Australia need to or are able to excel in teaching *and* research and therefore “some should focus more on ‘teaching excellence’” at the expense of research (Griew et al., 2018; Parker et al., 2018). Zipin and Brennan (2019) argue that the call for a separation of

research and teaching misunderstands the importance of communities of teaching *informed by research/scholarship* and the need for building *researchful capacities* in students as a part of the teaching relationship. As we highlight later, universities across Australia have varying and inconsistent approaches to strategising the separation or combinations of research and teaching.

KPMG's *Reimagining Tertiary Education* report (Parker et al., 2018) argues that, not all universities have shown they can shine in both teaching and a range of research, and some should focus more on "teaching excellence" (p. 2). However, the *Review of Higher Education Provider Category Standards* (2019) clarifies that universities in Australia should continue to be defined by research *and* teaching (p. 35). This report cited, among other reasons, the importance of "quality pedagogical practices and teaching based on current research"; "ensuring students are educated with ... latest knowledge"; "the connection between research, quality teaching and positive student outcomes (commonly known as the teaching-research nexus)" (p. 31). Coaldrake (2019) summarised this by saying "there remains a strong view that a university should be a place of both teaching and research, nourishing a rich scholarly environment for students and for the benefit of the broader community" (p. 31). The major argument for the research-teaching nexus is for academics to inform their teaching through research.

This paper looks at the recent restructure in an Australian University where the appointment process for TS defines them as non-researchers. The paper looks at what happened in the university from 2018 to 2020 and then explores the circumstances across Australia. In returning to the case of our particular university, we look at how we might identify some possibilities for contesting the 'second class' nature of the TS subject, through examining the construction of the TS role in the university *as a truth regime*.

The University

After the appointment of a Vice Chancellor, plans to restructure the university emerged in 2016 as part of the *2025 Agenda* (Williams, 2016). In 2017 the University's previous structure of four Faculties and fourteen Schools was transformed into six Colleges. Professional services were restructured first to align with the new College model. It was a harsh, time-consuming and painful process where many people with much organisational and student-course knowledge were forced to apply for and usually change position or take a redundancy.

In 2018 the university embarked upon an academic restructure process which sought to create an increase in Research-Only positions, appoint TS [initially opposed by the National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU)] and increase other positions (Richardson, 2018). Colleges were formed by July 2017 and in November 2018 each College had produced a draft academic restructure document. The documents ('steered' centrally) were very similar in structure and format across all Colleges. In our College, a number of teaching-focussed teams of staff were profiled in their future positions (without being named); however, there was little doubt as to who each person was. During a brief timeline to respond (about 3 weeks) the

restructure was delayed but given the ‘green light’ to proceed at a Fair Work Commission hearing. The Commissioner recommended that the University publish final proposed structures for each College by December 12th, and consult with affected staff between December 14th and 20th 2018. The university provided for Voluntary Redundancies. The Vice Chancellor argued that the restructure would produce improvements in the university’s underlying performance, including growth in commencements and research funding (Powell, 2018). In steering the restructure towards more teaching-only positions, the Vice Chancellor defended against the NTEU critique in a radio interview by proclaiming:

Teaching specialists are a marvellous new opportunity for the very best educators to be in front of our students in our classrooms ensuring our students get the very best education possible.

In the next section of the paper, we look more broadly at the higher education sector in Australia, to understand the context for the university and see how the patterns of change match the trends in most parts of Australia.

The rise of teaching-only academic positions

In Australian universities, between 2010 and 2019 the number of full-time and fractional full-time teaching-only positions increased from 1163 to 4988 FTE (Department of Education & Training, 2020). In the same period of time the number of research-only positions increased by 2449 FTE (Fig. 1).

If we compare 2010 and 2019 this is represented as follows in Table 1.

