



Looking back to move forward: Exploring a novice lecturer's experiences of transitioning from Basic Education to Higher Education

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to elucidate on an early career academic's lived experiences of transitioning from teaching in Basic Education (BE) to lecturing in Higher Education (HE), emphasising the development and application of pedagogical skills in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL). Through a qualitative narrative self-study approach, vlogs and visual representations were thematically analysed to identify key themes in moving from BE to HE. The objective of this paper was to reflect on how past experiences of teaching in BE influence lecturing in HE. Findings reveal that the novice lecturer often draws upon foundational skills acquired during teaching experiences from BE, which serve as a foundation for developing effective teaching practices in HE. The Transformative Learning Theory underpins the study and underscores the importance of structured support systems, changing identities, and professional development programmes in facilitating this transition from teaching to lecturing. The research contributes to a deeper understanding of the dynamics of scholarship and learning for novice lecturers in HE, offering insights for HE institutions and educational practitioners aiming to enhance teaching quality, academic experiences and overall success.

Keywords: Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, Early Career Academic, Reflective Practice, Professional Development, Lived Experiences.

INTRODUCTION

The transition from teaching in Basic Education (BE) to lecturing in Higher Education (HE) is a profound professional and personal shift. While both sectors share the common goal of facilitating learning, they differ significantly in pedagogical expectations, student demographics, institutional culture, and academic responsibilities. For early career academics, this transition often entails a reconfiguration of identity, teaching philosophy, and professional practice. Despite the growing number of teachers making this shift, scholarly attention has predominantly focused on seasoned academics, leaving a gap in understanding the nuanced experiences of novice lecturers. In extant literature, not much attention has been paid to dilemmas facing emerging researchers in teacher education institutions, particularly in the African context.¹ This paper thus attempts to contribute to the discourse surrounding the experiences of novice lecturers.

¹ Patrick Senderayi, Sihle Patience Senderayi, and Bekithemba Dube, "Esoteric Rumination: Can Emerging Researchers in Zimbabwean Teachers Colleges Genuinely Disengage the Publish or Perish Intonation?," *E-Journal of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences*, April 5, 2024, 380–92, <https://doi.org/10.38159/ehass.2024542>.

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Though this study emanates from a larger research project, this paper addresses that gap by exploring the researcher's lived experiences. The researcher is a novice pre-service teacher educator of English who has recently transitioned from teaching in BE to lecturing in HE. He is a novice lecturer at a South African private HE institution, in the discipline of English, and thus, this proposed study foregrounds an emphasis on English, which lays the foundation for the majority of South African pre-service teacher education programmes.²

The objective of this paper was to reflect on how past experiences of teaching in BE influence lecturing in HE. Through a narrative self-study approach, this paper explores how the researcher utilised the foundational pedagogical skills gained from BE, and then adapted and recontextualised them in HE, as well as how this process is shaped by the principles of the SoTL and the Transformative Learning Theory.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Transitioning from BE to HE

In Murray's research spanning several departments, at various HE institutions in England, it was maintained that there is a need to support the transition of schoolteachers appointed to HE and that that transitioning from BE to HE entails a fundamental shift from a practice-oriented to a theory-driven educational paradigm.³ This shift introduces a range of new challenges for novice teacher educators, often described as a turbulent and emotionally taxing journey marked by internal conflict and professional tension.⁴ While schoolteachers are well-versed in the structured dynamics of BE classrooms, the HE environment demands a distinct set of competencies, including research engagement, academic writing, and advanced pedagogical strategies. This transition frequently involves a steep learning curve, underscoring the need for targeted support and professional development to help educators adapt effectively to the rigors of HE.⁵

Challenges Faced

Several studies have highlighted difficulties that novice teacher educators face in their transition from BE to HE.⁶ These transition issues, relate to adapting to the new demands, include uncertainty about their actual new professional roles, difficulties in adjusting to the pedagogical skill set required to work with older students, concerns about the adequacy of the professional and academic knowledge bases necessary for work in HE, and the lack of collaborative working environments that facilitate the informal, reflective workplace learning.⁷

