



Research paper

A narrative inquiry of teacher educators' professional agency, identity renegotiations, and emotional responses amid educational disruption

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HIGHLIGHTS

- Narrative inquiry revealed the dynamic nature of professional agency.
- A complex interplay of factors influence professional agency and identity renegotiations.
- Professional agency was intricately connected to professional identities.
- Emotional responses directed the form of agency enacted.

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ABSTRACT

Employing a narrative inquiry, the study explored the way nine teacher educators responded temporally to the emotionally-laden challenges faced during the disruption to education caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, with a focus on their enactment of professional agency and renegotiation of their identities. Findings revealed seven conflicting themes located within personal, relational, and contextual spaces. Emotional experiences were further found to direct the dynamic forms of agency enacted, and consequently the consolidation or dismissal of renegotiated identities. The study concludes with the need to support teacher educators' professional agency as a resource for transformative changes and innovations in teacher education.

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1. Introduction

There is an emerging trend in the literature to acknowledge the importance of teacher educators' professional agency – that is, their active contribution to influencing their work and its conditions – for the purpose of improving the quality of teacher preparation programs (Hökkä et al., 2017). This particular emphasis on professional agency is significant given the complex work of teacher educators within the context of the academic university. As professional agents, teacher educators support the development of student teachers' knowledge, skills, competencies, and dispositions

required to transform education and meet society's changing needs (Zeichner, 2014). Besides teaching tasks, teacher educators have recently faced increased competition and demands for greater productivity in publishing research activities, writing and obtaining grants, and contributing to the community through service work (Gonzales, 2014; Hokka & Etelapelto, 2014).

Complicating this reality, worldwide universities have faced many societal, economic, and organizational challenges manifested in tightening budgets, expanding expectations, increased accountability, and a movement towards neoliberal economic policies (Hökkä et al., 2017; Zeichner, 2014). As part of the academic environment, teacher education institutions have not been exempted from the influence of increased global competition, market-oriented reforms, and managerial models, and they too have been forced to transform their organizational practices and improve their productivity (Hokka & Etelapelto, 2014). Teacher

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educators working in these environment have had to remain cognizant of the influences of these policies, while maintaining high productivity and efficacy (Hökkä et al., 2017). However, it may be argued that these policies have not only led to greater control over teacher educators' work, but more detrimentally have worked to de-professionalize teacher educators, and challenge their autonomy, performance, and creativity by taking agency away from them and replacing it with increased bureaucracy and managerial regulations (Connolly et al., 2018), accompanied by measurable emotional impacts (Campbell-Wilcox & Lawson, 2018). In response to these challenges, teacher educators have realized the need to practice active agency and renegotiate their identities in order to maintain their well-being and commitment at work (Hökkä et al., 2017).

Several studies have investigated ways in which teacher educators navigate such complex educational contexts, specifically by considering professional agency as a resource for the development of professional identities (Brew et al., 2018; Hokka & Eteläpelto, 2014) mediated by the significant role of emotions (Zembylas, 2005). However, the unprecedented educational disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic created a novel context with compounding challenges, thus requiring teacher educators to renegotiate who they are, and who they might become, as professional agents. Amid such turbulent academic work, teacher educators encountered novel resources and constraints in an educational context which changed dramatically and very quickly. Accordingly, in an effort to contain the pandemic, teacher education institutions responded in multiple ways; abandoning face-to-face teaching, transitioning to online learning, and dealing with a multitude of emerging problems, such as issues of educational equity and quality (Kidd & Murray, 2020). Change became the new normal, bringing with it a broad range of emotions, both positive and negative.

This paper is based on research conducted during Fall 2020 at Qatar University, and specifically at the college of education. The university had shifted to emergency online learning during the previous semester following total lockdown procedures imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. While the pandemic was far from over, the university grappled with decisions as to whether to return to online learning, conduct face-to-face teaching, or develop a contextually-relevant blended mode of instruction during the Fall 2020 semester. Decisions were made only two weeks before the beginning of this semester to lift some restrictions, such as allowing graduate students to take face-to-face classes, conducting exams on campus, and reopening particular facilities, such as labs and libraries. However, social distancing regulations were mandatory, and most teaching and learning activities continued online.

The complexity and novelty of the shifting situation facing teacher educators was believed to affect their identities and emotional responses, which made it a particularly suitable context for exploring their agentic responses and navigations. Therefore, the study invited teacher educators to reflect on their past experiences; pre-, during, and post-pandemic and retrospectively narrate the ways they enacted various forms of professional agency by exploring their actions, emotional responses, and behaviors, as well as the personal, relational, and contextual factors which either hindered or supported such enactment. As evidenced by previous studies, professional agency enacted by teacher educators has been identified in multiple forms, such as transformative, upholding, and resistant (Vähäsantanen & Eteläpelto, 2015), yet other forms may emerge as a result of teacher educators' interactions within shifting contexts, thus adding a dynamic element to the study of agency. Also of particular interest was the influence of agency on identity renegotiation, and the ways that emotions played out in the

enactment of agency by teacher educators (Vähäsantanen & Eteläpelto, 2015).

2. Theoretical framework

In this section, the main concepts adopted in this study are presented and their uses are justified as theoretical tools to understand teacher educators' experiences during turbulent times.

2.1. Conceptualizing professional agency

The study is based on the premise that teacher educators have the ability and potential to act as agents within and against the sociocultural and material conditions in their workplaces (Hökkä et al., 2017). This means, they can exercise control, take stances, make choices, and exert influence in ways that impact their professional identities, learning and development, and work environments (Eteläpelto et al., 2013). Teacher educators' agency can refer to their approval of educational change, or even resistance of external mandates and regulations when these conflict with their professional commitments (Gonzales, 2014; Vähäsantanen & Eteläpelto, 2015). As such, resistance is considered a form of agency, which can be modified and transformed into constructive forms of agency (Gonzales, 2014), by creating new ways of working, taking ownership over one's own and others' development, and transforming one's work and work communities (Eteläpelto et al., 2015).

In this study, the starting point for understanding professional agency was located within a subject-centered socio-cultural approach. This approach conceptualizes professional agency as manifested in and resourced by a relational interaction between social conditions, material resources and power relations on one hand, and individuals' beliefs, values, interests, and professional identities on the other hand (Eteläpelto et al., 2013). In a similar vein, other researchers (Biesta & Tedder, 2007; Billet & Pavlova, 2005) have also noted the connection between the practice of agency and the socio-cultural and temporal-relational context, but have also focused on individual's construction of work-related identities in order to lead meaningful careers and life courses. In other words, while agency is of interest in the present, it also has a past and a future dimension as well (Campbell-Wilcox & Lawson, 2018). Accordingly, agency is always exercised for certain purposes and within historically-constructed sociocultural circumstances (Hokka & Eteläpelto, 2014).

