

Accountability to whom? For what? Teacher identity and the Force Field Model of teacher development

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Abstract

The rise of fundamentalism in the sphere of teacher education points to a swing back towards teachers as service workers for State agendas. Increasingly, teachers are expected to account for the outcomes of their practices. This article traces the trajectory of trends in teacher education over the past five decades arguing that this "new conservative trend" is but one of the many forces that characterise present interpretations of the goals of teacher education and development. A de-professionalisation of teaching as a career looms on the horizon. Each era has progressively provided new insights into what the goals for teacher education could and should be. These have become increasingly layered into expanding roles and responsibilities being foisted on teachers. The article argues that this could threaten teaching as a career and fewer individuals now willingly choose the teaching profession. If they do, their accountability is seldom to quality teaching and learning as professional teachers find themselves threatened on a number of fronts by contradictory and often competing forces.

The article presents a model for understanding the complexity of forces influencing teachers' identities, and shows why there is a need for creative discursive spaces for the co-existence of these many forces. Rather than capitulate to the forces of conservatism, the article argues that teacher professional growth can flourish when it is able to understand deeply the biographical, contextual, institutional and programmatic forces that impinge on teacher identity. The Force Field Model of Teacher Development thus provides stimulus for creative dialogue and renewal.

Keywords: Teacher education; teacher accountabilities; historical development of teacher education

Introduction

This article draws from my reflections of engaging with the process of developing a National Framework for Teacher Education in South Africa. This process spanned a period of about two and half years in which I was member of a committee (appointed by the Minister of Education)

which interacted and consulted with a wide range of constituencies across the education and training system. The National Framework constitutes an overarching policy framework which attempts to chart the long-term vision of a co-ordinated and coherent system of initial and continuing professional education of teachers and focuses on the systemic role that teacher education has in the overall transformation of education. The recommendations of the Ministerial Committee on Teacher Education (MCTE, 2005) became the backbone for developing the legally gazetted policy, and is now framing the future for teacher education and development in South Africa (DoE, 2007).

The article reflects on the competing conceptions from the various constituencies interviewed as part of the Ministerial Committee's mandate. The focus of such engagements was on the expectations of the role and identity of teachers, on the goals and responsibilities of initial professional teacher education, and on the scope, shape and intentions of continuing professional teacher development. I will attempt to locate these insights into teacher identity within a broader landscape of emerging theoretical trajectories of the discourse of Teacher Education that characterise this field of study at both national and international levels. It provides an analysis of the shaping conceptual forces which underpin conceptions which drive curriculum choices currently made in the teacher education sector.

Section A of this article develops a historical analysis of the changing role and identity of teachers over the past five decades. Section B explores in detail the complexity of present roles and responsibilities of teachers, highlighting the possibly unrealistic agenda that has become the task of teacher education and professional development. Section C posits the Force Field Model of Teacher Development as a means of interpreting the critical discursive space of multiple expectations of the many roleplayers where I emphasise the need for teachers to serve as autonomous professionals within this force field.

Section A

Changing roles and identities of teachers

Needless to point out, the conception of the role and identity of teachers in South Africa has evolved in close relationship to changing social, historical and political settings. In retrospect, in the last five decades one notes how the dominant paradigmatic perspective of an era infiltrates into conceptions of what teachers should and could be doing in their classrooms. Within this context the dominant paradigm in turn influences the kinds of research studies that have come to characterise Teacher Education of each era. These research studies intersect with the specificities of the contexts of different societies. This is why in this article I shall trace the synergies and disruptions of the international and the local South African agenda of teacher education. My intention is to explore some of the trends in borrowing and reformulations that characterise this international dialogue, but also to indicate how the uniqueness of the South African debate on teacher identity points to a potentially vibrant possibility for teacher education in the future.

The 1960s, preoccupied with the emergence of behaviourist scientificity which proclaimed that an engineering of human potential was possible, came to interpret the role of teachers as instrumental technicians to enact the expressed goals of the authorities. During this era, teachers came to be constructed as *villains*, especially in the context of the large-scale failure that was being noted amongst learners (Coleman, 1996). The poor learner achievement of the early 60s was explained by social scientists as derived from the lack of structured learning environments in which learners could be taught specific objectives for each lesson. Of course the popularity of the model of education which foregrounded expressed learning targets was also politically motivated: large-scale social engineering models of schooling in the Soviet Union had proved to be capable of producing scientifically literate and competent products which outsmarted

other western societies' *laissez faire* schooling models (Schubert, 1986). The importation of the human capital theoretical models into the South African education system also attempted to emulate these "modern international trends", although they came to be infused with the ideology of the ruling Nationalist government. This trend marked the social engineering with targets along racialised apartheid lines (Suransky-Dekker, 1998). Teachers within this era came to be seen as technicians of the State-driven agendas, and the role of a "good teacher" was interpreted as one who adhered, both ideologically and politically, to the goals of the State education authorities.