Across the 2010–2019 period, the increases in full-time and fractional full-time staff are predominantly in teaching-only positions, research-only and other (non-academic classifications) positions having the majority (Fig. 2). However, if we look at Full-time and Fractional Full-time staff by function (Department of Education & Training, 2020) which lists teaching-only positions, research-only and teaching and research for each university, we can see a significant variation across universities in all three positions. The graph below represents universities ordered from smallest to greatest percentage of Teaching-only positions (see blue line) and shows their percentage of Research-Only and Teaching and Research positions (Fig. 3).

What is evident is a significant variation across universities illustrated in the graph below (Fig. 4), which shows Teaching and Research positions compared with Teaching-Only positions for increasing numbers of Research-Only positions. The particular university central to this paper is indicated, showing similarities with a group of 18–20 other universities in Australia.

Given the events of 2020 and the impact of COVID-19 on universities, *new* appointments and the continuation of *existing* appointments are hard to predict, although the proposed changes to degree funding by the Higher Education Reform Package, which differentiates funding for teaching not research (Australian Government, 2020) may result in an increase in Teaching-Only positions.

Figure 5 shows Australian universities ranked in order of their percentage of Teaching and Research positions. The university which is the focus of this paper

Table 1.3 FTE for Full-time and Fractional Full-time Staff by Function, 2010 to 2019

	Teaching Only		Research Only		Teaching and Research		Other		Total FTE	
	FTE	% change on previous year	FTE	% change on previous year	FTE	% change on previous year	FTE	% change on previous year	FTE	% change on previous year
2010	1,465	26.0%	13,506	3.2%	26,840	0.9%	51,140	3.5%	92,950	2.9%
2011	2,228	52.1%	14,045	4.0%	26,741	-0.4%	52,858	3.4%	95,873	3.1%
2012	2,462	10.1%	14,573	3.8%	27,357	2.3%	55,005	4.1%	99,388	3.7%
2013	2,309	-5.8%	15,602	7.1%	27,387	0.1%	55,570	1.0%	100,868	1.5%
2014	3,140	30.0%	15,443	-1.0%	27,009	-1.4%	57,048	2.7%	102,041	1.8%
2015	3,212	2.3%	14,856	-5.1%	26,932	-0.3%	58,192	2.0%	102,993	0.3%
2016	3,696	15.1%	14,617	-0.3%	26,963	0.1%	59,247	1.8%	104,523	1.5%
2017	4,061	9.9%	14,733	0.8%	27,181	0.8%	60,313	1.8%	106,287	1.7%
2018	4,655	14.6%	15,353	4.2%	27,010	-0.6%	62,005	2.8%	109,021	2.6%
2019	4,988	7.2%	15,955	3.9%	27,507	1.8%	64,255	3.6%	112,705	3.4%
% of total FTE in 2019	4.4%		14.2%		24.4%		57.0%		100.0%

Fig. 1 Number of full-time and fractional full-time teaching-only positions 2010–2019 (Department of Education & Training, 2020)**Table 1** FTE for full-time and fractional full-time staff by function, 2010–2019

	2010	2019	Difference
Teaching-only	1465	4988	3523
Research-only	13506	15955	2449
Teaching and research	26840	27507	667
Other	51140	64255	13115

shown by the vertical line. It is interesting to note that all of the universities in the state, are equal to or below the line showing Teaching and Research at less than 52% (left of the vertical line), which is in the lower range overall of the percentage of Teaching and Research positions. For this group on the left there is a corresponding peak in either Research-only or Teaching-only positions, showing in most cases, a more significant Research-Only/Teaching-Only divide than most other universities in Australia (on the right of the vertical line, although the variation across universities should be noted).

In Australia, Bentley et al. (2014) concluded that a variety of intersecting forces have had a profound impact on reconceptualising academic careers and that the “40:40:20 principle has become increasingly obsolete for academics in combined

Fig. 2 FTE for full-time and fractional full-time staff by function, 2010–2019

Fig. 3 Department of Education and Training (2020) Adapted from Table 1.8 FTE for full-time and fractional full-time staff by state, higher education institution and function, 2019. (Color figure online)

positions” (p. 371). The most common tripartite combination of teaching, research and service for academics in universities (Macfarlane, 2011) is rapidly ‘unbundling’, as a result of a variety of influences including “the massification of national systems, the application of technology in teaching and increasing specialisation of academic roles to support a more centralised and performative culture” (p. 59).