Additionally, certain personal, relational, and contextual factors have been found to shape, support, or constrain teachers' agency within their various organizational contexts (Biesta & Tedder, 2007; Hökkä et al., 2017). For example, power relationships and distribution of authority in educational settings affect teachers' agency (Eteläpelto et al., 2013), as do structural factors, such as the professional tasks they are required to do, the norms of the institution where they work, and the material and social resources available (Priestley et al., 2015). Earlier research has indicated that professional agency is fostered by leadership support (Eteläpelto et al., 2015). Specifically, practices that empower teachers, and maintain their autonomy and creativity can support agency by giving them opportunities to feel in control of the choices they make (Campbell-Wilcox & Lawson, 2018). Experiences of trust and emotional safety, as well as positive work environments and peer relationships have also been found to be significant for teachers' agency (Priestley et al., 2015). Receiving emotional and social support within the work environment can enhance teachers' agency and consequently their chances of resolving issues in professional identity negotiation (Hökkä et al., 2017).

2.2. Conceptualizing professional identity

In the absence of a precise definition (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009), contemporary conceptions of professional identity have been based on four assumptions: that it is dependent upon and formed within multiple contexts; that it is formed in relationships with others and involves emotions; that it is changing, unstable, and multifaceted; and finally that it involves the construction and reconstruction of meaning through stories over time (Rodgers & Scott, 2008). Such assumptions have been found in other studies (Beijaard et al., 2004; Day et al., 2006), which emphasize historical, social, and political elements as being influential in the formation of professional identity (Leigh, 2019; Zembylas & Chubbuck, 2018). Similarly, Hökkä et al. (2017) identify the characteristics of professional identity, and indicate that it is a construction that is dynamic, multifaceted, culturally embedded, and continuously reshaped. Typically, identity is understood as a tool through which professionals make sense of themselves, and position themselves in various situations and in relation to others (Akkerman & Meijer, 2011; Beijaard et al., 2004; Day et al., 2006). It encompasses teachers' values, ethical considerations, commitments, ideals, and goals (Hokka & Eteläpelto, 2014); in other words, it involves what teachers consider as being of utmost important for their work.

While the current study accepts the notions of the multifaceted, discontinuous, and social nature of identity, it also shares the concerns raised by Akkerman and Meijer (2011) in that these characteristics cannot account for a complete illustration of professional identity, and that individuals are in fact able to maintain a sense of self through time and within changing contexts. Similar to Ruohotie-Lyhty (2013), this study adopts a narrative definition of professional identity that sees teachers as active agents striving to maintain a stable understanding of themselves in shifting contexts through their "self-as-teacher stories" (p.122). Therefore, in order to understand teachers' construction of identity, it is important to examine how they enact professional agency in understanding their experiences, and what kind of self-stories they voice based on these experiences (Beijaard et al., 2004; Biesta & Tedder, 2007).

The relationship between professional agency and identity is further given prominence within the subject-centered socio-cultural approach (Eteläpelto et al., 2015). As agency is seen as referring to intentional efforts to influence and make a difference, and thus transform work places and cultures, identity renegotiation amid changing work conditions becomes inevitable and even a necessary condition for adapting, striving, and succeeding at work (Hokka & Eteläpelto, 2014). In this sense, changing contexts and conditions do not directly influence identity negotiations, rather, teachers' agentic actions and choices have the potential to provoke identity reconstruction and development (Eteläpelto et al., 2015). Particularly in the case of disruptive and traumatizing events, professional identity can be radically challenged and changed, as individuals engage in a process of reinterpreting their life stories (Ruohotie-Lyhty, 2013). Since typical teachers' careers and organizational contexts will always include discontinuous, fragmented and turbulent events, there will continue to be a "struggle to construct and sustain a stable identity" (Day et al., 2006, p. 613).

2.3. Agency, identity and emotions

In understanding teachers' emotions, the study takes a similar stance as Cross and Hong (2012) and Zembylas (2005) in considering emotional experiences as involving social, relational, and psychological processes; meaning they do not exist within an individual or an environment independently, rather they are experienced within social and political practices and interactions. In

troubled work contexts, the emotional aspect of teaching cannot go unnoticed, as has been the case in prior research (Campbell-Wilcox & Lawson, 2018). Such times provide the opportunity to further illuminate the kinds of emotions which teachers typically associate with their struggle to enact agency and find a fit between their professional identities and work organizations (Cross & Hong, 2012; Vähäsantanen & Eteläpelto, 2015). While some teachers may feel empowered and build resilience (Gu & Day, 2013), other emotional impacts can bear heavy on teachers, and include apathy, psychological withdrawal, burnout, and depression, accompanied by diminished commitments to their students and work community (Campbell-Wilcox & Lawson, 2018). Still others may experience contradictory emotions, such as a sense of being undervalued and empowered simultaneously (Vähäsantanen & Eteläpelto, 2015). These emotions, as theorized by Zembylas (2005) are the points of departure for any examination of identity and the role of power and agency in identity negotiations.

In their research on troubled work contexts, Vähäsantanen and Eteläpelto (2015) illustrated the way individuals perceived organizational limitations on their professional identity, competencies, and ways of working, and how they were prompted to enact various forms of professional agency, including transformative, upholding, and resistant agency. Their study highlighted the way emotions play a significant role in agentic enactment, concluding with the notion that "agency is not merely a rational act but an emotional process which itself gives rise to different emotions" (p. 13). Similarly, the current study takes account of these considerations and provides additional understandings about the emotionally-laden agentic nature of renegotiating identities in disruptive educational contexts. Thus, the current study was guided by the following questions:

1. In which ways do teacher educators' professional agency evolve in the context of intense educational disruption?
2. In which ways have personal, relational, and contextual factors influenced teacher educators' professional identity renegotiations and the practice of professional agency in the context of intense educational disruption?

