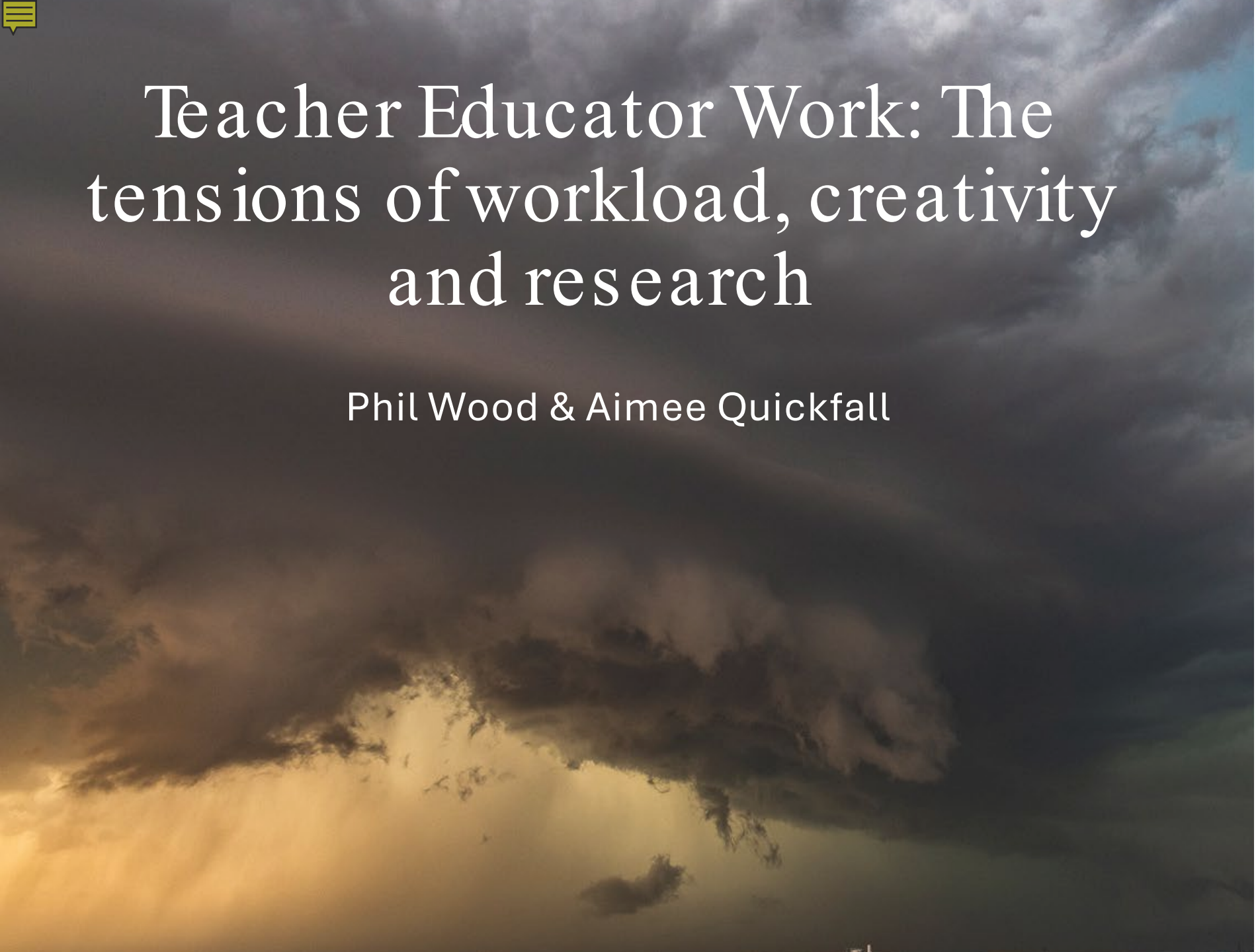


Teacher Educator Work: The tensions of workload, creativity and research

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Aims:

- Brief overview of the 2023/24 results of our ITE Academics Survey
- Exploring the tensions between workload, creativity and research in the data
- Some thoughts and ideas on the future of creativity and research in our sector

Introduction to the research

- Born out of a concern for colleagues during COVID-19
- First survey in 2021/22
- Second and third survey ran from May to September 2023 and 2024, supported by UCET
- around 12% of the sector (HESA) took part
- unstructured interviews with survey respondents in 2023 and 2024.