The 1970s it may be argued, was an era within which teachers attempted to overturn the negative servile role that was constructed for and imposed upon them. In South Africa this was noted in the increasing political campaigns that characterised the 70s, culminating in the 1976 Soweto uprising. A more interpretivist perspective of the role of teachers came to dominate this era and researchers and scholarship on teacher education commented on the manner in which teachers were being framed as *victims* of their circumstances. The poor quality output of learners and teachers was argued to be a consequence of the micro-environments within which they operated. The micro-contextual analysis of schools and their sociological cultures became an emphasis. Within this context, teachers were being interpreted as agents of their own socialisation and enculturation (Lortie, 1975). Such analyses, however, still tended to be framed within psychological personalistic interpretations characteristic of the hermeneutic and phenomenological paradigm, and were usually conducted by commentators on teacher education rather than by teachers themselves.

The 1980s saw a turn around in terms of who became the dominant voices of the education sector: teachers themselves rallied a more critical presence within the public sphere as they asserted themselves as *individual free agents*, professing their own interpretations of the schooling system. The models of educational reform that came to characterise this era drew on the models of action research at school site level, collaborative research, and lifehistory research (Elliot, 1985). Researchers and teachers came to work more collaboratively in recording what goes on within the teachers' classrooms from the perspective of teachers themselves. Teacher decision-making research traditions came to expose the complexity that teaching and learning entailed (Eggleston, 1979). It provided insights into the world of teachers beyond superficial mastery and transference of content subject matter knowledge. In the South African context, this era saw the rise of the teacher movements and teacher unions who saw themselves as the direct oppositional forces against the imposing apartheid education authorities (Govender, 2004). Their campaigns took on matters of the iniquitous conditions of service that characterised teachers of different racial and gender groups. The worker identity of teachers became a rallying cry to consolidate the apartheid fragmented teaching sector.

In South Africa the 1990s coincided with the preparation and early stages of new governance arrangements for the education and training system. Teachers came to be interpreted as the *Reconstructionists* since many of them had in truth led significant community campaigns to realise the new democratic system. The rapidly changing context threw up many challenges for teachers, the major one being the fundamental reformulation of the school curriculum by the newly elected state, and the introduction of new governance arrangements for schooling (Adler & Reed, 2002). Teachers chose to label themselves "educators" as a means to flatten the levels of hierarchies that characterised the apartheid system: classroom-based practitioners, heads of department, principals, district and provincial officials came to be included in the label "educator". Educational policies became infused with the plot of transformation and the political struggles of the early resistance to apartheid (Kraak & Young, 2001). Interestingly, the post-apartheid educational bureaucracy absorbed key teacher union officers into their ranks at national and provincial departmental levels, in the labour relations bargaining council, and in the professional council for educators.

Increasingly, the teachers were being asked to take on new responsibilities and these came to be enshrined in post-apartheid policies such as the Norms and Standards for Educators (2001). Teachers were expected to fulfil seven roles which went beyond their classroom practice. The seven roles included roles and identities related to their classroom responsibilities: "learning mediator; interpreter and designer of learning programmes; learning area/subject/discipline/phase specialist; assessor", but also social responsibilities, such as "a leader, administrator; scholar, researcher and lifelong learner; and a community, citizenship and pastoral role" (DoE, 2001). With the establishment of the National Qualifications Framework, a policy designed to provide greater articulation between the education sector (formal schooling and the university education system) and the training sector (largely related to skills training institutions, including adult basic education and training), the label "Education and Training Development Practitioner" surfaced as a rival definition for "teachers".

"Teachers as change agents" or "agents to be changed"?