3. Research methodology

3.1. Method

The article employed a narrative inquiry into the professional agency and identity renegotiations of teacher educators in Qatar. Well accepted in the literature is the notion that human beings make sense of their experiences, organize their understandings and communicate their ideas through stories (Ruohotie-Lyhty, 2013; Teng, 2020; Wertz et al., 2011). Consequently, narrative inquiry has emerged as a powerful approach to obtain a narrative view of a phenomenon under investigation, but also as a viable research methodology used to explore it (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

As a research methodology, narrative inquiry is more concerned with a constructed account of experience, rather than a factual record of reality (Wertz et al., 2011). As such, narratives are considered powerful tools for understanding individuals' experiences and exploring the meanings they derive from them (Clandinin & Huber, 2010). Using narrative inquiry, researchers are able to investigate the way participants construct past events and actions into personal narratives, impose order on the flow of their experience, and make sense of these events and actions in their lives (Riessman, 2008).

In order to achieve these understandings, researchers need to consider a three-dimensional inquiry space (Clandinin & Connelly,

2000), which includes the temporal, registered in participants' reflections on past, present, and future experiences; the social, depicted in participants' relations to self and to others; and the spatial, concerned with the contexts which shape the experiences. Previous research employing a narrative inquiry have emphasized the strength of this approach in capturing teachers' personal stories as the central resource for exploring their agency and professional identity (Biesta & Tedder, 2007; Kayi-Aydar, 2015; Leigh, 2019; Ruohotie-Lyhty, 2013; Teng, 2020). Similarly, the current study employed narrative inquiry to explore the way teacher educators were able to influence and develop their work and identities, and shed light on the extent to which, at a certain time, they felt restricted in their professional agency as a result of certain personal, relational, and contextual factors.

3.2. Context and participants

The context of the current study was the college of education at Qatar University, which was the only teacher preparation institution in the country until recently. The college offers both undergraduate and postgraduate degrees in education, and houses several programs which prepare students for teaching at the early childhood, primary or secondary school levels, and within a specific subject concentration, including mathematics, science, social studies, English, Arabic, Islamic studies, physical education, or art education.

In response to the global pandemic, the university followed directives from the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, mandating all colleges to transition to emergency online learning during the Spring semester, 2020. Accordingly, teacher educators at the college of education shifted all teaching and learning activities online, following a three-day intensive training program. The teacher educators chose among different video-conferencing tools (i.e., Microsoft Teams, WebEx, and Zoom) to conduct their synchronous classes, in addition to the availability of a learning management system (i.e., Blackboard), which they used for content dissemination and online assessments. Noteworthy, cultural barriers surfaced during the synchronous classes, as the majority of female students refused to open their cameras. In the ensuing Fall semester, some social distancing restrictions were lifted, as limited university attendance was allowed and students were required to take their exams on campus. Concurrently, policy directives from the university's higher administration were not limited to the academic space, as financial decisions influenced the working lives of the university faculty, yet more profoundly expatriates who did not enjoy equal financial standings or job security as their Qatari colleagues. While expatriates had enjoyed several financial benefits from the university, covering accommodation, children's tuition fees, and medical insurance before the pandemic, these benefits were significantly reduced during the pandemic, thus adding another layer of complexity influencing their livelihoods.

Participants were recruited from the different programs by sending an open invitation to all the teacher educators ($n \approx 40$). A total of nine teacher educators gave their consent to participating in this study, including four females and five males. All participants held doctoral degrees, with different academic backgrounds. Their nationalities were diverse, including four Qataris, three Egyptians, one Omani, and one Jordanian. Their work experience in the field of teacher education ranged between 4 and 38 years, with several participants having previously worked at different universities in the Gulf and internationally before joining Qatar University. Demographic data is presented in Table 1.

Table 1
Demographic data.

Participants	Years of experience	Specialization	Gender
1	4	English	Female
2	20	Sociology	Male
3	15	Arabic	Male
4	18	Educational Psychology	Male
5	23	Physical Education	Male
6	15	Social Studies	Female
7	34	Educational Technology	Male
8	16	Special Education	Female
9	38	Early Childhood	Female

3.3. Data collection

Interviews served as the main source of data and included questions pertaining to the dimensions of narrative research: the temporal, social, and spatial dimensions (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). In the process of data collection, the principles of narrative inquiry, as explained by Caine et al. (2013), were followed in that the researchers, having experienced similar events, were able to examine their own "research puzzles" (Caine et al., 2013, p. 576) alongside their participants, start a conversation on mutual interest and engage in dialogue, seeking a common understanding in which the voices of the narrators were clear.

In this sense, participants were prompted to describe their experiences before, during, and after the disruption caused by the mandatory closure of the university. They explained ways in which they prepared for their courses, their major goals for students, what they valued and considered important for teacher preparation, and confidence in using educational technology. Participants were also requested to illustrate the relational structures affecting the way they interacted with others. In this respect, they described their relationships with colleagues, students, and administrative staff. Finally, they recounted the contextual resources as either supporting or restraining their professional agency. For this dimension, they described the teacher preparation program, leadership expectations, their own responsibilities, and the material resources made available.

Data collection began with a semi-structured interview protocol, but the interviewees were encouraged to describe their experiences, perceptions, and ideas freely without restrictions (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). All the while, participants were asked to describe their emotional state, and their ability to pursue professional interests and make decisions related to their work. Interviews lasted 60–80 min, and were conducted in Arabic. All interviews were recorded, transcribed and translated into English for analysis. During data analysis, the Arabic and English versions were used to check the accuracy of the translation and avoid any loss of meaning.

3.4. Data analysis

The study aimed to provide a rich description of the phenomena under investigation from the participants' perspectives (Patton, 2002), and used a constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) to understand their narratives and interpret the findings. Thus, the qualitative content analysis was conducted in an inductive way and included three levels: open coding, axial coding, and selective coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

During the open coding stage, the transcripts were read repeatedly while noting initial impressions and searching for various meanings. In line with narrative analysis (Clandinin & Huber, 2010), the holistic narrative of each participant was

preserved by reconstructing the transcripts as individual profiles (Floyd, 2012). For each participant, concise notes were taken of the events which they described as significant, and the meanings they associated with them, along with the researchers' thoughts and impressions used as cues for the following data analysis phases. These notes were marked as codes according to the research questions; such that the emerging forms of agency were marked, and the personal, relational, contextual factors influencing professional agency and identity renegotiations were also noted using different colors.

During the axial coding process, another round of reading was executed and the codes were reorganized to allow for a cross-case comparison among the participants. Researcher triangulation was applied as the initial codes were discussed several times before they were organized in a table format. Next, using the initial codes, the researchers searched for meanings and patterns, and then sorted them into overarching themes following several rounds of discussions. Caution was taken so as not to deconstruct participants' stories into coded piles, but on the contrary maintain the "complex and multi-layered storied nature of experience" which "represent the complexity of people's lives and experiences" (Clandinin & Huber, 2010, p. 13, p. 13).