Dados et al. (2018) identified that the increase in Teaching-Only roles, for managers, is related to recognising good teachers and reducing casualisation. However, the

Fig. 4 Department of Education and Training (2020) Adapted from Table 1.8 FTE for full-time and fractional full-time staff by state, higher education institution and function, 2019

Fig. 5 Department of Education and Training (2020) Adapted from Table 1.8 FTE for full-time and fractional full-time staff by state, higher education institution and function, 2019

higher teaching load for Teaching-Only roles creates challenges for building an academic career (Bennett et al., 2018) and continues to privilege research “by increasing the workload of predominantly teaching-focussed staff” (Dados et al., 2018, p. 53). The role has “increased pressure on academics aspiring to an integrated role to push themselves to meet research expectations”.

I just think it’s created a subclass ... this guy here who’s fantastic at teaching and does great research is going to kill himself to try and get out of there and back up into *normal*. (p. 53)

The typical workload mix for Teaching-Only, with as much as 90% of workload given to teaching was perceived as a real obstacle for those wanting to move into combined Teaching and Research roles. This has been borne out in the recent research conducted by a working party of the Australian Association for Research in Education (AARE) (Brennan et al., 2020). Since research is still the main currency for promotion and winning continuing academic positions, many early career researchers appointed to Teaching-Only roles are still struggling to do research.

I complete research in any spare moment that I have, which is non-existent. I already work on completing teaching administration and marking on weekends and am doing 12-hour days Monday to Friday so unless I stop teaching as much (contractually obliged), I have no time for research without leaving zero work/life balance (Brennan et al., 2020, p. 31)

Many feel that they are still judged on the same criteria as their balanced teaching and research colleagues despite the differences in workload (Probert, 2013). Vajoczki et al., (2011, p. 29) reported that the underrating of teaching compared to research means that Teaching-Only positions can be perceived as a ‘second tier’. For Dados et al. (2018), even Scholarly Teaching Fellows (STFs) still felt ‘second class’, because Teaching-Only academics were not perceived as “real academics” (p. 56–58), engaged in research. The experience of being devalued and left off research teams and grants led by combined staff is common (Dados et al., 2018, p. 56). This was also the case in our university. Despite Teaching-Only positions being considered less desirable than traditional academic positions, they are still highly competitive, which points to the continuing oversupply of qualified and casualised early career academics perhaps set to change even more significantly in the current COVID-19 times, with many universities facing “shortfalls of hundreds of millions of dollars ... leading to drastic staff cuts” (Davies, 2020, June 4). The research-teaching nexus, confirmed by the Coaldrake review (2019) as central to defining a university, because of “the connection between research, quality teaching and positive student outcomes” (p. 31), continues to be under challenge.

Research-teaching nexus

In Australia, substantial research funding comes from revenue generated by teaching, especially from the fees of the increasing number of international students (Bentley et al., 2014, p. 362; Norton & Cherastidtham, 2015, p. 21–22). A report by the Grattan Institute entitled *The cash nexus: How teaching funds research in Australian universities* found that 20% of research dollars, comes from teaching surpluses (Norton & Cherastidtham, 2015, p. 1). This revenue is *removed from teaching* to support ‘balanced’ roles and the increasing Research-Only roles, often by appointing Teaching-Only or casual academics. With a greater dependence on competitive research grants universities now have “a bias toward recruitment of academics based on their research reputation, potentially at the expense of teaching quality” (Flecknoe et al., 2017, p. 1). Despite the *Review of Higher Education Provider Category Standards* (2019) clarifying that universities in Australia should continue to be defined by research *and* teaching (p. 35), the report also recommends that universities “conduct world standard research in at least three, or at least 30 per cent of the broad (2-digit) fields of education where courses are delivered, whichever is greater” (p. 34), maintaining the pressure for rankings in research to maintain recognition as a university. Prior to 2013, the NTEU has strongly opposed the idea of depriving any academics of the right to do research. “Being moved to a teaching-only position in this culture implied a form of punishment or loss of status, which the NTEU opposed” (Probert,

2013, p. 74). The NTEU is now supporting the appointment of teaching-focussed academics as a trade off against a reduction in sessional employment.