The new era of teacher education more than ten years into democratic governance in South Africa sees an increasingly judgmental approach concerning teachers being meted out. Teachers are increasingly constructed as *the villains* who are not able to realise adequately the goals of the new education and training system (Carrim, 2003). Disappointingly the response to the poor performance of learners is to lay the blame on the doorstep of teachers' deficiency. The general rhetoric by the State authorities regards teachers as incapable of making the transition to the new expectations (Sayed & Jansen, 2001). Whereas teachers were in the forefront in campaigns to topple the apartheid education system, post-apartheid teachers are considered to lack the "competence" to be agents of the new agenda. These increasing demands on teachers reflect back to an earlier era in which teachers were being framed to become technicians of the State agenda, *albeit* a new State with a new "transformatory agenda".

Rather than agents of change, it is increasingly evident that many directives from central authorities frame teachers as *agents to be changed*. In the enthusiasm to ensure the transformation of the education system, the new educational bureaucracy (via its policies and operational stipulations) tended to demand transformation from the teachers without adequate recognition of where teachers were. It is argued that teachers, in their revolutionary stance to dismantle apartheid education, did not pay sufficient attention to what a reconstructed system would demand from them. It is thus not surprising that higher education institutions (HEIs) producing teachers for the education system are being interpreted as failing to provide loyal, obedient and competent teachers who can implement the new State agenda. The higher education institutions are increasingly becoming chastised for their lack of relevant curricula which are seen as failing to adequately match the goals of the new educational policy contexts. Provincial authorities who previously had more control over colleges of education (teacher training institutions) which fell under their direct jurisdiction are skeptical about the role of universities in producing quality teachers. Provincial authorities would prefer to see the teacher education curriculum more closely mirror the school curriculum and student teachers developed to implement the demands of the new school curriculum. While this is the case, the agenda of HEIs is seen to be too theoretical and abstract with respect to teacher development. Provincial authorities would prefer that HEIs restrict themselves to being "service providers" of the State educational policies rather than partners in reconstructing the education system. Provincial authorities are over-conscious of the necessary critical commentator role that HEIs render in relation to educational policy (MCTE, 2004).

It can be seen as reflected in the historical journey above that the expectations and the responses of State authorities to the goals of teacher education remain markedly consistent. Despite the change in historical era, the new State is enthusiastic to see their policies being implemented and teacher education mirroring those expectations.

This surfacing of interest in more fundamentalist views of teacher education is not unique to the South African context. A recent education conference hosted by the Austrian Commission for UNESCO in Vienna in March 2001 listed the following key subthemes for their conference reviewing teacher education (Austrian Commission for UNESCO, 2001) (Table 1):

Table 1: Key subthemes from an education conference hosted by the Austrian Commission for UNESCO

Conference themes	
Session 1	
1.1	Where are teachers educated/ trained /formed?
1.2	Professional image of teachers (stockholders expectations)
1.3	Role of teachers: wide (social); narrow (subject specialists)
1.4	Education, training, formation (preparation)
1.5	Focus on in-service (reality of higher education involvement)
1.6	Higher education interface with "open market" in-service education <i>Case Studies focus on what are "realities" but exemplified by examples of practice that might point to future trends (What debate is going on?)</i>
Session 2	
2.1	What is happening? How are teachers being educated / trained /formed?
2.2	Concurrent teacher education design; consecutive teacher education curriculum
2.3	Kindergarten to secondary
2.4	Vocational
2.5	Coherence of course between universities
2.6	Problems of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruiting teachers • Keeping teachers • Qualifying unqualified teachers • Quality of recruits-tension • Higher quality of recruits and need to recruit
2.7	Is there a theory of teaching acceptable to the universities?
2.8	Certification examination: State / University
2.9	Teachers as state servants (or not)
2.10	New "non standard way" of becoming teacher
2.11	Seneca / Didactics? / Can we access the familia?
Session 3	
3.1	Changing role of the school: development of competences
3.2	Who owns the competences? (Teacher education? State?)
3.3	Mobility: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formal (acceptance of qualifications) • Informal (student mobility)
3.4	Central Function/ purpose of the assessment system (control by assessment, not courses?)
3.5	School roles – assistant teacher
3.6	Teachers
3.7	Teacher educator
3.8	Construction of didactics
3.9	Pedagogy
Session 4	
4.1	Proportion (balance) of practical experience in courses
4.2	Complexity of evaluating concurrent / consecutive models
4.3	Differing length of courses
4.4	How many subjects in concurrent courses?
4.5	Organisational / financial implications of closer integration between school and university
4.6	Love / hate relationship(s) between academic / educational departments

