

Birth, Death and Survival:

exploring pre-service teacher identity
and how to think differently about teacher education using
the work of Hannah Arendt

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The landscape of English education

- High levels of accountability and performativity
- Marketisation of schools
- High teacher attrition rates
- Challenging recruitment levels to teacher education

What is the resulting impact on teacher education, and particularly on pre-service teachers as they begin their teacher education journey?



The Problem

Beauchamp and Thomas (2009) highlight that the teaching profession has pre-service teachers who have an unclear sense of their identity...



Research Questions

1. How can an Arendtian framework enable pre-service teachers to perceive and interrogate their professional identity?
- 2. How can *Labour*, *Work* and *Action* be used to identify influences acting upon professional identity of pre-service teachers?
- 3. In what ways do pre-service teachers use Arendtian thinking to verbalise the process of becoming teachers?



Research context:

- One year, full-time Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) programme, with Qualified Teacher Status (QTS).
- Blocks of university- school- university learning.
- Seminars include professional studies, and subject based sessions; assignments lead to 60 Masters credits.
- Three school placements carried out in two schools
- 3 participants: 1 male, 2 females





Arendtian framework: Hannah Arendt's *The Human Condition* (1958, 1998)

In order to answer the research questions I used Arendt's 3 fundamental activities- *labour*, *work* and *action* to look at the influences at work on PST identity:

- *Labour* –‘**survival**’ of the individual and the species
- *Work*- artificial world created through human activity, leads to ‘**worldliness**’, creates a permanence
- *Action*- activity between people in political and social spheres, leads to ‘**plurality**’ and creates history

In addition I used Arendt's six conditions for PST to verbalise their journey: **birth, death, survival, worldliness, plurality, self-development**



Data collection tools- all qualitative

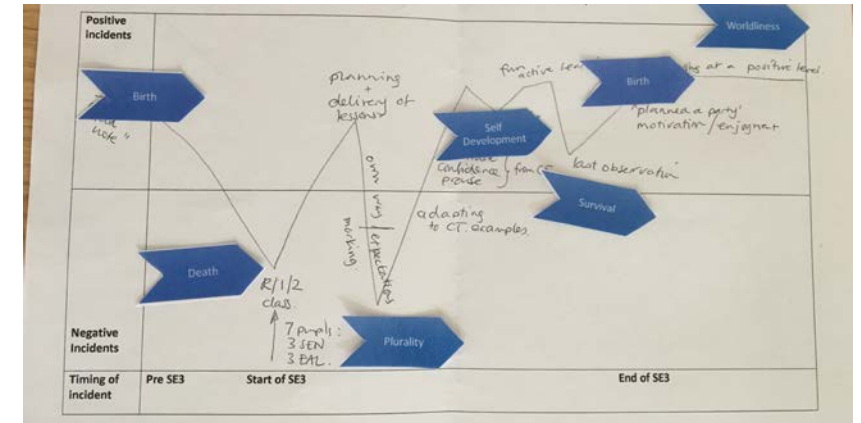
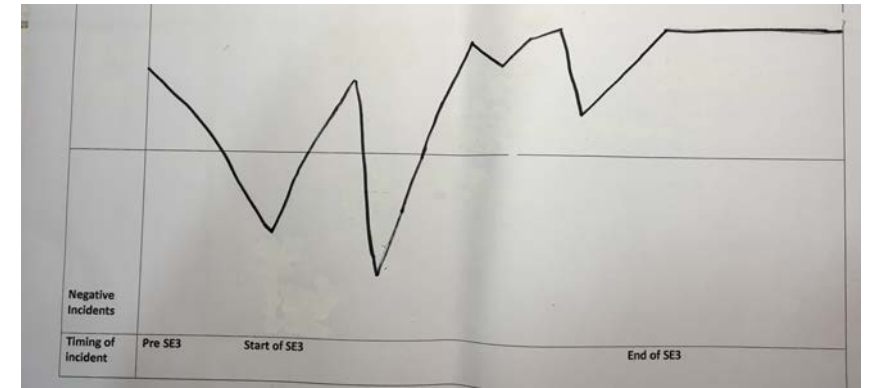
Narrative 1: Life history gathered through online survey

