

# **Teacher identities in policy and practice**

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## Abstract

This thesis brings together my two study and work interests, postcolonial theory and classroom-based research, in order to explore how teacher identities are constructed within the tensions between policy and practice. I begin by arguing for the usefulness and value of postcolonial theory in interpreting empirical findings because it foregrounds the politics of representation and provides good theoretical tools for examining how modernist policy discourse constructs traditional, rural teachers as subjects of difference. I use a postcolonial view of identity and agency as being always strategic and provisional, arising out of the subject's attempts to negotiate the contradictions in western modernity's false claims to universality. This view of the subject is linked with the interactionist concept of teacher strategy as arising within sites of contradiction and constraint that are generated within the wider social structure. In my attempt to identify the primary contradictions and constraints with which teachers work, I draw on empirical work carried out in local schools and argue that for rural teachers the tensions between policy and practice hinge around the disjuncture between tradition and modernity. I use Giddens (1990) to argue that, due to its origins in the West and its history of colonialism under the guise of rationality and enlightenment, modernity cannot be integrated with tradition but can only displace or shallowly assimilate tradition. In light of this theory, I question the assumption that an imported modernist policy discourse can be contextualised and made appropriate to South African conditions. To explore this question further, I use Durkheim (1964) and Bernstein's (1971) concepts of mechanical and organic solidarity to map the features of these two different forms of solidarity onto case studies of South African schools. These case studies reveal that policy requires traditional rural schools to undergo fundamental changes that threaten the foundations on which their cohesion and effectiveness is built, leaving many schools with a profound sense of displacement. Turning to the question of the strategies teachers use to negotiate the contradictions that arise within these "displaced" schools, I find further evidence of modernity's attempts to appropriate and shallowly assimilate traditional subjects in what I perceive as a strategy of mimicry. Arguing, with Bhabha (1984), that the strategy of mimicry is a response to, and disruption of, the western modernist discourses of rationality, democracy, meritocracy and equal opportunity on which all of modernity's promises of progress rest, I examine the particular mimetic strategy of "false clarity" (after Fullan, 1991) and suggest that the often unfounded confidence of "new outcomes-based teachers" is partly a mimicry of the false clarity of policy, and the false clarity teacher development programmes which attempt to "transfer" the abstract principles and "best methods" put forward by policy by means of "generic" skills and values which are not generic at all to rural teachers in traditional contexts, and which they then tend to shallowly and mechanically mimic. In light of this discussion, I recommend that teacher development needs to pay more attention to "the singer, not the song" (Goodson in Jessop, 1997: 242) by shifting the focus from methods and principles to teachers' subjective understandings of their own work and contexts, and by strengthening teachers' grasp and enjoyment of the formal, conceptual knowledge they teach. I also suggest that, to avoid the risk of trying to prescribe and reform teacher identities, how teachers establish their own "sense of plausibility" (Prabhu, 1990) in their own contexts should best be left to them.

This dissertation, except where otherwise specifically indicated, is entirely my own original work.

E.J. Mattson

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## INTRODUCTION

### **Background and approach to the study: theoretical reflections on empirical work**

My interest in teacher identities began with my involvement in our school's contribution to the President's Education Initiative (PEI) Research Project in 1998 which aimed to measure the "fit" between teachers' roles and competences in policy and practice (see Harley, et al, 1998; Harley, et al, forthcoming). As a lecturer in education, I had seldom ventured into the classrooms where my students spend their days and, doing empirical classroom-based research for the first time, I was struck by the contrast between the "university identity" we assume in our students and the "real" identities with which they live. To me, the contrast hinged on a distinction between the conservative traditionalism of teachers and the highly rational Enlightenment discourse of the academy; in other words, between tradition and modernity. This perceived distinction lent itself to analysis in terms of the theory I had studied in a Masters coursework programme on Postcolonial Literary Studies, which deals with the fraught relationship between colonial discourse and its "other". Thus the attempt in this dissertation to bring together these two interests: my theoretical background in postcolonial studies has, I believe, made me a more careful and sensitive researcher, while my experience of classroom-based research has grounded my theoretical interests in a more practical way.

As such, this thesis is not a conventional piece of empirical research, but rather a narrative and discursive account of my own attempt to understand the interface between policy and practice, and how teachers make sense of their roles within this interface, drawing on empirical findings and impressions formed in the research field. For this reason, the thesis is divided into two sections. Part One is a descriptive account of the two empirical research projects with which I was involved, and Part Two is simultaneously a reflection on this research experience and an attempt to use the experience to develop a theory of teacher strategy sensitised to South African conditions. There is no formal literature review as the literature I have read is infused into the discussion in Part Two.

To set the theoretical context for the discussion, what follows is a very brief reflection on the affinity between my two apparently disparate interests - postcolonial theory and classroom-based research. Then I go on to discuss the purpose of the study and to provide an outline of the thesis as a whole.

### **Postcolonial studies and ethnographic research in South African schools**

If a model is to be developed which sensitively appreciates the meanings that different groups (pupils and teachers, working class and middle class, etc.) attach to their experience and situation, then it is necessary to abandon theoretical attachments to the cultural superiority of one group over another. A good model should be like a cubist painting and present different perspectives simultaneously, equally and appreciatively. If, as researchers, we fail to do this then we will deride the perspectives of those whom we should instead be seeking to understand (Hargreaves, 1983:21).

Hargreaves' image of the research model as a cubist painting is a compelling one, but is it possible? This dissertation proceeds from the assumption that it is not possible to forego one's positionality and to represent all perspectives equally. According to postcolonial theory and criticism, too much of history has been written by the benevolent western intellectual masquerading as an absent non-representer, and rather than making impossible claims to objectivity, cultural criticism should foreground the politics of representation.

As a middle-class, university-educated white woman, fluent in the discourses of modernity and the Eurocentric academy, researching African teachers in a variety of contexts and with a variety of backgrounds, the issue of representation (how I observe, describe and comment upon the "subjects" of my research) requires serious consideration. I have directly experienced the difficulty of trying to observe and analyse teachers' attitudes and practices without making value judgements based on my own views of education - judgements which often close off further investigation and understanding - and, while this is no doubt a problem experienced by all researchers, in the South African education context it becomes even more acute given the gap that exists between the modernist liberal assumptions of the Eurocentric academy (on



which, I will argue, the latest education policy is based) and the often conservative, “traditional” assumptions of teachers who work in rural, “third world” settings.

Postcolonial theory alerts us to the difficulties of representation by describing the European subject’s tendency to recognise the other only through assimilation, and to selectively define the other as a means of establishing itself (see Derrida, 1976; Spivak, 1988: 292), so that one can represent only an appropriated, or partly appropriated other. The advice, then, is “not to abstain from representation” - in other words, not to obscure the fact that one is representing an other - but to pay attention to the mechanics of representation and appropriation (Spivak, 1988: 285). Policy constructions of the ideal teacher are a clear attempt to define, and thereby appropriate, the teacher as a subject of modernity. Given the diversity of contexts and value-systems within which teachers work, the ways in which they respond to this decontextualised, ideally unified policy construction will hopefully make more visible “the itinerary of recognition through assimilation ... in the imperialist constitution of the colonial subject” (Spivak, 1988: 294). The challenge for me, as a researcher, is to try to *trace* this itinerary without replicating it, or at least to pay careful attention to the ways in which I am most likely to replicate such a process.

A further difficulty of representation is what Gayatri Spivak calls the “native informant syndrome” - overdependence on the representative (in this case the research subject) as one who speaks truthfully on behalf of others, rather than a complex, multiply interpellated subject who will make assumptions based upon the discourses most readily available to her. In empirical research, the temptation to draw general conclusions from specific observations is strong, particularly when one encounters an articulate and well-informed research subject who seems able to “speak back” clearly to the centre in a voice that represents those subjects most marginalised from the centre. Spivak’s point is that in order to have a recognisable identity, and to speak in a voice which can be heard by the western intellectual, the native informant must be in some ways similar to (assimilated to) the western intellectual. Applying this analogy of “native informant” and “western intellectual” to “research subject” and “researcher” alerts the researcher to the danger of constructing the research subject as a transparent, parahuman being who has unmediated access to the truth - an oversimplified, patronising view of the

ethnographic subject as guileless, trustworthy and devoid of conflicting interests, who is able to speak in an “authentic” voice.

In this project I am not interested in retrieving the “authentic voice” of teachers marginalised by previous education policy and constructed as new citizens by current policy. I am more interested in capturing the ways in which teachers strategically adjust their attitudes and their practice in constant negotiation with policy expectations and the contextual demands of the workplace. I hope to resist any essentialist notions of teacher identity and to maintain throughout my discussion an understanding of the teacher as a complex nexus of intersecting subjectivities whose attitudes and practices are often provisional, strategic and contingent on prevailing circumstances.

Holding this view of the subject, the interactionist notion of “teacher strategy” is a valuable theoretical tool for developing an understanding of teacher identity, as it declines the essentialism and unity usually implied by the modernist notion of identity. In this thesis I attempt to develop a theory of teacher strategy that can be used in the current South African context by merging the interactionist concept of teacher strategy as presented by Andy Hargreaves (1983) with some of the insights of postcolonialism.

I understand that “postcolonialism” is a contested term and there is not the space in this project to adequately define or defend it, but I hope my application of postcolonial theory will demonstrate its validity in making sense of the empirical findings of classroom-based research, and developing a responsive understanding of teacher identities. What I appreciate most about this school of theory is its mistrust of universalising “grand theories” and the sovereign subjects they assume (be it the objective, well meaning western intellectual or the vocal native who stands metonymically for all natives), and its interest in the “small narratives” of people whose identities are shaped by discourses over which they cannot always claim control. It also carries with it the constant awareness that “we too, ...may be fated to rehearse the agonisms of a culture that may never earn the title of *postcolonial*” (Gates, 1991:470).

## **Purpose and outline of the study: developing a theory of teacher strategy to "favour all the corners"**

One of the teachers I worked with during my research felt that "the policy should be in such a way that it should favour all the corners, not specific people but everyone". While I and most of the policy analysts I have read would agree with him, I also realise that when both social transformation and alignment with global imperatives are necessary, of course there will be tensions between policy and practice, and these tensions will be unevenly felt - they will inevitably trouble some schools a lot more than others. However, I believe it is helpful for policy and for teacher education providers to identify these tensions and the principles of what is at stake, and to work out how to deal creatively with the tensions in order to facilitate shifts in personal identities and professional pedagogies.

In a chapter entitled "OBE and Unfolding Policy Trajectories: Lessons to be Learned", summarising the insights and implications of a compilation of views on the new curriculum, Pam Christie concludes that "the challenge is to mesh the course grain of state policy with the fine grain of daily life in schools" (1999: 287). This resonates with Mills' view of "the central task of the sociological imagination as the connection of personal troubles to public issues" (cited in Hargreaves, 1980: 164). We need to know a great deal more about the ways in which teachers come to understand and define their professional roles and how they cope with the tensions between policy and practice. Towards this end, I believe that the concept of "teacher strategy" should be resurrected as a focussing concept for school-based research. As argued by its proponents (Woods, 1980; Hargreaves, 1980 and 1983) in the heyday of interactionist classroom studies, teacher strategy provides a key focussing concept for connecting teachers' personal constructions of their roles with the contexts in which they work, as well as with the broader social structure.

However, to import a theory of teacher strategy developed in America and England and to apply it unproblematically in South Africa would be to enact a form of academic colonialism, assuming the universality of "a conception of the world which was discovered under other skies" (Fanon, 1961: 222). Strategy theory needs to be revised in the light of local conditions,

or, in Woods' terms, developed and sensitised so as to generate new theories (see Scarth, 1987: 245; 251). This thesis attempts to sensitise the concept of teacher strategy in relation to South African schooling, by integrating with it some of the theoretical insights of postcolonial studies and applying the revised concept to the empirical data I have gathered in local schools.

In order to make use of Hargreaves' (1983) understanding of teacher strategies as a way of negotiating the contradictions generated by social-structural and historical forces, I first examine what some of these forces are in KwaZulu Natal at the moment, with reference to the disjuncture between tradition and modernity, and correspondingly, between practice and policy. Here I use Giddens' account of the encounter between tradition and modernity to argue, as he does, that the two modes cannot be integrated, but that modernity is "designed" to displace and appropriate tradition. Applying this theory to the encounter between modernist policy and the traditional schools of rural KwaZulu Natal, I use Durkheim's (1964) and Bernstein's (1971) notions of mechanical and organic solidarity, mapped onto three case studies of schools, to illustrate more clearly the nature of the sense of displacement prevalent in KwaZulu Natal schools.

Turning to the question of how teachers negotiate the disjuncture between policy and practice and the sense of displacement this brings about, I examine more closely what I perceive as a strategy of mimicry. Using Homi Bhabha's (1989) theory that mimicry is a cultural consequence of colonialism, I attempt to read teachers' mimetic strategies as a way of inhabiting, and thereby revealing, the contradictions "within the rationalisations of modernity" (Bhabha, 1992: 46), and particularly "the central ambivalence of modernity" (50) which is its false claim to universality. Arguing, with Bhabha, that the agency of mimicry lies in its mockery of "the reforming, civilising mission" (1989: 235) of Western modernity, I move on to examine some specific ways in which teachers' mimetic strategies expose the contradictions in the modernist discourse of education policy.

Finally, I briefly consider the implications for teacher development in KwaZulu Natal and suggest a shift away from any attachment to the notion of "best method" and towards a more responsive engagement with teachers' subjective understandings of their work. Towards this

end, I suggest further areas of research into teacher strategies by briefly outlining what I perceive as some of the particular sites of contradiction that teachers in rural KwaZulu Natal will have to negotiate.

I hope that this theoretical work will help develop an understanding of teacher identities as they are constructed in policy and lived in practice, and contribute towards conceptualising a form of teacher development that focusses a lot more clearly on "the singer, not the song" (Goodson in Jessop, 1997: 242). If policy cannot "favour all the corners", perhaps research into teacher strategies can take a step in that direction.

The entire theoretical discussion summarised above is based on my experiences as a researcher in KwaZulu Natal schools. As such, my empirical "findings" emerge within the discussion as illustrative case studies and examples of the theoretical ideas I explore. The next section of the thesis, Part One, describes the empirical work I did in order to reach and develop the theoretical questions and arguments that make up Part Two.

## **PART ONE: THE EMPIRICAL WORK**

This section provides a description of the two empirical studies that provided the data for my thesis along with a more narrative account of how my research interests and questions developed during this process.

### **1.1 *The Real and the Ideal: The interface between policy and practice***

My first involvement in any kind of empirical study was with a research project undertaken by the School of Education, Training and Development at the University Of Natal, Pietermaritzburg in 1998, carried out under the auspices of the President's Education Initiative (PEI) which was funded by the Danish International Development Agency and managed by the Joint Education Trust. A report outlining the project was published, with the title, *The Real and the Ideal: Field analysis of roles and competences of educators* (Harley, et al, 1998).

This was a typical funded project with clear terms of reference and three precise research questions:

1. What does policy on teacher roles and competences say teachers should be doing?
2. What are teachers actually doing?
3. What is the "fit" between policy and practice?