Professionals in HE, particularly teacher educators, frequently juggle multiple responsibilities, including those of being a researcher, instructor, mentor, and counsellor.⁸ The extent to which these roles are enacted often depends on the specific context and the personal or professional demands involved. Research and teaching are commonly perceived as distinct functions, with academic staff typically categorised as either “master teachers” or “researchers.”⁹

² Thelma Mort, “Improving South African Student Teachers’ English Language Skills: An Argument for the Assessment Strategies of the PrimTED Language Teaching Project,” *African Journal of Teacher Education* 12, no. 1 (2023): 161–78.

³ Jean Murray, “Teacher Educators’ Constructions of Professionalism: A Case Study,” *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education* 42, no. 1 (2014): 7–21.

⁴ Wood and Borg, “The Rocky Road: The Journey from Classroom Teacher to Teacher Educator.”

⁵ Murray, “Teacher Educators’ Constructions of Professionalism: A Case Study.”

⁶ Martin Braund, “Teacher Educators’ Professional Journeys: Pedagogical and Systemic Issues Affecting Role Perceptions,” *Africa Education Review* 12, no. 2 (2015): 309–30.

⁷ Pete Boyd and Kim Harris, “Becoming a University Lecturer in Teacher Education: Expert School Teachers Reconstructing Their Pedagogy and Identity,” in *The Professional Development of Teacher Educators* (Routledge, 2014), 20–34.

⁸ Murray, “Teacher Educators’ Constructions of Professionalism: A Case Study.”

⁹ Rajendra Chetty and Fred Lubben, “The Scholarship of Research in Teacher Education in a Higher Education Institution in Transition: Issues of Identity,” *Teaching and Teacher Education* 26, no. 4 (2010): 813–20.

Personal and Professional Competency Issues

Teacher educators are expected to have a well-structured understanding of teaching and learning, as this forms the foundation of sound professional judgment.¹⁰ They should be capable of drawing on this knowledge to justify their actions and make well-informed decisions.¹¹ Additionally, the importance of personal qualities, such as confidence, dedication, receptiveness to feedback, and a strong professional ethos, are emphasised as essential components of effective professional practice, alleviating the issue of unnecessary anxiety.¹²

The issue of stress and burnout among novice lecturers in South African HE is becoming increasingly prominent, driven by a combination of systemic and situational pressures.¹³ Recent research underscores the complexity of these challenges, which include overwhelming workloads, difficulties in achieving a sustainable work-life balance, and a lack of adequate institutional support.¹⁴

Excessive workloads were identified as a major factor contributing to stress and burnout among academic staff.¹⁵ Novice lecturers, in particular, often face the challenge of managing multiple roles, including teaching, research, and administrative tasks, which can quickly become overwhelming.¹⁶ This demanding workload frequently leads to persistent stress and, ultimately, burnout. The added pressure to publish and secure research funding further intensifies these difficulties, making it increasingly hard for lecturers to safeguard their mental health and overall well-being. It is also emphasised that teacher educators must navigate the dual demands of teaching and producing publishable research, adding to the complexity of their professional responsibilities and managing a healthy balance.¹⁷

Achieving a healthy work-life balance is a noteworthy challenge in academia. The demanding nature of academic roles often requires extended working hours, which can intrude on personal time and strain relationships, ultimately diminishing overall life satisfaction. When boundaries between work and personal life blur, it can lead to ongoing stress that adversely affects both mental and physical health.¹⁸ This issue is especially acute for novice lecturers, who may feel compelled to overextend themselves in an effort to establish their credibility in their new role.