Narrative 2: Semi structured interviews

Narrative 3: Critical incident timelines

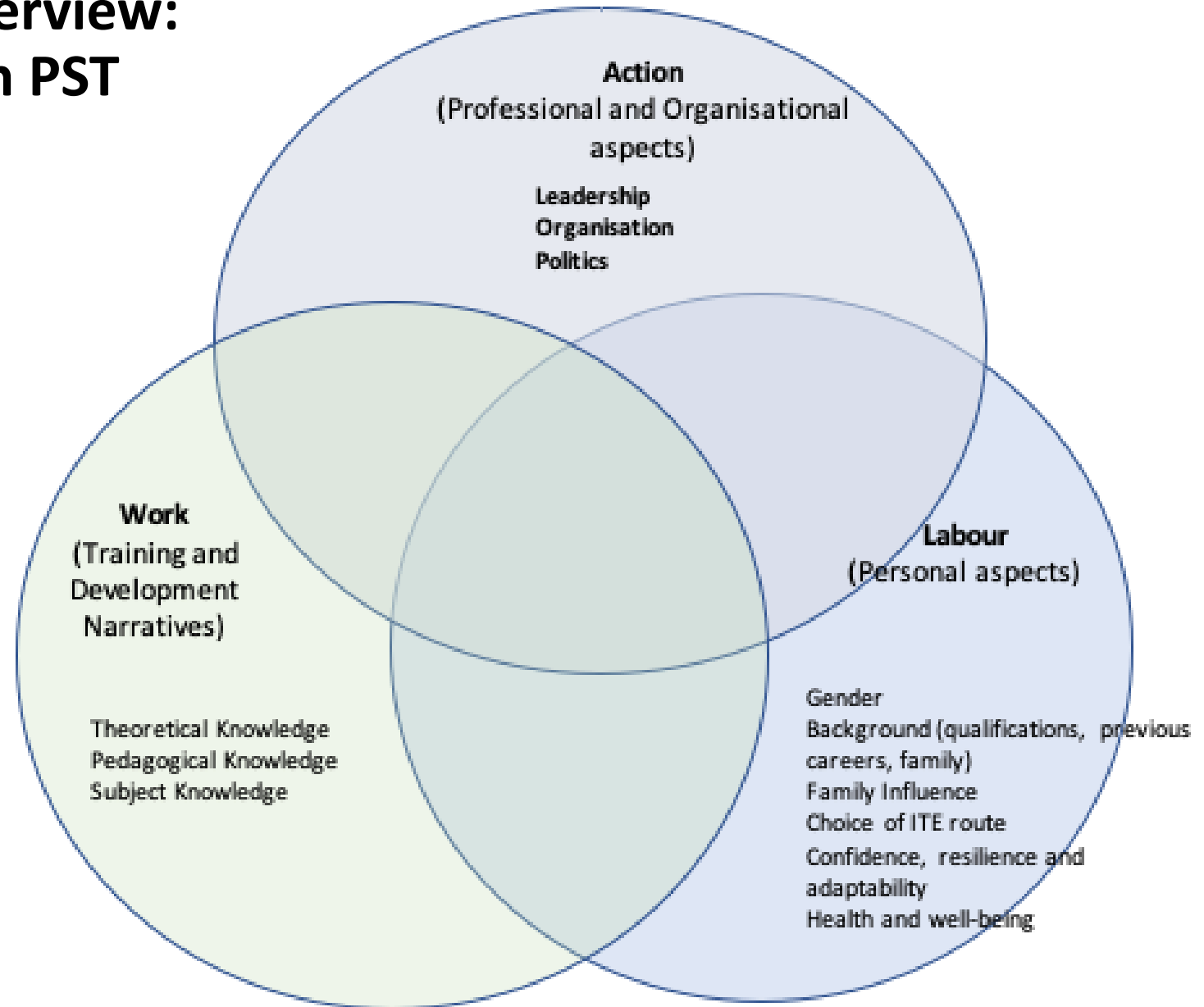
Analytical framework:

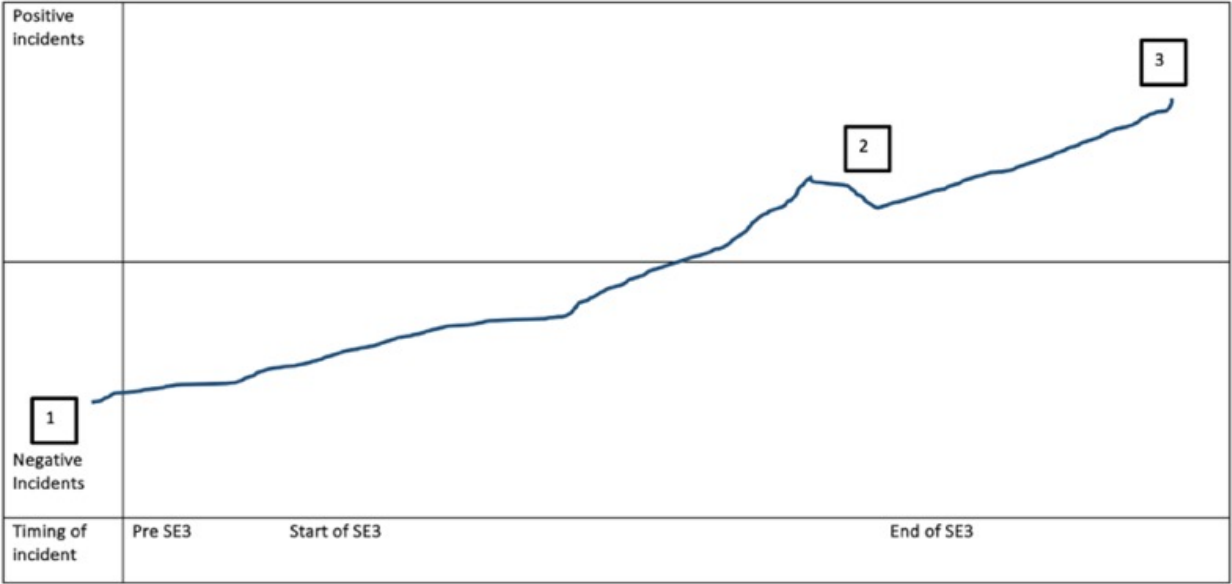
Arendt's 'conditions': birth, death, survival, worldliness, plurality and self development



Findings from the interview: 3 influences acting on PST identity

- Personal;
training and
development;
professional
and
organisational,
- Non linear, non
sequential