To capture the policy construction of the ideal educator we analysed the four new policy documents which together define and regulate the professional duties and conduct of educators, and provide frameworks for their professional development and appraisal. Although each document serves a distinct purpose, what they all have in common is the use of the concepts of roles and competences (though not necessarily in these exact terms) in drawing up the various criteria of professionalism. The *Norms and Standards for Educators* (Department of Education, 1998) is the most comprehensive and detailed of the documents as it attempts to incorporate and integrate the roles and competences outlined by the other three documents. For this reason, the *Norms and Standards* document was used as the primary resource in the development of research instruments.

What follows is a brief description of each document, noting the categories each one uses to describe the criteria of teacher professionalism.

*National Department of Education Duties and Responsibilities of Educators*

*(Department of Education, undated a)*

The purpose of this document is to provide a job description for each post level against which an educator may be legally appointed, promoted and appraised. It lists the daily duties and responsibilities of educators under the following four headings: teaching; extra and co-curricular; administrative and interaction with stakeholders.

*SACE (South African Council of Educators) Code of Conduct. (SACE, undated)*

This document is intended to regulate the ethical conduct and professional discipline of all educators registered with SACE. The document describes the expected ethical conduct of educators in relation to: the learner; the parent; the community; colleagues; the teaching profession; their employer (the National Department of Education) and SACE.

*Education Labour Relations Council Manual for Developmental Appraisal*

*(Department of Education, undated b)*

The purpose of this document is to establish appraisal procedures, criteria and instruments for all levels of educators. It aims to create a nationally unified system of appraisal which will encourage professional development.

The main appraisal instrument is the Prioritisation Form which lists core criteria by which teachers are to be appraised. For example, at post level one, criteria are described under 13 categories: Curriculum development; Creation of a learning environment; Lesson presentation and methodology; Classroom management; Learner assessment; Recording and analysing data; Development of learning field competency; Professional development; Human relations; Leadership; Community; Extra-curricular; Contribution to school development.

*Committee for Teacher Education Policy (COTEP) Norms and Standards for Teacher Educators (Department of Education, 1997)*

The purpose of this document is to define employer requirements for the National Department of Education as employer of all educators in public institutions. These requirements are then translated into criteria for the development and evaluation of qualifications for teacher education. Here the document outlines the 6 roles all educators are expected to play, and describes 120 competences that teacher education programmes should aim to develop. The six roles are:

- Learning mediator
- Interpreter and designer of learning programmes
- Leader, administrator and manager
- Community, citizenship and pastoral role
- Scholar, researcher and lifelong learner
- Learning area/ phase specialist

Each role is defined in terms of foundational, practical and reflexive competences.

Foundational competence is a demonstrated “understanding of the knowledge and thinking which underpins actions taken”. Practical competence is “the demonstrated ability, in an authentic context, to consider a range of possibilities for action, make considered decisions ... and perform the action chosen”. The ability to integrate the above two competences in order to reflect more critically on both is referred to as Reflexive competence. This competence develops the ability to “adapt to change and unforeseen circumstances, and explain the reasons behind these adaptations” (Department of Education, 1998: vii, ix).

Analysis of these four policy documents (see Barasa and Mattson, 1998) reveals that they work together to create a coherent and consistent regulatory and developmental system for educators, which:

- provides an holistic view of the effective educator as someone who possesses practical, foundational and reflexive competences, and is able to play a variety of roles. An educator in possession of all three kinds of competence is a self-directed, well-



informed and highly skilled professional with a strong sense of ethics and accountability, who is constantly reflecting on and developing her practice.

- marks a shift from the non-democratic educational practices of apartheid to a new democratic system by employing the principles of liberal education and OBE.
- firmly upholds the principles enshrined in the Constitution, while in other matters providing a fair degree of flexibility and sensitivity to different contexts.
- promotes teaching as a profession, and attempts to create a balance between professional accountability and professional autonomy.

We also identified some weaknesses that could expose the new policies to difficulties in their implementation and reception. The following two are the most important in the light of our subsequent findings in the field:

- Values are sometimes assumed to be universal and uncontested. The attempt to define professional ethics, in terms of the Constitution, tends to emphasise commonality rather than difference.
- There is a tension between the regulatory and development functions of the policies. The roles and competences expected of teachers form the criteria for both their professional development and their appraisal. There is a danger that the appraisal function, which is more clearly outlined in terms of procedure, will eclipse the development function.

This analysis of the roles and competences of educators outlined by policy revealed that, despite a few inconsistencies, there is a common and consistent vision of education in general and teachers' roles in particular. The language of roles and competences combined with the principles of liberal, democratic education within a culture of human rights is shared by all four documents. The question remained, however, whether these roles and competences reflect and are relevant to the daily experience of educators, and it was the aim of the research project to

address this question. So, concurrently with the policy analysis, a research instrument was developed which listed 48 discrete competences grouped into 6 broad categories of roles that teachers are expected to play (see Appendix A for the research instrument).

With the assistance of the Pietermaritzburg regional educational authority, a sample of six “resilient” secondary schools (Christie and Potterton, 1997) representing a cross section of state schools was identified. Three of the schools were urban, being close to the city centre, one school was peri-urban and two schools were rural. In turn, through internal processes, the schools themselves identified a number of “effective” teachers who were prepared to participate in the research programme. (The decision to work with effective teachers in resilient schools was based on the reasoning that very little about the policy/practice interface would be learnt from ineffective teachers in dysfunctional schools. Clearly, the decision to conduct research with a select sample of teachers has major implications for the interpretation of findings.) In September 1998 researchers spent one week with each of the ten teachers in the sample, observing lessons, recording data on an observation schedule, and engaging teachers in discussion on those roles and competences which were not directly observable. Fieldwork was concluded with a formal interview at which researchers compared their findings with teachers’ own perceptions.

Analysis of teacher practice in relation to each of the 6 roles and 48 competences in the research instrument can be summarised as follows:

*1 Mediator of Learning* : This was the strongest category of all, but it was uneven: the foundational and practical competences were more prominent than the reflexive competences.

*2 Pastoral Role* : All teachers were involved to some degree here (mostly in extra-school programmes such as sports, cultural and artistic activities). Communication with parents to discuss the well-being, conduct and progress of their children was the least prominent role. Counselling was a new role for all teachers and was seemingly not easily embraced.

3 *Administrator* : Teachers appeared to be very active in record keeping etc, but not in the planning and co-ordination of integrated and team teaching approaches to learning. Marks were recorded efficiently but were not used for diagnostic or developmental purposes.

4 *Designer of Learning Programmes* : There were few indications of activity in this role. For example, one teacher felt he had been trained to implement syllabuses and assess learners' work, not to design and evaluate programmes.

5 *Lifelong Learner* : This role is largely introspective and self-interactive: formal study as an index of lifelong learning can be misleading. Research, and reflection on practice, were not generally apparent; and some suspicion of teacher appraisal was evident.

6 *Community Developer and Citizen* : Perception of the teacher's role as a community developer was as diverse as it was contested. For example, we found both initiative and indifference; conformity to, and contestation of values; as well as optimistic and pessimistic views of policy initiatives towards educational transformation and change.

An overall assessment of the findings revealed firstly, that among the six roles played by teachers, Mediator of Learning emerged as the strongest category, while Designer of Learning Programmes was the weakest. Secondly, teachers appeared to be very strong in foundational competences, but much less so in the reflexive competences. Using Hoyle's (1980) typologies of extended and restricted professionalism, we concluded that policy requires from teachers an extended view of professionalism, which involves:

- locating one's classroom teaching in a broader educational context
- comparing one's work with that of other teachers
- evaluating one's work systematically, and collaborating with other teachers
- seeing teaching as a rational activity amenable to improvement on the basis of research and development (Hoyle, 1980 : 43).

However, there was more evidence in the field of a restricted view of professionalism.

According to Hoyle (1980), characteristics of "restricted professionalism" are:

- teachers' thinking and practice are narrowly classroom based
- teachers' thinking is rooted in experience rather than theory

- classroom autonomy (in the sense of privacy) is valued
- responsibilities are restricted to the academic programme.

When it came to interpreting these findings, along with other impressions gained in the research field, we came up with 4 major themes:

*1 The teacher's own value system impacts on her effectiveness in certain roles.*

Evidence from the field suggests that there is a gap between what educators are *able* to do, what they *believe* they should do and what they *actually* do. Tensions between policy and practice were evident with respect to:

- gender equality
- participation in community development
- creative and critical thinking
- emphasis on pupil activity and group work
- democratic practices and disciplinary practices.

*2 The school context has a profound influence on the way in which different educator roles and competences are made sense of, prioritised and practised.*

Such contexts include school ethos, resources, management styles as well as the nature and level of community involvement. For example:

- Ethos and management styles: In some schools discipline seemed to be founded on trust, friendliness and respect; others on rule enforcement, monitoring and corporal punishment. The ethos of a school influenced the way in which an effective teacher was defined and therefore the type of roles and competences practised.
- Resources have clear implications for the possibilities and opportunities for teaching and learning.
- The nature and level of community involvement either constrained or complemented the teachers' roles, and therefore policy implementation, eg. attitudes to corporal punishment.

3 *In practice, an effective teacher is not one who plays all of the six roles or demonstrates all of the competences underpinning each of the roles, but one who makes an appropriate weighting of the roles and a selection of competences in response to specific contexts.*

Not one of the teachers scored highly in *all* of the roles or competences. In addition to 1 and 2 above, the school subject made a difference to how teachers select and prioritise roles. It was suggested that there was a danger of "spreading teachers too thin"; and that while all the roles were all essential, they should be provided by the *school*, not by each individual teacher. And for many teachers, the primary responsibility was to get their students through exams, so roles and competences were (consciously or unconsciously) chosen and prioritised towards this end.

4 *Effective teachers had "something extra" over and above competence in the defined roles, a classroom "presence" embodied in "achieved status" (Bernstein, 1996) which enabled them to exercise interpersonal control.*

The teachers whom we thought had "something extra" did not necessarily meet all policy requirements; in many cases their teaching methods were not in alignment with OBE. This perception led us to conclude that "good teaching" has more to do with a sense of "calling" (as mentioned by one teacher) than adherence to policy requirements.

In an overview of our findings, we concluded that the four policy documents are internally coherent and consistent and that policy is clearly progressive, transformatory and consistent with broader national policy. However, our fieldwork led us to question two inter-related assumptions that policy makes: Firstly, we thought that policy holds a consensus view of the nature of South African society, and secondly, it further assumes that the school and community contexts in which it will be implemented are homogenous. In short, fieldwork suggested that policy is insufficiently sensitive to the context in which it will be implemented and played out. This raised five specific concerns:

1 *Potential demoralisation and disempowerment*

The roles are so all-encompassing that clearly no single individual could do justice to all of them. The scale of change demanded from "restricted" to "extended" professionalism is very considerable.

## 2 *Language and terminology*

Important concepts (such as democracy) are open to individual interpretation, but perhaps more seriously we are not sure that policy discourse "speaks" to teachers. (For example, "Mediator of Learning" could compound the uncertainty regarding the role and identity of the teacher created by Curriculum 2005.)

## 3 *Teachers' pragmatic concerns*

Teachers have very powerful pragmatic concerns like the need to exercise control in classrooms (for pedagogical as well as survival reasons); and there is the imperative for good examination results, especially in matric. Policy does not appear to acknowledge the need for role prioritisation.

## 4 *How do teachers encounter policy?*

We thought it unlikely that teachers will read the four policy documents on which we based our analysis. It is most likely that they will encounter policy through appraisal. We wondered about the level of preparedness in local settings to implement appraisal in the democratic, developmental manner intended by policy. In the light of earlier remarks, we also wondered how tensions and contradictions around values, cultures, and community will be addressed.

## 5 *Equity*

A final broader, somewhat impressionistic view: we thought that the values and practices inherent in policy are based on the image of a school with particular cultural and material resources, and that this image corresponds more closely with historically advantaged than with historically disadvantaged schools.

Although the PEI project was my first experience of formal empirical research, I was involved in all aspects of the project from conceptualisation to printing out the final report. I assisted with developing a research design; I worked with my colleague, Fred Barasa, on the policy analysis and submitted an interim report on this; I carried out field work in both a suburban ex-model C school and a more remote rural school; and I was one of the four main authors who worked on interpreting the findings and writing up the final report. So my initiation into empirical research took the form of total immersion and as such, my personal involvement and

investment in the project developed an energy of its own. By the time the project was complete, while some questions had been “answered”, I was left with many more. In the words of my senior colleague, Professor John Aitchison, I had been “bitten by the research bug”. In particular, struck by what I perceived as a radical disjuncture between modernist policy and traditional modes of practice in rural schools and classrooms, the aspect of the research that intrigued me the most was the ways in which teachers responded to policy, how they viewed the policy image of the teacher in relation to their own identity and practice, and the strategies they used to adjust to and/or resist this new identity. I believed that a more responsive understanding of teachers’ subjective feelings about their professional identities was key to an approach to teacher development that would not repeat the potentially demoralising and disempowering effects we had noted in policy.

With these hunches and questions in mind, I began a new empirical project in 1999 which aimed to work more closely with teachers studying for their B Ed at UNP to find out more about their perspectives on policy.

## **1.2 Working with B Ed students: Finding out more about teachers’ perspectives**

The opportunity to work with B Ed students arose out of fortunate circumstances. Following on from the PEI research, the research team published a learning guide for a B Ed open learning module called *Classroom Studies: Researching Teacher Roles in Policy and Practice* (Harley, Bertram and Mattson, 1999) which introduces students to policy on teacher roles and competences and then guides them through their own research process (using the same research questions and instruments as used in the PEI project) in which they observe the practice of a teaching colleague and compare this to policy requirements. The learning guide draws on extracts from our PEI research report, *The Real and the Ideal*, and local and international research and theory on issues raised in that report, such as teacher professionalism; the importance of school culture, learner subcultures and teachers’ personal values; teacher constraints and teacher strategies. The intention of the module, as stated on the back cover of the learning guide is to “develop a view of teacher practice which takes into account the complexities of the classroom, [and to encourage] teachers to formulate their own opinions on the latest policies and how these relate to their experiences in the classroom”.

As co-ordinator of the *Classroom Studies* module in Pietermaritzburg in the second semester of 1999, I worked with twenty-six second-year B Ed students (mostly women teachers in rural primary schools) and their 10-page reports and exam scripts yielded some useful data. But the most important data came from another B Ed module I set up with the help of my supervisor, Professor Ken Harley, following a different structure but using the same learning guide. This module was offered to a random selection of B Ed students registered for *Classroom Studies* as a Supervised Independent Study in which they were required to use the research instruments provided in the learning guide to reflect on their own practice in relation to policy requirements. (See Appendix B for a letter I sent inviting students to register for the course, describing the course requirements, and asking their permission to use their findings in my own research).