Finally, during the selective coding stage, a top-down approach was implemented in which existing literature and theories of professional agency and identity were used to gain a deeper understanding of the similarities and differences between participants' experiences during a time of intense change. Specific illustrations were located from certain participants which provided empirical evidence for the identified themes. Ultimately, seven theoretical themes emerged throughout the data analysis process and were organized into three levels; the personal, relational, and contextual spaces, as illustrated in the following section.

4. Findings and discussion

In the following section, the seven themes are presented according to the personal, relational, and contextual factors (Eteläpelto et al., 2013), which have influenced the different forms of professional agency that the participating teacher educators enacted, and their professional identity renegotiations in the context of intense educational disruption. These themes are presented in Table 2.

4.1. Enacting agency in the personal space

In the pre-pandemic phase, all participants were able to realize their professional goals, roles and responsibilities. For some participants (n = 6/9), these professional goals were closely related to

their teaching roles; aimed at enhancing student teachers' pedagogical knowledge and skills, and focusing on preparing student teachers who can design effective lessons, integrate educational technologies, present interactive lessons, and interact positively with their students. While for others (n = 3/9), preparing student teachers for their future professions adhered to their facilitator roles, and reflected their own personal experiences and educational backgrounds. In this way, Participants 1 and 6 focused on critical thinking skills, metacognition, life-long learning, and the ability to adapt to change with their student teachers, while Participant 4 believed student teachers should become aware of their future students' psychological, social, and cognitive needs, cater to their mental well-being, and enjoy good mental health themselves. Further, for the majority of participants (n = 7/9), their identity of "teacher of teachers" (Swennen et al., 2010, p. 140) emerged evidently in the analysis, as they revealed their own competence and values through "explicit modelling" of the kinds of teaching they expected their student teachers to imitative and develop. Similar findings have been reported in Hökkä & Eteläpelto's (2014) study of teacher educators enjoying similarly positive agency in influencing their work and professional identities.

During the pandemic, the narrative of *renegotiating professional identities* was prompted by the sudden changes in participants' personal and professional lives, yet varied largely among them. For participants whose identities remained intact and mostly unchanged (n = 4/9), their agency was immediately redirected at their teaching responsibilities, as they remained relatively calm and in control. Only after a short period of "shock" (P9) and "confusion" (P1), these participants were able to "gather [their] mental strength and pull [themselves] together" (P1), and realize their same goals and roles in the online context. Accordingly, they expressed feelings of "contentment and pride" (P8) of having the ability to continue teaching in ways that well-suited their course learning outcomes. For instance, Participant 1 did not constrain herself with administrative directives and practiced a resistant form of agency, as she "did what [she] was convinced in without fear" in catering to her students' psychological well-being, engagement and learning. These participants practiced what Kidd and Murray (2020) termed "pedagogic agility," as they were able to innovate based on the premises of previous practices and values, and were successful in navigating away from initial "pedagogic discomfort" (p. 552). Ellis et al. (2020) further described similar actions by teacher educators as producing a "stabilizing" effect (p. 565), as it allowed participants to absorb "the shocks to the system" and resume their responsibilities towards student teachers.

This narrative of self-fulfillment and confidence contrasted drastically with the troubles faced by those participants (n = 5/9) who were prompted to enact various forms of agency and

Table 2

The seven themes emerging from the data analysis and organized into three spaces.

	Themes	Sample citations (during pandemic)
Personal space	(1) renegotiating professional identities	(1) <i>Everything has changed; I am no longer the same professor I was before March (P6)</i>
	(2) developing work practices	(2) <i>I started using a flipped classroom strategy, searching relevant websites, learning methods of interactive teaching and I mastered tools on Blackboard (P4)</i>
Relational space	(3) social practices and interactions with students	(3) <i>The students may be logged in to the class session, but they mostly don't respond when I ask questions (P3)</i>
	(4) social practices and interactions with colleagues	(4) <i>We couldn't see each other, but we were communicating much more frequently by text, email, and phone calls ... I was the one offering support, but that was after I had received support from colleagues (P1)</i>
Contextual space	(5) professional autonomy	(5) <i>Autonomy was ripped away from us during this period, we followed a strict set of decisions. My work autonomy was at its lowest level, and was dominated by frustration (P2)</i>
	(6) decision making in the university context	(6) <i>The administration should have had a clear vision of the crisis, and shouldn't have made decisions so abruptly. What added to our confusion were the rapid changes in decisions (P5)</i>
	(7) professional learning opportunities	<i>The university put a great effort into supporting us on a 24 h basis. All the support we needed was available online (P9)</i>

renegotiate their initial identities in response to personal and professional challenges. For these participants, emotional turmoil crippled their agency, especially at the initial stages of the pandemic. For Participant 5, the need to change his instructional plans in ways which did not match his goals and beliefs undermined the value of his previous roles and caused him much distress. Accordingly, he was unable to implement previous teaching and assessment procedures, instead he “adopted a lower set of standards” and “turned a blind eye” to the shortcomings of online teaching as a satisficing form of agency. The term “satisficing” used here is adopted from [Le Maistre and Paré \(2010\)](#), as a “strategy in decision-making situations” (p. 562), in which individuals seek solutions which are sufficient enough to meet the requirements of the situation. However, it should be noted that similar to other forms of agency, satisficing is not unchangeable; but can be modified and become more constructive and positively agentive when circumstances also change ([Hökkä et al., 2017](#)).

Participant 2 also struggled with feelings of “confusion and uncertainty” about his roles and responsibilities during the shift to online teaching. Being unprepared for the transition, he found mundane teaching tasks burdensome and time-consuming. Consequently, he suspended all his research and community service roles as a coping form of agency, and focused exclusively on his teaching activities. In a similar vein, Participant 6 felt “overwhelmed and completely disoriented” by the shift to an online context. The significant increase in her responsibilities was another debilitating challenge. While she was technically prepared, the timing of the shift in the middle of the semester just before midterm exams caused significant delays in achieving her previously set goals. Accordingly, the situation “became a matter of survival,” and she decided to enact a resilient form of agency by redirecting her focus on students’ psychological states and “doubling [her] previous efforts.” She implemented new instructional strategies in the form of “one-on-one tutoring, while being available to students 24/7 to help, support and emotionally contain them.”

