Chapter 1
Critical Perspectives On Teachers
And Teaching: An Appreciative
Examination

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Abstract With increasing levels of teacher accountability, more knowledge and
an understanding of student achievement in reading, writing and scientific knowl-
edge, educators and school leaders are confronted by the pace of change in the
twenty-first century and the educational disruption of COVID-19. The aim of this
chapter was to provide an overview of significant international forces considered in
this book and an overview of the conceptual framework of appreciative inquiry. By
adopting a practitioner-researcher perspective, we considered the problem of how to
strengthen educational outcomes considering the United Nations Sustainable Devel-
opment Goals and the 2018 Programme for International Student Assessment results.
While controversy abounds in the interpretation and education policy responses to
trends in these surveys, there is a body of evidence about the roles teachers and
teaching play in enhancing educational outcomes. Finally, we contend because of
the appreciative approach; the book is new knowledge on enhancing educational
outcomes essential for developing a well-educated population.

Keywords Twenty-first-century skills · Education policy · Secondary education ·
Teacher education · Teacher wellbeing · Theory of education

The significance of enhancing educational outcomes has been highlighted by the
immediate and widespread disruption to learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)
(2020) claims that by mid-May of 2020 some ‘1,198,530,172 learners’, or ‘68.5%
of total enrolled learners’ in ‘153 country-wide closures’ enrolled at ‘pre-primary,
primary, lower-secondary, and upper-secondary levels of education were affected
[ISCED levels 0 to 3], as well as at tertiary education levels [ISCED levels 5 to
8]’ (UNESCO, 2020). The OCED (2020a) have proposed ‘The Learning Compass
2030’, which ‘defines the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that learners need

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to fulfil their potential and contribute to the well-being of their communities and the planet’. The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDG) acts as the ‘blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all’. Here, the United Nations recognises the significance of enhancing educational outcomes for all students. For example, Goal 4 of the UNSDG focuses on quality education, claiming, ‘a quality education is a foundation for creating sustainable development’ (UN, 2019). In the Australian context, the *Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration*’s (Council of Australian Governments Education Council, 2019) outlines the two goals for the Australian education system. These are, Goal 1: The Australian education system promotes excellence and equity and Goal 2: All young Australians should become confident and creative individuals, successful lifelong learners, and active and informed members of the community. What are the major controversies in enhancing educational outcomes? The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (2019) notes that ‘on average across OECD countries and in 43 education systems, students who perceived greater support from teachers scored higher in reading, after accounting for the socio-economic profile of students and schools’ and ‘a positive school climate is one of those things that is difficult to define and measure, but everyone—including parents—recognises it when they see it’ (pp. 15–16).

We argue that enhancing educational outcomes is essential to developing a well-educated population (Albrecht, 2018; Aldridge & McChesney, 2018; Byrne, Rietdijk, & Pickett, 2018). Enhancing educational outcomes is key to a nation’s ongoing creativity, prosperity, peace, democracy and human flourishing. While it might be a cliché to argue that change abounds in education, it is difficult to find another educational epoch where such a vast array of global challenges has tested teachers, principals and governance (Araneda, Guzmán, & Nussbaum, 2018; Podolsky, Kini, Darling-Hammond, & Bishop, 2019; Spillane, Paquin Morel, & Al-Fadala, 2019; White & McCallum, 2020).

Internationally, teacher quality and retention are a growing concern as highlighted by Schleicher (2020). For example, UNESCO claims that, by 2030, there will be a global shortage of teachers, with 74 countries facing an acute shortage, threatening educational outcomes worldwide. Today, it is more widely recognised that teachers and teaching are the heart of successful communities of practice with complex relations between initial teacher educators, university researchers, students, families and school systems (Ford & Youns, 2018; Gonski, 2018; Hogan, Thompson, Sellar, & Lingard, 2018; Mansfield & Beltman, 2019). Over the past decade, we have seen the rise of greater professional accountability and evidence-based, evidence-informed and diagnostic teaching approaches, which has transformed professional practice. Increasingly, teachers are asked to interpret data to develop learning and teaching interventions to enhance student learning outcomes, where one year’s instruction is matched with one year’s student learning growth (Brooks, Huang, Hattie, Carroll, & Burton, 2019; Brown, 2018; Gonski, 2018; Hawthorne, Vella-Brodrick & Hattie, 2019).