In July 1999, thirteen B Ed students (ten female and one male primary school teacher, and two male secondary school teachers, all of whom teach in African rural schools in KwaZulu Natal) registered for the Supervised Independent Study. Weekly meetings were held during the July school holidays to familiarise students with policy and with the research process, and field work began in August. My role as supervisor of their research projects was to help the students to reflect on their practice by visiting their schools and observing them in the classroom so as to gain some understanding of the contexts in which they work. Accompanied by Ken Harley, and on two occasions by a research assistant, Mthembeni Dlamini, I visited eleven of the thirteen teachers at their schools. (We visited the twelfth school twice but had to leave - the first time due to student unrest at the school and the second time because the teacher was ill. The thirteenth teacher kept postponing our meetings until the September school holidays, by which time it was too late). During this time we collected our own data in the teachers' classrooms, and also interviewed teachers to find out more about their own data collection and their emerging findings. (See Appendix E for photographs taken during school visits). In September, students handed in a first draft of their twenty-five-page research reports to which I responded with detailed feedback, and in October they gave twenty-minute oral presentations of their findings which were then discussed by the whole group. Finally, at the end of October, they submitted final drafts of their research reports and these, along with my field notes and interview transcripts, were my primary source of data.



Although a quantitative aspect was built into the research instruments we used (in measuring the degree to which particular competences were evident), I did not use this measure and relied fully on qualitative data in the form of observation commentary, formal interviews, informal discussions with students (in and out of tutorials) and students' written work. Having worked with the instruments before and having spent much time teaching students about the policy documents from which they were drawn, I felt familiar enough with the roles and competences to work with a more holistic sense of the ideal educator constructed by policy, and to use the instrument as a useful reference point rather than a checklist. During classroom observations, I made notes recording the events of the lesson and other features of classroom interaction that struck me as interesting, referring only occasionally to the instrument itself (see Appendix C for examples of field notes). This approach allowed for a more intuitive and impressionistic response to the teachers.

Similarly, during interviews, I tried a number of approaches with varying success. One very fruitful interview had us discussing each of the 48 competences in the research instrument in great detail; but with another teacher, this approach fell flat, while a casual chat with her before the interview formally started yielded very interesting information and ideas. Some teachers spoke freely and openly in the interviews while others were reserved. I was struck by the importance of a sense of rapport with the teacher. In some cases where this rapport was well established, the interview followed a "stream of consciousness" pattern, at times feeling almost therapeutic, and the data were correspondingly rich; in other cases, teachers maintained a formal distance and the data were less interesting (see Appendix D for examples of contrasting interview experiences).

I am therefore stating at the outset that, although based on carefully constructed research instruments and the fairly systematic findings yielded from them in the initial PEI research project, this project followed a far less formal and systematic approach and was based on entirely qualitative data. This was a deliberate choice and had to do with my own temperament as a researcher (in other words, I believe that my "intuitive" skills are a lot stronger than my ability to be "scientifically objective"), as well as the fact that I was trying to privilege teachers' own perspectives and observe their strategies *as they emerged* in their attempts to make sense of the policy / practice interface, and not according to any preconceived research template.

Combining the role of researcher with that of teacher developer and, ultimately examiner, came with its own privileges (the students had to co-operate with the research process and generate their own findings in order to pass), but also raised some questions about reliability in that it was not always possible to understand students' levels of participation and interest, or indeed their findings, in isolation from their wish to impress me and to pass. However, I believe that with this reliability factor taken into account in my interpretation of the findings, the fact that my empirical work was coupled with a teacher development role is also very useful as it predisposes my findings and reflections to address the issue of teacher development and particularly the role of universities. Having only ever taught large classes (up to two hundred) and tutorial groups (usually about twenty-five in a group) of B Ed students, or written distance materials aimed at thousands, I welcomed the novelty of working closely with individual students in a prolonged relationship that allowed us to learn more about each other's backgrounds and personalities. As I expected, for every student doing the Supervised Independent Study, it seemed to make a significant difference to them that they were actually "seen" in the contexts in which they work. For many, it seemed to be a very valuable experience, particularly at the affective level of self-confidence and motivation (to the extent that they were prepared to share these feelings with me). However, it was not necessarily a positive experience for all of them. As I have mentioned, some students were defensive and reserved, and one student made sure I did not visit her at all by repeatedly postponing our visit. And of course, not all students passed the course, which might have made it ultimately a disempowering experience for them. This was a very valuable experience for me, however, as it caused me to question some of my illusions about working closely with teachers in their own contexts and with their own subjective understanding of their work. There were times when my attempts to do this felt invasive and uncomfortable and I began to see that the "university" identity I had thought we unfairly imposed upon our students is sometimes as convenient and advantageous to them in their pursuit of qualifications as it is to us in our provision of qualifications.

I will return to this concern at the end of my discussion when I consider the implications of my research experience for teacher development programmes, but I mention them now because they affected the way in which I made sense of the findings and caused me to revise my earlier assumptions about the purposes and usefulness of the research.

Having described the purposes and design of my empirical studies, what follows next in Part Two is a more discursive and theoretical reflection on the experience as whole.

## **PART TWO: CRITICAL REFLECTIONS ON EMPIRICAL WORK**

Before considering the policy / practice interface in the light of empirical findings, it is necessary to briefly outline the context in which policy has been developed. The current literature on education policy is largely concerned with the competing visions and discourses of globalisation and progressive pedagogy within policy pronouncements, and the dominant view is that the technicist discourse of globalisation has won the day. After a brief review of this literature, my discussion then turns to what I perceive as a more serious problem than competing discourses within policy, which is the profound disjuncture between policy and practice, resting on the disjuncture between tradition and modernity, and policy's assumption that the two modes can be smoothly "integrated".

### **2.1 The policy context: competing discourses of globalisation and people's education**

In a demonstration of response to globalisation, South Africa has adopted two key education strategies developed globally by countries intent on stimulating their own economic growth in a global economy characterised by intensified competition. Firstly, the integration of education and training is manifested in the National Qualifications Framework. Secondly, the technologising of teaching and learning - in a way that attempts to insert order and predictability in an uncertain and changing world - relies on an outcomes-based system embodied in Curriculum 2005. In addition to meeting the needs of the local context (Christie, 1997), the NQF and C2005 represent a strong thrust directed at the development of a more skilled, adaptable and flexible workforce. Education policy has moved towards a centrist and pro-human capital position (Chisholm and Fuller, 1996).

The gloss on policy is that the imported discourse of globalization can be "contextualised" or "indigenised" in the interests of redress and reconstruction so that previously marginalised groups might be admitted into the global modern order. But a number of commentators (Chisholm and Fuller 1996; Christie 1999; Jansen 1999; Skinner 1999; Kraak 1999) are questioning this claim.

Linda Chisholm and Bruce Fuller (1996) suggest that the narrowing of an initially radical drive for people's education into a technocratic, managerialist, neo-liberal and largely Western policy discourse is a result of the "fragile state's desire to gain credibility, to manage political conflicts, to look like a legitimate player by showing how a unified school system signals the coming of modernity" (713). In their analysis, the state must "mimic the tools and means of policy implementation borrowed from the Western state [or run] the risk of not looking modern" (698) while at the same time paying lip service to demands for equity: "national and provincial policy makers display a rich tapestry of policy symbols signalling mass opportunity but they are stitched together with a thin thread" (714).

In a similar vein, tracing the history of competing discourses that have shaped education policy since the eighties, Andre Kraak (1999) concludes that what we have now is a policy discourse whose "massively technicist armoury of terminology and procedure" is "couched publicly in the more palatable language of people's education" (53), and that

these two discourses - the radical education tradition and outcomes based 'new vocationalism' - are simultaneously contradictory because each emphasises the attainment of a high-skill, high-participation ET system for very different ends: empowering the individual citizen with critical and 'interpretive intellect' versus linking 'instrumental intellect' to the needs of a rapidly changing economy (Sedunary, 1996: 383).

This assessment is echoed by Jane Skinner (1999) in her analysis of the critical cross-field outcomes which underpin OBE at all levels of the NQF. Here I will quote Skinner at length, as her analysis is extremely helpful in showing the specific workings of what Kallaway (1997: 42) calls "Janus-faced policy", and explaining why it is so difficult for progressive educationists to critique policy, despite their misgivings.

Generally, progressive educationists have given 'critical cross-field outcomes' their approval. They see their implications as educationally exciting and potentially transformative. They were, of course, involved in their drafting. However, representatives of commercial interests and government ministers, who see the solution

of existing economic problems as education's primary *raison d'être*, are equally enthusiastic - hence the extraordinarily ambivalent readings which are possible about the kinds of skills and competences which 'critical outcomes' support. 'To identify and solve problems ... using critical and creative thinking' may involve (depending upon your point of view) either an active commitment to solving the problems of society, or competence in dealing with commercial problems. To 'work effectively with others' raises visions equally of support for a vibrant civil society and of 'flat management structures'. 'Communication skills' are as significant for an effective 'dialectic' between student and teacher as they are for management training. An 'understanding of the world as a set of related systems' can promote an awareness of systems thinking in ecological terms, or its relevance to corporate structures. To 'collect, analyse and critically evaluate information', in short 'research skills', can be used to produce new knowledge in any field or to keep ahead of competitors. And, finally, the 'recognition of prior learning' which is accepted in all recent government policy (although not directly included in the list of critical outcomes) can imply recognition of indigenous understandings to those with an interest in transformation, or equally the value of prior experience in specific workplace situations to those interested in industrial training. (Skinner, 1999: 119-120).

These writers conclude that the radical rhetoric of people's education is little more than "a very sophisticated mask of deception in the public domain" (Kraak, 1999: 43) for an education policy that "sees both the ends and the means of education in largely economic terms" (Skinner, 1999: 126). Pam Christie (1999) shares this view, blaming the failure of policy's transformative potential on the state's lack of "responsibility or accountability for how these policies might be delivered":

... though these proposals may be admirable in their sentiments and elegant in their formulation, they are generally lacking in detail and specificity. They have no clear equity or redress provision; there is no attempt at strategic planning or analysis of points of engagement to transform what actually exists (281).

Perhaps Jonathan Jansen (1999) sums it up most aptly with the perception that "it is important to understand OBE as an act of political symbolism in which the primary preoccupation of the state is with its own legitimacy" (154).

So there is clearly a widespread belief that the emancipatory vision that once characterised education policy reform has been neutralised, and its symbols and promises have been appropriated by a new discourse which in fact obeys the dictates of global capital. The concern, then, in this policy context, is whether the principles of a transformative pedagogy stand "some chance of becoming institutionalised - of being accepted simply as good practice, as making educational sense" (Skinner, 1999: 127), and ultimately whether or not education providers and stakeholders can address "how schools and classrooms can become more participatory in the old spirit of people's education" (Chisholm and Fuller, 1999: 707) .

While I share the reservations of the critics cited above about the narrow instrumentalism of policy in its deference to global capitalism and its lip service to transformation, my research on teacher roles and competences in rural Kwa-Zulu Natal schools suggests that the emancipatory aims of peoples' education are *more* evident in policy (albeit in a purely symbolic and somewhat compromised way) than they are valued or desired in practice. "The old spirit of people's education" might well have been sterilized by policy, but far more importantly, in many school contexts it has rarely been encountered and remains as alien (and often threatening) a concept as the neo-liberal discourse which has taken its place in policy-making circles. Far from any traces of the spirit of people's education, what I have found in rural KwaZulu Natal schools is deeply entrenched traditionalism and conservatism founded on custom and conformity.

It seems then that the lost discourse of critical pedagogy and people's education is as much a modernist discourse as the existing policy discourse of globalisation, confined largely to the ranks of academics and policy-makers and, despite its name, having little currency among "the people". Debates about the degrees of "competition and cohabitation, convergence and divergence" (Kraak, 1999: 38) among these different policy discourses are important and must go on, but they are debates that exist only *within* the larger discourse of modernity, while in my view the tension between policy and practice rests on a far more profound disjunction - not

between two competing modernist discourses, but rather between two fundamentally different ways of being - the traditional and the modern.

My interest in this dissertation is what happens in the encounter between this globalized, modernist (and potentially transformative) discourse and the highly localized and traditional discourses that remain in rural KwaZulu Natal schools. If OBE and its attendant policy provisions are "a script for modernity" (Baxen and Soudien, 1999: 138), what happens when this script is handed to teachers and learners whose everyday, lived experience falls largely outside of the institutions and discourses of modernity? In KwaZulu Natal, the chances of reviving the spirit of people's education seem secondary to this question.

In Part One of this thesis, looking at policy on teacher roles and competences, we have seen what this "script for modernity" entails: a teacher who possesses well-developed practical, foundational and reflective competences is a self-directed, well-informed and highly skilled professional with a strong sense of ethics and accountability. In my opinion, this is an impressive ideal, but this is not surprising. Like broader education policy, these documents are "admirable in their sentiments and elegant in their formulation" (Christie 1999: 281). The *Norms and Standards* and the *Manual for Developmental Appraisal*, the most detailed and influential of the four documents, are underpinned by the same critical cross-field outcomes analysed by Skinner (1999) above, so her point applies here too that generally, progressive educationists have given these outcomes their approval because "they see their implications as educationally exciting and potentially transformative. They were, of course, involved in their drafting" (119). I was not involved in the drafting of the *Norms and Standards* but some of the colleagues I most admire were, which leads me to assume that they should be educationally exciting and transformative. In abstract and on paper, policy is difficult for me to criticise. It promotes the same values promoted by the university in which I work, and it speaks the same rational, modernist discourse I have been trained to speak. Reading policy documents in my university office, I can see that policy is idealistic, but it seems to be an ideal worth working towards; even as I interact with the teachers who are studying with us at the university, policy seems to make sense and merit our support. But as I drive along dirt roads to their schools that are sometimes barely recognisable as schools at all, the certainty that holds my own assumptions in place starts to waver and both I and policy begin to feel strangely inappropriate



and beside the point. What is it that marks this divergence between policy on paper and policy in practice? How can a policy system be admirable in abstract and yet almost irrelevant in the real contexts for which it is intended? This is the question I turn to next.

## **2.2 The policy / practice disjuncture: tradition and modernity**

Jean Baxen and Crain Soudien (1999) argue in relation to OBE that policy attempts to construct "a universal subject with universally good attributes"(138) without addressing the social history of these attributes. In their analysis, the construction of the universal subject is

abstracted from the social conditions of poverty, continued racial oppression and pedagogical neglect; and is also abstracted from the specificity of the cultural orbit of South Africa where, as Manganyi (1991) has argued, young people are having to learn how to navigate their way through the competing ontologies and epistemologies of a white and middle-class world and an African and often working-class township or rural location (139).

The very same argument applies to policy on teacher roles. Policy constructs teachers as "extended professionals" with well developed "reflexive competences". Our PEI. research findings in schools (see Harley, et al, 1998) suggest that teachers demonstrate a "restricted" view of professionalism and are not highly skilled in the reflexive competences required to implement OBE and Curriculum 2005.

In our research, teachers were found to be most concerned about, confident and competent in the roles of 'mediator of learning' and 'administrator', while the roles of 'designer of learning programmes' and 'lifelong learner' were more remote from their daily experience. Of course, in most cases this can be clearly traced back to a materially and intellectually impoverished schooling and teacher training which addressed foundational and practical competences but in many cases actively discouraged reflexive competence, coupled with a school and curriculum system that required teachers to limit themselves to the roles of a restricted professional. Where teachers have encountered the modernist discourse of teacher education and curriculum knowledge, it has been largely in terms of the positivistic epistemology and behaviouristic

pedagogy of 'Mode 1' knowledge production (see Skinner, 1999: 118) rather than the more critical, flexible and potentially democratic terms of 'Mode 2' knowledge production which define the new curriculum policy.

