



PERGAMON

International Journal of
Educational Research 33 (2000) 475–491

International Journal of
**Educational
Research**

www.elsevier.com/locate/ijedures

Chapter 2

Critical dialogues with self: developing teacher identities and roles — a case study of South African student teachers

Michael Samuel^{a,*}, David Stephens^b

^a*School of Educational Studies, University of Durban-Westville, Private Bag X54001, Durban 4000, South Africa*

^b*Faculty of Education, Oslo University College, Pilestredet 52, N-0167, Oslo, Norway*

Abstract

This chapter examines the development and maintenance of teacher role and identity by means of a case study of student teachers entering the profession in Durban, South Africa. The first part of the chapter briefly explores the nature of teacher role identity with particular attention paid to contextual factors in shaping a teacher's professional environment. The second part presents the South African case study, focusing on the experiences of two young entrants to the profession. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the implications of research into teacher role identity for the development of policy and practice in teacher education in developing countries. © 2000 Elsevier Science Ltd. All rights reserved.

About 57 million teachers are currently working in the world's formal education systems, thus constituting the largest category of people engaged in professional and technical occupations (UNESCO, 1998). Although the main concern has always been the impact of these teachers on pupils' lives and achievements, increasing interest is being expressed in understanding those involved in the occupation of teaching and in what ways professional roles and identities are formed, constrained, and developed (Ball & Goodson, 1985; Osler, 1997). The purpose of this chapter is to examine the development and maintenance of teacher role and identity by means of a case study of student teachers (STs) entering the profession in Durban, South Africa.

* Corresponding author.

E-mail address: msamuel@pixie.udw.ac.za (M. Samuel), david.stephens@lu.hio.no (D. Stephens).

1. The nature of teacher role identity

“Who are we?” is a question loaded with philosophical and cultural import. For a young South African considering a teaching career a further question — “What do I want to become?” — lies at the heart of the fundamental relationship between the individual sense of self and the development of a professional identity in a rapidly changing educational environment. The purpose here is not to enter into a lengthy discussion in the concepts of role or identity, but rather to map out the conceptual landscape on which young teacher trainees (student teachers) live and work. This conceptual landscape is one that is charged with historical, political, cultural, and social significance. The specific identity that the student teachers develop is deconstructed, constructed, and reconstructed through the course of the pre-service teacher preparation programme.

The two key relationships are those of self and identity (at the level of the individual) and cultural context and professional environment (at the level of the society in which the student teacher resides). These levels are in critical dialogue with each other, since neither is immune to the forces of change that characterize all societies undergoing the influence of increasingly complex interactions between groups of individuals previously isolated from each other. The self can only attempt to define itself in relation to a host of other competing selves, which do not necessarily share the same fundamental principles, values, and beliefs. What constitutes a professional identity and a role is thus a “percolated” understanding and acceptance of a series of competing and sometimes contradictory values, behaviors, and attitudes, all of which are grounded in the life experiences of the self in formation.

1.1. *Self and the development of role identity*

At a fundamental level questions of identity are located in a process to be found, “in the core of the individual and yet also in the core of his communal culture” (Erikson, 1968). For Erikson, the concept of identity is one that expands from the “inner” sense of self to include social and “external” factors (Breger, 1974). For student teachers growing up in South Africa we are, therefore, looking to understand the relationship between a personal self shaped by socio-cultural forces (such as family, childhood and school experiences) and the nascent professional identity to be developed by the university or teachers’ college. Within the existing school system where student teachers (STs) serve a teaching practicum, the new South African school is itself undergoing a fundamental reconceptualization of its identity and role in a new democracy. The student teachers are exposed to another range of possibilities with which to interact during the process of developing a conception of their roles and identities as professional teachers.

One idea of identity as a situated or contextualized sense of self has been explored by Nias (1989, 1985) in her work with British teachers. Drawing a distinction between what she calls the “substantial” and the “situational” self, she paints a picture of teacher identity formation in which an “inner” or “core” self strives to realize its own purposes, while a later more “external” and professional sense of self is constrained by

circumstance. The data drawn from our case study suggest that tensions exist between the hopes and ambitions that individuals have for *themselves* and what they feel they can achieve as a teacher. Similarly, the experiences that students have as school children influence the formation of their identity as a teacher-in-training.

1.2. Cultural context and professional environment

The interplay between the cultural contexts from which the student teachers come and the professional environments in which they will study and teach forms the second major dimension in an understanding of teacher role identity. The importance of contextualizing the self is well illustrated in the proliferation of studies taking a life history approach. As a leading proponent, Andrews (1991), notes that:

it would seem apparent that the context in which human lives are lived is central to the core of meaning in those lives. Researchers should not, therefore, feel at liberty to discuss or analyse how individuals perceive meaning in their lives and in the world around them, while ignoring the content and context of that meaning" (p. 13).