These professional struggles were similarly experienced by Participants 3 and 4, yet personal challenges caused further burden. As closures throughout the country were both sudden and unexpected, these participants were prevented from returning to their families in Qatar during the transition to online teaching. Consequently, both participants were “traumatized” (P4), with feelings of “fear and anxiety” (P3) controlling their ability to perform any professional duties for several weeks. Participant 4, a “psychologist and mental health specialist” himself, explained how debilitating his personal circumstances were on his ability to perform his previous professional roles in teaching and research, as well as leading a learning support center. After this initial setback, both participants resorted to completely revamping the way they performed their professional roles and responsibilities as a transformative form of agency. With limited Internet connection and frequent electricity outages, they developed new ways to teach their courses asynchronously, by creating a YouTube channel for posting instructional videos (P3), and adopting a flipped classroom strategy in order to ensure students had access to the material in a timely fashion (P4). As a result, Participant 4 described the significant changes to his role, as he shifted from a “traditional instructor who gave lectures and taught students using traditional methods, to an innovative instructor who applied modern techniques.” The two narratives represented in this section display similar references to emotional control and regulation discussed in [Zemblyas \(2005\)](#), which constituted power, agency, and even resistance to subvert existing conditions and create the kind of transformation needed within socio-political contexts.

In the post-pandemic phase, the context of intense educational disruption continued to influence several participants’ (n = 5/9) professional identities as they continued to adapt to revisions in their goals, roles and responsibilities. With new developments happening in the Fall semester, these participants added to their previous repertoire of goals. For instance, Participant 1 saw the need to better prepare student teachers for a changing world, by infusing “change theories into the teacher preparation program, such that they may anticipate and accept change in the future.” Participant 6 emphasized the need to better prepare her student teachers in the use of educational technologies, as she predicts the future to carry many uncertainties during which they “may be compelled to switch to online teaching.” Similar to participants in the [Ellis et al. \(2020\)](#) study, these participants were prompted to rethink their practices in more deliberate and intentional ways, and move away from reactive responses as in their initial responses to the pandemic.

For other participants (n = 4/9), a return to “normalcy” (P9) and “face-to-face teaching” (P7) was highly anticipated, as they perceived their prior roles and responsibilities to be more suitable for accomplishing their previously set goals. For instance, Participant 3 highlighted the shortcomings of online teaching, comparing it to a “train moving quickly on a track” in order to reveal the way he could cover large quantities of content, without knowing for certain whether his students had acquired professional skills. Participant 5 confirmed this belief in the superiority of face-to-face teaching, specifically in “ensuring students’ attainment of course learning outcomes ... which has become an even bigger responsibility with online teaching.” Accordingly, their significant emotional experiences during the pandemic had prompted these participants to enact agency and renegotiate their identities temporarily. However, as tensions between their new identities and previous identities caused further emotional load, they resisted their negotiated identities and anticipated what they called a return to normalcy. This finding corroborates with previous notions of identity, which allude to its dynamic, multiple and unstable nature specifically within shifting work environments ([Hökkä et al., 2017](#); [Rodgers & Scott, 2008](#)).

Finally, the mostly gloomy narratives of the Spring were replaced with narratives of optimism, confidence, and readiness for *developing work practices*. The majority of participants (n = 7/9) discussed the various ways in which they enacted agency to improve their technological skills and try out new ideas in their courses. They believed the pandemic revealed “how far behind” (P4) they were in integrating technology in their teaching, and “forced them to refine their skills” (P5) and engage in intense professional learning to “keep up with instability” (P2) on one hand, and “move forward with the semester” (P2) on the other. Similar to [Vähäsantanen et al.’s \(2020\)](#) study, these participants expressed “activeness and enthusiasm” (p. 7) for designing new teaching practices which integrated a multitude of technological tools, thus becoming “competent online instructor [s]” (P1), and consequently “making online teaching more enjoyable” (P4). Even for courses which could be held on campus, technology integration became a fixed staple and a solution for ensuring continued learning for students who were unable to attend classes. As noted in [Campbell \(2020\)](#), there was a realization among most participants for the need to continue “to develop and engage with new ways of working, utilize technology, and engage in professional learning to support their new approaches to practice” (p. 4). In particular, there was a continuous need to adapt to the changing work conditions through the three temporal phases, revealing the dynamic nature of agency as different forms were enacted in compliance with the need to renegotiate their identities.

4.2. Enacting agency in the relational space

The way participants positioned themselves in relation to their students and their colleagues were important considerations in their identity negotiations (Akkerman & Meijer, 2011) and the way their agency was supported or constrained by such relational aspects (Hökkä et al., 2017).

Within their *social practices and interactions with students*, participants revealed consistent patterns in the pre-pandemic period. All enjoyed healthy and respectful relationships with their students, as they saw themselves as “advocate” (P1), “advisor” (P3), “mental supporter” (P4), and “colleague” (P6). Several narratives reported the way participants practiced agency towards promoting strong relationships with student teachers and supporting their cognitive and emotional well-being. For instance, Participant 2 developed a “buddy system approach” to support his struggling students by partnering them with more competent students, and closely monitoring their progress. He described feelings of “satisfaction and pleasure” when he established close relationships with his students, in which he was able “to be honest with them about their strengths and weaknesses ... assuring them that their relationship was governed by commitment and justice.” Similarly, Participant 4 discussed his “joy-based philosophy,” which “connected happiness and joy to learning” and led to “enhancing students’ willingness to learn and their academic achievement.” Based on this philosophy, he “strive [d] to establish strong social bonds with [his] students which [were] not restricted to the classroom.”

During the pandemic, these relationships did not remain intact for all the participants. The majority of participants (n = 7/9) disclosed several factors which caused disapproval in their relationships with their students. The first factor influencing their relationships with students was a “lack of interaction” (P7). As a cultural barrier, students (especially females) did not open their cameras at any time during the online classes. While most participants respected this cultural norm, they believed that being restricted in their ability to see their students was a hindrance for “getting to know them ... assessing them accurately ... and developing social relationships with them” (P5). To stress this issue further, Participant 5 felt as though he were speaking to his computer with no one on the other side, while Participant 3 felt “deep frustration,” as though he were “alone on a deserted island ... or in an empty stadium ... talking to [him]self.”