While some schools and teachers are constrained in twentieth-century teaching paradigms, others are already integrating virtual reality (VR), augmented reality
(AR), artificial intelligence (AI) and digital technologies across learning, teaching and student experiences from the earliest years (Care, Kim, & Scoular, 2017; Lavy, 2019; Seldon, 2018; World Economic Forum [WEF], 2015). The integration and, in some instances, the imposition of these technologies are having both positive and unintended wellbeing impacts. For example, the Economist (“Generation Z is stressed”, 2019) reports that Generation Z (people born since 1997) is more ‘stressed, depressed and exam-obsessed’ and that they are ‘generally less hedonistic’ and ‘better behaved’ than the earlier generation. The Pew Research Center noted that in a study of 920 13–17-year-old Americans, the people of Generation Z were more concerned about issues surrounding mental health and bullying, as opposed to issues around alcohol, with 70% of respondents claiming that anxiety and depression were concerns for their peers (“Generation Z is stressed”, 2019). With the rapid pace of emerging technologies, it is no longer sufficient to be foundationally literate; certain social, emotional and cognitive characteristics are now also regarded as indispensable.

Over the past two decades, there has been exponential growth in new research into, and the practise of, twenty-first-century skills manifested in many forms such as character education, learning and teaching for twenty-first-century skills, social and emotional learning, wellbeing and positive education. Discussion around the new skills needed for the twenty-first century has dominated education discourse since the mid-1980s in the United States of America, the United Kingdom and Australia. During this time, the focus shifted to preparing students to learn content and knowledge, literacy, numeracy and emerging technologies. The new competencies that are associated with these skills share common themes, including reasoning, evidence, critical thinking and communications (WEF, 2016).

In an era of unprecedented teacher and school leadership accountability, it is time to examine contemporary research that considers how to enhance education outcomes from practitioner-researchers and school–university lenses (Yi Chan, Sloan, & Chandra, 2019). The Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration argues that ‘[e]ducation plays a vital role in promoting the intellectual, physical, social, emotional, moral, spiritual, and aesthetic development and wellbeing of young Australians, and in ensuring the nation’s ongoing economic prosperity and social cohesion’ (Council of Australian Governments Education Council, 2019, p. 2). Significant education research asserts that to thrive in today’s world, school students need a different mix of skills than in the past. It notes that ‘in addition to foundational skills like literacy and numeracy, they need competencies like collaboration, creativity, and problem-solving, and character qualities like persistence, curiosity, and initiative’.

Internationally graduating teachers are entering the workforce at a time of unprecedented change and complexity, with many leaving within the first 5 years (Mansfield & Beltman, 2019). Increasingly, initial teacher education (ITE) programmes are being challenged to show evidence of classroom readiness and evidence of impact. The WEF claims, ‘To thrive in the 21st century, students need more than traditional academic learning. They must be adept at collaboration, communication, and problem solving, which are some of the skills developed through social and emotional
learning’ (p. 4). A report on Securing the 21st Century Teacher Workforce claims that,

nearly half of all new k-12 teachers in the United States leave the profession within five years… teachers who remain in the profession often move on to other schools, suspending lower-performing schools in cycles of chaotic management by isolating teaching staff who aren’t around long enough to build collaborative momentum needed to leverage student outcomes (Edge et al., 2017, p. v).