As shall be seen later in this chapter, growing up for many of the student teachers is characterized by experiences of struggle to overcome poverty, ill-health, and the hardships of schools in which corporal punishment is commonplace (Harber & Davies, 1997). Traditional conceptions of how children learn compete with more progressive views about learning and teaching. This yields a set of possibilities from which developing teachers may choose. Osler's (1997) pioneering study of the lives of 108 black teachers working in the north of England identified ethnicity, gender, and family responsibilities (particularly for women) as major factors constraining the development of a professional identity. The professional environment in South Africa into which student teachers will initially enter during their practice teaching and later as newly qualified teachers is equally shaped by difficult and volatile forces.

The rapid expansion and restructuring of the formal educational system since the establishment of the ANC government has necessitated a demand for better qualified teachers who will be able to impart knowledge and skills very different from those acquired by current student teachers in their own days at school. But the professional environment of college and school is also one constrained by lack of physical resource and funding, recognition that curricula are out of step with what trainees and young pupils need to learn, and the uncertainties brought about by rapid change at almost every level of the system. Nevertheless, the teacher education institution is charged with the responsibility of developing teachers who will be ambassadors of the policy imperatives of a new democratic order.

The picture that emerges is of a changing teaching force working in and under very new and difficult circumstances. The South African teachers of the future, now entering the University's Department of Education, bring with them cultural and personal "baggage" which will both promote and hinder the development of the nation's schools.

1.3. The development of a future-oriented teacher role identity

If a young teacher-in-training is shaped by contextual forces, it is also important to consider the dynamic, future-oriented nature of his or her developing role identity. As a product of an iniquitous and qualitatively poor schooling system, these student teachers are entrusted with the responsibility of realizing the ideals of an educational policy that attempts to reverse the disadvantage and pave a new path for the future generation of South Africans.

Hall (1991) suggested that cultural identity is actually something that is being “produced, always in process, never fully completed ... belonging as much to the past [yet] subject to the continuous ‘play’ of history, culture and power” (p. 225). Teacher identity in a country like South Africa, which is in the process of rapid social and economic change, is therefore, much about the development of a future-oriented role. The emphasis is on what we want teachers-in-training to become, shaped not only by the contextual factors mentioned earlier, but also by complex relations of power and contestation that determine the future course of identity formation and, we would argue, the direction of teacher education (Duesterberg, 1998). For the new entrant to the teaching profession their experience of these ideological forces is often referred to in terms of “fitting in”, or learning to “play the game”. It involves looking for ways to develop a career that satisfies both personal self and professional identity.

In South Africa many of the “hard boundaries and fragmentation that characterized teacher education under apartheid” (Pendlebury, 1998) are now being broken with efforts to move teachers towards more open and flexible working arrangements that will have an impact on, what Pendlebury calls, the “space-time perspective of teaching”. Newly qualified teachers will therefore be required to “fit” into an image of the teacher far removed from that of the old regime. The new “Norms and Standards for Educators” (DOE, 1997) also presents a vision in which teacher education institutions are to concern themselves not only with the preparation of teachers who will service the formal schooling system, but also with the training sector. Implicit in this policy is the symbolic intention to see the educator as one who will be an agent of human resource development in the country.

Young teacher trainees, therefore, walk a tightrope in both developing a personal teacher identity which sits comfortably with their own sense of self and maintaining a balance between satisfying the requirements of state and society and providing the source and impetus for change. In this balancing act, the student teacher is being asked to serve the role of critic of the existing educational system, and in doing so to serve as a commentator on the actions of the very mentor teachers who are entrusted with orientating them towards their new professional careers.

2. The design of the study

In the study, we focused on the lives of two student teachers as they journeyed on the road to becoming teachers of English within the context of post-apartheid South Africa. This account emerges from a larger study of how student teachers (STs) think

about the process of becoming teachers of the English language. The study was conducted within the Faculty of Education at the University of Durban-Westville, with nine students involved in a pre-service teacher education program. The university teacher education program (called the Special Method English Course or SMEC) attempted to address the teaching and learning of the English language within a context of fostering increasing respect for linguistic and cultural diversity.

The student teachers themselves bring to the course their heritage of experiences of primary and secondary schooling under the apartheid era of mono-racial schooling. The preparation of teachers is conducted within a context of relatively more integrated linguistic, racial, and cultural environments. The intentions of post-apartheid language education policy signaled the way for the teaching and learning of languages at school level to be framed within an “additive bilingualism” model, which promoted the scaffolding of mother tongue languages to support the development of competence in second languages (DOE, 1997). For the vast majority of South Africans, the second language is English which, because primarily of its economic value as a passport to better life opportunities, is the preferred language of teaching and learning in the school system.