Institutional Support

Institutional mentorship and support systems are vital in alleviating these pressures. Effective mentorship provides novice lecturers with the guidance and reassurance needed to navigate their responsibilities more confidently. However, the availability and quality of such support can vary widely across institutions. Research from Australia suggests that strong mentorship practices significantly enhance the professional growth and social integration of novice lecturers, helping to reduce feelings of isolation and stress.¹⁹

¹⁰ Christopher Winch, Alis Oancea, and Janet Orchard, "The Contribution of Educational Research to Teachers' Professional Learning: Philosophical Understandings," *Oxford Review of Education* 41, no. 2 (2015): 202–16.

¹¹ Anne Edwards and Harry Daniels, "The Knowledge That Matters in Professional Practices," in *Professional Learning in Changing Contexts* (Routledge, 2016), 39–58.

¹² Michael Eraut, "The Acquisition and Use of Educational Theory by Beginning Teachers," *Action and Reflection in Teacher Education* 69 (1994): 88.

¹³ Nicolene Barkhuizen, Sebastiaan Rothmann, and Fons J R Van De Vijver, "Burnout and Work Engagement of Academics in Higher Education Institutions: Effects of Dispositional Optimism," *Stress and Health* 30, no. 4 (2014): 322–32.

¹⁴ Amber D Rieder et al., "Improving Access to Early Intervention for Autism: Findings from a Proof-of-Principle Cascaded Task-Sharing Naturalistic Developmental Behavioural Intervention in South Africa," *Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Mental Health* 17, no. 1 (2023): 64.

¹⁵ Biswaranjan Paital and Kabita Das, "Spike in Pollution to Ignite the Bursting of COVID-19 Second Wave Is More Dangerous than Spike of SAR-CoV-2 under Environmental Ignorance in Long Term: A Review," *Environmental Science and Pollution Research* 29, no. 57 (2022): 85595–611.

¹⁶ Barkhuizen, Rothmann, and Van De Vijver, "Burnout and Work Engagement of Academics in Higher Education Institutions: Effects of Dispositional Optimism."

¹⁷ Diane Mayer et al., "Teacher Educators and 'accidental' careers in Academe: An Australian Perspective," in *Academic Work and Identities in Teacher Education* (Routledge, 2016), 7–20.

¹⁸ Ann Darwin and Edward Palmer, "Mentoring Circles in Higher Education," *Higher Education Research & Development* 28, no. 2 (2009): 125–36.

¹⁹ Victoria Clarke and Virginia Braun, "Teaching Thematic Analysis: Overcoming Challenges and Developing Strategies for Effective Learning," *The Psychologist* 26, no. 2 (2013).

Furthermore, institutional initiatives such as wellness programmes and policies aimed at managing workloads and promoting work-life balance are essential. Universities that prioritise staff well-being often see improvements in job satisfaction, productivity, and staff retention. These efforts not only benefit individual lecturers but also contribute to a more resilient and committed academic workforce.²⁰

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Jack Mezirow's Transformative Learning Theory provides a robust framework for understanding the cognitive and emotional shifts that occur during professional transitions. According to Mezirow, transformative learning involves a disorienting dilemma that prompts critical reflection, leading to a fundamental change in perspective.²¹ This theory is particularly relevant for teachers from BE transitioning into HE, as they often encounter unfamiliar pedagogical landscapes that challenge their established beliefs and practices.

The ten-phase process of transformative learning, beginning with a disorienting dilemma and culminating in reintegration with a new perspective, mirrors the journey of novice lecturers adapting to HE.²² This framework allows for an exploration of how the researcher critically reassessed teaching identities and practices in response to new institutional demands.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative narrative self-study methodology, which is particularly suited for exploring personal experiences and professional identity formation. This paper sought to understand how the principal researcher, a novice pre-service teacher educator of English, interpreted experiences from teaching in BE to HE, as well as how he constructed his world, and what meaning was attributed to the experiences.²³ The narrative inquiry methodology largely arose from the need to study teacher knowledge, and teacher knowledge itself is narrative in nature, thus narrative inquiry was cemented as the grounding for this research.