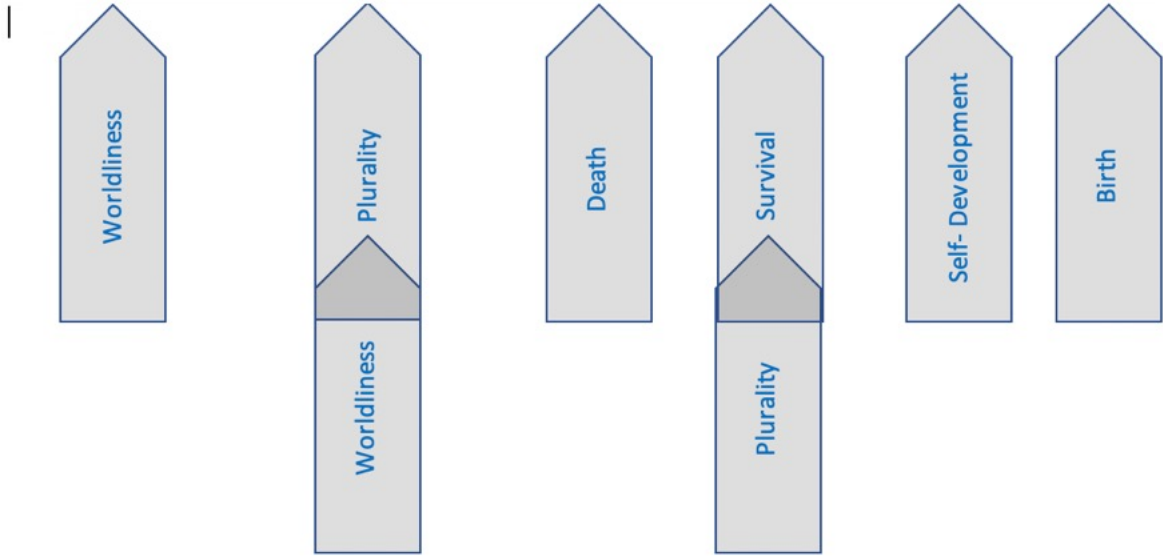
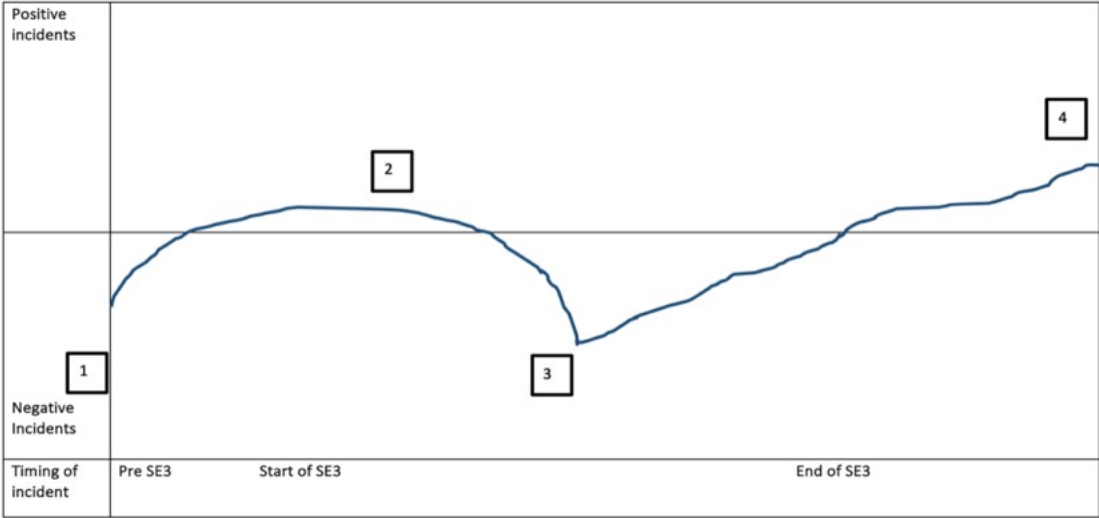
Death