This narrative account of the student teachers developing a sense of their identity as teachers of the English language is intended to provide a picture into the competing, complex, contradictory and complementary forces which impact on the student teachers’ lives. The data for this case study emerges from a range of instruments and methodologies used to access the student teachers’ thinking. These data were collected at different stages during their one-year program in 1997. The data used to construct the student teachers’ biographical experiences of becoming a teacher included:

- the student teachers’ reflective written and oral accounts of their experiences of English language teaching and learning (ELTL);
- the student teachers’ photographic and artistic representations of their early home and schooling experiences of ELTL;
- the student teachers’ reflective journals written during the SMEC program and during their teaching practicum at the schools;
- the researcher’s observations of lessons taught and the student teachers’ reflective commentary on these video-taped lessons;
- the student teachers’ self and peer reports on professional performance;
- curriculum materials produced by the student teachers;
- focus group interviews among the student teachers involved in the project; and
- summative examination papers written by the student teachers.

The data from these different forms of data collection were integrated into a narrative account. Both of the student teachers grew up in Hammarsdale in the province of KwaZulu-Natal, and attended the same secondary school. Their understanding of the processes of becoming teachers of English differs as a result of their unique biographical experiences.

3. Emmanuel: the taste of forbidden fruit

Emmanuel's first language is Zulu, the language of the majority of African people in this province. He comes from a single-parent family. His mother worked for several years in a factory until she was retrenched during Emmanuel's pre-final year at secondary school. His mother was the sole bread-winner of the family. His father abandoned the family quite early when Emmanuel and his siblings were pre-schoolers. Emmanuel has no recall of his father. Emmanuel was only introduced to his father when he (Emmanuel) was in his early twenties.

The rural community of Hammarsdale was characterized by political violence during the years running up to the first democratic elections in South Africa (1994). This emanated from the clash between the traditional chieftainships which rallied support around the preservation of rural Zulu identity and culture, and the more progressive (urbanized) political parties which rallied around the creation of a new non-racial, democratic system. The exercise of power by these two forces resulted in many of Emmanuel's friends' families being killed, or pillaged. Growing up amidst this conflict was a way of life, which influenced Emmanuel's strong reactions against violence. During his early secondary school years he became influenced by a group of Rastafarians who lived in the community. Their lifestyle reflected an alternative to the values of attack and revenge that characterized the community in which he grew up. The Rastafarian way represented for Emmanuel a way out of the turbulent existence of his community.

Emmanuel commented that the image that most people have of Rastafarians tends to be dominated by images of stoned dagga (marijuana) smokers and promiscuity. He argued that this image of Rastas is understandable given that many high profile Rastafarians in the popular music culture tend to lead lives contrary to Emmanuel's understanding of the philosophy of the religion. His attraction to Rastafarianism stemmed from its deep respect for the sacredness of the individual body and soul as a creation of Jah, the Creator; its belief that evil begets evil and that eating meat entails the imbibing of the soul of another living animal. These values were particularly attractive to Emmanuel in the context of his community in which the respect and value of human life was so fragile, and politically exploited by the forces of power-hungry leaders.

His choice to lead a Rastafarian way of life caused several conflicts within his family because it contradicted his mother's value systems. Eventually, he left home and school to pursue "living in hills". This move devastated both his teachers and his family since Emmanuel was regarded as the mainstay of stability and hope in his family because of his acknowledged more intellectual way of life. His teachers felt he was too idealistic and his family simply felt that serving separate meals was too costly for them.

After he left home, his mother too lost hope; she abandoned the remaining siblings to fend for themselves. Emmanuel's early teenage years were described as a process of slowly rebuilding his fragmented family once he decided to return to school after a year or so living in community with Rastafarians. His secondary schooling was remembered as years in which he and his Rastafarian friends set up a fruit stall outside

the gates of the school to support their independent lifestyles away from their family homes. This enterprise was, in Emmanuel's opinion, sabotaged by the teachers of the school who wanted to force him to abandon his Rastafarian ways and return to his mother's home. The teachers in the school were nevertheless constrained in their responses to Emmanuel. He was one of the top academic pupils in the school and they attempted to encourage his academic performance. They saw their roles as being to "normalize him" into the community.

Emmanuel's first experiences of learning the English language were in primary school where he saw books in this language for the first time. He recalls his primary school years with stories of physical corporal punishment. For example, his teacher beat him with five lashes for not being able to "properly pronounce the word 'apple'". The teachers tended to believe that second language learning of English involved learning strictly the grammatical structures in isolation from the use of the language in everyday interaction. There was hardly anyone besides his teachers with whom Emmanuel interacted in his everyday world in the English language. Emmanuel recalled that he accepted that what he learned in the language classroom should be divorced from everyday life. His view at that stage was that "education was an escape from the every day world into another world". The irrelevance of many parts of his apartheid-schooling curriculum thus made sense to him within this framework.

His secondary school teacher realized that Emmanuel was a bright pupil and, therefore, chose him to become "a pupil teacher". This entailed that the teachers abandoned teaching the lessons themselves; the lesson was to be taught by Emmanuel. He was given the teachers' textbooks and was asked to prepare the lesson for the following days. Emmanuel recalls that this elevated status motivated him as a learner, and inspired him to want to become a teacher. He believed then that teaching was about "the look and listen mode": a strategy for engaging with learners that he had learned from observing his own teachers for several years. Emmanuel acquired an elevated status among the pupils in the school and this extended into the self-study groups that pupils formed to prepare for external examinations, especially, in subjects where their teachers were not able to sufficiently assist them to "acquire the knowledge required to pass."