However, teacher quality and retention are a concern (Heffernan, Longmuir, Bright, & Kim, 2019; Reid, 2019). Fifty-eight per cent of Australian teachers describe their intention to leave the profession and a further 62% claim workload as a significant catalyst to retire early (Heffernan, Longmuir, Bright, & Kim, 2019, p. 10).

ITE and pre-service teacher (PST) quality are being challenged due to a failure to shift from patterns with proven poor educational outcomes. In addition, there is increasing pressure for PSTs to demonstrate evidence of their teaching ability and impact on student learning, which in turn increases emphasis on league tables, wellbeing issues (Collie & Perry, 2019; Hugo, 2007) and health issues, including mental health issues (Vesely, Saklofske, & Nordstokke, 2013). Critical Perspectives on Teaching, Learning and Leadership: Enhancing Educational Outcomes argues that the quality of graduate teachers is a critical step in educating flourishing students (Carter et al., 2018; McCallum, Price, Graham, & Morrison, 2017; White & Murray, 2015; White & McCallum, 2020). This book evaluates the opportunities, issues and obstacles facing the preparation of teachers through creative and multidisciplinary perspectives. These are consistent questions posed over the past two decades of ITE research, focusing on evidence-based teaching strategies. The debate about teacher quality and the impact on learning outcomes is a contentious area. This book argues that there is a lack of specificity around notions of crucial issues to enhance educational outcomes. Issues such as character and wellbeing, twenty-first-century learning and e-learning pedagogy mean that the education sector is presented with an ironic paradox: there is explicit consent that it is essential to consider, monitor and respond to what constitutes an effective teacher, yet there is little sector-wide consensus on what it actually is.

Today, education is experiencing unprecedented change. This is having a significant impact on school systems, learning outcomes and the wellbeing of students and teachers. As illustrated by the three volumes of the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2018 results, we now have a greater knowledge and understanding of the role teachers play in creating a positive impact on student learning outcomes. However, issues associated with initial teacher education (ITE), the professional development of educators, teacher and student wellbeing and how school systems operationalise twenty-first-century learning abound. This book addresses the significant problems that arise for pre-service and graduate teachers who are unprepared for the complexity of twenty-first-century teaching (Fernandes,
Peixoto, & João, 2019). ITE is an essential factor in graduating quality teachers. Therefore, teachers must be able to contribute to the social, emotional, cognitive, spiritual and physical wellbeing of their students (Allen & Kern, 2018; Allen, Kern, Vella-Brodrick, Hattie, & Waters, 2018; Brown, 2018; White & Kern, 2018). A shortage of literature exists that focuses on what inhibits teacher development. Universally, there are challenges in this field: attracting candidates into ITE with a combination of academic strengths and character qualities, retaining the best teachers in the profession and finding evidence of classroom readiness.

1.1 How This Book Was Developed

This book is the culmination of over 6 months’ collaborative work during 2019 by the practitioner-researchers, all academics, working in the field of ITE from the University of Adelaide’s Enhancing Educational Outcomes research group. The book investigates evidence-based and evidence-informed approaches to teaching, learning and leadership. The group focuses on research topics including assessment, measurement and evaluation; governance, leadership and management; ITE; and STEM and wellbeing education. Critical Perspectives on Teaching, Learning and Leadership: Enhancing Educational Outcomes focuses on the major forces affecting teacher preparation, teaching and school leadership during an era of notable change.