There is a growing sense of opposition to the notion that teachers need to be seen as independent professionals asserting their own interpretation of their role regarding teaching and learning. This is partly demonstrated by the State's preference for teachers to be accountable to the authority of the employer. The "love-hate relationship" between academics and the educational bureaucracies stems from the view that teachers ought to profess allegiance to their employers rather than be brought under the influence of "academic arguments". Teachers are being co-opted to develop accountability to their employer authority. Accountability to being members of a profession, holding up the ideals of the teaching profession, recedes in this context. Conservative views on the role of the teacher as a "semi-autonomous professional" are being rallied amongst circles who construct teachers as inadequate. Teachers are interpreted as "service workers" with a responsibility to deliver the goals of State's "transformation" agenda. Ironically this view of teachers is argued to be more progressive since it has as its rationale the construction of a society based on principles of democracy, equity and justice. Paradoxically though, the denial of the independent democratic voice of the teacher, or the suppression of critique of HEIs, is seen as a Machiavellian choice.

In South Africa this interpretation draws from the arguments that teachers have campaigned for their status as workers (in their rally around conditions of service) and should then be treated as such. The bargaining council between employers and employees tends to increasingly demand obligations from the "contracting parties". Education and the purpose of education are negotiated in the form of contractual relationships, and these results in a climate of demands and obligations from both the employer and employees. In doing so the teacher is de-professionalised and re-interpreted as a public service worker, in essence an agent of the State. The ideal is a balance between both teachers' search for professionalism and the employer's search for controls.

Section B

Teacher identities: Contested complementarities

In this section I explore the complexity of teacher identity. This emphasises that any form of teacher education (either at initial or continuing professional development level) needs to acknowledge multiple foci for the intervention, together with addressing the expectations of (student) teachers about what they believe teacher education ought to accomplish.

Diversity of teacher identity

It is understood that no two teachers are identical in their experiences, personalities, training, and interpretations of their role as members of a community involved in the practice of teaching and learning. Teachers vary across many divides. The apartheid history of the South African society demarcated privilege sharply across racial divides. Engagement with political resistance was second nature to many Black teachers who were on the receiving end of apartheid's inequities. On the contrary, their White counterparts, who were relatively cocooned from the direct inequities through their privileged schooling system, interpreted the public political insurrections of Black teachers as "unprofessional". It is no small wonder that to be a professional teacher came to be interpreted by White teachers (and perhaps, many Indian and Coloured teachers) as to be focused on "in-classroom" or "in-school" activities. The practice of teaching and the development of quality learning and teaching were interpreted as independent of the social and political struggle. The teaching force thus broadly differentiated into White teachers belonging to "professional associations" and Black teachers aligning themselves with "teacher unions", a feature which still characterises post-apartheid South Africa (Soudien, 2003).

The important campaign of the largely Black teacher unions in the post-apartheid era has been to declare the dual nature of teachers as "workers with professional responsibilities" (SADTU, 2004). However, when large sectors of the teaching force (mainly Black) still hover in the working class, it is no small wonder that economic worker considerations still dominate the teacher union agenda. This does not mean that teachers are locked into working class status. Markedly, teachers in the South African context are the most highly paid teachers on the continent, and this is testimony to the power of the organised teacher union movement.

The identity of teachers is a kaleidoscope of many permutations: race, class, gender, language, age and stage of career. Each of these different permutations yields particular kinds of interpretations and framings of their relationship to professional development. No uniform identity of being a teacher is thus possible.

Macro-forces impacting on teacher identity

Teacher identity is also being fashioned in relation to the wider society's perception of teaching as a career. This should be reflected on, especially in the context of the declining interest in individuals to enter into the teaching profession. Ironically in South Africa the opening up of the potential career possibilities for graduating school-leavers has lowered the esteem of teaching as a career. In theory, graduates have more higher education institutions' doors open besides the former restrictions to teaching or nursing colleges that the apartheid State offered. Globally, the trend has been towards a decline in the number of students enrolling for initial professional teacher education. This has sparked new forms of bartering of teachers who cross national and international borders. Teacher migration has become a national enterprise of countries unable to produce and retain adequate stock of teachers to service their own education systems, particularly in specific geographic and subject areas.