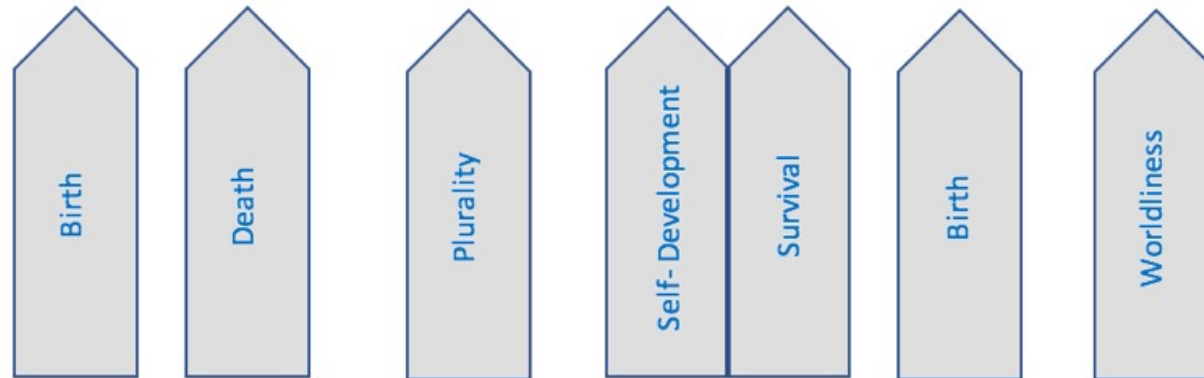
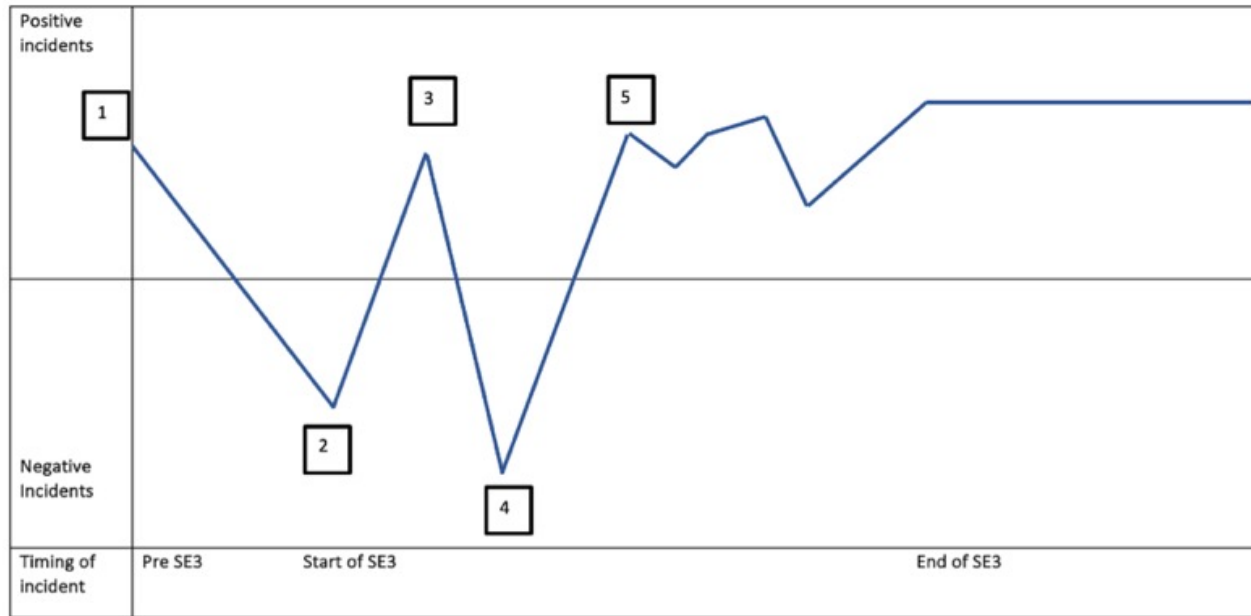
Survival

Survival

Plurality

Worldliness





Findings from the critical incident timelines: pattern of death, survival and plurality

Death:

- Isolated in an unfamiliar school;
- Unable to bring university and school identities together;
- 'Mental health crisis;
- Cultural differences
- Questioning the practices and politics of the school
- Unable to bring their strengths and experience to placement.

Survival:

- Attempting to get back on track;
- Long periods of negativity;
- Self esteem affected;
- Reluctant to ask for help
- Changing structure of the placement
- Removing responsibilities and pressure