Another factor influencing this relationship was the frequent incidents of plagiarism and cheating. For example, Participant 2 was “surprised to witness a different set of values surfacing ... one which included opportunism.” Accordingly, students resorted to “quick gains, lacked real desire to learn, and put forward the least effort.” Participant 9 confirmed that “students had little value for ethics,” and Participant 7 could not “guarantee that students do not resort to cheating,” no matter what procedures he took to minimize such actions. Feelings of “disappointment” and “understanding” (P8) coexisted towards their students, as participants did not generalize the occurrence of these incidents (P9), and acknowledged that “it was an exceptional period, which required providing the maximum support possible” (P4).

By contrast, Participants 1 and 6 experienced strengthened relationships with their students. As a resilient form of agency, they focused most of their energy and effort on maintaining “very close” (P1) relationships with their students, and devoting “all [their] time to students” (P6). Both were aware of the psychological states of their students, and believed in their need to “remain strong” (P1) for them. Kidd and Murray (2020) confirmed the importance of previously established relationships between teacher educators and student teachers in ensuring the “reconstruction and

revitalization” (p. 552) of such relationships in the online context. Built upon existing relationships and ethics of care (Kidd & Murray, 2020), these participants were able to reconstruct the “classroom atmosphere using online tools” (P6) and reconfigure their “practices to make them suitable for online teaching” (P1). Accordingly, they worked intentionally on “motivating students and boosting their confidence” (P6) so students would not succumb to their own struggles with online learning.

In the ensuing Fall semester or what has been termed the post-pandemic phase, the majority of participants (n = 7/9) believed their relationships with students returned to some normalcy, despite the fact that an online mode of instruction prevailed for most classes. The emotional response to the beginning of the semester reflected positively on participants’ relationships with their students, as they “sensed more discipline and commitment among students” (P2), “accumulated experiences in online teaching” (P4), and “were able to assess students using traditional exams (P9). This meant that some of the challenges they faced with student cheating and plagiarism could be mitigated using “stricter means of assessments” (P5). Despite these positive changes, Participant 3 still believed the prevailing cultural norms prohibited the initiatives he had taken towards establishing any relationship with students, especially female students, whom he could not persuade to open their cameras or participate more actively during class. He described students as being “invisible behind the screen” and their participation as being “non-existent.”

A second subtheme in this section pertains to the *social practices and interactions with colleagues*. During the pre-pandemic phase, most participants’ (n = 8/9) relationships were “governed by the rules and regulations at the college” (P2), such that they “participated willingly in numerous committees” (P1), “exchanged experiences and teaching ideas” (P3), and “discussed issues related to students and course development” (P6). These collaborations were limited within the scope of professional tasks and activities, as they did not have time for more “informal collegial relationships” (P2). Yet, for most participants (n = 6/9), these relationships did not grow into research collaborations, despite several “failed” (P1) initiatives in this direction. In this regard, characteristics of a “prevailing culture of individualism,” as described by Swennen et al. (2010, p. 140), may still dominate a “fully collaborative culture.” The prevalence of this culture has been documented in teacher education studies globally (Hokka & Etelapelto, 2014), confiding that “teacher educators’ agency in terms of participation in shared work practice was weak and fragile” (p. 45), especially as they valued their teaching roles over their researcher roles.

As “crises reveal the true characteristics of people” (P3), participants’ relationships with colleagues became governed by the emergency nature of the transition to online learning during the pandemic. For most participants (n = 7/9), the experience of “a pandemic brought [them] closer together” (P1) and their “relationships became stronger” (P4) in mostly informal ways. These participants believed in their “duty to stand by each other and help one another” (P6). In this respect, they offered assistance in professional learning by “creating instructional videos” (P1) and “holding online workshops” (P2), as a form of “upholding” agency (Vähäsantanen & Etelapelto, 2015). They also “communicated more often” (P5) in order to provide emotional support, as they felt “a professional and moral responsibility to help [their] colleagues overcome the difficulties they were facing” (P2). In describing her initiatives towards colleagues, Participant 6 alluded to feelings of “satisfaction” mingled with “exhaustion” as she enacted a transformative form of agency. She would “spend long hours teaching them everything [she] knew ... [yet] this consumed [her] time and drained [her] strength.” These interactions were further important

for “exchanging ideas, discussing alternative assessments, and sharing experiences” (P5), yet “research collaborations could not be continued online” (P9). For Participants 3 and 8, however, the pandemic situation left them with feelings of “isolation” (P3) and “being ignored” (P8) by their colleagues, indicating the complexity and sensitivity of sustaining relationships among members of the same community.

As the post-pandemic phase began to unfold, most participants described “a return to [their] previous relationships” (P6) with their colleagues, whether those were governed by collegiality or not. The “culture of individualism” described before the pandemic prevailed once more, exacerbated by the fact that most classes were still conducted online, and most instructors “had become knowledgeable in online teaching” (P1). For instance, Participant 6 illustrated this situation clearly, indicating the “strong impact” of the pandemic in its initial stages, “but soon after, [they] returned to [their] old selves and communication returned to what it was before,” as another instance of enacting an upholding form of agency. Further, Participant 3 believed he “was still recovering” from the damaged relationships during the previous semester, yet maintains that arriving to the university every day to give his online lectures and meet with his colleagues provides him with a “sense of accomplishment,” as he tries to overcome his negative experiences during the pandemic. Finally, several participants (n = 4/9) believed that “communities of practice” (P1) should govern their relationships with colleagues, in order to witness “positive interactions, engagement in research projects, and continued emotional support” (P8) among colleagues. Clearly, the different ways in which participants responded to their shifting relationships called for different forms of agency and continuous renegotiations of identity. However, there was no particular pattern among participants to allow for projecting the forms of agency most suitable for different conditions, alluding to the complexity of human responses to changing circumstances.

4.3. Enacting agency in the contextual space

Participants did not work in vacuum, and changing contextual factors influenced their agentic actions and decisions (Hökkä et al., 2017), as well as their identity renegotiations (Vähäsantanen & Eteläpelto, 2015). First, several participants (n = 5/9) noted a heavy workload as restraining their agency. However, as this aspect of their work context was not related to the disruption to education caused by the pandemic, it will not be further elaborated in this section. Noteworthy, however, is the significant negative influence of “having too many administrative tasks” (P2) on participants’ ability to perform their roles and responsibilities as they would like to, and leading only to “exhaustion and fatigue” (P6).