This decline of interest in teaching as a career has several reasons which could be understood on a macrolevel: a lack of financial support to become teachers; a perception that learners are increasingly undisciplined; when making a career choice, learners are most familiar with teaching as a career which they have experienced during 12 years of hidden pedagogy as being a career that is extremely demanding; teachers often discourage their learners from becoming teachers. However, one reason seems to stand out: students not choosing teaching as a career do so because the responsibilities being placed on teachers are becoming increasingly unrealistic and unattainable. Overload and burnout seem to occupy much of the reporting on the teaching profession. Teachers are expected to execute many different roles. Parents, on the other hand, increasingly hand over their children into the care of teachers, expecting teachers to perform miracles to inspire and educate them. Often when parents pay a proportional sum of their income towards school fees, there is an increase in their demands and expectations of their children becoming academically successful. "*Schools must be able to give us the quality product we pay for*" is an example of the commodification industry that teachers are expected to enact. Examination performance and successful assessments are seen as the goals of fee-paying parents. Above all, schoolteachers are expected to be social workers, psychologists, caregivers, community developers, nurses, and developers of full-rounded critical citizens. Simultaneously teachers are expected to be accountable to the wider system, the students, and the subject / learning area or discipline (Jita, 2004). All of this simply cannot be done, at least not by any one individual teacher! Besides this, teachers argue that given their multiple roles, they simply are undervalued by society. Teachers are expected to be saints, humanitarians, altruists who operate for a greater good and reward beyond financial incentives. It is no wonder that learners exposed to the daily challenges of teaching as a career do not wish to choose teaching as a career.

The scenario of teacher professional development that I am trying to sketch here is one which recognises the competing and multiple levels of forces that impact on teachers in the

present schooling climate. Perhaps these tensions have always been a feature of all educational eras, but are increasingly becoming forefronted in the era of competing expectations of the goals of schooling, the goals of teacher professional development and the expanding roles and responsibilities of teachers.

Morrow (2007) argues that this proliferation of roles detracts from the constitutive responsibility of teachers, which is "to teach". He argues that most teacher education programmes fail to distinguish between this "formal" constitutive element of being a teacher and, instead, overemphasise the "material" aspects which frame the work of teaching. There is a tendency to foreground the material aspects of teaching methods, which often presuppose the existence of particular facilities, conditions and resources (*ibid.*, 105). Erroneously, this raises the expectation amongst teachers that unless these material conditions are present teaching cannot take place. Clearly this is not an argument against the need for facilitative environments to practice teaching, but it highlights that many teacher educators are renegeing on the responsibility to develop amongst novice or practicing teachers, the constitutive responsibilities of teachers for "organising systematic learning" (MCTE, 2005). The need to retrieve this focus on teaching and organising systematic learning became one of the first recommendations of the Ministerial Committee on Teacher Education in developing their recommendations for a National Framework for Teacher Education (Recommendation A1) (*ibid.*).

Teachers and institutional settings

Of course, the resource contexts within particular kinds of schools vary enormously. Such resources include the quality of professional autonomy and competence of senior/ experienced teachers. Some of these teachers, it could be argued, derive their resources from many years of practical experience. However, these years of experience are not always necessarily innovative or progressive, and often are a constraint on moving schools into new directions (Fullan, 1993). Rituals and routines are usually entrenched by more senior teachers and resistance to alternate approaches tends to stultify the system. Novice teachers (usually newly qualified graduates) tend to face "a brick wall of resistance" as more senior teachers ask the new recruits to "*abandon what you learnt at university*". The wash-out effect of initial professional teacher education is a common feature when both the school and the teacher education institutions do not collaborate closely in establishing the goals of initial professional education (Zeichner, 1983). Unqualified teachers absorbed into some contexts are at the mercy of the existing teaching force who serve as "masters" to their new apprentices and, within this context, a cloning of existing practices usually prevails.

Entry into the teaching profession could thus be characterised by a degree of turbulence, which often co-opts the novice to perpetuate the rituals and routines in order to survive. The early stage of accountability that novice teachers often imbibe is towards the sources of authority within the school (Goodson & Hargreaves, 1996). Such authorities need not always be progressive or innovative and "accountability" might be willingly adhered to, despite the novice having perhaps better insight into the expectations of new curriculum policies or innovative teaching and learning methodologies. A later form of accountability begins to emerge, especially amongst novice underqualified or temporary teachers who seek an allegiance to their teacher unions and this is the mainstay towards securing a more permanent position within the scarce employment market.