Emmanuel reported that he made a conscious decision to become a teacher early on in his schooling career because he saw that teachers were afforded a high degree of respect in the community. Smartly dressed teachers appealed to him and in his youth he often attempted to imitate his teachers' style. The principal of his secondary school was particularly inspiring to Emmanuel because of the way in which he maintained a disciplined learning environment. This principal was different to previous principals who in Emmanuel's opinion were afraid to challenge both the teachers and the staff. Unfortunately, this model principal was killed: he was found shot in his school office. Emmanuel intimated that this deed might even have been the work of teachers who found his insistence on accountability to pupils too demanding. Emmanuel suggested that this principal was able to empathize with his Rasta lifestyle, whereas, the replacement principal insisted that Emmanuel and his friends cut their dreadlocks.

Coming to university was like a dream come true. Emmanuel saw this as an opportunity to grow beyond the confines of racial, linguistic and cultural boundaries

of his schooling. However, in this quest he became aware of females' reactions to him as an object of curiosity. "It was like they wanted to taste the forbidden fruit". His continued Rastafarian lifestyle provoked interest among the female students and he found that his moral principles of monogamy were being tested. He raised this as major concern for a future teacher since he was aware that girls in his own school experiences were easily courted by male teachers on the staff. He believed that parents entrusted their children to teachers and, therefore, teachers owed the children respect.

Passing through the university undergraduate years was not very problematic for Emmanuel. He believed that his own self-study skills in school had helped him cope with university education. By the time he completed the first three years of undergraduate study he felt that the Faculty of Education had little to offer him as a future teacher of English. He felt that he already had the skills of critiquing English literature and that this was sufficient to become a teacher of English in secondary schools.

When he enrolled in SMEC he realized that there were large gaps in his knowledge about the nature of the English language with its sociolinguistic and psycholinguistic characteristics. He had little alternative conception of how the learning and teaching of the English could be organized. He believed that his own language learning experiences at school were simply to be replicated. He had imbibed his teachers' implicit theoretical assumptions of how children learn the second language English. The SMEC presented new ways of interpreting the effectiveness of his own teachers' theoretical assumptions. This was achieved through the critical reflective autobiography that Emmanuel was asked to construct, looking back at his own experiences of ELTL using the lens of language learning theory.

When he began his school-based teaching practice session as a novice teacher, Emmanuel was placed along with three other student teachers in a school that had only Indian pupils under the apartheid era but now had pupils from both the African and Indian populations. This diversity of pupils was familiar to Emmanuel, having studied together with students at the university which had the same groupings. At the university, however, Emmanuel recorded that he hardly ever needed to interact so intimately with first language English speakers (Indian students). His major fear before he went out to this school was that he saw himself as a second language speaker of English who was going to interact with first and second language speakers. He questioned whether he would be able to cope. His own schooling experiences had prepared him little for understanding the intercultural, inter-racial dynamics of school-classroom interaction.

His student teaching colleagues were from different racial, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds and he saw this as a possible source of comfort to be "able to understand the context of this school". In time, he began to see the need to distance himself from the value systems and actions of his teammates. They resorted to physical and verbal abuse of the pupils who were undisciplined in the class. Their response he understood as being linked to their own personal philosophy of coping with the belligerent urban school culture of the pupils at this school. He attempted a "softer Rastafarian way". It backfired on him, leaving him to seriously question the way to ensure classroom discipline and management.

Unexpectedly, he found that the African pupils in his classes did not identify with him. He desperately tried to incorporate them into his lesson, using a range of techniques he had learned at the SMEC. None of them worked. The African pupils in this school seemed to have developed a pattern of silence and were amused at his attempts to get them to participate in the class. Emmanuel suggested that this pattern of silence of African pupils could be explained in several ways. The school did not have a deliberate system of affirming the cultural and linguistic background of the pupils. The teachers abandoned the responsibility of coping in this new school environment to the African pupils themselves, letting them “sink or swim” while they continued their former curriculum practices. The system of apartheid had indoctrinated African pupils to be passive and subordinate in a multiracial context. Finally, “African culture expects pupils to be passive in the classroom as a mark of respect for the teacher”. Emmanuel recorded that he was not very successful with the African pupils in his class.

Emmanuel concluded his SMEC with the view that he did not want to return to teach in the rural area from which he came. He regretted that the use of his new-found “radical ideas” at university might cost him his life as a future teacher in this area. He realized that his own mission could be directed to understanding and working with African pupils in “multi-cultural schools” because he believes that with time he will be able to assist them to make the best of schooling opportunities.