Self-Study

The self-study approach allows for introspective analysis while maintaining academic rigor, as even though the phrase self-study may imply an exclusive or individual approach to researching practice, in reality, self-studies are significantly aided by drawing on other views and reframing of events, resulting in ideas, facts, and information that need stepping beyond the self.²⁴ Transcending personal perspectives is essential, as a key aim of self-study is to gain more profound insights into how the processes of teaching about teaching intersect with and inform the processes of learning about teaching.²⁵

It also aligns with SoTL's emphasis on reflective practice and contributes to the broader discourse on teaching and learning in HE and, more specifically, for teacher education, as lecturing pre-service teachers is an inimitable form of education.²⁶

²⁰ David Coldwell et al., "Academic Citizenship and Wellbeing: An Exploratory Cross-Cultural Study of South African and Swedish Academic Perceptions," *South African Journal of Higher Education* 30, no. 1 (2016): 80–105.

²¹ Lisa M Baumgartner, "Fostering Transformative Learning in Educational Settings.," *Adult Literacy Education* 1, no.1 (2019): 69–74.

²² Denise Wood and Tracey Borg, "The Rocky Road: The Journey from Classroom Teacher to Teacher Educator," *Studying Teacher Education* 6, no. 1 (2010): 17–28.

²³ Elizabeth J Tisdell, Sharan B Merriam, and Heather L Stuckey-Peyrot, *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation* (John Wiley & Sons, 2025).

²⁴ John Loughran, "Researching Teacher Education Practices: Responding to the Challenges, Demands, and Expectations of Self-Study," *Journal of Teacher Education* 58, no. 1 (2007): 12–20.

²⁵ D Jean Clandinin, F Michael Connelly, and Anne M Phelan, "Shaping a Professional Identity: Stories of Educational Practice," *Alberta Journal of Educational Research* 46, no. 3 (2000): 288.

²⁶ Nonceba Cynthia Mbeshu-Mhlauli, "The Trajectories of Arts and Culture Students Transitioning from Rural Secondary Contexts to Higher Education: A Self-Study of Practice," *E-Journal of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences*, September 15, 2023, 1089–1100, <https://doi.org/10.38159/ejass.2023496>.

Principal Participant-Researcher

While the research is from a larger study, this paper focuses solely on the 28-year-old principal researcher, who has been a novice pre-service teacher educator of English in HE for over two years, following being a secondary school teacher in BE for just over four years prior.

Data Generation and Analysis

Data were generated through semi-private video blog (vlog) recordings and visual representations of the novice lecturer's journey from teaching in BE to lecturing in HE.

The digital era has introduced a wide array of new media formats, with vlogging becoming notably popular. Baskara advocates the use of vlogs as an excellent platform for teachers to share ideas, thoughts, reflections, and knowledge within the SOTL.²⁷ Parkes and Kajder thus proposed this more multimodal approach as a creative way to engage teachers in reflective practice and the development of teacher agency.²⁸

Incorporating vlogging into academic research serves as a valuable addition to traditional data sources, offering real-time, varied perspectives and rich qualitative insights. This method enhances research by providing up-to-date, nuanced viewpoints and naturalistic data, effectively addressing the limitations of more conventional approaches.²⁹

As an arts-based data generation strategy, the researcher created a visual representation that linked his experiences from BE to HE, as many narrative inquirers utilise artefacts to trigger the telling of stories.³⁰ Artefacts include, photographs or memory box items, amongst others, to trigger ideas and memories and to stimulate the sayings of the researchers' experiences.³¹ The researcher's transcribed vlogs and visual representations were then thematically analysed to identify recurring patterns and insights into the transition from BE to HE.

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The following themes were extrapolated:

Adapting teaching methodologies

The move from teaching in BE to lecturing in HE required an adaptation and shift in teaching strategies, which was welcomed as it got the researcher out of the constraints of being an English teacher in the upper secondary school context:

"I left basic education because of feeling sort of closed down, locked up and it was a bit too structured. A lot is required from educators, especially language educators, English educators in general... as it is a compulsory subject, so we teach all full classes. Approximately 45 students per class, 6 lessons for the day. Some days I used to teach 6 out of 6 periods. Plus, I used to have intervention classes for my matric students after school. Even in the holidays, I used to be called in, and it did become quite a bit [to deal with], and I felt like my personal time or time I needed for myself to breathe was not given..."