In the other two roles of 'pastoral care' and 'community development', we found that teachers' own personal values within the complexities of the communities to which they should be accountable were the main reasons for tensions between policy requirements and what was possible in practice.

So policy on teachers' roles and competences, in all six of the roles it describes, seems to be out of synch not only with teachers' professional identities but also with their personal and social identities. And one could argue that these two identities (the professional and the personal) intersect in such a way as to create an overall identity that often has far more in common with traditional practices than the self-reflexive modernist discourse of policy.

In my view, the policy assumption that a modernising, globalizing project can be "indigenized" in such way as to assimilate previously disadvantaged groups into modernity ignores some of the insights of postcolonialism, a term which carries with it the recognition that the local and the global are now so thoroughly interconnected only *because* we are living in the wake of colonialism, with all the material and discursive conditions colonialism has brought into being. Under these conditions, cultural relativist notions of "integrating" a global modernist discourse with "other" local discourses elide the historical origins of modernity. In *The Consequences of Modernity*, Anthony Giddens (1990) captures this elision in his discussion of the encounter between tradition and modernity. In Giddens' view, the fact that modernity arose in reaction to traditional thought systems and was developed as a global mission bringing enlightenment to an irrational world, means that modernity cannot be integrated with tradition in any symmetrical way; modernity can only displace and appropriate tradition.

While I would hesitate to attach the definitive labels of tradition and modernity to actual groups or practices, I believe that Giddens' formulation serves as a useful analogy for the encounter between the modernist discourse of policy and the complex, local discourses of teachers, schools and communities all caught somewhere in the murky, conflicted terrain

between tradition and modernity. And according to Giddens' definitions of the terms there is a sense in which many aspects of teacher practice in almost any South African context may be seen as "traditional" (in that they appeal to ritual and symbols of authority for their validity and thereby function as self-constituting systems), and policy may be seen as the rationalising discourse of modernity which opens traditional practices to doubt and demands "good reasons" in the quest for progress (in fact current policy elevates reflexive competence and self-appraisal as the hallmarks of teacher professionalism).

In Giddens' analysis, modernity's deification of reason paradoxically opens knowledge and reason up to doubt. The insistence that social practices must be justified by "good reasons" raises the possibility of "bad reasons". Furthermore, the quest for rationality and progress means that social practices are constantly examined and reformed in the light of incoming knowledge, so that there is always the anticipation of better (more rational) social practices supported by "better reasons". Tradition on the other hand is a self-validating system which does not open its practices up to doubt, but defends them unreflexively through appeals to ritual and authority. The moment tradition attempts to justify its practices in relation to other practices which are not authenticated by rituals and authority, the moment it attempts to give "good reasons" for those practices, it entertains the possibility of doubt and is thereafter open to change.

So to speak of the integration of tradition and modernity raises a host of problems, for, if Giddens is correct, tradition in its true form cannot enter into dialogue with modernity without radically altering its self-validating status. In order to engage with modernity, tradition must enter into the enlightenment discourse of rationality which demands reflexive explanations. Unaltered recourse to unreflexive tradition in the context of modernity can only be interpreted as fundamentalism which can make no claims to rationality. It is therefore difficult for tradition to exist alongside modernity on its own terms - it must either open its practices up to doubt by entering modernist discourse, in which case it is "in sham clothing" (Giddens, 1990: 38) or it can continue to protect its practices from doubt by abstaining from reflexivity, in which case it falls entirely outside modernist discourse as 'fundamentalist', 'irrational' and totally other.

An example of modernity's appropriation of opposing discourses has already perhaps been seen in the description of what happened to people's education. If people's education ever did exist as an 'indigenous' or 'grassroots' phenomenon, it is possible that on entering the more politically powerful arena of policy-making (itself a modernist project), it was forced to open its moral and political principles up to the "light of reason" and to abandon any modes of self-validation it might once have enjoyed. Once coupled with the apparently more compelling discourse of "economic thinking in the guise of science and rationality" (Skinner, 1999: 125) the discourse of people's education, as we have seen, became little more than a repository of powerfully mobilising images and symbols which, through a process of "amnesias and selections" (Gellner, 1983: 57), were stitched together with various kinds of 'rational' validations and woven into a policy discourse that could claim to be both globally credible and locally ethical.

Applying this analogy of the encounter between tradition and modernity to the encounter between policy and teachers whose professional practices, personal values and social identities are largely constructed by a positivist 'Mode 1' epistemology in combination with local, traditional discourses, it becomes clear that the global modernist discourse of policy, almost by definition, cannot "integrate" such subjects. These teachers are forced to engage with a policy discourse that simply does not represent them as they are, from which they are inherently excluded. They might find the language of policy persuasive and appealing, and research shows that most teachers do give policy their support (see Taylor and Vinjevoold, 1999: 230), but when it comes to enacting policy roles these teachers are faced with massive contradictions.

Baxen and Soudien identify a similar process of exclusion in their analysis of OBE:

Groups of privileged people, whether white or black, promote preferred notions of learners' and teachers' identities ... These preferred identities stand in stark contrast to the identities which learners and teachers manifest in their everyday worlds ... OBE is presented as a mediating device for entry into a modern future, but not as a device for working with the suppressed identities and the stereotypes to which people were forced to conform in South Africa's past (1999: 140 -141).

On the basis of our findings in the PEI research project, we confirmed Christie's view that "better resourced, historically privileged schools are more likely to be able to manage the new policies than historically disadvantaged, mainly black schools, and particularly the poor, rural and marginalised among them" (1999: 290). This might seem to be an obvious point, but I suspect it is one that is usually researched and understood largely in relation to material inequalities: that poor, rural schools will always struggle because they lack resources and their teachers lack skills. While different levels of skills and resources are obviously a crucial factor in establishing a school's ability to meet policy requirements, what I am arguing is that, on top of those more tangible inequalities, there is the added problem that the "preferred identity" of the teacher as constructed by policy seems to be quite comfortably held by those who already have access to modernity, and sits uneasily with those who do not.

One quick example relates to the policy requirement that teachers are accountable to their communities. In the PEI research project we found that, quite apart from the difficulties experienced by many teachers in defining who or what their "community" might be, there was some evidence that dual accountability to both policy and community is not a problem where teachers work in urban, well-resourced, ex-model C schools, but could introduce all kinds of dissonances and tensions where teachers work in rural, poorly resourced, ex-DET schools. In these rural schools, many of the fundamental principles underpinning policy (and particularly those that might have had their origins in people's education, such as human rights, gender equality and critical thinking) were in stark contrast to the values held by the surrounding communities.

The idea that the transition from tradition to modernity can happen smoothly and symmetrically depends on a refusal to seriously consider this contrast. On paper and in policy, the discourses of globalisation and peoples' education can be eloquently and seamlessly integrated, for example by speaking of democratic, progressive values in the same sentence as community values, but in the realities of day-to-day practice, such a sentence has little meaning for the kinds of teachers we worked with. My intention in this dissertation is to try and develop a clearer understanding of how teachers' identities might differ from the "preferred identities" constructed by policy, and a clearer understanding of how policy requires such teachers to change in order that they might be assimilated into modernity as the "universal

subject" of western Enlightenment thinking. In the following section, I present case studies of three schools in order to illuminate the relationship between the modernist, globalised values of policy and the differing contexts in which teachers' professional roles are constructed and enacted.

### **2.3 Three case studies of South African schools: mechanical solidarity, organic solidarity and displacement**

We are all familiar with the contrasts in and between South African schools, but field work can still stun a researcher who encounters them: In a suburban, ex-model C school, we have observed lessons on the internet in a well-equipped computer room; in a rural school serving a community which is largely unemployed, we have sat among goats and chickens observing a government feeding scheme in operation. The economic, social and cultural differences between these two schools are obviously enormous, yet the policy expectation placed on their teachers is the same regardless of context. The following case studies seek to understand how teacher roles and identities are differently constructed in different school contexts. To this end, I provide empirical illustrations in terms of the schools themselves as social organisations - ie. their cohesion, "resilience" and functionality. In describing and understanding the different forms of social cohesion that characterise different kinds of schools, I have found the concepts of mechanical and organic solidarity (Durkheim, 1964; Bernstein, 1971) to be useful, particularly as applied to South African schools by Ken Harley and Ben Parker (1999). The focus on social cohesion is a first step towards understanding teacher identity, with the understanding that "forms of solidarity and their accompanying social features have crucial implications for identity formation and for the kinds of social cohesion and fragmentation in which identity is embedded" (Harley and Parker, 1999: 188).

Mechanical solidarity is founded on a simple division of labour and common belief system, both of which shape individual identity into roles based on one's position within a hierarchy. Organic solidarity emerges within a more complex division of labour which relies on a high degree of interdependence between individuals whose differences are accepted. For Durkheim, the key index of the particular form of solidarity is the law. With mechanical solidarity, law assumes a penal form, privileging the definition of sanctions over the definition of obligations

(in other words, the law doesn't say "this is the duty"; it says "this is the punishment"). With the greater complexity and difference within organic solidarity, a common belief system is harder to maintain and covenant must be replaced by contract, binding individuals to each other by a social contract spelt out in constitutions, bills of rights and legislation. It is clear that education policy favours an organic mode of solidarity in line with broader policy:

The 'new' South Africa (post 1994) reflects a dramatic shift from the principles of mechanical solidarity to a new legal-organisational basis reflecting organic solidarity. Most notably, the previously strong criminal penal code - symbolised most overtly by the death penalty - has been superseded by an emphasis on human rights and a strong civil society. The interdependence between people is based on contractual relations with an emphasis on the rights and duties of individual citizens and their contractual relation with the state (Harley and Parker, 1999: 189).

Policy on teacher roles and competences clearly sets up a legal regulatory framework where the detailed provision of a code of conduct, duties and responsibilities, norms and standards and appraisal criteria serve as

an exemplar of one of the key features of organic solidarity: that of determining 'the obligation with all possible precision' (Durkheim, 1964: 75) and 'creating among men an entire system of rights and duties which link them together in a durable way' (1964: 406) (Harley and Parker, 1999: 190).

Harley and Parker argue that policy expects South African schooling to shift from a mechanical to an organic mode of solidarity and that the shift is "a fundamental dislocation with the past" (190). In an attempt to understand more clearly what this shift requires, and what it means for teacher identities, I will examine more closely the key features of mechanical and organic solidarity as mapped onto the empirical illustrations of three different schools we visited in KwaZulu Natal. (Here I wish to acknowledge Ken Harley for assisting with the mapping of these case studies for a paper we presented together at the Kenton Education Conference at Salt Rock in October 1999.)

### Case study 1: Mechanical solidarity

This was a rural school with no running water, no electricity and no telephone. Pass rates were 100% in 1995 and 1996, and 97% in 1997. The overriding feature of the school was its apparent order and harmony, seemingly based on shared customary understanding and acceptance of teachers' and learners' roles. Interviews with teachers and our own observations led us to believe that this is because the school culture largely reflects the community and home culture of the teachers and learners. The Superintendent of Education and Management attributes the school's success to "hard work and discipline". The school's resemblance to a mechanical solidarity can be depicted as follows:

Features of a mechanical solidarity	Features of the school
Simple division of labour	Very limited subject choice; No specialist teachers, eg. counselling; Principal and deputy share an office adjoining that of the only secretary
Individuals <i>resemble</i> each other	Simple division of labour and lack of differentiation within the school reinforces existing similarities: Mono-racial school; Community is geographically and culturally-cohesive (traditional, patriarchal, eg. a <i>Nomkubulwane</i> virginity testing ceremony had recently been held in the area), and poor.
Roles are socially <i>ascribed</i>	Roles are clearly-defined, understood, and unquestioned; teachers and pupils seemingly comfortable with roles that are essentially "given", eg. school assembly just "happens" in an orderly way without overt direction or regulation. Very little late-coming.
Modes of control are <i>positional</i>	Authority has a seemingly unchallenged legitimacy. The principal, a fatherly figure who had declined promotion in earlier years, had been in his post since 1979.
Social cohesion is based on <i>common faith or covenant</i>	Teachers could not explain why the school worked : "It just does." Parents from other areas send their children to this school because of its lack of conflict and its sense of unity.
Common faith is sustained by <i>penal law</i>	Corporal punishment is the publicly-declared sanction against the violation of norms.



*Case study 2: Organic solidarity*

This is a suburban, ex-model C school with good resources (eg. library, media centre, large sports grounds). Pass rates were 96% in 1996 and 99% in 1997. The school serves a diverse community that is geographically scattered and difficult to define. Problems with racial integration were spoken of largely in terms of the difficulties of second language learners and seldom in terms of race or culture. The school seemed to be a functional, busy and quite happy place where effective learning and teaching was the expectation and the norm. The school's resemblance to an organic mode of solidarity can be depicted as follows:

Features of an organic solidarity	Features of the school
Complex division of labour	Staff: several specialist posts, eg. librarian, counsellor, receptionist, secretary, grounds staff. Pupils: wide subject choice, choice of sports, cultural activities and clubs
Individuals <i>differ</i> from one another	Community served was geographically and culturally diverse. Multi-ethnic staff and pupil composition; staff work in strongly-differentiated subject departments; pupils have opportunities to explore their interests and talents; different activities, particularly those of an extra-curricular kind (eg. theatre, internet club, sporting activities). Differences are reconciled through consultative management style.
Roles are socially <i>achieved</i>	Roles are allocated on the basis of competence. In theory, all have opportunities for achieving roles and status.
Modes of control are <i>personalised</i>	Teachers are not simply respected because they are teachers - they reported having to work very hard at "crowd control" and winning the respect and co-operation of learners.
Social cohesion is based on <i>contractual relationships</i>	Social cohesion is based on recognition of the interdependence of different roles within a complex division of labour. Obligations are codified.
Justice is sustained by <i>civil (restitutive) law</i>	No corporal punishment. Certain rights are denied for a specified period as a means of stressing interdependence, eg. a miscreant is denied access to Internet Club for specified period. Sanctions are aimed ultimately at repairing and restoring things as they were.

It is clear that mechanical solidarity corresponds with Giddens' definition of tradition in that it functions as a relatively closed, self-validating system, while organic solidarity corresponds with his view of modernity because the contractual relations on which organic solidarity rests assume a particularly modern, rational sense of rights and justice. I have argued, using Giddens, that South Africa's globalised policy discourse cannot be "contextualised" in such a way that tradition will be smoothly integrated with modernity because modernity can only displace and appropriate tradition, and I think that these case studies provide evidence of this: Both of the schools described above were clearly functioning, orderly and effective schools (in terms of community expectations and to the extent that matric results reflect academic success), yet policy requires one school to stay more or less the same, while the other must undergo radical and fundamental changes in such a way as to threaten the very foundations on which its effectiveness is built. In order to align itself with policy, the first school must abandon the forms of mechanical solidarity and discard its traditional principles. This is not a reciprocal integration of two modes of being but a total conversion from one mode to another.