Survey Questions

- Demographics
- The role
- Leadership support and understanding
- Working with students and colleagues
- Curriculum and creativity
- Workload
- Wellbeing and mental health
- Research and knowledge exchange
- Job security and future plans
- Accreditation
- Ofsted
- Recruitment of students



The ITE Role

Question	2021/22 (n=159)	2022/23 (n=142)	2023/24 (n=166)
I enjoy working in a university ITE role.	85%	83%	87%
I have supportive colleagues to work with.	90%	94%	93%
I enjoy working with ITE students.	97%	99%	99%
The leaders of my institution are supportive of ITE	65%	46%	31%
The leaders of my department are supportive of ITE	n/a	81%	81%
The leaders of my institution understand ITE	53%	28%	51%

Work in ITE

Question	2021/22 (n=159)	2022/23 (n=142)	2023/24 (n=167)
This year has been a 'normal' year for me in my ITE role	20%	30%	30%
I have felt secure in my role this year.	49%	51%	53%
The DfE accreditation has been a positive experience for me	4%	9%	5%
Ofsted inspection/inspection preparation has been a positive experience for me	4%	9%	16%

Reflections on the Future

Question	2021/22 (n=159)	2022/23 (n=142)	2023/24 (n=166)
I am sure I will still be working in the university ITE sector in 5 years	26%	30%	28%
I want to still be working in the university ITE sector in 5 years	64%	54%	52%
I will actively seek promotion within the university ITE sector in the next 5 years	29%	32%	34%
I do not have any worries or concerns about the future of the university ITE sector	5%	8%	7%

Workload and its impacts

Question	2021/22 (n=159)	2022/23 (n=142)	2023/24 (n=167)
My workload has been manageable this year.	29%	25%	25%
I can easily 'switch off' from work, outside of my work hours	18%	18%	26%
I have enough time to get my work done this year to a standard acceptable to me	25%	29%	28%

‘Impossible workload, no tasks removed only added, working evenings and weekends every week.’

‘Because the role is so intense and so personal it is almost impossible to switch off and despite being part-time I still work well over my hours because it simply doesn’t fit into the workload regime that we have. We work in education with people and that doesn’t in any way fit into fixed hourly allocation.’

‘There is so much change all the time that I’ve chosen to not overthink/over prepare as it is likely whatever I do/produce will be replaced quickly. All feels a bit pointless so I’m protecting myself by disengaging slightly from the madness.’

‘There is undoubtedly pressure associated with excessive workload. But I am coming to accept it and stay positive in this context.’

‘The pressures are so huge. I’m constantly told I’m lucky to have a job, that we need to increase numbers but are losing staff all the time.
A number of my colleagues are off on long-term medical leave for mental health, further exacerbating the workload for the rest of us.

Creativity in ITE work

Question	2021/22 (n=159)	2022/23 (n=142)	2023/24 (n=167)
I have freedom to be creative in my work	73%	66%	69%

‘Freedom to be creative is growingly constricted by external diktats.’

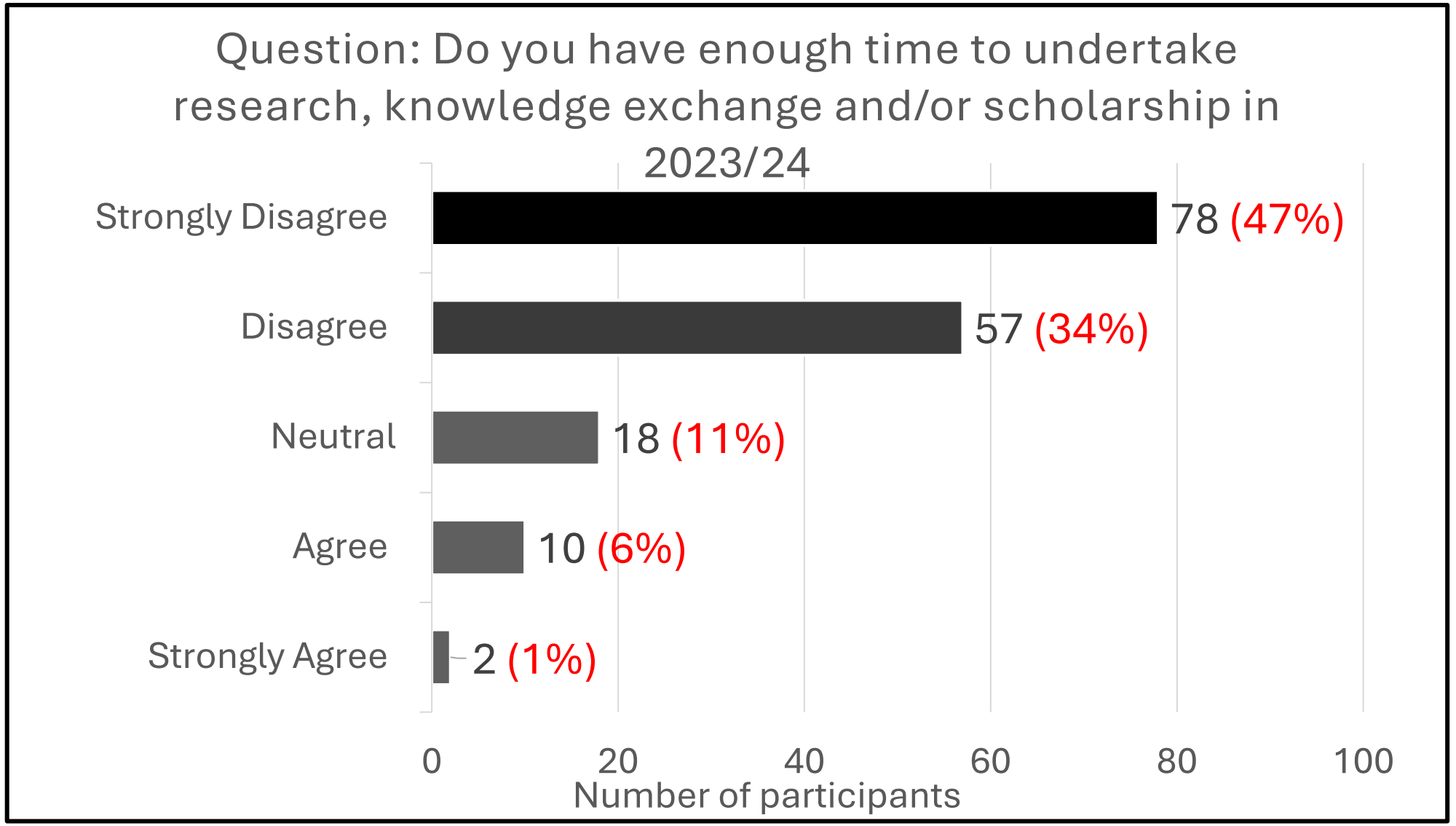
‘Less creative freedom now with the new framework.’