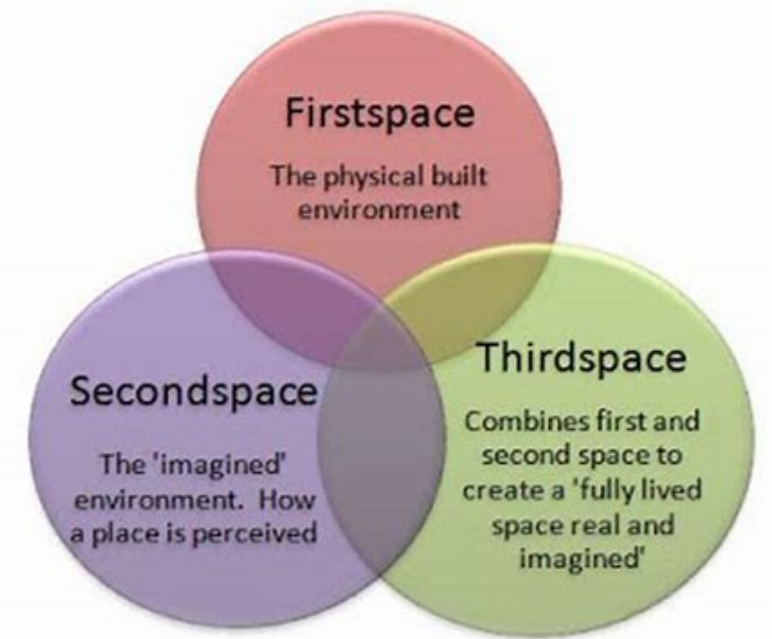
Plurality:

- Dialogic and collaborative practice;
- Supportive and adaptive mentoring
- Actively making decisions about their own identity

Practical suggestions (1)

The need for a third space for teacher education (Cuenca et al., 2011; Dyson, 2010; Lee, 2018) to denote a space of triadic collaboration between university, school and pre-service teacher (Zeichner, 2010) in order to:

- Allow pre-service teachers time to think for themselves; safe and unjudged spaces, time out peer support sessions, impartial staff to talk to
- Raise the profile and purpose of teacher education in a more contemporary way by developing ways of shared working;
- To work differently and to challenge the educational status quo



Practical suggestions (2)



To re-think what we expect of pre-service teachers.

- Rather than keeping pre-service teachers busy practising the ‘apprenticeship’ of teaching, Dyson (2010: 17) asserts that we need to see them as “discerning individuals, capable of monitoring their own progress in learning and in control of themselves ...”
- Pre-service teachers are ‘people-who-teach’ and who have skills and expertise to bring to their TE programme.
- Need to negotiate their placement in light of these skills, while meeting professional standards

Practical suggestions (3)

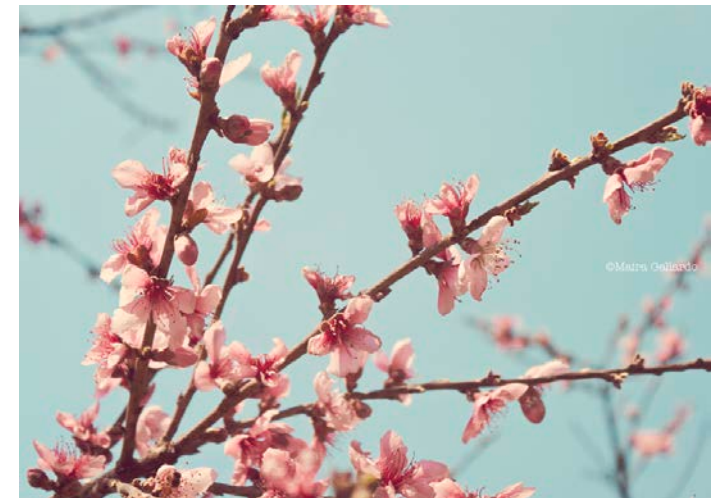
To recognise that becoming a teacher is a non-linear journey

- Building flexibility into TE programmes to include time out with support packages put in place
- Non-assessed time in placement
- Continuity of support between schools
- Adaptive mentoring in response to the need of the pre-service teacher: from induction to employment as teachers



Calling for reform of teacher education that enables the ‘flourishing’ of pre-service teachers

- A pedagogy of ‘Obstinate’ teacher education? (Biesta, 2019)
- Teacher education should be prepared to take risks.



Thank you for listening

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