The different principles and identities sustaining the effectiveness of the mechanical/traditional school and the organic/modern school are of a fundamentally distinct nature and are not easily reconciled. One wouldn't think of these principles on a continuum; rather, they are dichotomous. Yet it is doubtful that very many schools in South Africa can be neatly categorised onto either side of the dichotomy. It is more likely that the majority of schools resemble a third type of school that exists uneasily somewhere between the mechanical and the organic, between tradition and modernity. This kind of school is neither in alignment with policy, nor is it orderly or functional in a traditional sense. Neither form of solidarity is evident; old certainties and purposes have disappeared, the moral foundation has been swept away; social solidarity through covenant has been lost, but social solidarity through recognition of interdependence has not been achieved in social contract.

### *Case study 3: displacement*

This school, in a peri-urban setting, has a declining matriculation pass rate: 100% in 1995, 88% in 1996, and 75% in 1997. It enjoyed better resources than many comparable schools: there was electricity and piped water, sports fields were being renovated, the staff room was

able to accommodate most staff, and on display in the principal's large office were many trophies. However, the office had heavy anti-burglar grills on the doors and windows; the video, television and photocopier were kept in the strong room. Many classrooms had broken windows. There was a fairly well stocked library, but it appeared to be largely unused.

Fieldworker's notes record that:

Late coming seemed to be the norm for both students and teachers. One morning, the teacher/ co-researcher gave each latecomer a stroke on the hand - and there must have been about 150 who came in after 8am. As did six teachers. Apparently most of the latecomers are those students who live within the vicinity of the school, while those who travel by taxi or bus are punctual. At the assembly we attended at 7.50am, only 6 teachers were present, and possibly half the learners . The principal was never present at 8am. There are a number of students wandering around the school at any time - buying things from the tuck shop, going to the shop for a teacher, etc. The environment is noisy due to the teachers and learners walking around during class time.

Learners did not seem to have a great deal of respect for teachers or vice versa. Corporal punishment was administered fairly freely. According to the principal, the community and parents are happy with teachers using corporal punishment. However, one member of the School Governing Body, who is also the security guard, felt that it was not the best way and that it was important to try out other forms of discipline. He said learners do come to him to complain about the use of corporal punishment. There does not appear to be much team spirit amongst the staff. All the hour lessons observed were 50 minutes long, as they always started 10 minutes late.

This was also the single school where there was a lot of suspicion about the research, and one of the teachers involved in the research wanted to be reimbursed for his co-operation.

Of course, it is possible that the main problem in this school is an ineffective principal, but I think the problem goes deeper than that: the school seems caught between two irreconcilable social forces which can only clash and conflict with each other, giving rise to a restless and uneasy sense of displacement. For example, the index of mechanical solidarity which is penal law (here in the form of corporal punishment) is still evident in the school but is not accepted

as legitimate because the covenant required to support this form of solidarity is absent. Similarly, classroom practice is very teacher- and subject-centred with lots of lecturing (as with the “mechanical” school) but this is not accepted by learners and is therefore ineffective. So the forms and practices of a mechanical solidarity are no longer valid in the school, but an alternative solidarity has not been achieved through the recognition of interdependence and contractual relationships.

Many teachers have explained to me that they have little choice as to whether to use corporal punishment and authoritarian discipline because learners do not understand any other kind of discipline. They feel that democracy and freedom, when applied to learners, would mean chaos in the school, since learners have no sense of responsibility or accountability. For example, an extract from a student’s research report: “The policy developers have no psychology of the African child ... that is why nowadays teachers are victims of schoolchildren because they know they have got rights”. Some have indicated that the problem extends to teachers as well - that unless they are closely monitored by the principal, they don’t do much work: “The staff is divided into more dedicated ones to their job, and the other group which needs a push at their backs in order to do their jobs”. This common view indicates the prevalence of a sense of displacement - that in the absence of a common faith or covenant binding the school together, penal law and positional authority are the last remnants of social order protecting the school from the anarchy ushered in by the demise of custom and covenant before the rationality of social contract has been established.

Durkheim draws a distinction between social contracts and social bonds: "The former increase as civilization develops, while the latter decline. Thus, modern man is ripped apart by two antagonistic forces" (Mestrovic, 1988:119). In the displaced school, social bonds based on custom and covenant have declined, and social contracts have not taken their place. The school as a whole, and the teachers and learners within it, are undergoing an identity crisis which policy, with its abstracted notion of the universal subject, is more likely to heighten than to heal.

In her study of the narratives of rural primary teachers in KwaZulu Natal, Tansy Jessop (1997) writes of the “gulf” that exists between the modern world and “the remote tribal enclaves of rural KwaZulu Natal”(130) and the “nostalgia among older teachers for an imagined golden

age, where children respected their elders and certainty prevailed” (128). Considering the impact of modernity in these areas, Jessop reaches a similar view that tradition and modernity cannot be symmetrically integrated:

This disjuncture between traditional and modern ways of knowing may go deeper, in that modernisation and political liberalisation may threaten the fabric of social relations as they exist in rural contexts, as teachers indicate by their discomfort at the breakdown in respect. Whether the imperatives of modern ideals, clad in their western dress, should be imposed on existing social relations as part of the package of progress is debatable (Jessop,131).

Here Jessop points to an aspect of modernity that is often overlooked: modern ideals are "clad in western dress". The rest of the present study concerns itself with developing an understanding of the disjuncture between tradition and modernity that takes this aspect of modernity more clearly into account. Employing a view of modernity that foregrounds its origins in the West and its history of colonialism, I use postcolonial theory (in particular, the work of Homi Bhabha, 1984; 1992) to develop an understanding of teacher strategies as a consequence of, and response to, the colonial power relations embedded in the universalising discourses of modernity. The discussion so far has described the disjuncture between tradition and modernity, between mechanical and organic solidarity and between practice and policy. The question I turn to next is, how do the tensions and contradictions play themselves out in schools and classrooms, and how do teachers negotiate them? To consider this question I use an interactionist theory of teacher strategy (as proposed by Andy Hargreaves, 1983), which will be discussed next.

## 2.4 Teacher strategy as a focussing concept within the "great debate"

The concept of teacher strategy was promoted and debated in the 70s and 80s as part of a broader project within social theory which aimed to "reconcile a deterministic view, that social structures set the limits to the range of possible teacher practices, with a voluntaristic one, that teachers are creative meaning makers" (Scarth, 1987: 256). As with other sociological debates within this project, the process of reconciliation was rocky, with theorists such as Woods (1979), Hargreaves (1980; 1998) and Scarth (1987) arguing the finer points of "relative autonomy" (Althusser, 1971) in an attempt to avoid falling into either side of the structure-agency dichotomy.

But whichever side they fell, what these sociologists shared as a central principle of the "political drama of the Great Debate" (Hargreaves, 1983: 17) was "that 'structural' questions and 'interactionist' questions should no longer be dealt with as separate 'issues' each to be covered in their respective fields" (*ibid*). The concept of 'strategy' was promoted as the sociologist of education's tool for performing "the central task of the sociological imagination [which is] the connection of personal troubles to public issues" (Hargreaves, 1980: 163).

Debates in South African education have followed a similar path, with 'reproduction' and 'resistance' theorists offering pessimistic and optimistic explanations for apartheid education and its chances of being transformed. Now the demise of apartheid education sees this same debate displaced onto policy analysis - continuing, as we have seen, in terms of the chances of reviving the lost emancipatory discourse of people's education against obeying the dictates of global capitalism.

The nationwide research project organised by the President's Education Initiative in 1998 and collated and published in 1999 (see Taylor and Vinjevold, 1999) was an attempt to ground this discussion with empirical data, but the challenge still remains, to cite Christie once again, to "mesh the coarse grain of state policy with the fine grain of daily life in schools" (1999: 287). This thesis proposes that the focussing concept of teacher strategy is a good tool for doing just this, and in the process developing a clearer understanding of teacher identities, if we can find new ways of reading teacher strategies in terms of the schism between tradition and modernity. Hargreaves (1983) lists ten defining features of teacher strategies and his fifth point is of

particular relevance to the policy / practice disjuncture I have outlined - that strategies arise in response to constraints that are generated structurally within the wider society and experienced at the material and institutional level in schools. These constraints fall into three broad categories: the fundamentally contradictory nature of educational goals within capitalist society; 'material' constraints that reflect social inequalities; and "the generation and proliferation of differing educational ideologies" (32). In South African schooling, these same constraints are clearly operative, but they also take on a distinctive character in our context, given the radical disjuncture between modernist policy discourse and traditional school practices.

To examine teacher strategies within the conflicts of this disjuncture, I wish to propose a reformulation of Hargreaves' (1983) view of teacher strategy as a focussing concept, and in particular to modify and contextualise his description of the constraints with which teachers work. But first a brief overview of Hargreaves' original formulation.

#### *Hargreaves' view of teacher strategies and constraints*

As I have said, the concept of teacher strategy was proposed as a bridging point within a theoretical framework "which might link structural questions to interactionist concerns" (Hargreaves, 1983: 18). Hargreaves sees the teacher as "a crucial linch pin in the wheel of causality that connects structural features of the society to interactional patterns in the classroom and back again, thereby reproducing those structural arrangements" (20). What follows is Hargreaves' list (more or less verbatim) of the ten salient characteristics of teachers' coping strategies, followed by a brief discussion:

1. Coping strategies are the product of constructive and creative activity on the part of teachers.
2. Coping strategies are not only constructive but also adaptive.
3. Coping strategies refer to very generalised definitions of teaching behaviour which cannot be reduced to a simple set of alternative teaching and control techniques (in other words, strategies persist as long as they work).
4. The concept of coping strategy becomes a truly radical one only when one re-poses the question of what it is that teachers have to cope with.

5. Strategies emerge when teachers have to cope with constraints which are generated by wider social-structural and historical forces and which produce institutional problems that they must resolve in the school and classroom. These constraints fall into three broad categories:
  - (a) the fundamentally contradictory goals of the educational system in contemporary capitalist society;
  - (b) material constraints which reflect broader social inequalities; and
  - (c) the generation and proliferation of differing educational ideologies.
6. Societal constraints are mediated in different ways by different institutions (e.g. with age and social class factors playing a role).
7. The notion of institutional mediation prevents the concept of coping strategy from being employed in an oversimplistic manner. Institutional mediation must be taken into account when tracing elements of social structure within patterns of classroom interaction, and also when expecting teachers to change these patterns.
8. Whether coping strategies persist and become institutionalised depends, in part, on the response of pupils.
9. The claimed effectiveness of coping strategies is ultimately validated in teacher experience.
10. Although coping strategies are constructive and creative in character, nevertheless they are also based upon a set of tacitly accepted and taken-for-granted assumptions.

(synthesised and adapted from Hargreaves, 1983: 20 - 40)

Hargreaves' first two points - that strategies are both creative and adaptive - captures the structure-agency dilemma that accompanies any correspondence model: agency is possible but circumscribed. But a glance at points 3 - 10 suggests that the scales of Hargreaves' definition of the concept of strategy are in fact tipped more in favour of determinism than voluntarism. John Scarth (1987), for example, takes Hargreaves to task for assuming a "naturally radical" teacher who is bowed by constraints of which he is barely aware and duped into perpetuating capitalism's taken-for-granted assumptions. But questions of structure and agency aside for now (I will return to this issue later), I think Hargreaves' model offers a useful approach to understanding the dilemmas faced by South African teachers caught between the conflicting demands of policy and practice.



It is Hargreaves' fourth and fifth points that are particularly pertinent to the present study: that we re-pose the question of what it is that teachers have to cope with, and that we consider the broader implications of the constraints with which they work. It is this aspect of Hargreaves' model that I wish to focus on in this study, and in particular, the first constraint he identifies - that of the contradictory demands of education within a capitalist system:

Following Bowles and Gintis it can be argued that in contemporary capitalist society the goals of the educational system are fundamentally contradictory. Liberals and reformers frequently seek to promote egalitarianism and to foster personal development (the education of the 'whole' child) whilst at the same time they also recognise the need to prepare the child for the position he will be expected to occupy in the social, occupational and political order. At the classroom level, this contradiction often comes to present itself as a wish to educate and relate to children in the spirit of liberal individualism, counter-balanced by a necessity to select and socialise children for a class-stratified society (23).

Here Hargreaves is capturing the very contradictions identified by the critics of South African education policy (in the competing and contradictory aims of globalisation and progressive pedagogy) but his concern is to understand how teachers inhabit and negotiate this contradiction in the classroom, so he goes on to examine the ways in which teachers manage the "pedagogical paradox known as 'guided discovery'" (23) and concludes:

The one-dimensional manner in which participation is conventionally conceived as token participation and the nominal forms which 'democracy' usually takes are pervasive features of economic and political life in advanced capitalist society. Choice as 'guided' choice is a definition available and taken for granted within the dominant social democratic hegemony, and is also a practice which best resolves the dilemmas that teachers confront ... 'Guided choice' is thus the outcome of both pragmatic response and available ideology, but is most essentially the product of the intersection of these two (23 - 24).

In my view, it is in this example that Hargreaves' concept of strategy "becomes a truly radical one" (22), regardless of what theoretical claims he might ultimately make for the possibilities

of agency. For the person who is serious about understanding how teachers' professional identities are constructed, the radical nature of the model lies in the researcher's willingness to make the link between the universal and the quotidian, and to read the ways in which the universalised human rights discourse of capitalism/ modernity is compromised in seemingly insignificant ways on a daily basis. Of course, "globalised democracy" violates human rights in far more dramatic and obvious ways, but these are the ways we can point to and identify, and where is the radicalism in that? In something as seemingly innocuous as negotiating the paradox of 'guided choice' in the classroom, we come closer to understanding how we live in and through the discourses that sustain us. As Hargreaves states in a later review, "structure is always in our agency, agency at the root of all structures - they are relationally connected, not hermetically sealed ... What really matters is how structures exert their effects and with what consequences and implications for the self in different places and times" (1998:422).

Of the second constraint Hargreaves mentions - material constraints which reflect social inequalities - much has already been said with regard to South African schooling. In a sense, this theme runs through my entire discussion of teacher strategies in rural contexts as these contexts are all characterised by poverty. The third constraint - "the generation and proliferation of differing educational discourses" (Hargreaves, 1983: 32) - has obvious applicability in the South African context, where the introduction of OBE sees a progressive ideology overlaid upon an old ideology of educational conservatism. And because the new ideology of OBE "contains definitions of 'correct' practice and provides routes for career advancement", it also represents "a clear constraint to which teachers feel they must respond through their construction and maintenance of appropriate displays of educational imagery" (32). The tension between the old and the new ideologies of education reflects the same tension between tradition and modernity, between the mechanical and the organic, and between practice and policy. How teachers negotiate and manage this tension is crucial to their career prospects, and therefore to their professional identities.

In his assessment of the strategy model, John Scarth (1987) calls for more rigour in distinguishing between different kinds of strategies and in clearing up the ambiguities that abound in the explanations given for why teachers adopt strategies (ie. is it a rational or unconscious process?). It is beyond the scope of the present study to seriously address either of these issues, but I imagine that different kinds of strategies would inevitably overlap and

might go by different names in different circumstances, and trying to provide a final explanation of why teachers adopt strategies would plunge us back into the impenetrable mystique (see Hargreaves, 1980: 184) of the determinism - voluntarism debate; surely each strategy is adopted for a combination of different reasons that would change from context to context. Of more value to the present study is Woods' view that strategy theory must be developed and sensitised through focussed studies on particular aspects of the strategy model "involving the development of existing work and the generation of new theories" (Woods in Scarth, 1987: 251). So, bearing in mind Hargreaves' broader definition of teacher strategies (contained in points 1 - 10), it is the fifth aspect, which deals with constraints, that I will use to help develop an understanding of teacher identities in South Africa, by developing strategy theory in the light of postcolonial studies, and sensitising the theory to South African conditions at the end of the millennium.