In regards to *professional autonomy*, participants revealed conflicting notions of what it meant to be autonomous in one’s work. These perceptions were consistent throughout the three phases in the study. During the pre-pandemic phase, participants’ (n = 3/9) definitions of autonomy were equated to “not hav [ing] the ability to change course learning outcomes, descriptions, or anything else in the program” (P5), and their “autonomy was completely constrained” (P1). These participants believed their “autonomy was governed by the university’s system of rules and regulations” (P6), and they were “obliged to adhere to the content and assessment methods prescribed in the course syllabus” (P6). Feelings of “disappointment” (P1) were revealed as the changes they called for were warranted based on contradictions between program or course particularities and their own beliefs and values. In dealing with these contradictions, participants sometimes practiced a satisficing form of agency, as they “explained to students the

contradictions in the syllabus” (P1), “assigned extra readings to students, ...offered additional ideas related to innovative knowledge and concepts” (P6), and “postponed discussions about change” for when the time was right.

For some participants (n = 4/9), however, their definitions of autonomy were already restricted to the classroom context as “hav [ing] the ability to choose any teaching methods and activities” (P8), “interact freely with [their] students” (P7), and “take initiatives that provide additional support to students” (P2). Accordingly, “autonomy was assured in whatever [took] place inside the classroom” (P8). Feelings of “satisfaction and gratitude” (P4) were revealed as they were “appreciated and trusted” (P4) by their line managers, who “gave [them] the freedom to make decisions and implement any initiative or creative ideas related to teaching” (P4). Accordingly, they practiced different forms of personal agency as previously discussed in the first section of the findings. Consequently, in line with Vähäsantanen and Eteläpelto (2015), restrictions on autonomy did not necessarily result in negative emotions or imply a lessening of organizational commitment among these participants.

Noteworthy, these definitions of autonomy were closely related to the notion of *decision making in the university context*. In this respect, Participant 9, who had been working at the university for approximately 40 years, witnessed the gradual decline in her autonomy and the “somewhat centralized” nature of decision-making, for which faculty members were no longer given a prominent role. With a similar extensive experience at the university, Participant 7 described decision-making as though occurring at “a military institution, as they received orders which could not be discussed.” Both participants readjusted their definitions of autonomy to the classroom context, emphasizing that their “relationships with students and what [they] did in the classroom were private matters, and no one interfered with that” (P7). The changes experienced by these two participants in particular provided further evidence to the increasingly controlled nature of the work of teacher educators (Buchanan, 2015) and to the power relations within traditional educational hierarchies which influence their identity negotiations and generate diverse emotional reactions (Zembylas, 2005).

During the pandemic, the connection between *professional autonomy* and *decision making in the university context* became problematic. Most participant (n = 5/9) agreed that their autonomy had been jeopardized by the “incessant directives from the university concerning assessments, teaching, and attendance” (P6). Participants were left with “no choice but to wait for instructions telling [them] exactly what to do” (P6). This wait, however, caused feelings of “frustration and anxiety” (P2) for some participants as they were “constantly waiting for decisions from higher administration, even for the smallest matters” (P2). As “emails kept pouring in from the university” (P6), participants were constantly requested to change some aspect of their practices, only to be “surprised the following day with a different decision” (P5). Accordingly, their “academic freedom was constrained” and “their work autonomy was at its lowest” (P2). As some of these decisions restricted their agency, they implemented these directives even when they went against their professional values and beliefs. These satisficing forms of agency seemed to become more common in overcoming contextual challenges, specifically when they were obliged to implement certain top-down directives. While a certain degree of autonomy is always expected, educators tend to become resentful when they are told exactly what to do (Brew et al., 2018).

In contrast, other participants (n = 3/9) disagreed that the university decision-making had constrained them. For instance, Participant 3 believed he enjoyed “full freedom to do what [he] saw

appropriate for [his] students ... deciding on evaluation tools and grade distribution as needed." Further, Participants 7 and 8 did not report on any changes to their autonomy, and believed that "all the instructions received from the university were logical, reasonable, and not difficult to implement, and placed the interests of the students first" (P8). Perhaps enjoying "too much autonomy," Participant 1 was alone in her belief that they "were not informed about many things, and were left on [their] own with no direction in a Laissez-Faire-like style." This situation prompted her to call for more "decision-making ... a clear vision ... and active communication" on behalf of the college leaders, rather than have directives come from the higher administrative level. While considering this type of autonomy as being "negative" (P1), the situation, nonetheless, prompted her to enact a resilient form of agency as discussed in the first section of the findings. Examining the contradictions in participants' perceptions towards decision-making confirms that there are different ways in which teacher educators make meaning of their changing contexts and further demonstrates how these differences relate to their "foci of awareness" (Brew et al., 2018, p. 2298).

Despite previous associations between their definitions of professional autonomy and the classroom context, some participants (n = 4/9) believed that they only "regained a fraction of [their] autonomy related to teaching, but in reality, [they] still felt that [they] had lost most of it" (P2) in the post-pandemic phase. These feelings were mainly associated with "the arbitrary decision-making" (P4) taken by the university to cut back on "most of [their] financial benefits, including children's education, health, and travel allowances" (P5). Feelings associated with these financial reductions included "diminished job security ... and a lost sense of belonging" (P4). The fact that these participants associated the decisions made to restricted autonomy revealed the intricate relationship between their personal and professional lives: "In the end, [they] were human beings, and the financial, social, and psychological conditions influenced their well-being at work and prevented [them] from performing [their] responsibilities ... [eventually] leading to emotional burden and burnout" (P4). As these actions were implemented on non-Qatari employees only, the discrepancies in the way participants enacted professional agency became associated with nationality. In this case, non-Qatari participants were prompted to enact different forms of agency in more dynamic ways than their Qatari colleagues, who enjoyed higher levels of job security and feelings of certainty. Taking a political approach towards teacher identity, Zembylas and Chubbuck (2018) indicated that boundaries between the personal and the professional become blurred, and imply deeper identity politics in relation to demographic factors, such as race, gender or class, and in the case of our participants, nationality. This finding provides further evidence for the way identities are embedded in social, political, and cultural contexts, and for the need to enact professional agency in navigating the demands of academic work environments (Brew et al., 2018; Hokka & Etelapelto, 2014).

Lastly, participants (n = 9/9) unanimously agreed that the provision of support during the pandemic in the form of *professional learning opportunities* and in response to the sudden university closure had a positive influence on their professional agency. They benefited from the "intensive three-day courses on online teaching and learning" and were "able to learn the skills [they] needed to make the quick transition" (P6). A positive idea associated with these professional learning opportunities was their timely nature, such that "the university was quick to respond and provided different platforms for faculty to choose from" (P8). In this case, administrative decision-making supported participants' professional agency and identity renegotiations, as they were able to transition to emergency online teaching equipped with some skills,

which later constituted the foundations for enacting their agency in the personal space as discussed in the first section of the findings.

