

UNDERSTANDING TEACHERS' RESPONSES  
TO EDUCATIONAL CHANGE IN ACT HIGH  
SCHOOLS: DEVELOPING PROFESSIONAL  
VOICE AND IDENTITY

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## Abstract

This research identifies those practices and/or conditions that facilitate (or hinder) school and/or system based innovation in ACT high schools. It examines teachers' ways of making meaning of change in their working lives. It draws on narrative inquiry and teacher in-depth interviews. The *work story* is used to engage teachers' individual agency as a way to conceptualise the requirements of innovation. The data is represented as teachers' narrative categorized as the *Red Hots* and *Unfreezables*. The primary themes or motifs emerging in the teachers' talk—teacher agency, resistance and leadership—provide collective insight into teachers' working lives and the capacity of schools to cope with change.

Analyses of the 'lived experiences' of teachers suggest that innovative practice is linked to teacher agency and the presence of professional learning communities, and that those leading change must focus on the realities of the teachers implementing change. This study also explores the culture of teacher resistance, supporting the research that school cultures are characteristically and strongly resistant to change from within the organization. As a result of this study, we have an improved understanding of the conditions that

contribute to effective school change, and the importance for teachers to conduct their own research. This study contains important recommendations for governments and education systems implementing change initiatives.

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