In contexts where job prospects are more available within the wider economy, the early outflow of novice teachers is a common feature. Accountability to the learners within the system, or to rendering quality education, is often not at the forefront of novice teachers' involvement with education. Job security within the school and/or job prospecting to more desired occupations, usually characterises many teachers who do not make teaching a first

choice career. Teacher identity within the early stages of a career is thus often uncertain and directed towards survival rather than towards the teaching profession itself.

Teacher identity constructed in (initial) teacher education programmes

Teachers' identities also vary in relation to the quality of teacher preparation they have undergone. Research studies in the South African context point to the evidence that the apartheid education system meted out poor quality initial teacher education (training for teachers) for all teachers: irrespective of race, class or gender (DoE, 1995). Teachers were products of a teacher-training model which valued teachers as transmitters of prepackaged knowledge. The earlier villain mentality of teachers produced teaching and learning materials that were in a sense "teacher proof". Such material required teachers merely to clinically dispense to recipient learners. In this context initial teacher education (?training) became the forum to hand out recipes for survival in classroom practice rather than developing fully rounded professional teachers who could exercise professional autonomy and judgment.

This fostered a dependency on State-driven teaching and learning material and promoted a view that any teacher development was something that has to be imported from outside the schooling contexts. Teachers, as products of a victim mode, expect teacher professional development to be driven from "outside-in". This conception of professional development is usually sustained in the teacher identity that these teachers adopt as more seasoned teachers. "*We can't do it ourselves*" is usually the refrain from teachers who see themselves as lacking the competences to drive their own professional growth. The responses to recent innovations in the new State curricula still bear the hallmark of this kind of teacher: a teacher who expects that "*Pretoria must provide!*" Professional development for such teachers is interpreted to be the responsibility of some external agent (Samuel, 1998). This, furthermore, fuels the interpretations that teachers should not be regarded as professionals and cannot be seen as competent to drive quality teaching and learning on their own.

This lack of self-driven motivation is not without an accompanying degree of distrust of any centralised teacher development strategy that may emanate from "outside their context". Teachers have become suspicious of any intervention that reinforces their deficient status and, even though they may desire to develop as autonomous professionals, choose to reject the "outside-in interventions". "*We can do it by ourselves*" attitude tends to be the refrain of such teachers. Variations of teacher motivation and expectation do not exist between different teachers only. An individual teacher could potentially embody contradictory stances in relation to what they regard as the potential source of their own development: within themselves or their immediate context, or from outside in their employing authority. Many of these competing expectations of teachers' roles and identities exist as contested complementarities, within and between different teachers.

Section C

The Force Field Model of Teacher Development

The description I have provided of the multiple layers of concerns in relation to being and becoming teachers prompts me to posit a model of teacher identity which I label the Force Field Model of Teacher Development. I contend that there are many different forces which push and pull teachers' roles and identities in different directions. Each of these forces professes ideological theoretical positions about what the role and identities of teachers ought to be. The following are some of the key forces which impact on teacher identity and role:

- 1 The forces of one's BIOGRAPHY.
- 2 The forces of one's CONTEXT (macro-social, political, historical context).

- 3 The forces of one's INSTITUTIONAL SETTING (micro-contextual forces), and
- 4 The forces of PROGRAMMATIC impact (conceptions of curricula).

The following notes are important, especially for researchers exploring teacher professional growth using this model:

- These forces are not stable, nor unitary. They may embed a series of complementary and contradictory elements.
- The different forces act in concert with each other to exert influence and this may direct individuals to move in directions that include both predictable trajectories, but also at times may exert retractions to move in contrary paths.
- The forces exert influence on the individual teacher's own sense of identity and it is likely that s/he will report different sources of influence of each force with varied interpretations of their impact. Such reporting will likely be influenced by different audiences, purposes and contexts within which the reporting is being conducted.

The force field model of teacher identity is best illustrated analogously from its physical science/chemistry roots. Imagine that the teacher's conception of their role and identity as an electron within a force field. The direction that the individual electron moves within the force field is influenced by both the pull or push exerted by external forces in that field, but also by the stored potential energy that the electron itself has (its charge). The trajectory of the electron is directed by both internal and external sources and this enables or constrains its mobility or actions.

