

TOWARDS AN UNDERSTANDING OF QUALITY TEACHING AND TEACHING EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION AND TEACHING FOCUSED ROLES IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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Education-focused roles are rapidly expanding in higher education and raising important questions about what constitutes quality teaching and teaching excellence and how should it be measured. Dominant discourses often define teaching excellence using frameworks, metrics, and certifications (Kinchin, 2025). The Australian Universities Accord (Recommendations 21 and 31) reinforces this direction, proposing standards, professional development, and a national framework to assure quality and capacity of educators in higher education. While such initiatives promote transparency and accountability, they risk narrowing teaching excellence to what can be quantified. Teaching, however, is not simply a technical act or performance; it is relational and transformative. It requires educators to take risks: to give students experiences of freedom and responsibility, embracing ambiguity, and sharing decision-making. Excellent teaching may not be found in polished lectures or neatly packaged handouts, but with teachers who are “greater risk-takers” (May 2017), may ultimately create more enduring student learning. Current professional development for education-and teaching-focused academics often draws on longstanding theories such as modified Bloom’s taxonomy Krathwohl’s learning outcomes (Bone and Ross, 2021), constructive alignment (Biggs, 1996), intervention and reaction (Weiman, 2019), the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (Boyer, 1990) assessment-driven learning and critically reflective practice using Brookfield lenses (Brookfield, 1995). While these theories are needed (Kinchin 2025) their dominance risks narrowing our conception of teaching excellence (Kandlbinder & Peseta, 2009; Kinchin, 2025). If education- and teaching-focused roles are to deliver on their promise, higher education leaders must acknowledge teaching is complex and cannot be reduced to theoretical and excellence frameworks, metrics, or professional certification. Excellence requires moving beyond the egological (Biesta, 2017), towards relational pedagogies (Gravett, 2023) that emphasise trust, vulnerability, humility, and shared responsibility with students and colleagues, qualities that resist quantification and metrics. It is time to reconsider how we define teaching excellence within teaching and education focused roles in Australian higher education.

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