4. Sanelesiwe: cherries, misses and ma’ams

As a female growing up in the rural environment of a traditional African community, Sanelesiwe grew to understand the boundaries that patriarchy and patronage circumscribed. Hierarchies between the siblings in her family existed and she was expected to serve a domesticated family function. When she went to school she noted the hierarchies amongst the male and female teachers. Also important was the clearly demarcated status afforded to married and unmarried female teachers. The “ma’ams”, the married female teachers were given an elevated form of respect; the “misses”, the unmarried female teachers found it more difficult to command respect from all the pupils. The “misses” often found it difficult to maintain classroom discipline.

The female pupils in the school were also influenced by the male chauvinism of the male staff. Sanelesiwe recalled that the female pupils were often “romanced” by the male teachers. This set up rivalry between the unmarried female teachers and the female pupils. Sanelesiwe indicated that the unmarried female teacher saw the girls as competing for the affections of the male members of staff. Sexual relationships between the girls and the male teachers were common practice. Because of the *laissez faire* attitude towards courtship, many unmarried female teachers were seen as “cherries”, a derogatory term to refer to their perceived “availability” to courtship by the male teachers and pupils. The male pupils in the school were sometimes as old as the unqualified, unmarried female teachers. This caused tension between male pupils and male staff. Sanelesiwe recalls that this pattern of relationship characterized her own experiences of secondary schooling. This formed the basis for her own analysis of

the lack of regard she received from her African pupils during school-based teaching practice as a novice teacher. She felt that the pupils believed she was unmarried, even though she was married.

Sanelesiwe's early experiences of using the English language drift back to her days of playing "house-house", a childhood game enacting out the roles of everyday household interaction. She recalled that many of these games were conducted in what she believed was the English language. On reflection, these patterns and sounds of using the English language could not have been a good rendition of the language but they represented to her playmates a means of asserting superiority and power. They thus imitated the way in which Whites used the language in the town that they visited occasionally. English was her imagination's marker of a superior language, a superior person.

When she went to school she became aware that language learning and teaching involved a strict code of testing performance in the language. She recalled how often the pupils would be pounced on to read aloud in the classroom. She detested being asked to read aloud because of the fear of making a mistake. Pupils often learned that teachers valued accurate pronunciation; they would openly laugh at any error made.

The syllabus used by teachers focussed on a strong structuralist interpretation of language teaching and learning. The repetition of particular structural features of the English language was a common feature of both her primary and secondary schooling. The present, past and future tenses were topics that were repeated year in and year out, both at primary and secondary schools. Her teachers seemed to have set topics like "My Dog", "My House", and "The Day I Will Never Forget" which featured at repeated intervals throughout her schooling experiences.

She decided to become a teacher of the English language because of a specific incident during her secondary school days. The Department of Education had purchased a textbook on poetry, which was a prescribed section in the school-leaving examinations. However, her teacher of English indicated to the pupils that in the external examinations it was possible to exclude answering a question on poetry. He indicated to the class that they would not be studying poetry during their course of study. He told them that he thought that poetry was too difficult for second language learners; he admitted that he did not understand English poetry and, therefore, they would have to abandon studying it. Sanelesiwe recalled that many of her African teachers "were allergic to poetry". She blamed these teachers for developing negative attitudes towards poetry even among students at university level.

The teacher decided that the pupils would study "short stories" for the matriculation examination. Sanelesiwe was most upset because her family could not afford to buy the textbook that she would need to study for her examinations. Only a few members of the class could afford to buy the textbook and they all suffered from not having the text to read in the classroom. It was this incident that made her decide that she wanted to become a teacher of English, and especially teach English poetry to her pupils.

In her third year of study at the university Sanelesiwe recalled her fortune in meeting a fellow graduate teacher who had studied the SMEC program and was a practicing teacher. She learned a lot from this teacher especially about how to

organize and design an English language curriculum. The teacher helped her realize that her own teachers had very limited views about how to promote English language competence especially among second language learners. She looked forward to working with alternative conceptions of ELTL.

When she went to an urban “Indian” school during school-based teaching practice (SBTP), she was surprised to note that the school did not have any African teachers, despite the growing number of African pupils who were now registered in the school. Nevertheless, the school had a tolerant attitude towards the use of languages other than the official medium of teaching and learning (English). Pupils of the different race groups in this schools tended to mix more freely and Sanelesiwe attributed this to non-formal activities within the school. However, the official status of English was never threatened in this school. The principal of the school indicated that African parents expressly sent their children to his school because they wanted to learn English. The school thus operated with a system of linguistic acculturation to the norm of English. The reality was that there were classes where the racial and linguistic composition was skewed. Many African pupils tended to be grouped in cohorts that were racially and linguistically biased. In the more senior grades in the school there tended to be a more even distribution of African and Indian pupils in the class cohorts: this may have arisen from pupils’ choice of courses. Sanelesiwe noted that in the classes where there were more African students, there tended to be more active participation of the African pupils. However, she still felt that African female pupils did not engage with her (which she explained as being as a result of her perceived unmarried status).