5. Implications and conclusion

The findings from this study offer critical insight into the inherently complex working lives of teacher educators, specifically as they navigated the intense disruption to education caused by COVID-19 pandemic. The findings further allude to the complex interplay of the factors influencing teacher educators' professional agency and identity renegotiations in their responses to the shifting context of the university, while simultaneously controlling and regulating their emotional well-being in their inseparable personal and professional lives. Accordingly, teaching in this context was nothing near to being a technical enterprise. It was inextricably linked to participants' personal lives through the multiple ways in which they invested their selves in their work, thus closely merging their sense of personal and professional identities (Zembylas (2005). The narrative approach used in the current study (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) was also useful in exploring the way these factors evolved and changed temporally from the pre-pandemic, during, and post-pandemic phases, and in understanding participants' experiences from the meanings and feelings they associated to them. A significant contribution of the study pertains to its emphasis on the dynamic nature of professional agency and the interrelationships between agency and identity, and the consequential effects on teachers' ability to feel agentic in their work environments (Ruohotie-Lyhty, 2013). Specifically, the study further responded to a gap in extant literature with its emphasis on teacher educators' emotional responses, providing evidence for the notion that their professional agency and identity renegotiations were emotionally imbued (Hökkä et al., 2017).

In response to personal and professional challenges, teacher educators were found to enact different forms of agency, including resistant, satisficing, coping, resilient, upholding, and transformative agency. These findings revealed that participants were capable of taking actions and making choices, but they differed in the ways they responded to similar challenges. The differences in responses were found between participants, as well as within individuals themselves, enacting different forms of agency in relation to their identity renegotiations, but also in relation to a complex web of other influential factors, particularly emotional responses. Confirming previous studies (Buchanan, 2015; Hokka & Etelapelto, 2014), participants' professional agency was intricately connected to their professional identities, as they found ways to enact agency which were compatible with their goals, values, and interest. When challenges caused a mismatch with their identities, they could not always enact transformative forms of agency, and for these circumstances they resorted to other forms of agency, which led to emerging professional identities. However, these renegotiated professional identities were in some cases only temporary and mediated by emotional distress. Particularly, identity renegotiations have generally been associated with either accepting challenges and responsibilities, and developing professionally, or with defending original conceptions of self against contextual influences (Ruohotie-Lyhty, 2013). In both cases, the current study found emotional experiences to play a significant role in directing the form of agency taken and consequently the consolidation or dismissal of renegotiated identities.

Thus, knowledge about the way teacher educators enact different forms of agency and renegotiate their identities in mostly constructive and positive ways is important to discussions about how faculty leaders can and should build on these resources to make necessary transformative changes to their organizational

practices and improve their productivity in the future, specifically taking advantage of the disruption which has already occurred in their faculties (Ellis et al., 2020). Furthermore, understanding the complexity of enacting professional agency within the personal, relational, and contextual spaces, and the interrelationships between these spaces enables faculty leaders to apply practical interventions at these levels, depending on their particular organizational needs (Hokka & Etelapelto, 2014). They are further important to discussions about how university strategic planning and policy decisions influence teacher educators' emotional well-being and commitment to the academic institution. As revealed through the findings of the current study, decision making at the higher administrative level does not necessarily take into account the influences on educators' personal and professional lives. Careful consideration of these realities is necessary to enhance productivity, commitment, and belonging to the institution (Vähäsantanen & Etelapelto, 2015), as emotions are powerful responses influencing individuals' thoughts and actions (Cross & Hong, 2012).

Additionally, professional development and learning programs are not necessarily common practices in teacher education institutions, as teacher educators often offer such opportunities to others. This is an area ignored in both research and practice, which requires further attention, specifically in the development of programs which target different forms of agency enactment, reflections on identity negotiations, and the expression and management of emotions. Such programs can be implemented more powerfully within communities of practice as they provide the opportunity for educators to examine their individual and collective identity-agency, as well as the emotionally-laden work of teaching, research, and community service (see, for example, Hökkä et al., 2017). Specifically, key characteristics of such programs should emphasize workplace learning, social spaces for identity-work, and building agency through collective influence on work conditions (Hökkä et al., 2017). These programs may be useful in eliminating remnants of the "culture of individualism" (Swennen et al., 2010), and redesigning teacher education as "social learning systems" (Hokka & Etelapelto, 2014, p. 47), where strengthened networking opportunities and collaboration become common practices.

In addition to these practical implications, the different responses revealed in this study call for further research investigating dimensions of agency, identity and emotions. Given the scarcity of research combining these dimensions, future research can provide further evidence needed for understanding teacher educators' professional lives, and consequently their professional development needs (Swennen et al., 2010). As the influence of the pandemic on higher education continues to unfold, teacher educators will continue to respond to their shifting educational contexts, enact different forms of agency and renegotiate their identities accordingly. Documenting these developments can help support and sustain transformative changes in teacher education as discussed above.

In acknowledging the limitations of the study, the participants were recruited on a voluntary basis, and thus it may be possible that those who were more actively involved in their working contexts agreed to participate. Second, while a larger sample of teacher educators from multiple universities could provide trustworthiness to the generalizability of the findings, however, the aim of the current study was to explore the subjective experiences of the teacher educators. It could also be argued that a smaller sample size may offer the possibility of understanding the narrative of each participant as a whole, as another viable way to analyze the data (Floyd, 2012). Another limitation may be the concept-laden nature of the study, as it involved professional agency, identity

renegotiations and emotional response. However, the study emphasized the way these concepts were interrelated within a shifting context. Future studies may be needed to further explore how these concepts continue to interact in the aftermath of the pandemic. Despite these limitations, the study provided an illustrative picture of the way teacher educators were able to enact different forms of agency, how they renegotiated their identities, and how they managed positive, negative and contradictory emotions in response to the disruption to education caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. These emotional experiences played a significant role in directing the different forms of agency taken and consequently the consolidation or dismissal of renegotiated identities. As work organizations continue to receive recognition as emotional spaces (Vähäsantanen & Etelapelto, 2015), teacher educators' emotional interpretations will be important considerations in understanding their future agentic practices and professional identities.

Declaration of competing interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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