## **2.6 Developing and sensitising the theory of teacher strategy as a focussing concept: a postcolonial view of the subject**

I believe that postcolonial theory has something to offer in understanding teachers' constraints and the strategies to which they give rise in South African post-apartheid schooling and, more specifically, in rural KwaZulu Natal. Jessop (1997) captures the ideological constraints and contradictions clearly in this description of teachers' subjective views:

Rural teachers were ambivalent about the impact of modernity on schooling. There was considerable nostalgia among older teachers for an imagined golden age, where children respected their elders and certainty prevailed. Nostalgia for the old order, imagined or real, was coupled with suspicion towards the new battery of urban-biased, democratic, and politically radical values that have accompanied the collapse of Apartheid and the coming of modernity. For some teachers there were difficulties in reconciling the contradictions of the breakdown in traditional values ('a bad thing') being heralded at the same time as the collapse of Apartheid ('a good thing'). These ideological tensions were exacerbated by the fact that virtually all teachers regarded technology and the tools of modernity in a positive light (128).

Reflecting on teacher narratives, Jessop writes that "these are not one-dimensional stories of one-dimensional people, but rather the messy, unpredictable, and contradictory narratives of individuals caught in their own and the nation's fragmented and partial histories" (238).

So in Jessop's analysis, and in mine, the teacher caught between the demands of policy and the realities of practice is in many ways the archetypal postcolonial subject, inhabiting "an interstitial space, structured by ambivalence" (Bhabha, 1993: 100). The notion of strategy is particularly pertinent in understanding such a subject. According to Bhabha, "the affective experience of social marginality - as it emerges in noncanonical cultural forms - transforms our critical strategies" and forces us to engage with culture as "an uneven, incomplete production of meaning and value, often composed of incommensurable demands and practices, and produced in the act of social survival" (1992: 47). This description of culture has much in common with the symbolic interactionist view of strategies - in that it is an attempt, both creative and adaptive, to survive within contradictions.

But if the focussing concept of teacher strategy encapsulates a form of correspondence theory, how to negotiate the structure-agency dichotomy? Of course this same dichotomy exists within postcolonial studies too, in what Henry Louis Gates calls a "critical double bind":

You can empower discursively the native, and open yourself to charges of downplaying the epistemic (and literal) violence of colonialism; or play up the absolute nature of colonial domination, and be open to charges of negating the subjectivity and agency of the colonised, thus textually replicating the repressive operations of colonialism. In agency, so it seems, begins responsibility (Gates, 1991: 462).

In this project, I am interested in the kinds of practices and strategies that resist easy categorisation within this critical double bind, and I am not looking for 'evidence' of either hegemonic control or agency and resistance. Rather, I am interested in the constantly shifting dynamics of the constitution of the teacher as a subject where resistance or acquiescence to one form of structural control has implications for her experience of other forms of control. Again, this corresponds with Jessop's (1997) view of the agency of rural teachers, where "survival, resistance, pragmatism, courage and despair work together in complex and contradictory ways" (19). The postcolonial view of the subject holds that the structure-agency

dilemma will never be pacified since the subject, although capable of agency, is always compromised by the fact that she must use the discourses she critiques and resists. The "split narratives" of the partly complicit, partly resisting postcolonial subject are, according to Bhabha, the "exemplary texts for our moment":

They represent an idea of action and agency more complex than either the nihilism of despair or the utopia of progress. They speak of the reality of survival and negotiation that constitutes the lived moment of resistance, its sorrow and its salvation - the moment that is rarely spoken in the stories of heroism that are enshrined in the histories we choose to remember and recount (1992: 57).

A postcolonial theory of the subject insists on the internalisation of the "self/other, here/there binary division" (Slemon, 1990: 40) and a constant awareness of difference - ie. that "we have not all been colonised in the same way" (Mukherjee, 1990: 2). In a similar way, the focussing concept of teacher strategy, with its fascination for the specific, ordinary, everyday routines of the classroom, indicates that colonial power is not a unitary entity "out there", but exists "in all the cultural places we have somehow been taught to ignore" (Slemon, 1990: 40). This view of the subject will not help us to arrive at any final theory of reproduction or resistance in South African schooling; in fact my intention is to forego all attempts to do so. The focus on something as "small" and specifically local as teacher strategies in rural KwaZulu Natal schools is hopefully a way out of the irresolvable reproduction-resistance dilemma, in line with Gates' (1991) suggestion that we discard the dilemma entirely by relinquishing all forms of transcultural, transhistorical, global theory:

Do we still need global, imperial theory - in this case, a grand unified theory of oppression; or indeed even the whole universalising model of Theory that it presupposes, a model of total theory that quests for finality and an exclusive lien on the last word? It's no longer any scandal that our own theoretical reflections must be as provisional, reactive and local as the texts we reflect upon (470).

I am hoping that the theoretical reflections that emerge in this dissertation will at least be useful in conceptualising teacher development, if only in KwaZulu Natal and for as long as they seem relevant. It is difficult for an academic trained to think in terms of universalising

modernist concepts to narrow the focus to provisional, local reflections, but this is the task I have set myself, inspired, ironically, by the words of my favourite transhistorical, global theorist, Frantz Fanon: "In no way should I undertake to prepare the world that will come later. I belong irreducibly to my time" (Fanon in Gates, 1991: 470).

## **2.7 Revising Hargreaves' view of constraints: the contradictions within modernity and the strategy of mimicry**

In a seminal paper called 'Freedom's Basis in the Indeterminate', Homi Bhabha (1992) describes the project of postcolonialism:

Postcolonial criticism bears witness to the unequal and uneven forces of cultural representation involved in the contest for political and social authority within the modern world order. Postcolonial perspectives emerge from the colonial or anticolonialist testimonies of Third World countries and the testimony of minorities within the geopolitical division of East/West, North/South. These perspectives intervene in the ideological discourses of modernity that have attempted to give a hegemonic "normality" to the uneven development and the differential, often disadvantaged histories of nations, races, communities, and peoples. Their critical revisions are formulated around issues of cultural difference, social authority, and political discrimination *in order to reveal the antagonistic and ambivalent moments within the "rationalisations" of modernity* (46, my emphasis).

Just as Hargreaves reads teacher strategies as a response to working within the fundamental contradictions of capitalist society, and uses these to reveal the contradictions more clearly, I aim to read teacher strategies as a response to working within "the central ambivalence of the knowledge structure of modernity" (Bhabha, 1992:50). Using Habermas, Bhabha defines this central ambivalence as modernity's contradictory assumption that knowledge claims based on rational reflexivity practised in specific contexts can then transcend those contexts and profess universal validity, thereby allowing their unproblematic application to "other" contexts.

What modernity's assumption of universality obscures is that the original site of enunciation of Enlightenment ideals is a Western site, so that modernity's attempts to construct the

enlightened subject could in fact be seen simply as the displacement of one tradition (non Western) by another (Western). Or in other words, colonialism. Bhabha / Habermas's definition of the central ambivalence of modernity reflects quite neatly the main problem I have noted with policy - its assumption that modernist discourse can be "contextualised" and made appropriate and beneficial in contexts that are characterised by traditional understandings and mechanical solidarity. And following Hargreaves, I believe that in teacher strategies within these "other" contexts, one can detect the contradiction and ambivalence in modernity's claim to universality.

I would like to give an example of what I mean by this. As a way of illustrating how strategies arise in particular local contexts, this example focuses on the response of a school community to the new roles required of them by policy. In a tutorial discussion with a group of students about governing bodies, a teacher related the story of the governing body at her rural school whose members wanted to be part of the process of selecting a new staff member. As they could not speak much English, the parents asked the teachers to teach them the questions they would ask the applicant so they could learn them by heart. It did not seem to concern them that they would not understand the answers: to be seen as fluent in English was more important than real communication, for which a translator could have been used.

What sense can one make of such a story? One could read it as evidence of "a culture of apemanship and parrotry any self-respecting African must distance himself/herself from" (Nekhwevha, 1999:1), but where does this culture come from? Homi Bhabha (1989) attributes it to the "forked tongue" of colonial discourse which gives with one hand and takes away with the other, telling the colonial subject 'you can be one of us' and meaning 'you can be *like* one of us' - what Bhabha calls "almost the same but not quite, or almost the same but not white" (238). According to Bhabha, the colonial subject then learns to mimic power and authority but not actually to exercise it - a form of the mimetic parrotry Nekhwevha (1999) scorns. The image of a group of parents rote-learning questions to ask an applicant is a startling example of mimicry - I am not sure how else one would describe it, disconcerting though it is to use a term that could be seen to have racist overtones.

Mimicry is a concept central to the argument of Bruce Fuller's book, *Growing-Up Modern: The Western State Builds Third World Schools* (1991). Here Fuller argues that "In the Third

World, earnest yet fragile states eagerly try to catch up, faithfully arguing to their people that mass education is *the* effective medicine for social ills and brittle economic growth" (xv). Then, "to build and reinforce their own institutional legitimacy, both state and school must display western symbols and advance modern expectations and promises" (xix). This "faithful yet rocky romance between state and school" (1) gives rise to a contradiction that is closely allied to the one described by Hargreaves as the fundamental contradiction of education under capitalism - "the Western tension between individual development and bureaucratic forms of merit and opportunity" (1991: 24) - with the tension thrown into even starker relief against the backdrop of anomie created by the erosion of mechanical solidarity and the loss of covenant:

On the one hand, the central state holds authority to establish rights and rules of opportunity for the *individual*. The individual's status is no longer determined by the local village, family or church. The reified individual holds a direct, codified link with the state. Yet modern forms of socialisation, employment and civic participation are organised through secular bureaucracies which are designed to treat everyone identically according to universal routines (that is, "equitably"). The individual allegedly can *achieve* variable levels of economic well-being and status, and is no longer trapped in castes or ascribed forms of status. But the individual (and local collectives) must surrender to the bureaucratic encasement and social rules within which merit must be demonstrated. This, in turn, leads to allocation of material rewards and status that signal "opportunity" and mobility in the western polity . This bureaucratic form of mass civic life, and its incursion into economic activity, flies in the face of neo-classical and romantic ideals regarding individual freedom, achievement and market incentives.

This contradiction is stark in African societies. Here fragile states have encountered Western ideals of polity and economy quite late. So, political leaders struggle to catch up, pushing institutions and symbols that signal the coming of mass meritocratic opportunity. Looking modern brings affection from larger western states and spurs the arrival of foreign capital. And by signalling the coming of economic growth, real or illusory, the fragile state strengthens its own domestic position (1991: 19 - 20).

In other words, or in Bhabha's words, the Western discourse of meritocracy and opportunity gives with one hand and takes away with the other, promising Third World subjects individual



freedom while carefully defining that freedom in a way that either excludes or assimilates them, saying, "you can be one of us" and meaning, "you can be *like* one of us: almost the same but not quite." The only option left to the Third World State is to try its very best, in Fuller's terms, to "look modern".

This same contradiction is reflected in the central tension held by policy on teacher's roles - the tension between the contradictory functions of teacher professional development and teacher regulation and control by the state as legal employer (see Barasa and Mattson, 1998) - and noted by a teacher in a rural secondary school who felt it unfair that policy requires teachers to take more risks in the classroom, school and community, and at the same time to be more accountable to these groups and to the state. So policy promotes freer individual expression while at the same time setting the rules and the "bureaucratic encasement" (Fuller, 1991: 19) within which the individual must express himself - the "forked tongue" of modernist discourse. Caught between such contradictory promises and demands, teachers will almost inevitably resort to the safety of mimicry and the shallow display of the new ideology, as noted by a teacher in her research report: "I have noticed that some of us are good at writing down in our workbooks, these big nice terms of OBE but when teaching in the classroom, practice is still in the old style of ours".

If, for Hargreaves (1983), 'guided choice' was the strategy adopted by progressive teachers negotiating the contradictions of capitalism within modern, first world schools, mimicry seems the primary strategic mode of teachers negotiating the contradictions of globalised capitalism within the traditional third world schools of rural KwaZulu Natal. I will discuss this point later in more detail, but first I wish to return to the discussion of mimicry as a strategy that is, in terms of Hargreaves' definition, both creative and adaptive. It is easy to see how mimicry is adaptive and how it compromises states, schools, teachers and learners in third world settings, but how could the strategy of mimicry be read as creative? Where does its agency lie?

Jacques Lacan reminds us that often mimicry carries with it a threat: "The effect of mimicry is camouflage ... It is not a question of harmonising with the background, but against a mottled background, becoming mottled - exactly like the technique of camouflage practised in human warfare (Lacan in Bhabha, 1989: 234). So if the mottled background consists of contradictions offering both opportunities and constraints, then so does the strategy of mimicry offer both. As

Bhabha says, “mimicry is at once both resemblance and menace” (236). As much as it marks an attempt to appropriate the other, it is also “a sign of the inappropriate ... a difference or recalcitrance which coheres the dominant strategic function of colonial power, intensifies surveillance, and poses an immanent threat to both ‘normalised’ knowledges and disciplinary powers” (235).

For Bhabha, mimicry is a menace to colonial power because "it is from this area between mimicry and mockery where the reforming, civilising mission is threatened by the displacing gaze of its disciplinary double" (235). This creates a "double vision which in disclosing the ambivalence of colonial discourse also disrupts its authority" (237). This is why, in postcolonial theory, agency is conferred not by the experience of unity and self-sufficiency, as in the ideal of western ideological subject formation, but rather through the colonised subject's experience of contradiction, ambivalence, splitting and lack in relation to the ideology of the coloniser. It is this split which, when articulated through forms such as mimicry, creates a space for the interrogation and subversion of colonial discourse. Or in Bhabha's words, “the look of surveillance returns as the displacing gaze of the disciplined, where the observer becomes the observed” (238). Giddens also makes this point - that ironically, it is *through* colonialism and globalisation that the Western Enlightenment tradition comes to be questioned:

the continuing influence of tradition within modernity remained obscure so long as ‘modern’ meant ‘Western’ ... Modernity has been forced to ‘come to its senses’ today, not so much as a result of its internal dissenters as by its own generalisation across the world. No longer the unexamined basis of western hegemony over other cultures, the precepts and social forms of modernity stand open to scrutiny (Giddens 1994: 57).

To return to my example of school governing bodies, how can their strategies of mimicry be read as a form of agency that “reveals the antagonistic and ambivalent moments within the "rationalisations" of modernity" (Bhabha, 1992: 46) and disrupts modernity's authority?