In the student teaching team at her school-based teaching practice school, Sanelesiwe indicated that she had a tough time asserting her voice, especially among her teammates. Her teammates were an Indian female and an African male. She felt that the Indian female student teacher was able to easily fit into this “Indian dominant school”. Her African male teammate was not that assertive. She described her lack of direct intervention in team meetings as stemming from her own non-confrontational style. Nevertheless, she felt that the teaching practice experience challenged more her role as a woman than as an African.

Sanelesiwe commented that her resident teacher did not constrain her pursuit and design of creative methodologies for her classroom. However, she felt that this latitude was afforded to them with the acknowledgement that teaching practice was an “opportunity to impress the lecturers at the university”: the view of her mentor teacher. Sanelesiwe believed that the ideal of the university assisting the mentor teachers to reconceptualize their practice as a consequence of the partnership they develop during teaching practice session was not achievable. The reality was that the mentor teachers saw SBTP as a sham to assist the student teachers achieve certification. Mentor teachers projected to the student teachers that they would soon unlearn the “fancy theories learned at the university”. This latter view was usually the view recorded by non-university trained mentor teachers.

Sanelesiwe decided at the end of her SMEC program that she would not like to return to teach in the rural area from which she came. She believed that the hierarchies that exist in such school would prevent her from operating successfully using the skills

she had acquired during her teacher preparation program. She believed that that collaborative work among teachers would be the means for development of the pupils' ELTL curricular experiences. She felt that most of the teachers whom she knew would resist working with new graduates, especially those that came from university. In the rural area many of the teachers who were qualified had gained their training at colleges of education; they believed that university graduated teachers thought of themselves as superior practitioners. The college teachers therefore drew imagined boundaries between university and college graduates. Sanelesiwe was not prepared to work under such conditions. She looked forward to the opportunity to work in an urban multicultural school.

5. Learning from the field: implications for policy and practice in teacher education

Emmanuel's and Sanelesiwe's personal and professional life journeys tell us not only a great deal about what it is like to grow up and be schooled in the transition from pre- to post-apartheid South Africa, but also of the process of acquiring a role identity. A striking factor is the relationship between the individual's development of a sense of self and the impact this has on their later formation of a professional teacher identity.

The broader social environment of political violence that characterized his youth provides the backdrop to Emmanuel's conception of the role of a professional teacher. To him a teacher ought to be a person of status and standing in one's community; an inspiration and role model for pupils. A teacher is a "replacement parent". He formed this conception despite the negative role models he experienced during his own schooling. Also, his experiences of the cultural conflicts within his rural community inspired his rejection of conservative views of rigid cultural boundaries between different groups, opting instead for a more humanist philosophy of Rastafarianism which lies beneath his approach to others. These experiences influenced him to aspire towards becoming a professional teacher who recognizes the essential "humanity of all of Jah's creations". He is, therefore, critical of his student teacher colleagues who adopt a more pragmatic stance to regulating the behavior of pupils.

At the heart of the matter is the contested nature of the role identity Emmanuel has been required to adopt. Is Emmanuel's idealism a constraining or enabling feature of his future role as a professional teacher? Whose cultural assumptions about the professional role of teachers should teacher education institutions promote? To what extent did Emmanuel's former teachers help to provide him with the model of the role identity of a professional teacher? Which individual (self) and/ or contextual factors most impacted on this role identification of a professional teacher?

For Sanelesiwe formative childhood experiences also influenced the development of her professional identity. Her early initiation into the ideological function of the English language, for example, has great importance for her, not only in her decision to become a teacher of the language, but in her entire approach to the way she believes the language and its literature should be taught.

It is interesting, too, that during her teaching practice she comes to terms, not only with a range of professional issues (e.g., how to teach poetry effectively), but also with personal and professional issues of identity i.e. her role as an African and a woman. For her the journey of becoming a teacher of the English language is traveled on a road that forces her to be critical of the value systems that her own biography has taught her. Her first experiences of teaching in a school context quite different from the one in which she learned as a pupil allow her to develop a new vocabulary for the critique of her previous schooling experiences, experiences characterized by sexist and stereotypical conceptions of female pupils and teachers. Unfortunately, however, Sanelesiwe is not able to fully cast off these past experiences, since she continues to interpret the attitude and behavior of pupils in her new school only in gendered terms. She often downplays the influence of her own pedagogic strategies and practices as sources of explanation for the difficulties she experiences. To what extent has her interpretation of the role identification of a professional teacher been influenced by her own biographical experiences developed during her formative years at school?

Both student teachers interpret their negative schooling experiences during apartheid times as a manifesto for seeking alternative forms of English language teaching and learning (ELTL) practice. They see the advantage of being exposed to more creative ELTL methodologies within their university courses. The nature of critical reflection that was espoused by the curriculum enabled them to develop their ability to articulate their often unstated personal philosophies and interpretations about being a teacher of the English language.