Biographical forces

The FORCES OF BIOGRAPHY which I regard as one of the more powerful forces in the force field, draw their resources (energy) from the personal lived experiences and history of teaching and learning that the individual has acquired through his/her unique lifehistory of schooling, teaching and learning. These experiences need not be confined only to conceptions of learning and teaching in formal school settings, but could also be drawn from the personal family or social settings in which teaching and learning were negotiated. It is thus likely that teachers have a rich store of experiences based on their unique racial, cultural, religious and socially situated experiences. In this context, the experience of schooling, teaching and learning of an orthodox Christian White rural learner who becomes a teacher is likely to be fundamentally different from a Black urban Hindu teacher! Both these teachers bring into the schooling force field, experiences of what it means to be teachers gleaned through their biographical history.

I argue that this force is an "inertial force", a residual force towards which individual teachers often retreat when other external forces begin to exert too forceful a control over their identity. The teacher "retreats" into the safe world of their "background", their biography, both of which store cultural archetypes of being a teacher. This "inertial force" could sometimes be regarded as a "restricting movement" since it often encompasses "looking over one's shoulders to see where one came from". It could potentially be a romanticised interpretation of teaching and learning drawn from idealistic hearkening to the past. It could, furthermore, be regarded as a powerful conserving force, allowing the teacher to feel a degree of stability and comfort, both of which ground them in their history. It is a comforting force which usually is characterised by a fair amount of consonance, and is usually the point of return when other forces are "washed out".

The tradition of lifehistory research has uncovered voluminous records of how teachers interact between this deeply held belief system embedded in their biographical profile and the expectations of external forces in their wider environment (Goodson, 1992). Many initial professional teacher education courses do not pay sufficient attention to these enduring conceptions of teaching and learning that this biographical force embeds. The deeply held

views on teaching and learning are often not addressed within such initial courses, and novices are often exposed to "foreign conceptions" which mark a "preferred identity of being teacher" that the university teacher education programme imposes on them (Samuel, 2003).

Contextual forces

The second major force is the CONTEXTUAL force. We are all products and processors of our history. This force is regarded as the uniqueness of the macro-social, political and cultural environment within which the teacher finds himself or herself. To illustrate, the kind of teacher that would have been produced during the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s in the American context, for example, would have charged into the force field a system of values and ideals that were being defended or challenged. The post-apartheid South African education context is infused with the euphoria that policy will be a major contributor to transformation of our education system. A contextual force of pessimism may have characterised earlier periods of history in South Africa when the grips of apartheid education may have seemed to be unalterable. In such a context the climate of uncertainty about the status of the teaching profession promotes hostility and confusion. The climate of free democratic participation and exercising of one's agency as a professional, furthermore, might also engender into the force field a charge that allows teachers to interpret their role and identity as more flexible and potentially more powerful.

Institutional forces

These forces draw on the lived biography of particular INSTITUTIONAL settings. It is well accepted that the ethos of different institutions in different historical periods could exert influence over the quality of teaching and learning in that setting. This institutional ethos is likely to be influenced by a range of factors (which have been the subject of many school effectiveness research studies). It includes the inspiration that may be offered by charismatic leaders, with vision and direction, with theoretical and passionate insight towards realising quality education. The institutional ethos could be understood to encompass the underlying and overt mission and theoretical underpinning of an institution. Teachers who either teach or learn within institutional settings are infused with a vibe of the institution and its ethos, and this influences their conception of self, role and identity as members of that institutional community.

Programmatic forces

This force might also be interpreted as a "curriculum intervention force", although my inclination is to believe that all the above forces constitute the "curriculum" of a teaching/learning environment. The PROGRAMMATIC force is a more explicit charge which declares the sequence, content and direction that the teaching/learning practices will follow. This declaration is not only espoused, it is also enacted in everyday practices to reinforce the quality of teaching and learning. Teachers who come under the influence of these programmatic charges come to interpret their role and identity in unique ways.

It should be noted that each of these forces has the potential to be "measured on a continuum" of both positive and negative influences. Some forces may restrict the movement of the "electron" (teacher identity), whereas others might serve as catalytic of action for new roles of teachers. It is likely therefore that when the ethos of a school-learning environment is dull and boring, routinised and ritualised without adequate critical reflection, this might predispose the individual teachers in that setting to "switch off". Their own enthusiasm to being teachers might be negatively effected. However, another teacher with the historical experience (biographical force) of having previously worked in such an uninspiring context might precisely interpret this "dull context" as the spur for his or her personal interest to ignite passion into the

schooling environment. S/he might choose to do this within the confines of their "programmatic intervention" or extend further into an alteration of the "institutional context".

