Editorial

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Dear teacher educators, scholars and educationalists,

It is our pleasure to present Volume 14 – Issue 3 of the Journal of Teacher Education and Educators. Following the tone and structure we have maintained in recent issues, we again bring together a set of contributions that speak to pressing questions in teacher education across diverse contexts—how future educators learn to inquire, how creativity is understood and (mis)understood in teacher preparation, how teacher educators navigate complex professional roles, how early-career academics negotiate identity under institutional pressures, and how entry into teacher education is shaped through selection practices.

The opening article, "Sparking the Flame: Research as Inquiry for Aspiring Educators" by Madeline Grimes and Erik John Byker, focuses on a foundational but often underdeveloped area in teacher preparation: learning to do inquiry rather than merely consume research. Reporting on the implementation of an intensive, year-long inquiry-based learning module ("Pathways for Success") with 229 first-year and transfer undergraduates interested in teaching, the authors show how structured research experiences can support students' sense of relevance and professional application. At the same time, their findings surface familiar—yet instructive—challenges, such as crafting research questions and managing time, reminding teacher educators that building inquiry capacity requires sustained scaffolding rather than one-off research assignments.

In "Exploring Creativity Beliefs and Biases of University Education Students," Todd Kettler, Beatrice Ruiz Buentello, Kristen N. Lamb, Shan Jiang, and Anna M. Payne examine the relationship between education students' beliefs about teaching for creativity and potential misconceptions about creativity (creativity bias). Drawing on data from 209 education students, the study provides a nuanced picture: endorsement of creativity biases appears generally low, yet specific belief patterns matter. In particular, a fixed creative mindset is linked with several bias dimensions, while creative teaching self-efficacy relates inversely to arts bias. This work offers practical direction for teacher education programs seeking to promote creative pedagogy—namely, that supporting creativity is not only about "adding strategies," but also about addressing underlying beliefs that shape how creativity is recognized, valued, and cultivated in classrooms.

Teacher educators' work, however, is not defined only by what they teach, but also by the roles and conditions through which they operate. "Navigating Dual Roles: Professional Competence and Agency among School-Based Subject Teacher Educators" by Eliisa Vähä, Riikka Hirvonen, Kari Sormunen, and Lasse Eronen explores this complexity within the Finnish context. Using survey data from 118 school-based subject teacher educators working in university teacher training schools, the authors illuminate role-based differences in perceived competence and agency. Content and contextual competences tend to feel stronger in the role of teacher than in the role of teacher educator, and experiences of influence and being heard are often weaker when acting as an educator. The study's socio-cultural framing helps connect these perceptions to workplace traditions and power dynamics, offering a

compelling lens for international readers concerned with how teacher educator professionalism is supported—or constrained—by institutional arrangements.

n a complementary way, questions of professional identity come into sharp focus in "Balancing Teaching and Research: Multimodal Insights into Novice EFL lecturers' Identity Development in China's Performance-Driven Academia" by Jing Zhou. Situated in the context of neoliberal reforms and heightened performance expectations, the study follows four early-career EFL lecturers through three rounds of video-recorded interviews and applies Multimodal (Inter)action Analysis to show identity as not only narrated but also performed through embodied modes such as gaze, gesture, and spatial positioning. The four identity trajectories identified—embodied resistance, strategic adaptation, strategic balancing, and aspirational resistance—offer a powerful vocabulary for understanding how novice academics navigate the often-competing demands of teaching and research, particularly in non-elite institutional contexts where supports may be uneven. The implications extend beyond a single national setting and speak to workload, mentoring, and evaluation policies that shape identity development across higher education systems.

The issue concludes with an integrative, forward-looking review: "A Scoping Review of the Attributes Screened in the Selection Processes for Initial Teacher Education (ITE)" by Aída Valero Moya, Ville Mankki, and Pekka Räihä. Mapping 32 studies (2013–2023) across major academic databases, the review synthesizes how selection practices assess both cognitive attributes (e.g., academic performance and cognitive skills) and non-cognitive attributes (e.g., motivation, resilience, personal traits). Importantly, the authors highlight persistent tensions in high-stakes selection—especially around validity, reliability, and equity when assessing non-cognitive dimensions—while calling for more integrated and context-sensitive approaches. This contribution is a timely reminder that teacher quality debates begin well before coursework and practicum: they are shaped by the criteria and tools used to define who is admitted into the profession's preparation pathways.

The articles in this issue underscore teacher education as a continuum—from selection into programs, to the development of inquiry and creativity in preservice preparation, to the lived realities of teacher educators' professional agency, and onward to the identity work of novice academics operating within powerful institutional logics. Across the United States, Finland, China, and the broader international evidence mapped through scoping review, the studies collectively invite readers to consider how beliefs, structures, and supports interact to shape professional learning and professional life.

We thank our authors, reviewers, editorial board members, and readers for their continued support. We invite you to explore the rich content of this issue and to consider contributing your own scholarship to future volumes of the Journal of Teacher Education and Educators.