‘Plenty of freedom to be creative and have autonomy within sessions however overall institutional pressures force pragmatic choices to be made.’

‘I have freedom within my university – but I still have to meet all the DfE requirements which reduces potential creativity.’

I have creative opportunities in helping students develop, or get over skills and conceptual hurdles. I also recognise that there are significant spaces for autonomy, at least in theory, even in the highly regulated ITT curriculum…That said, I increasingly feel inspection can be used at any moment as a tool for enforcement…We make autonomy, but it could be some time before we understand what the real edges of that autonomy are.

Research and Knowledge Exchange



I have had to give up doing my doctorate due to workload. I do complete tasks efficiently and always meet deadlines, but this is only because I have been prepared to work at weekends and early mornings/late evenings. Other areas of my life have suffered as a result of this.

Non-ITTECF research is not valued in my department- "trainees" are trained to be able to work in schools rather than engage critically with research from non-ideological perspectives that could broaden their capacity to educate children.

This is an absolute joke. Research activities are seen as 'extra that you do in your own time'. ITE departments do not facilitate this for you.

I don’t have capacity to do any research. My time goes on chalk face survival.

For the majority of the year, to get my own research done, I need to either start from 5am, work into the night, or work at the weekend. So, because that has not always been possible (especially with a young family, but even it I didn't have the kids, why should I have to do that??), my work gets pushed to the end of the year.

A Perfect Storm

- Workload – high
- Expectation – low
- Support – low
- Yet majority insider research sector (26/34 in BERA journals 2021-2024)



Rays of Sunshine…



- Creativity in our sector
- Motivated workforce
- Supportive colleagues and UCET
- Funding?
- Support?
- Collaboration?
- Time?

Next Steps

1. Raising the profile of research in ITE

2. Providing support for ITE academics undertaking research;

   advocating for funding, opportunities to collaborate

3. Continuing with the survey and interviews in 2024/25, 2025/26

Academics in ITE Research - UCET 2024

Get in touch!

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Research outputs to date:

Quickfall, A. & Wood, P. (2021). 2021/22 experiences of academics in teacher education: 'I should not be afraid in my job, but I am'. *BERA Blog*. https://www.bera.ac.uk/blog/2021-22-experiences-of-academics-in-teacher-education-i-should-not-be-afraid-in-my-job-but-i-am

Quickfall, A. & Wood, P. (2024). 'Read The Trial by Kafka for a good analogy': Teacher educator experiences of DfE accreditation in England. *BERA Blog*. https://www.bera.ac.uk/blog/read-the-trial-by-kafka-for-a-good-analogy-teacher-educator-experiences-of-dfe-accreditation-in-england

Wood, P. & Quickfall, A. (2024). Was 2021–2022 an Annus Horribilis for teacher educators? Reflections on a survey of teacher educators. *British Educational Research Journal*, 00, 1–26. https://doi.org/10.1002/berj.4017