- Vlog 04

As much as he enjoyed teaching in BE, the administrative and extra-curricular activities were time-consuming, and he thus decided to move out of BE into HE. He acknowledged that this would be a shift, but it was a transition that he believed he needed, as the participant's account describes a

²⁷ F X Risang Baskara, "Humanistic Language Learning in the 21st Century Classroom: A Brief Look at Practice and Application," in *Seminar Dies Ke-24 Fakultas Sastra*, April, 2017, 1–8.

²⁸ Kelly A Parkes and Sara Kajder, "Eliciting and Assessing Reflective Practice: A Case Study in Web 2.0 Technologies.," *International Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education* 22, no. 2 (2010): 218–28.

²⁹ Ignat Kulkov et al., "Leveraging Podcasts as Academic Resources: A Seven-Step Methodological Guide," *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 23 (2024): 16094069241266196.

³⁰ D Jean Clandinin and Vera Caine, "Narrative Inquiry," in *Reviewing Qualitative Research in the Social Sciences* (Routledge, 2013), 166–79.

³¹ D Jean Clandinin, *Engaging in Narrative Inquiry* (Routledge, 2022).

disorienting dilemma.³² This arose from excessive workload, inflexible scheduling, and erosion of personal time in BE, which are conditions documented to erode teacher autonomy and contribute to burnout.³³

The ensuing critical reflection challenges assumptions about teaching as a sustainable profession, aligning with Mezirow's model of transformative learning through frame-of-reference disorientation and critique.³⁴ Transitioning to HE allowed greater professional agency, facilitating the adoption of adaptive, student-centred pedagogies and enabling professional identity reconstruction, as lecturers reposition themselves within academic roles.³⁵ This shift illustrates how structural constraints in BE can trigger transformative learning processes that empower novice lecturers to renegotiate roles and embrace adaptive methodologies in HE.

One of the most significant themes in transitioning from teaching in BE to lecturing in HE is adapting teaching methodologies, particularly to suit adult learners. In BE, teaching is often structured, directive, and curriculum-driven. In contrast, HE demands a more facilitative, inquiry-based approach that encourages critical thinking and independent learning.

In BE, the researcher utilised a more teacher-centred approach and slowly transitioned to a more student-centred approach in HE, as he felt he had the freedom and flexibility (represented by the wings and open arms) to do so:

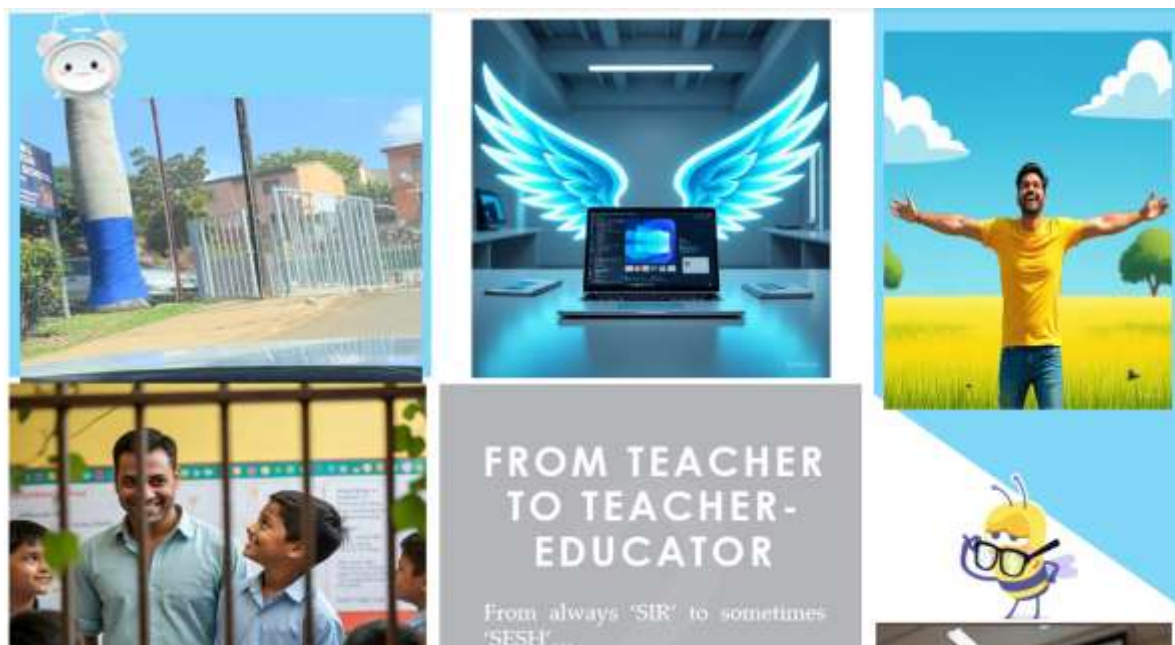


Figure 1: Visual Representation of moving from a 'prison-like' environment to a more flexible one

The narrative data revealed that he was initially unsure about relinquishing control in the BE classroom. However, through reflective practice in HE, he began to adopt more student-centred strategies, such as flipped classrooms, experience-based learning, and dialogic teaching. These shifts

³² Jack Mezirow, "Learning to Think like an Adult," *Learning as Transformation: Critical Perspectives on a Theory in Progress*, 2000, 3–33.

³³ Cheyeon Ha, Tim Pressley, and David T Marshall, "Teacher Voices Matter: The Role of Teacher Autonomy in Enhancing Job Satisfaction and Mitigating Burnout," *PloS One* 20, no. 1 (2025): e0317471.

³⁴ Esther S Friedman, "Teachers, Know Before Whom You Stand: Training Educators to Confront Pedagogies of Presumption," *Journal of Jewish Education*, 2025, 1–27.

³⁵ Louise Campbell et al., "Transitioning Identities in Professional Education: An Appreciative Enquiry," *Research in Post-Compulsory Education* 29, no. 4 (2024): 623–41.

align with Mezirow's concept of perspective transformation, wherein educators critically reassess and modify their teaching philosophies.³⁶

Managing diverse student cohorts

HE classrooms are characterised by diversity in age, background, academic preparedness, and learning styles. Unlike BE, where students are relatively homogenous in age and developmental stage, HE requires a nuanced understanding of adult learning principles.

For instance, gender differences in degree completion tendencies have been observed, with female students generally demonstrating greater persistence. This is often attributed to their belief that obtaining a degree enhances their societal standing. In contrast, male students tend to exhibit a higher intention to drop out and report encountering more obstacles in completing their studies. Their motivation to persist through academic programs appears comparatively lower.³⁷ It is factors like these that require novice lecturers to be able to manage their diverse students' needs, and they often draw upon their experiences from BE to manage their cohorts now, in HE.

The researchers' prior experience in BE provided a strong foundation in differentiated instruction, classroom management, and formative assessment. These skills proved invaluable in addressing the varied needs of HE students. He, however, also had to develop new competencies, such as facilitating academic writing, supporting digital literacy, and fostering self-directed learning:

"I'm not the most technologically advanced person. So, there are a lot of things that I learnt through tutorials. They did have a little bit of training during the orientation about using the learning management system and stuff..."

- Vlog 04

It was revealed in Kobusingye et al.'s findings that COVID-19 pushed institutions of learning to espouse the use of technologies to teach skills and to deliver material that some students and lecturers were not accustomed to.³⁸ This transition to online and hybrid teaching and learning made some students contemplate dropping out of HE, as the lack of skills and capacity building frustrated some students. Based on that finding, HE institutions should devise a model for capacitating and developing students and lecturers in meaningful online engagement classes. As a BE teacher, the researcher was equipped to teach students in the traditional context of the classroom; however, when the shift to online teaching came about, he had to adapt to the virtual reality.