1.2 Conceptual Framework

1.2.1 Appreciative Inquiry

We adopt appreciative inquiry as the conceptual framework for this book. Appreciative inquiry is “based on the simple assumption that every organisation has something that works well, and those strengths can be the starting point for creating positive change [and it] is also intended for discovering, understanding, and fostering innovations” (Cooperrider, Whitney, & Stavros, 2008, p. 3). The appreciative inquiry approach was first developed by Cooperrider and Srivastva (1987). It was later extended by Cooperrider and Sekerka (2006) who argue that it enables “new ways of understanding the processes and dynamics of positive outcomes in organisations are rapidly emerging” (p. 223). Furthermore, they asserted that “Appreciative inquiry is a process of search and discovery designed to value, prize, and honor. It assumes that organisations are networks of relatedness and that these networks are alive” (Cooperrider & Sekerka, 2006, p. 224).
1.2.2 Affirmative Topic Choice

Appreciative inquiry uses an affirmative topic choice as a catalyst to start the research process, an affirmative topic choice “selectively seeks to locate, highlight, and illuminate what are referred to as the life-giving forces of the organisation’s existence, its positive core” (Cooperrider, Whitney, & Stavros, 2008, p. 4). Usually, the affirmative topic choices are voted upon by participants. However, as shown in Fig. 1.1 for this book, the editors pre-selected “enhancing educational outcomes” as the affirmative topic choice. This was based on the process described by Cooperrider, Whitney, and Stavros (2008, pp. 35–39). This book is written from a practitioner-researcher perspective, with each contributor having significant practitioner experience first in classrooms as teachers, from the early years to senior secondary education, as senior leaders with executive experience in Independent, Catholic and Government schools, as Board Directors, as teacher educators and as educational researchers. Among the chapters in this book, scholarly contributions focus on current issues. Topics explore the changing nature of teachers’ work, the impact of twenty-first-century skills in ITE, the integration of iPads in pre-service teacher education, blended learning, instructional theory, the Programme for International Student Assessment results, pre-service teachers’ perceptions of character and wellbeing and the role of school leadership in shaping professional teachers’ growth. The chapters and the book publish new knowledge and original research material.

![Diagram of the Appreciative Inquiry 4-D Cycle](image)

**Fig. 1.1** Chapter structure for Critical Perspectives on Teaching, Learning and Leadership: Enhancing Educational Outcomes based on the appreciative inquiry 4-D cycle (adapted from Cooperrider, Whitney, & Stavros, 2008, p. 34)
1.2.3 4-D Cycle

Appreciative inquiry employs a four-step cycle to examine an affirmative topic from a diverse range of perspectives. We followed this process (1) Discovery, or appreciating the best of what is (2) Dream, or envisioning what might be, (3) Design, or co-constructing the ideal and (4) Destiny, or how to sustain for the future. Cooperrider and Sekerka (2006) call this the 4-D cycle. The book’s conceptual framework of the 4-D cycle is outlined below:

- **Discovery**, or appreciating the best of what is: the discovery phase of the appreciative inquiry process investigates existing strengths within the context of the affirmative topic. It encourages researchers to engage in meaning-making. Moreover, the discovery phase enables researchers to consider future possibilities within the context of the problem chosen (Cooperrider, Whitney, & Stavros, 2008, pp. 6, 105–130).

- **Dream**, or envisioning what might be: this phase focuses upon the best of what is envisaged as potential future directions within the lens of the appreciative topic. Research explores the strengths and limitations of the topic chosen (Cooperrider, Whitney, & Stavros, 2008, pp. 6–7, 131–162).

- **Design**, or co-constructing the ideal: in this stage, the researcher, considers the future implications. This step is where researchers may find potential future “strategic intent” for a topic and who it may affect (Cooperrider, Whitney, & Stavros, 2008, pp. 7, 163–200).

- **Destiny**, or how to sustain for the future: in this stage, the researcher considers how innovations may be operationalised. (Cooperrider, Whitney, & Stavros, 2008, pp. 4, 201–229).