However, this enthusiasm was dashed when they entered the teaching context of the desegregated schools of the new South Africa. Their initial expectations were that the schools that belonged to the former legally advantaged sector would automatically be more advanced in terms of the quality of English language teaching and learning. They were surprised to find that many of these schools had entrenched rituals and patterns of teaching English that did not necessarily promote quality learning, especially learning English as a second language. The schools within which they practiced were to varying degrees able to address the new challenges of admitting pupils of different linguistic and racial groups. Rather than seeing themselves as having to reach up to the perceived elevated status of these schools, Emmanuel and Sanelesiwe began to realize through the process of their school-based teaching practicum that they themselves were a valuable resource for the school. This drove them to see themselves as agents of reconstruction of the school environment, rather than as victims of their own apartheid schooling. They were able to speak the language of the new African pupils who entered the desegregated school. They were able to identify with what it means to study in the medium of English, the pupils' second language. They were being called upon by the school to mediate in situations in which the resident teachers felt unable to interpret the problems that African pupils were having in this new school. All of these reflections impacted positively on Emmanuel and Sanelesiwe's conceptions of their reconstructivist role in a new South African school.

However, this positive view about being a professional in these schools, was counteracted by the mediocre reception that the African pupils gave them. Emmanuel

talks of his failure to get any closer to the African pupils. Sanelesiwe questions whether the African pupils accepted her as a professional teacher. In both cases, the student teachers are reporting on the racial element that characterized their rejection by African pupils. Many of the African pupils who moved into the former White, Indian, and Colored schools did so with the expressed intentions of “denying their African roots”. The new school represented to them (the pupils) the environment within which they would develop competence in the language of power, English. This transition was fueled by the model of subtractive bilingualism that the new school adopted in replacing the African pupils’ mother tongue language with the language of the school, namely English. The student teachers who were teaching the African pupils the English language could be interpreted by the pupils as reminders of their former teachers in apartheid African township schools. The student teachers, therefore, not only had to cope with their own conception of their roles within these desegregated schools. They also had to manipulate their way through the conceptions of their roles and identities that were being foisted upon them by pupils of different races in a desegregated school.

Both student teachers arrived at conclusions about the desired contexts within which they wish to develop their careers. For Sanelesiwe it was an urban multicultural setting. For Emmanuel it was a school near the University where he was trained. He believes the school will provide him with an opportunity to maintain and promote his own political ideas.

Having some control over where to teach has often been presented in terms that are largely economic (i.e., a preference for an urban school with more resources over a school in a more deprived rural setting). In fact, it may be that young teachers like Emmanuel and Sanelesiwe are also concerned about sustaining a professional identity that is consistent with the values and beliefs that make them who they are. Their own university training has perhaps caused them to be misfits in the cultural contexts from which they came. Their new role as reflective practitioners forces them to evaluate the “rituals of disempowerment” (Samuel, 1997) that characterize post-apartheid education. They cannot proceed into the school environment without seriously challenging the *status quo*, which has become comfortable with normative apartheid-like practices.

6. Lessons for teacher education

For policymakers involved in the design and implementation of teacher education programmes the lessons are clear. We need to learn much more about the “identity baggage” that student teachers bring with them into the professional arena. Much of this “baggage” has been acquired by student teachers during the formative stages of their lives. In their homes they have experienced and have formed a response to issues of violence, relationships between adults and children, and what it means to be different. In their schools early role models have shaped positive and negative responses to what it means to be a teacher. During their training, the transition from personal self to professional identity calls for a much closer understanding of the

matrix of complex, contradictory, and complementary agendas that influence the making of a teacher.

The development of a student teacher's identity in a rapidly changing context can be described as the intersection between several competing forces. Each force pulls or pushes the student teacher into foregrounding (and/or receding) different roles and identities. This case study reveals that the student teachers develop conceptions of themselves, their roles, and their identities in relation to three main forces. They are:

- Inertial forces, which emanate from their own biographical experiences of teaching and learning (English) and are constructed during their own home and schooling environments;
- Programmatic forces, which emanate from the teacher education institution's curriculum and program, and which include the influences of student teacher teams and mentor teachers during the school-based teaching practicum; and
- Contextual forces, which derive from the macro-educational environment of changing policy; and the micro-educational environment of a changing school culture.

For the student teacher in a rapidly changing social context, it is evident that he or she is expected to play several roles simultaneously in order to become a professional teacher. Among these roles are:

- that of biographer of his /her own "heritage" and/ or "baggage" of previous schooling experiences;
- that of critical commentator on his or her own previous experiences of teaching and learning;
- that of student of alternative theoretical conceptions, approaches, methodologies, strategies and practice;
- that of agent of self-reconstruction of new and different experiences of teaching and learning, ideally developed from a vantage point that allows for one to critically reflect on his/her own previous schooling; and
- that of agent of educational reconstruction, to enact qualitatively better educational experiences for his/her learners.