One of the features of mechanical solidarity is that the boundary between ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ is hard. In most schools we visited, this was still the case as parents seem to place much of the responsibility of parenting onto teachers whose superior knowledge and social status is seldom

questioned. But in the new climate of participatory democracy, the hardness of the boundary is recreated in a less discernible guise, ironically putting the school principal in an even more powerful position than previously because of the new illusion of democracy and legitimacy. This was evidenced by the significant number of teachers who admitted that although their school had a governing body, it was largely a formality because most parents were not educated or literate enough, and held the principal in too much esteem, to make any real contribution. When it came to the governing body's involvement in appointments and promotions, some teachers commented that this could be detrimental as some members who were not educated themselves tended to favour certain teachers for personal, ethnic and political reasons rather than educational reasons. Many teachers referred to the governing body as the principal's "puppets", and one teacher had this to say: "The hierarchical levels with its authorities are still in much existence, but for an outsider he can be fooled by the fact that the management is transparent."

One teacher felt strongly enough about the issue to include it as a major theme in her research report. What I find interesting about this extract from her report is the teacher's critique not only of the people and the practices which denied her the opportunities she sought, but also of the discourse which promised her the opportunities in the first place.

I think another planning is needed concerning the promotion posts. The government has given all the powers to the governing bodies members. The principals have a great influence to the members of the governing bodies. As there are the promotion posts, the principals and the governing bodies members have held meetings for several times. I heard one of the principals talking to her friend telling her that I will take you to be my HOD no matter whether you will pass the interview or not. I had driven into despair because I have applied but unfortunately I have no friend or relative who is a principal. I think the interviews should be conducted by other people outside from the school who have management skills. Those experts should start by doing research and find the basic needs of the particular school to be able to interview the teachers.

There is no fair in the conduction of these interviews. People can't be divorced from apartheid. There is no friend in work but the inspectors and principals put their friends and wives in higher posts. I feel that the government should change the strategy of

conducting the interviews. The policy makers are too idealistic, this is seems as if the policy makers didn't ever observe the things happen in schools. There are the groups of teachers in schools. Others are near the principals hearts and others are rejected and regarded as futile.

In the second paragraph cited above, reflecting on her experience of being marginalised and overlooked by the very practices that are meant to promote fairness and opportunity, the teacher skilfully identifies some of the myths propagated by Western modernity. Firstly, the teacher has discovered through her own experience of injustice that “there is no friend in work” - in other words, the myth of meritocracy that imagines we can forego all personal, cultural, ethnic and political interests and preferences and make purely rational choices based on objective assessments of an individual's worth. Secondly, the perception that “people can't be divorced from apartheid” pinpoints the mythical nature of democracy and equal opportunities, particularly in a country with a history of the opposite, and raises the important question of “what happens when the instruments of modernity - rationality, technology, the modern state - are taken up by those who have experienced them only as the means of their oppression” (Attwell, 1995: 23). Thirdly, the teacher's conclusion that “the policy makers are too idealistic, this is seems as if the policy makers didn't ever observe the things happen in schools” points to Western modernity's central myth of universality which assumes that Enlightenment ideals are fitting in all contexts.

On reading an account of nepotism such as the one given by the teacher above, my usual mistake as a “first world intellectual” (Spivak, 1988) would be to read these problems as peculiar to the teachers' community, and as a sign of deficiency in that community, based on the assumption that “we” are rational and just enough to understand and practice democracy and meritocracy, but traditional rural communities are not, followed by the conclusion that “we” must develop “their” rationality and justice. But this would simply be an instance of the European subject selectively defining the other as a means of establishing itself (see Derrida, 1976 and Spivak, 1988: 292) - the irrationality and injustice of the other establishes my own rationality and justice. In fact, according to Bhabha, this is precisely why colonial discourse must speak “in a tongue that is forked, not false” (1984: 234) in order to *produce* the colonial subject:

colonial mimicry is the desire for a reformed, recognisable Other, as *a subject of difference that is almost the same but not quite*. Which is to say, that the discourse of mimicry is constructed around an *ambivalence*; in order to be effective, mimicry must continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference (235).

So for Bhabha, the racist innuendo in speaking of mimicry is in fact required and produced by colonial discourse: "The success of colonial appropriation depends on a proliferation of inappropriate objects" (1984: 236). The inappropriateness of the "mimic man" (Bhabha, 1984) stands in stark contrast against the fully reformed native, "the appropriate objects of a colonialist chain of command, authorized versions of otherness" (238).

The challenge for the "first world intellectual" (Spivak, 1988) is to recognise the slippage and excess not only in the obvious form of the mimicry of the rural community, but also within the Western policy discourse that makes impossible and groundless claims to rationality and justice. By appealing to false notions of the universal, modernity hides its origins in a Western tradition marked by colonial power relations - what Derrida calls "an ethnocentrism *thinking itself as anti-ethnocentrism in the consciousness of a liberating progressivism*" (1976: 120). In the irony and the "low mimetic effects" (Bhabha, 1984: 234) of the governing body's parody of non-partisan democracy, this ethnocentrism is more obviously and ludicrously revealed. "For in 'normalizing' the colonial state or subject, the dream of post-Enlightenment civility alienates its own language of liberty and produces another knowledge of its norms ...[and then] the great tradition of European humanism seems capable only of ironizing itself (Bhabha, 1984: 236).

So to return to the idea of mimicry as a strategy, just as Hargreaves saw guided choice as an instance of the "nominal democracy" of capitalism, the mimicry practised by governing bodies in rural schools reveals the nominal democracy, transparency and meritocracy of Western modernity on which all its promises of "progress" rest, and reveals the dynamics of power and interest that operate within the supposedly civilised and democratic structures of western democracies. In a context where the state is mimicking the policies of the West and employing a modernist discourse which can only shallowly assimilate and appropriate traditional subjects, rural teachers caught within the contradictions sidestepped by policy will also adopt strategies that are mimetic in their attempts to negotiate incongruous policy requirements.

What form do these mimetic strategies take, and what particular constraints do they reveal? It is still early days for policy implementation, and it seems that some teachers have not made many changes to their practice at all (which is a strategy in itself), but as procedures such as developmental appraisal start to exert their influence, and as teachers trained under the "new ideology" of OBE enter the profession, the contradictions between policy and practice will sharpen and new strategies will probably develop. But having worked with teachers who were themselves researching the interface between policy and practice, in the next section, I examine one particular aspect or effect of strategic mimicry I have noted among them - a phenomenon I have called "false clarity" (after Fullan, 1991).

## 2.8 "False clarity" and the myth of transfer

"False clarity", like mimicry, is evident at the levels of both school governance and classroom practice as the forms, symbols and procedures of policy - but not the substance - become ritualised. The constraint operating here is similar to what Hargreaves calls the "proliferation of ideologies". The new ideology of OBE requires from teachers the "construction and maintenance of appropriate displays of educational imagery" (Hargreaves, 1983: 32). "False clarity" then implies that the teacher feels secure and confident that she has actually understood the new ideology and is able to put it into practice.

Bearing in mind that we were working with teachers who were studying the new policies, and also that they were being observed by university researchers who were also their examiners, most of the teachers we observed made some attempt during the observation sessions to demonstrate their familiarity with policy by putting it into practice. In the classrooms we visited, many of the procedures and outward forms of policy were evident. For example, there was deference to the principle of learner-centredness and learner activity, but this was frequently more muscular than cognitive, and involved much cutting and pasting. Likewise, group work has seemingly become an orthodoxy, but the purpose of group formation was not always clear - quite a lot of whole class teaching took place with learners dutifully seated in groups. (These findings are echoed by the PEI research project; see Taylor and Vinjevoold, 1989: 150). The circular logic in this statement by a Grade 4 teacher illustrates how the *point* of group work has somehow been missed: "Since my studies I have learned that we must put

learners in groups because in groups they work effectively”. Here is an example of group activity taken from a Grade 7 Geography lesson on telecommunications:

Each group is given a magazine, a large sheet of paper, and these instructions: cut out the different kinds of telecommunication; share ideas; paste; give feedback. Groups work busily leafing through magazines, cutting out the occasional picture, pasting, and talking. This takes quite a long time. Reportbacks - from about 8 groups - is tedious in the extreme as there is so much repetition.

It is in this kind of context that skills come to be defined not as the skill of classifying knowledge, but of cutting and pasting. A lot of what happened here was occupational therapy rather than the processing of information. In all of the lessons we observed there was remarkably little reading and writing. (Again this mirrors findings in the PEI research project; see Taylor and Vinjevoold. 1989: 151 and 230).

Some teachers embraced the new symbols and terminology with enthusiasm. For example, some primary school timetables now carry the new learning area terminology (HSS, MLMMS, LO, EMS, etc), and in one school the researchers were greeted: “Good morning, Educators!”. Furthermore, students’ research reports reflecting on their own practice indicated that many teachers were confident that they are lifelong learners now that they have learnt about OBE and teacher roles in policy, and that this knowledge gained in theory makes them effective in practice. A hard division is created between “them” and “us”, as illustrated in this extract from a B Ed student’s essay:

The attitude where old teachers undermine themselves in the presence of younger teachers is common amongst our schools. This is because the old group does not have degrees and diplomas and thus feel insecure and ashamed when associated with younger teachers whom they label “outcomes-based teachers” because we believe in progressive pedagogy and learner involvement.

With the widespread job insecurity created by rationalisation and redeployment, it is not surprising that many teachers are striving to acquire a grasp of the new terminology. A student who carried out her research with a colleague who was an “unprotected temporal teacher”

whose post had been terminated but who continued to work without pay in the hope of being reinstated, provided insight into some teachers' motivation for lifelong learning:

My co-researcher is a student of Natal College of Education. There is a fit again [between policy and practice] in the teacher's role as Lifelong Learner. I asked her the reasons which make her to become a lifelong learner while she is temporarily unemployed. She said she is upgrading herself because she don't know may be she will survive in future and become secured in the redeployment because of higher qualifications. I advice her to continue with HDE and other courses.

Under conditions like this, where one is studying to "survive in future", being *seen as* competent and confident in the new orthodoxy is far more important than being genuinely confident.

But apart from the fact that a professed belief in progressive pedagogy is seldom carried through to actual practice, there is a contradiction within the confidence of some "new" teachers which points to a particular form of false clarity that I believe is propagated by policy itself. Many teachers claim to be lifelong learners yet disclaim the possibility of playing other roles such as curriculum development because they were not trained for this role. Teachers' faith in one-off workshops to address their lack of skills was remarkable. In students' research reports, when they came to the section on 'Recommendations', almost every student suggested workshops - for teachers, principals, parents, learners, sometimes whole communities - aimed at developing competence in everything from the most basic skills (such as fundraising) to quite abstract values (such as democracy and gender equality). Only one teacher out of twenty-six raised a critical voice with regard to workshops:

Most of what policy says is a theory and is not always applicable. We need to be trained for such skills we lack. Even the little training we receive in workshops is not enough because none of the change agents makes any follow up just to find out if what they teach is implemented or not. Or else to find out what difficulties we come across. Why I say this is because changing any long practised habit such as developing a teaching style different from the one that has been modelled for most of our formal learning experiences, involves a great deal of de-learning.



This teacher’s discussion indicates quite clearly why workshops are so attractive. Once you have “done a workshop”, you have met the policy requirement in such a way that little or no “de-learning” is required. The “banking model” (Freire, 1972) that teachers use in their classrooms applies to their own lifelong learning as well. Much has been written on modelling and “long practised habit” in explaining teachers’ resistance to change and their immunity to in-service training, but this is not enough to explain the confidence they have in the courses and workshops they attend and the surface-level changes they make. I believe that this misplaced confidence arises in part from the glib promises made by policy and the emphasis placed by policy and by teacher education providers on teaching methods, or as Goodson would say, their emphasis on the song, and not the singer.

Much of the information on policy encountered by teachers is promotional material on OBE and the new curriculum which promises, for example, to “unlock the potential” of South African citizens so that “soon all South Africans will be active, creative, critical thinkers living productive and fulfilling lives” (Department of Education, 1997: 3). In the face of this kind of “feelgood” hype, who can blame teachers for thinking that change will happen by means of legislation and a few workshops? The clear division created between “old” and “new” teachers might also have its roots in policy publicity, as this extract from a Department of Education booklet (1997: 6 - 7) suggests:

The only way that the NQF can be effective is if there is a change in the educational system from a content-based to an outcomes-based approach.

Jill: But I want to know how it will be different in the classroom.

Thabiso: I’ll explain all that now.

<b>OLD</b>	<b>NEW</b>
passive learners	active learners
exam-driven	learners are assessed on an ongoing basis
rote-learning	critical thinking, reasoning, reflection and action
syllabus is content-based and broken down into subjects	an integration of knowledge; learning relevant and connected to real-life situations

textbook / worksheet-bound and teacher centred	learner-centred; teacher is facilitator; teacher constantly uses groupwork and teamwork to consolidate the new approach
sees syllabus as rigid and non-negotiable	learning programmes seen as guides that allow teachers to be innovative and creative in designing learning programmes
teachers responsible for learning; motivation dependent on the personality of the teacher	learners take responsibility for their learning; pupils motivated by constant feedback and affirmation of their worth
emphasis on what the teacher hopes to achieve	emphasis on outcomes - what the learner becomes and understands
content placed into rigid time- frames	flexible time-frames allow learners to work at their own pace
curriculum development process not open to public comment	comment and input from the wider community is encouraged

Later in the same booklet, Thabiso explains "what makes it a new approach" (12):

A new terminology

The first difference is the terminology that will be used. Pupils or students will now be known as "learners". The subjects as we know them will not appear in their present form. They have been absorbed into eight "learning areas", etc.(13).

Thabiso's "explanation" to Jill of "how it will be different in the classroom" is to draw an oversimplified distinction between the old and the new approach and then to imply that the new approach is firstly a matter of terminology. If teachers are exhibiting the shallow display of appropriate educational imagery in the classroom in order to promote their image as new "outcomes-based teachers" to protect their jobs and further their careers, they are only doing what policy, and the publicity around it, suggests.

The Department of Education's extravagant and superficial publicising of OBE gives credence to Jonathan Jansen's point that "it is important to understand the origins and anticipated trajectory of OBE (and indeed other curriculum reforms) as primarily a political response to apartheid schooling rather than one which is concerned with the modalities of change at the classroom level" (1999: 145). So it is up to teachers and teacher education providers - colleges, universities and NGO's - to make the link between the political vision and the classroom modalities. Widely criticised as a "contentless curriculum", Curriculum 2005 and OBE are little more than a set of methods and principles - learner-centredness, active learning, continuous assessment, etc. - which add up to one "best method". The idea of best method or best practice has come under heavy criticism from a number of international sources ( Brumfit, 1984; Prabhu, 1990; Boomer, 1989; Bell, 1993) and also some local sources (Taylor and Vinjevold, 1999; French, 1989). For example, a research project conducted by the Human Sciences Research Council (Maja, et al in Taylor and Vinjevold, 1989) aiming to identify what constitutes "best performance" in mathematics in twenty selected schools made the following finding:

The key finding of this study is that method does not seem to be as important as meaning during a lesson. As to whether the teacher's lesson is "learner-centred" or "teacher-centred" does not seem to relate in any way to performance. What seems critical is whether the lesson promotes understanding of the subject being taught, do learners attach meaning to what is being taught, and most importantly, are learners able to engage with the lesson (156).