Despite Coaldrake's claims for "the connection between research, quality teaching and positive student outcomes" (2019, p. 31), the Grattan Institute claims that "[e]mpirical findings on the teaching-research nexus are equivocal" (Norton & Cherastidtham, 2015, p. 32). The Grattan Institute "compared university departments with high and low research output using questions in student surveys relating to teaching and the student experience" (p. 32). The results were inconclusive in that they did not "support either positive or negative generalisations about the teaching-research relationship". The authors suggest that the.

inconclusive results do not mean that the various theories about the teaching-research relationship are false. But the positive and negative theories explaining the teaching-research relationship could cancel each other out ... A teaching-research nexus could be valuable in some cases but not others. (p. 32)

Research in the post-war period in the USA has "looked for statistical associations between variables representative of research (such as numbers of publications and research grants) and teaching (such as evaluations of quality)" (Tight, 2016, p. 296). Coate et al. (2001) found evidence of six possible relationships between teaching and research—"shaped by the value-orientations of academic staff and the management of available resources" (p. 172). Scott (2005) points out that the relationship between teaching and research "is among the most intellectually tangled, managerially complex and politically contentious issues in mass higher education systems" (p. 53) and that there is a move "towards a much clearer separation between teaching and research" (p. 53). The separation of research and teaching is reinforced by research assessment exercises (for example in the UK and Australia). Pressure to publish regularly in peer-reviewed journals has been characteristic of academic workloads with "division and polarisation of 'teachers' and 'researchers' ... an almost inevitable consequence" (Sikes, 2006, p. 562).

In this next section we use Foucault's notion of truth regime to investigate and try to understand possibilities for thinking beyond "second class" (Dados et al., 2018, p. 56–58) or "second tier" (Vajoczki et al., 2011, p. 29). We adopt Gore's (1993) more localised lens for 'regime of truth', which provides us with a way to open up "practices in the formation and operation of political *and* ethical dimensions of the power-knowledge nexus" (p. 134 emphasis in original) through focussing on any discourse (in our case the 'teaching specialist' discourse) within Foucault's understanding of the circulation of power.

As a regime of truth

A regime of truth is “the strategic field within which truth is produced and becomes a tactical element in the functioning of a certain number of power relations” (Lorenzini, 2015, p. 3). Foucault identifies that in relation to regimes of truth:

there is always a certain assertion that does not belong to the logical realm ... and which has the following form: "if it is true, then I will submit; it is true, *therefore* I submit". This 'therefore' that links the 'it is true' to the 'I submit' and gives the truth the right to say "you are forced to accept me because I am the truth", even if ... we hardly notice its presence, ... this 'therefore' does not rest itself on any truth or evidence and does not arise from the truth itself in its structure and content. (Foucault, 2014, p. 94-95)

The 'you have to' is “always the result of a historical, social, cultural and ultimately 'political' production” (Lorenzini, 2015, p. 5). Every regime of truth determines the obligations of the individuals who are implicated in it and thus that they must “accept—explicitly or not, consciously or not—the specific 'therefore' that links the 'it is true' and the 'I submit'” (p. 5). Acceptance of 'I submit' takes the form of a subjection or of a subjectivation, since every regime of truth asks of the individuals who are implicated in it, *a specific self-constitution*. The idea that 'truth' gives us no choice, and necessarily forces us to accept and build up our conduct in accordance to it, is a dangerous ethico-political trap. Foucault conceives of the notion of conduct within regimes of truth as “displaced from an ethical and political context” because the framework of intelligibility for conduct loses “its ethical and political dimensions ... [by] becoming the object of scientific explanation” (Davidson, 2011, p. 36). The “emptying-out of the ethical–political content of conduct” (p. 37) through the focus of the regime of truth, makes counter-conduct, as an ethical and political activity, difficult and often seen as “a form of irrationality ... [or] a form of abnormality” (p. 37). Struggling against the subjection or subjectivity implied by the regime requires “an ethics and politics of counter-conduct” (p. 37) which has elements of both refusal and production (Foucault, 2009, p. 200). Counter-conduct is understood as “struggle against the processes implemented for conducting others” (p. 201) but also a manner of thinking which is “a critique of the way in which our conduct is governed” (Davidson, 2011, p. 37).