All of these roles are simultaneously entrusted to the student teacher in a rapidly changing society. In the short space of time that is often available to the student teacher in most teacher education pre-service programs, not all of these roles are fully developed. These student teachers at the end of their training are often not sufficiently rooted in these roles and are therefore easily swayed by the dominant hegemonic forces that co-opt them to become part of the existing school culture. In many cases these existing school cultures are far from ideal. Their latent purpose may be that of propping up the existing power bases within the society. The student teacher is subtly coerced into maintaining these power bases through the lack of having fully established a confident sense of self and a sense of their roles as teachers. In light of the results of this study, here are some of the questions facing the designers of teacher education institutions.

- (1) Are student teachers afforded sufficient time, space and curriculum input to develop critical conceptions of:

- themselves as learners;
 - their peers as future teachers;
 - their lecturers' and mentor teachers' conceptions of teaching and learning;
 - the school culture in which they practice;
 - the teaching and learning practices of teacher colleagues and administrators;
 - and
 - their conceptions of themselves as teachers in a rapidly changing environment?
- (2) What contribution to the development of alternative schooling practices do the teacher education institutions present to student teachers, and how are student teachers supported during the early stages of their careers in order to realize the implementation of such practices?
 - (3) Should teacher educational institutions serve to reinforce or challenge the existing cultural practices in schools? What are the consequences of this action on the kind of identity and role that a student teacher will or could develop in such schools?
 - (4) Should teacher education institutions serve to reinforce and/or challenge student teachers' existing cultural conceptions of the role and identities as teachers?
 - (5) Whose responsibility is continuing teacher development? At what stage (if ever) should the teacher education institutions abandon their responsibility to student teachers to ensure that "alternative/new/better practices" are implemented in an "impoverished schooling context?"
 - (6) What should be the nature and content of the experiences that novice student teachers are presented with in the training in order to realize the development of critical reflective skills?

These and other critical questions would need to be addressed by researchers seeking to explore the competing influences on teachers' roles and identities in a changing world context. The answers to such questions will no doubt impact on the kind of teacher curriculum policies that would have to be enacted in order to fully exploit the role of the teacher as a promoter and implementer of alternative visions for a new educational system.

7. Conclusion

At the beginning of this chapter we asked two questions: "Who are we?" and "What do we wish to become?" Perhaps, as our case study has shown, there is a third question: "What do we bring with us?" In addressing these questions, researchers and policy makers should adopt a methodology which unashamedly puts the experience and voice of the teacher, whether at the start of her profession or after many years of teaching, at the forefront of the inquiry. One criticism of such an approach is that it is often very difficult to draw generalizations and broader lessons for policymakers from such individual life experiences. Nevertheless, we lose an authentic sense of perspective in an era of global change and policy directives if we cease to remind ourselves of the experiences of men and women who daily juggle professional and personal demands

and dreams. What they carry with them into the classroom determines the educational experience of future generations.

References

- Andrews, M. (1991). *Lifetimes of commitment: Aging Politics, Psychology*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Ball, S., & Goodson, I. (Eds.) (1985). *Teachers lives and careers*. London: Falmer Press.
- Breger, L. (1974). *From instinct to identity: The development of personality*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Department of Education, DOE. (1997). *Norms and standards for teacher education, training and development*. Discussion document of the Technical Committee on the Revision of Norms and Standards for Teacher Education, 31 November.
- Duesterberg, L. (1998). Rethinking culture in the pedagogy and practices of preservice teachers, *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 14.
- Erikson, E. (1968). *Identify, youth, and crisis*. New York: Norton.
- Hall, S. (1991). The local and the global globalisation and ethnicity. In A. King (Ed.), *Culture, globalisation and the world-system*. London: Macmillan.
- Harber, C., & Davies, L. (1997). *School management and effectiveness in developing countries: The post bureaucratic school*. London: Cassell.
- Nias, J. (1985). Reference groups in primary teaching: Talking, listening and identity. In S. Ball, & I. Goodson (Eds.), *Teachers' lives and careers*. London: Falmer Press.
- Nias, J. (1989). *Primary teachers talking: A study of teaching as work*. London: Falmer Press.
- Osler, A. (1997). Teachers' biographies and educational development: A Kenyan case study, *International Journal of Educational Development*, 17.
- Pendlebury, S. (1998). Transforming teacher education in South Africa: A space-time perspective. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 28.
- Samuel, M. (1997). *Rituals of disempowerment: Preparing teachers as curriculum developers*. Paper presented at American Educational Research Association Annual Conference, Chicago, IL.

Michael Samuel is the Director at the School of Educational Studies, University of Durban-Westville, South Africa. He has just completed his doctoral dissertation on newly qualified teachers entering the profession, using a predominately life history approach.

David Stephens is Professor of International Education at the Faculty of Education, Oslo University College in Norway. Until recently he was working at the Centre for International Education at the University of Sussex. For the past 25 years he has worked extensively in the Developing world, particularly in teacher education and in programmes aiming to improve the quality of primary education. He is currently researching issues around culture, education and development. His latest book (with Pat Pridmore) is titled: *Children as Partners for Health: A critical review of the child-to-child approach*, Zed Books, 1999.