Each author was invited to respond to the affirmative topic choice using the first two steps of the 4-D cycle (1) Discovery and (2) Dream. The outcome of the appreciative inquiry process enables an “inquiry into the appreciable world is a vehicle for creating and developing positive change, not just within the present moment, but also over time… [and that] inquiry into the positive, naturally occurring or deliberate, is a source of positive change as it elevates and extends the best of what is present in the organisational system” (Cooperrider & Sekerka, 2006) p. 232). Consequently, chapters investigate the following questions:

- What impact does the changing nature of teachers’ work have on teacher preparation and the teaching profession for the twenty-first century? (Discovery)
- What role does wellbeing play on teacher quality? (Discovery)
- How can educators implement and evaluate the outcomes of blended learning? (Discovery, Dream and Design)
- What impact do teachers have on learners? (Discovery)
As represented in Fig. 1.2 the outcome of the 4-D process is the book’s chapter topics and structure. The themes which emerged from the conceptualisation of the book include the topics of teacher’s wellbeing, development in initial teacher education, the immediate impact of emerging technologies on the professional practice of pre-service teachers, the role of blended learning in evaluation, instructional theory, factors of quality and equity in mathematics achievement in Southeast Asia, the evaluation of a pre-service teacher course to prepare candidates for professional practice, pre-service teachers perception of wellbeing and its role within professional practice and the role of school leadership in developing professional learning communities. We believe the chapters in this book will be of interest to educators who aim to have an impact on student learning outcomes. The chapters in this book adopt a practitioner-researcher perspective in that each section examines issues

**Fig. 1.2** Chapter structure for Critical Perspectives on Teaching, Learning, and Leadership: Enhancing Educational Outcomes
related to teacher professional practice, leadership or ITE. Many chapters embrace the dual roles of teacher educators who are researchers. Chapters adopt various research methods and theoretical approaches including appreciative inquiry (Cooperrider & Sivastva, 1987), a broader pragmatic worldview (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010), an ecological framework (Bronfenbrenner, 1972, 1979), Freire’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1971, 1998, 2005) and the Substitution, Augmentation, Modification, Redefinition (SAMR) model (Puentedura, 2015).

Over six months, the Enhancing Educational Outcomes group crafted individual chapters and met to collaborate during two research group writing days. During the first writing day, authors presented their introduction, adopted method, results, discussion and conclusion. This process was an essential step for developing research claims and ensuring there was coherence across all chapters. Here, round 1 of an open review within the research group for each chapter was undertaken. All reviews and author responses to these reviews were documented as part of the editorial process. During the second writing day, the chapters drafted by each author underwent an open peer review. All participants knew the identity of the author and the reviewers. Each reviewer was asked to provide feedback to the authors based on the quality of the research question, the introduction and background of the chapters, the aims of the study, the method or theoretical framework adopted, the results and the discussion. In turn, the authors were asked to respond to their peers’ feedback and integrate changes, as evidenced in their final chapters. During this final stage, the manuscript was closely reviewed by two anonymous experts in the field selected by the publishers. All authors responded to feedback from the final anonymous review before being submitted to Springer.

1.3 The Book’s Structure

In this chapter, we have established this work’s significance, outline appreciative inquiry, the book’s conceptual framework and the structure. We also have provided an overview of each chapter.

In Chap. 2, ‘The Changing Nature of Teachers’ Work and its Impact on Wellbeing’, Faye McCallum asserts that Australia’s graduating teachers are entering the workforce at a time of unprecedented change, increased education opportunity and overwhelming complexity and investigates teachers’ health and wellbeing may be at risk because of this pursuit. McCallum also presents the findings of research undertaken in Australia and Canada to investigate an early career, mid-career and those in leadership and the impact of wellbeing on professional practice.

In Chap. 3, ‘Transforming Higher Education Teaching for 21st-Century Skills’, Linda Westphalen reflects on the processes by which teachers are accredited in Australia and considers this in the context of the development of twenty-first-century skills. Westphalen examines these developments in the context of the presented by the World Economic Forum’s twenty-first-century skills.
In Chap. 4, ‘The Impact of Introducing iPads in Teacher Education’, Walter Barbieri examines a case study investigating the integration of 1:1 iPads in an undergraduate Individual Teacher Education (ITE) degree influenced the digital competencies of its participants. The chapter argues for the inclusion of digital technologies in ITE.