This emphasises the importance of explicit pedagogies in developing teacher identity during transitional phases.³⁹ The lecturer's ability to integrate BE strategies into HE contexts illustrates the continuity and adaptability of pedagogical knowledge across educational sectors.

In BE, the researcher also established authority for classroom management, as he adopted a strict, authoritarian teaching style to maintain discipline:

"I used the general authoritarian method, where I was quite strict with learners, mostly standing. I stood at the front of the class, taught my lesson, and demanded silence. Most of the time, it worked fine. However, I do feel that I did not create many relationships with learners because of the strict persona that I had."

Vlog 03

While effective for control, this approach limited relational depth with learners, prompting later reflection. In HE, he moved away from being a strict authoritarian to an approachable teacher educator. His reflections revealed that he is more relaxed and conversational with students in HE.

³⁶ Mort, "Improving South African Student Teachers' English Language Skills: An Argument for the Assessment Strategies of the PrimTEd Language Teaching Project."

³⁷ Loyce Kiiza Kobusingye, Newlin Marongwe, and Rogers Mageyo, "Why They Contemplate Leaving: Exploring the Factors That Drive the High Dropout Intention Rate among University Teacher Trainees in Post-COVID Uganda and South Africa," *E-Journal of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences*, March 22, 2024, 301–18, <https://doi.org/10.38159/ehass.20245312>.

³⁸ Linda la Velle, "Teacher Education: The Transformation of Transitions in Learning to Teach," *Journal of Education for Teaching* 46, no. 2 (March 14, 2020): 141–44, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02607476.2020.1737374>.

³⁹ la Velle, "Teacher Education: The Transformation of Transitions in Learning to Teach."141-144.

“...in HE, I am a little freer to actually smile with the students, to actually speak with them without losing that discipline...in higher education, I feel more comfortable. You know, having a conversation with them.”

Vlog 04

The shift in environment allowed for a more balanced and authentic teaching style.

Integrating prior BE experiences into HE instruction

Pedagogical continuity is evident, as practical knowledge from teaching in BE is often used as the foundation for lecturing in HE. The researcher frequently draws upon BE experience to illustrate concepts and guide pre-service teachers:

“I tend to always speak to students about my experiences in basic education, and I see that they enjoy hearing these real-life experiences...”

Podcast 04, pg.3

The above highlights the pedagogical value of autobiographical narrative in HE. This practice aligns with narrative pedagogy, which emphasises the continuity of experience.⁴⁰ These positions' personal stories as tools for meaning-making and relational engagement.⁴¹

Sharing lived experiences from BE creates authentic connections between theory and practice, fostering student engagement and motivation. Research shows that autobiographical storytelling enhances classroom participation and deepens conceptual understanding by situating abstract content within real-world contexts.⁴² Students perceive such narratives as credible and relatable, which strengthens trust and promotes dialogic learning.⁴³

Real-world classroom experience thus enhances the credibility of teacher educators and enriches the learning experience for future teachers. Rather than discarding his BE background, the novice lecturer found that many foundational skills, such as lesson planning, scaffolding, and formative feedback, were transferable to HE. These skills served as a scaffold for developing more advanced teaching practices aligned with SoTL.

Integrating prior teaching experiences also serves as a mechanism for professional identity negotiation during the transition to HE. As Groenewald and Arnold mention, novice lecturers often draw on their BE histories to establish authority and authenticity in new academic spaces.⁴⁴ This process reflects Wenger's notion of identity as a trajectory, where past experiences inform present practices and future aspirations.⁴⁵ By narrating these experiences, lecturers bridge the gap between their former teacher identity and emerging academic identity, reinforcing agency and confidence.