Gore (1993) modifies Foucault's use of regime of truth to apply it at “a more microscopic or local level than Foucault did in his writings ... [which is still] consistent with Foucault's thought on power-knowledge and discourse” (p. 50). While Foucault links “regime of truth” to 'society', Gore (1993) argues that society can be conceived at “a more local level whereby discourses and practices can contain a local politics of truth” (p. 56). What is most relevant for this discussion is that Gore (1993) emphasises that we are not saying it *is* a regime of truth but that it is helpful to examine what is happening *as* a regime of truth. The next section briefly focusses on the formation of the TS subject in relation to how the TS is described *as* a regime of truth.

Formation of the 'TS' subject

Every regime of truth requires the individuals implicated in it to engage in a specific *self-constitution*. There is always a specific subject associated with a given regime of truth, a subject who constitutes himself or herself and is constituted by this very regime of truth precisely when (and as long as) he or she accepts the *therefore* that links 'it is true' and the 'I submit'. (Cremonesi et al., 2016, p. 69)

The regime of truth for TS is linked to how research is being defined and how 'good research' subjects are being defined. There is a normalising of what is 'good' and by assumption of what is lacking in a TS. The workload allocation model is an illustration of how TS positions are viewed through allocations of up to 90% of workload allocated to teaching and no allocation for research. This is despite some people having HDR completions and research publications which would otherwise qualify for research workload.

There are two ways in which the production of the subject of the truth regime occurs: 'subjection' when the individual is required to tell the 'truth' about himself or herself in order for a certain mechanism of power to govern him or her, and 'subjectivation' which refers to the construction of oneself as a subject through practices or techniques of the self (Cremonesi et al., 2016). Subjectivation requires two moments: a *reactive* moment of 'de-subjection' which resists the mechanisms of power within a certain regime of truth, and a *creative* moment (which is actually the moment of subjectivation), by being about the invention of a different form of subjectivity, implying "practices of freedom" (Foucault, 1997, pp. 282–283). It is within this framework that it is possible to think of resistance to a given regime of truth. Contesting the form of subjectivity that is imposed "in order to build an *other* subjectivity is not an easy task ... [since the mechanisms of power give] the impression that there is no real choice to be made" (Cremonesi et al., 2016, p. 72). The possibility of refusing consent to be "governed *in this specific way*, is thus 'masked' from the beginning" (p. 73). What we see in the practices around TS that operates as a regime of truth, is a lack of attention to the ethical (in the Foucauldian sense) by excluding from consideration how people in formerly balanced roles might now come to relate to their new positions, their identity and value of their work to the university. The achievements prior to the declared date of starting the TS position are totally excluded. Foucault's (1982) notion of ethics is a kind of relationship to oneself, "self-reflection, self-knowledge ... the transformations that one seeks to accomplish with oneself as an object" (Foucault, 1990, p. 29). We make choices about how we constitute ourselves and in relation to how the regime of truth now defines us.

It is important at this time that we identify "specific techniques and practices with which we constitute ourselves" (Gore, 1993, p. 129) so that we can open up the 'micro-practices' through which power and knowledge circulate in relation to being a TS. We can engage with micro-practices to identify points of rupture, "for interrupting our current regimes and practices" (p. 130). In the project of being ethical in relation to the regime of truth for TS, we are not speaking about just

individual activities but how the group of TS responds. While reflection is individual, it calls upon the possibilities identified through group discourse. “With Foucault’s notion of ethics, we confront the technologies through which we make ourselves into subjects, through which we participate in our own subjectification” (Gore, 1993, p. 155). We have internalised the technologies that have constituted us as TS, which consist of *being removed* from ‘being included’ as a researcher, which is now a daily experience. There may be a space to make *other* choices.