In Chap. 5, ‘Blended Learning Needs Blended Evaluation’, John Willison argues for a blended learning evaluation framework introduces the Blended and Engaged Learning Zones (BELZ) to addresses the imbalance in the literature. Willison contends that one of the limitations of earlier research has been the lack of integration for a framework that considers the significance of learning zones when evaluating the impact on enhancing educational outcomes.

In Chap. 6, ‘New Understandings of Instructional Theory: Finding the Instructional Sweet Spot’, Brendan Bentley deconstructs Constructivist Learning Theory and the Cognitive Load Theory and contends that instructional models that produce learning.

In Chap. 7, ‘Quality and Equity of Student Performance in Mathematics in Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam’, I Gusti Ngurah Darmawan examines issues of quality and equity of mathematics performance for 15-year-old students in PISA 2015 from five participating Southeast Asian countries.

In Chap. 8, ‘Inspiring and Transforming the Pre-service Teacher Through Authentic Classroom Preparation’, Robert Matthews assesses a course design was examined that sought to bridge the university experience of PSTs with the classroom experience through a focus on authenticity.

In Chap. 9, ‘Pre-service Teachers’, Perceptions of Character and Wellbeing’ Mathew White investigates pre-service teachers’, perceptions of character, wellbeing and pedagogy and argues that initial teacher education programs are fertile ground for integrating research-informed approaches concentrating on the teacher’s role.

In Chap. 10, ‘Shaping Professional Development of Educators: The Role of School Leaders’, Lynda MacLeod investigates the role of principal leadership in professional learning communities.

With increasing challenges from government, regulation and unprecedented levels of education reform as outlined in the OECD (2020b), TALIS 2018 Results (Volume II): Teachers and School Leaders as Valued Professionals, OECD (2019b), TALIS 2018 Results (Volume I): Teachers and School Leaders as Lifelong Learners and OECD and (2018). Reviews of National Policies for Education, it has been claimed that there is an ‘impending crisis’ in the preparation of teachers and the teaching profession (Preston, 2019). This book focuses on topics as diverse as student learning academic growth, classroom practice and teacher efficacy. Discussion is about the social and emotional elements of a ‘good teacher’. Together with this discussion were debates around the most effective teaching strategies and the effectiveness of initial teacher educators. Themes in the debate included what initial teacher educators should know and understand about discipline content and pedagogy. More recently, policies have concentrated on professional standards and character (ACARA, 2018; Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, 2018).
As Alma Harris, Professor of Educational Leadership and Policy, Department of Education, University of Bath, asserted, ‘The imperative to recruit, develop, and retain great teachers has never been stronger or more critical’ (Edge et al., 2017, p. vi). At a time of increased global accountability and scrutiny, surveys including the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study have created greater transparency for policy-makers, education leaders and teachers to critique as well as reflect on educational outcomes and performance (Fullan & Pinchot, 2018; Hitt & Meyers, 2018). While controversy abounds in the interpretation and education policy responses to trends in these surveys, a growing body of evidence has appeared regarding the roles that teachers and teaching play in enhancing educational outcomes. For example, teacher quality, attitude, effectiveness and motivation are found to be essential in high-performing systems. Teacher motivation, engagement and ability to teach well have appeared as critical. Educators fulfilling the promise of the UNSDG for enhancing educational outcomes are vital.

Across ten chapters, this book examines diverse topics, including approaches to learning outcomes, education policy, the philosophy of education, professional development of educators, issues of school leadership, school systems, secondary education, student wellbeing, teacher education, teacher wellbeing and the theory of education. Experts in their respective fields write each of the chapters; this edited volume contributes to the evaluation of contemporary issues in ITE. We argue that enhancing ITE is essential for developing a well-educated population. It is key to the nation’s ongoing creativity, prosperity, peace, democracy and human flourishing.

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