The Force Field Model of Teacher Development therefore allows one to interpret the schooling context and professional development as a potentially vibrant space that can be activated by a variety of charges.

Concluding thoughts

The description I presented of the post-apartheid South African education system tending towards a more pejorative chastising of teachers could therefore be interpreted as a potential opportunity within which to revive new forces and energies. The quality of a dynamic educational environment is precisely when there are multiple forces and charges that ignite the force field. Teacher professional development thus has more potential to flourish when multiple authorities are allowed into the space to exert their discourses of influence over teachers' practices. Competing views and opposition are signs of a healthy democracy and we need to embrace the opportunity that each different force presents (whether we interpret these forces as conservative or liberatory). It is precisely because we have so many competing and complementary forces that it is important that teachers not become subjugated workers to the agendas of others. Instead, the autonomy of teachers making a professional judgment in the interest of quality education is a fundamental building block of a vibrant and truly liberated education system. Anything less would be masked or disguised autocracy.

An example of how these complementary and competing forces could align themselves within a critical discursive space is illustrated below:

Firstly, there is recognition that teachers are not homogenous in their expectations of teacher education/ teacher development. The voices of teachers are now understood to embody a range of diverse perspectives, each drawing on their location within the story of the South African education. Such thinking usually acknowledges the important historical context which has produced the quality of teachers we currently have within the education and training system in South Africa (MCTE, 2004). Being "professional" is also not uniformly understood: teachers at different stages in their development as professionals demand different kinds of interventions to renew or engage their practice (Gounden, 2003).

Secondly, there is acknowledgement that making demands on teachers should be accompanied by providing the adequate support structures and systems to ensure teachers can deliver on what they are being held accountable for (Taylor, 2002).

Thirdly, there is no disagreement that novice and practising teachers need to be *au fait* with the demands of the new school curriculum, but that they should be allowed the latitude of commentary and critique. As professionals, teachers need to be permitted the possibility of exploring alternative approaches to teaching and learning, to designing learning programmes for their specific learners, such practices being chosen because they enhance the specific learners in particular contexts. Blind compliance de-professionalises. Broader interpretations of education policies recognise that teachers need to exercise situated interpretative judgment as independent professionals. However, officials who are anxious to regulate teachers' conduct are often overzealous in their expectation of conformity with respect to curriculum implementation.

Fourthly, there is recognition that competing (and perhaps irreconcilable) theoretical conceptions characterise the field of teacher education. The onerous responsibilities being placed on teachers' shoulders are being reviewed especially in the context of fewer recruits entering teaching as a career. How do we attract and retain teachers within the system of education and training? How do we move away from "teacher bashing" towards recognition of teachers as essential components of the transformation of the education system who need to be

nurtured, supported and encouraged rather than condemned. Increasingly, the movement toward this kind of support is to attempt to understand how and why teachers think, act and reflect the way they do (Mattson & Harley, 2003). Rather than condemn teachers, research traditions are encouraging an attempt to understand the complexity of the task of teaching and learning as a social, political and educational enterprise (Prabhu, 1990). Primarily teacher education programmes need to develop, amongst its students, teachers who are competent and committed to the enterprise of organising systemic learning for their learners. This would entail being (critically) responsive to varying cultural, historical, geographic, and physical contexts; to varying and expanding subject matter knowledge and learners; varying institutional biographies and leadership environments; to varying pedagogical approaches. A competent professional is one who can rationalise the choices he/she makes in learning environments with confidence and commitment to the constitutive responsibility of teaching learners to grow emotionally, intellectually, socially and politically.

So, rather than bemoaning the resurrection of conservative fundamentalist forces around teacher identities: whether teachers are becoming increasingly overburdened, whether we see the declining interest in teaching as a career, we should embrace these as opportunities for seeking anew the most appropriate forces which will revitalise the force field. Those forces are likely to be a combination of several sources from within teachers themselves as well as within the contextual policy environment within the kinds of institutional cultures we create, and also the programmes that we lead teachers into.

May the Forces be with us – as we journey towards continuing professional teacher development.

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