.. it may be in the realm of the ethical that we have the greatest capacity to make alterations to the dangerous aspects of our regimes. The more aware we are of the practices *of self*, the greater the space for altering those practices. (Gore, 1993, p. 155 emphasis in original)

As Gore (1993) highlights, the point of action or mobilisation is to resist in ways that are possible, and for us is to recognise that the regimes of truth “need not be as they are” (p. 156). As Ball (2017, p. 69) points out, there is a *freedom* in the “capacity and opportunity to participate in one’s self-formation” which is “both a product and a disruption of various discourses ... within which it is possible to make oneself thinkable in a different way ... (Foucault, 1983)”. We can look for spaces of freedom in investigating TS *as they might be* worked out locally through an ethics that is a practice of not only resistance but imagining how we might conduct ourselves within the truth regime (Dilts, 2011). The subject is formed through.

practices of the self that proceed from the “rules, styles, and conventions” of a particular culture. To identify what practices constitute free practices requires ... precisely an account of the specific rules and practices of a specific *milieu*, of the truth games or regimes of veridiction that are in play ... (p. 143)

We must not think just about “pockets of resistance” (Kennelly & McCormack, 2014) and resisting “the use of power, but also how to conduct ourselves under those rules” (Dilts, 2011, p. 143). Our subjectivity is not separate from the truth regime. We are already constrained and governable, already subjected to systems of regulation through this regime. Our ethical practices involve thinking beyond accountability “as investments with an expected future return, but [engaging] in practices that are explicitly self-conscious of their status as forming the self *in relation to* existing rules of conduct” (p. 144 emphasis added). The task (of being self-conscious of the *rules of the truth*) “makes the question of truth—the truth concerning what one is, what one does, and what one is capable of doing—central to the formation of the ethical subject” (Foucault, 1988, p. 68).

Whereas we first thought we might challenge the system that we find ourselves in, we now understand that a reconceptualisation of ourselves as TS is both within “a given regime of veridiction, under a specific governmentality” (Dilts, 2011, p. 144) but also involves “thinking self-consciously about the production of that regime of truth” (p. 145). Informed by Foucault’s later work on subjectivity, our ethical practices might involve ‘reading’ the TS truth regime “within a particular

geography and temporality” (p. 146) of our university. The possibility of resisting it starts with understanding “a genealogical account of how that order establishes truth, and one which can therefore question the value of such truth” (p. 146). Through both ethical and political (collective) practices, we have identified two possibilities for collaborative communities.

Collaborative reflective strategies as a creative moment of subjectivation

Subjectivation requires two moments: a *reactive* moment of ‘de-subjection’ which resists the mechanisms of power within a certain regime of truth, and a *creative* moment of subjectivation. In response to the second *creative* moment, we identified two possibilities which incorporate *collaborative reflective practice-based strategies* (Kennelly & McCormack, 2014) and *communities of practice* in Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) inquiry (Al-Mahmood et al., 2020).

In the first case (Kennelly & McCormack, 2014), the authors suggest that reflective conversations about teaching go beyond their initial ‘hidden’ locations to form bigger networks, promoting a culture that advocates for teaching and learning as *well as* research. Kennelly and McCormack (2014) write from the perspective of the Talking about Teaching and Learning (TATAL) project co-sponsored by ACT branch of Higher Education Research and Development Society of Australasia (HERDSA) and the University of Canberra, whose prime focus is collaboratively supporting the writing of individual teaching philosophy statements and compilation of teaching portfolios (p. 8–10) which serve the purposes of supporting teaching awards, promotion and grant applications, key components of the symbolic, structural and power dimensions of the “cultural web” (p. 8–10) of the university.