From Mezirow's transformative learning lens, autobiographical sharing represents critical reflection and perspective transformation. The researcher reframes prior experiences not as constraints but as resources for adaptive pedagogy. This reflective integration enables a shift from compliance-driven teaching to student-centred approaches, positioning the novice teacher-educator as a co-constructor of knowledge rather than a transmitter.⁴⁶

For instance, the lecturer's experience with formative assessment in BE informed his use of low-stakes quizzes and peer feedback in HE. Similarly, his understanding of classroom dynamics helped him foster inclusive and participatory learning environments for his students in HE. This helps him to better prepare student teachers to flourish in their training and beyond by fostering self-efficacy,

⁴⁰ John Dewey, “Experience and Education: Kappa Delta Pi,” *International Honor Society in Education*, 1938.

⁴¹ Trudy Ambler, Puspha Sinnayah, and Joanna Lim, “Exploring Experience: Teacher Narratives and Narratives of Teaching,” *Education Sciences* (MDPI), 2024).

⁴² Kartika Prananto et al., “Perceived Teacher Support and Student Engagement among Higher Education Students—a Systematic Literature Review,” *BMC Psychology* 13, no. 1 (2025): 112.

⁴³ Stephen D Brookfield, “Critical Theory and Transformative Learning,” *The Handbook of Transformative Learning: Theory, Research, and Practice*, 2012, 131–46.

⁴⁴ Emma Groenewald and Laura Arnold, “Teacher Professional Identity: Agentic Actions of a Novice Teacher in a Challenging School Context,” *Teachers and Teaching* 31, no. 3 (2025): 453–70.

⁴⁵ Etienne Wenger, “Identity in Practice,” *Pedagogy and Practice: Culture and Identities*, 2008, 105–14.

⁴⁶ Jack Mezirow, “Transformation Theory out of Context,” *Adult Education Quarterly* 48, no. 1 (1997): 60–62.

offering reflective spaces, and prioritising well-being.⁴⁷ This integration of prior experience thus reflects the cumulative nature of professional learning and supports the notion that teaching expertise is contextually situated but broadly applicable, and makes the learning and teaching of course content more effective and inclusive.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of this study have several suggestions for HE institutions, such as having structured induction programmes. Institutions should develop comprehensive induction programs that address the unique needs of lecturers transitioning from teaching in BE to lecturing in HE. These programmes should include mentorship, pedagogical training, and opportunities for reflective practice, to better assist the novice lecturer with the transition. Effective communication strategies during these processes will also assist not only in improving institutional reputation but also in establishing relationships with novice academics.

Recognition of prior experience should be acknowledged by hiring and promotion policies, as the value of BE experience in shaping effective HE teaching must be recognised, especially in teacher education. This recognition can enhance the confidence and retention of early career academics, as a novice teacher educator of English who has practical BE experience, is able to take authentic scenarios into the HE lecture room.

All HE institutions should encourage and support novice lecturers in engaging with SoTL through workshops, research funding, and publication opportunities. This engagement fosters a scholarly identity and contributes to teaching excellence.

Professional development initiatives should be inclusive, context-sensitive, and aligned with the principles of transformative learning. They should empower educators to critically reflect on their practice and adapt to evolving educational landscapes.

CONCLUSION

The transition from Basic Education to Higher Education is a complex, transformative journey that reshapes pedagogical practices, professional identities, and scholarly engagement. This narrative self-study reveals that foundational skills from BE serve as an asset in HE, providing a scaffold for effective teaching and learning. Grounded in *Transformative Learning Theory* and SoTL, the study highlights the importance of reflective practice, structured support, and institutional recognition in facilitating this transition. By shedding light on the lived experiences of early career academics, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of the dynamics of teaching and learning in HE and the challenges novice lecturers experience. It offers practical insights for educators, institutions, and more specifically for staff development programmes committed to enhancing academic quality and supporting the professional growth of novice lecturers.

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⁴⁷ Sheokarah, Jennifer. "Disorienting dilemmas, self-efficacy and well-being: Exploring student teachers' perceptions of unpreparedness to teach English." *Journal of Student Affairs in Africa* 13, no. 2 (2025): 103-123.

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