In the second case (Al-Mahmood et al., 2020, p. 83), the authors suggest that communities of cross-disciplinary practice can show how a “*love for and of teaching* resists the ‘cascades of neoliberalism’ that permeate (Connell, 2013)” the university. This approach comes from Teaching Scholar Development Programs (TSDPs) which have evolved across the USA, Canada, the UK, and Australia. There are similar purposes in support for awards, promotion and professional development but perhaps a stronger focus on extended support for publication and inquiry, creating the potential for investigating the research/teaching nexus and the perceived ‘second class’ nature of teaching-only roles.

Both possibilities could support a reconceptualisation of ourselves as TS, using the *creative* moment of subjectivation. In the processes of reflective practices as a group, we can come to understand how the truths of the research/teaching divide come about, individually and collectively. Consistent with establishing an “account of how that order establishes truth” (Dilts, 2011, p. 146), Ball (2017, pp. 77–79) suggests that a practical way forward identifies three elements of educational practices which might be embedded in the two possibilities above. These are: (1) an environment that encourages experimentation and the space to ‘start again’; (2) an awareness of one’s current condition and (3) an attitude or disposition to critique. Combining elements from both cases above (collaborative reflective-based strategies

and communities of practice) with Ball's (2017) three elements of educational practices was seen as a possibility through the reading and writing group established by a small number of TSs. By being focussed on engaging with reading and writing papers/chapters through collective discussion about particular issues related to teaching, we also see ourselves as inquirers into our teaching and the context of the university. The 'safe' environment allows exploring scholarship with its implications for contributing to the field. This also now finds a place within the newly developing university 'College Academies' for teaching-focussed positions, which are to become part of 'cultural web' of the university.

Conclusion

Despite the claims by the university that TS "demonstrate excellence and innovation in pedagogical matters" (University Vision, 2018, p. 5), the actual experiences of TS in the last few years have highlighted the common finding of "the perceived low value of the... role and confusion about what the role entails" (Bennett et al., 2018, p. 271). It has helped us to see that what the university enacts in relation to TS might be viewed *as* a localised regime of truth, which creates a TS subject, essentialised and invested with identities of deficit or second class. The discourse which divides research and teaching "works at least partly because we as academics work it" (Nixon et al., 2001, p. 238). Making choices to question, resist, reflect and talk together as an ethico-political practice, brings hopefulness that we can *enact* the research-teaching nexus *within* the truth regime by understanding how the regime establishes truth and therefore having choices.

We use a more local conception of regime of truth as a tool (Gore, 1993) for reflecting on possibilities for resistance and re-imagining how we might think about ourselves beyond 'second tier'. By understanding that a reconceptualisation of ourselves as TS is simultaneously within "a given regime of veridiction" (Dilts, 2011, p. 144) but also outside of it in reading the regime and "thinking self-consciously about the production of that regime of truth" (p. 145), we can combine elements from both collaborative reflective-based strategies and communities of practice with Ball's (2017) three elements of educational practices to create a space for 'starting again', 'reading' the circumstances of the truth regime, and having a disposition to question, through talking and sharing both research *and* teaching, which is also within the 'cultural web' of the university.

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Bev Rogers is a Lecturer in Leadership and Management at Flinders University in South Australia. Bev was previously a secondary principal in both country and disadvantaged areas of Adelaide, and Director of Teaching and Learning within the Department of Education and Child Development, prior to joining Flinders University in 2014. Her current research examines and challenges current dominant and culturally limited Western models of educational leadership, exploring culturally sensitive leadership interactions in diverse contexts. It also seeks to understand the impacts of professional learning on leaders' practice and the struggle, within the current policy context, to resist total compliance in finding agency for responding to contextual realities.

Katharine Swain was Primary Program Coordinator, Director of First Year Studies and Lecturer Middle Schooling at Flinders University from 2015 to 2020. Her research focus was assessment and middle schooling. Katharine retired from Flinders University in early 2021.