Taylor and Vinjevold (1999) conclude their overview of the findings of the nationwide PEI research project with the conclusion that it is not teaching method, ideology or approach that is the "fundamental systemic problem" with South African schooling (230), but teachers' knowledge base:

The most definite point of convergence across the PEI studies is the conclusion that teachers' poor conceptual knowledge of the subjects they are teaching is a fundamental constraint on the quality of teaching and learning activities, and consequently on the quality of learning outcomes (230).

They add that “no amount of exhortation by politicians or pedagogical guidance by curriculum planners, university and college academics or NGOs is likely to change this situation unless the knowledge base of teachers is simultaneously strengthened” (230) and suggest that the focus on method is doing more harm than good:

On the issue of pedagogy, many teachers model the surface forms of learner-centred activities, without apparently understanding the learning theories underlying them, and certainly without using them as a medium for enabling learners to engage with substantive knowledge and skills. These methods frequently interfere with student learning by providing distractions from the core conceptual issues. Consequently little is learnt (230 - 231).

This key finding confirms Edward French’s (1989) view that with progressive adult educators “who know the liturgy without believing” (7), “where alternative practices are developed they are commonly undermined by applications which repeat the letter but defeat the spirit” (5). It is also echoed by N.S. Prabhu, who puts teacher effectiveness in language teaching down to something quite different:

Indeed, the more “efficiently” a method is implemented (that is to say, with all possible measures to ensure that teachers will carry out the procedures envisaged), the more likely it is that mechanical teaching will turn out to be the main impediment to success. Perhaps, then, there is a factor more basic than the choice between methods, namely teachers’ subjective understanding of the teaching they do ... The resulting concept (or theory, or, in a more dormant state, pedagogic intuition) of how learning takes place and how teaching causes or supports it is what may be called a teacher’s *sense of plausibility* about teaching (Prabhu, 1990: 172).

This sense of plausibility is not at all a question of method but has to do with the degree of the teacher’s engagement with what she is teaching and teacher-learner rapport: “The question to ask about a teacher’s sense of plausibility is not whether it implies a good or bad method, but more basically, whether it is active, alive or operational enough to create a sense of involvement for both the teacher and the student” (Prabhu, 1990: 173). As such, it is similar to a quality we occasionally saw in teachers and defined as “something extra” in our PEI

research project (Harley, et al, 1989).. We suggested, using Bernstein, that “something extra” had to do with the teacher’s status being “achieved” rather than “ascribed”, with a control relationship that was “interpersonal” rather than “positioned” (see Bernstein, 1996: 99) and coupled with a teacher’s sense of “calling”.

The finding that teachers’ poor conceptual knowledge is their key constraint, along with notions of teachers’ subjective understandings, sense of plausibility and the importance of achieved, interpersonal relationships in the classroom, have obvious implications for teacher education and development, and in a sense this reflection on my research experience has now come full circle. I began with a concern about the contrast between teachers’ “university” identities and the “real” identities with which they live. Having explored the disjuncture more fully, I now find myself revising my view of the teachers I work with, and reconsidering the role of universities as teacher education providers.

Apart from having to work with policy’s “method-centred” approach to educational transformation, to some extent universities selling in-service courses to students rely on the idea of a best method, best approach or best ideology, supported by what Paula Ensor (1999) calls “the myth of transfer”. In my view, at the root of this myth is once again modernity’s false claim to universality which carries the assumption that “timeless universal truths” are generic and can be transferred from specific context to specific context. In education, this raises the concept of the “generic skill” which assumes that “verbally transmitted, explicit, general knowledge is the main prerequisite that makes cognitive skills available for transfer across situations” (Lave in Breier, 1998: 91). As we have seen, the whole education policy system in South Africa, including policy on teacher roles, is underpinned by seven critical cross-field outcomes, or in other words, seven generic skills. In a paper suggesting that in South Africa, the concept of the generic skill might be a “pipe dream”, Mignonne Breier (1998) cites “theories that emphasise the situated nature of all forms of knowledge and the *context-specificity* of knowledge and skill acquisition and suggest that learning and knowledge cannot be considered in isolation from the everyday practices in which it is embedded” (73). Given the radical disjuncture I have already discussed between the universalised abstract ideals of modernist policy (with its seven generic skills) and the traditional contexts of rural teachers, these theories make good sense. They are also in keeping with Ensor’s (1999) findings in a 2-year longitudinal study which tracked a group of University of Cape Town HDE students in a

mathematics method component. For Ensor, the discrepancy between what teachers say they do in the classroom and what they actually do will remain "so long as teacher education occurs exclusively in a site removed from that of teachers' practice" (16).

In short, if teachers are superficially mimicking policy requirements and demonstrating false clarity and confidence about the forms their mimicry takes, they are also mimicking the superficiality and false clarity of policy and its public promotion. This false clarity is further encouraged by the attempts of teacher education providers and teacher workshop facilitators to "transfer" the generic skills and universalising orthodoxies promoted by policy.

## **2.9 A concluding point: What it might mean to focus on "the singer, not the song"**

This discussion has returned to its starting point. One of the purposes of the research was to develop an understanding of teacher identities in order to identify principles for an approach to teacher development that would focus more clearly on "the singer, not the song" (Goodson in Jessop, 1997: 242). I mentioned at the end of my discussion of the empirical work I carried out with teachers in their own schools that my experience of working so closely with teachers led me to revise the assumption that "the singer" is always available to such scrutiny. In my experience, while most teachers participated well and seemed to find the supervised research process valuable, not all of them were comfortable with the self-exposure that was required of them in my interviews and classroom observation, and nor were they all very serious about their own self-reflection. (It is difficult to give an exact figure here, but my impression is that nine of the thirteen students found the process beneficial while four of them displayed varying degrees of discomfort and resistance.)

Edward French (1989) provides an interesting comment on progressive adult educators faced with the failure of alternative practices, which resonates to some extent with my concerns about the students who did not fully engage with the self-reflection required of them:

The proponents of progressive approaches to education tend to have a highly-developed sense of individual autonomy, and also have had the privilege of being steeped in a culture which gives special value to self-criticism and self-awareness. The belief that everyone else is basically like they are and is yearning to be liberated (if only

they knew what was good for them) is a fond illusion of many idealistic educators. This attitude might paradoxically constitute cultural imperialism on the one hand, and lead to failure of confidence [on the part of progressive adult educators] on the other (7).

French also suggests that

We may need to consider those practices we condemn [and explore why they] persist with such abundant vitality and power ... We need to understand and problematise our condemnation: perhaps we need a devil's advocate for the prevailing practices. For example, we don't like dependency and dependency-creating education. Yet there is dependency and dependency ... Dependency, even in its clearly negative manifestations, is functional: the subservience, gratitude and fatalism involved with dependency play along with the general hegemony. But it is also functional in a definite (and possibly irreplaceable) way for those who are dependent - awareness and self-assertion for them is not only dangerous, it may well seem a futile challenge to the prevailing social order. (Older people and seasoned practitioners get to the point where they say "I'd rather cope than question." They can't just be dismissed.) The same could perhaps be said of the classroom or community work practices that seem to us to be learning-discouraging rituals (7).

French's paper is subtitled "a provocation" and his ideas are certainly provocative, but I strongly agree with him that, if we are serious about understanding teacher identities, the aspects of those identities which may seem conservative, dependent and unreflexive "can't just be dismissed". And nor should teacher educators set out to "reform" these identities. Focussing on "the singer, not the song" (Goodson in Jessop, 1997: 242) means not burdening the teacher with the "preferred identity" of the Enlightenment subject, but working *with* "the suppressed identities and the stereotypes to which people were forced to conform in South Africa's past"(Baxen and Soudien, 1999: 141), and remembering, as Jessop (1997) does, that if change is a process, continuity is also a process that lives on within the process of change. For Jessop, "continuity is a process, embedded in the sedimented and taken for granted ways of believing and acting of most teachers" (10), and the educational world in South Africa is "caught in continuities of discontent" (11) which have little to do with "the neat formulations of policy conceived in air-conditioned offices light years away from the realities of rural schooling" (7).

When I began this research project, my intention was to work towards an approach to teacher development that might bridge the gulf between the air-conditioned offices of the policy makers (and the teacher educators) and the realities of rural schooling. But clearly, I was operating under the same assumption for which I have criticised policy: that tradition and modernity can be reconciled and integrated. The encounter between the two modes, as I have argued, is marked by a rupture which cannot be mended.

Jessop (1997) argues that because "many of the stories of teachers suggest that the continuities in education are more powerful than [the] massive structural changes" ushered in by policy (241), teacher development needs to draw on teachers' life histories as "one way of nurturing the seeds of reflection on practice, and beginning in the less threatening domain of ordinary life ..." (242). I agree with Jessop, and to a large extent my experience of working closely with rural teachers in their schools has affirmed this view, but it has also shown me that for some, "the domain of ordinary life" is only "less threatening" while it resists the reach of Western modernity's universalising crusade of rational reflexivity, its displacement of traditional forms of solidarity, and its "desire for a reformed, recognisable Other, as a subject of difference that is almost the same but not quite" (Bhabha, 1984: 235). For some teachers, deliberately *keeping* policy and the pursuit of qualifications in a quite separate world from their daily practices might well be a good strategy for resisting this incursion. But, bearing in mind the possibility of this kind of resistance from some teachers, I believe it is still a worthwhile undertaking to develop an understanding of the identities of teachers who are "caught in their own and the nation's fragmented and partial histories" (Jessop, 1997: 238).

To this end, I recommend further research into teacher strategies, and further development of the theory of teacher strategy in order to sensitise the concept to the South African schooling context. I suspect that what I have identified as a strategy of mimicry is one of many possible strategies teachers might employ, given the many contradictions they must negotiate in their daily practice.

For teacher development programmes, my recommendations are less confident than I thought they would be at the beginning of this project, perhaps because there is a certain irony in decrying orthodoxy and arguing for sensitivity to particular contexts, and then putting forward generalised recommendations. However, in spite of this unavoidable performative



contradiction, I think my research and my discussion do point to a few proposals for teacher development that are worth considering. These proposals include less focus on "generic" and "transferrable" methods, practices, principles, approaches and ideologies of teaching and learning, and more focus on teachers' subjective understandings of their work, and a clearer awareness of the contexts in which they work. We should also avoid simplistic distinctions between old and new / good and bad ways of teaching and, as French (1989) recommends, develop a more responsive appreciation of why the practices we condemn persist, and reconsider our often reactive condemnation of those practices. If this means tolerating practices which we do not see as rational or progressive, then we must learn this tolerance by reconsidering our notions of rationality and progress, not only as the elevated ideals of Western Enlightenment thinking (with all its hidden ambivalences and contradictions), but also in terms of what is practically functional and affirming of teachers' "sense of plausibility" (Prabhu, 1990) within their own teaching contexts.

Far more crucial to this sense of plausibility than any pedagogical method or ideology is the teacher's firm grasp and enjoyment of the formal knowledge she teaches. But the new taboo on "content-based" teaching and preoccupation with method and outcomes has created what Taylor and Vinjevoold (1999) call an "undisciplined" curriculum that "seems designed to promote superficiality" (128). Arguing that there is an important distinction between school and everyday knowledge, in their view the "the radical approach is to wish away the boundary and demand that all knowledges be equal" (118). The unavoidable fact is that modernity clearly values and privileges certain forms of knowledge over others and the knowledge it values is formal, rational knowledge and not "the endless variety of unruly personal experience" (Taylor and Vinjevoold, 1999: 128), and most definitely not the everyday knowledge of traditional rural people. The "radical" wishful thinking promoted by the new curriculum is part of "a relativism that assumes a public and symmetrical world" (Bhabha, 1992: 48) by "vacuously celebrating the astonishing pluralism of human cultures" (Jameson in Bhabha, 1992: 48). At the root of this relativism is once again the universalising impulse of modernity that elides the persistence of colonial power relations within rational modern democracies and glosses over difference by imagining that we can "transpose values across cultures through the transcendent spirit of a 'common humanity'" (Bhabha, 1992: 49).

Since, as university-based teacher educators, we are what Spivak (1988) refers to as "first world intellectuals" steeped in the discourses of modernity, perhaps we should simply be doing what we do best, which is sharing the formal, conceptual knowledge we have been trained to acquire and produce. And then, how teachers establish their own "sense of plausibility" (Prabhu, 1990) in interpreting and teaching this knowledge within the particular forms of solidarity that characterize their own contexts should best be left to them.

## OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY AND CONCLUDING COMMENTS

This study has brought together my two study and work interests, postcolonial theory and classroom-based research. In order to explore an aspect of South African education that I believe has been neglected, namely, how teacher identities are constructed within the tensions between policy and practice.

I began by arguing for the usefulness and value of postcolonial theory in interpreting empirical findings because of its foregrounding of the politics of representation and its careful attention to what Spivak describes as "the itinerary of recognition through assimilation ... in the imperialist constitution of the colonial subject" (1988: 294). The caution with which postcolonial theory approaches issues of representation was highly instructive to the present study for two main reasons. Firstly, it provided good theoretical tools for examining how policy constructs teachers as subjects, and secondly, it helped me to keep in mind throughout the study my own positionality as a researcher while not making any assumptions about the essential authenticity or fixity of the teacher identities I was trying to understand.

The value of postcolonial theory to this study also lay in its view of the subject. Postcolonial theory revises the Enlightenment ideal of the sovereign subject and posits a subject whose identity is always provisional and strategic and whose agency is conferred by the experience of, and strategic response to, the contradictions inherent in a Western modernist discourse that speaks to its "other" in "a tongue that is forked, not false" (Bhabha, 1984: 234). The postcolonial notion of identity and agency as being "produced in the act of social survival" (Bhabha, 1992: 47) and as a response to "the antagonistic and ambivalent moments within the 'rationalisations' of modernity" (Bhabha, 1992, 46) is analogous and highly compatible with the interactionist concept of teacher strategy I chose to use in interpreting empirical findings made in the classroom, and particularly Hargreaves' (1983) understanding of teacher strategies as arising within sites of contradiction and constraint that are generated within the wider social structure.

In my attempt to identify the primary contradictions and constraints with which teachers work, I drew on empirical work carried out in local schools which aimed to measure the fit between policy and practice, and which identified some of the key tensions and contradictions between

the two. Arguing that for rural teachers these tensions hinged primarily around the disjuncture between tradition and modernity, I used Giddens' (1990) theory of the encounter between tradition and modernity to examine the disjuncture more clearly. In Giddens' view, due to its origins in the West and its history of colonialism under the guise of rationality and enlightenment, modernity cannot be integrated with tradition but can only displace or shallowly assimilate tradition. In light of this theory, I questioned policy's assumption that the combined discourses of globalisation and progressive pedagogy (notwithstanding their uneasy relationship within policy) can be contextualised and made appropriate to South African conditions.

To explore this question in more detail, and to develop a more nuanced understanding of the nature of the sense of displacement that might be experienced in rural schools, I used Durkheim (1964) and Bernstein's (1971) concepts of mechanical and organic solidarity to map the features of these two different forms of solidarity onto case studies of South African schools. These case studies reveal that policy requires traditional rural schools which are characterised by mechanical forms of solidarity to undergo fundamental changes that would threaten the foundations on which their cohesion and effectiveness is built by devaluing and destroying the social order held in place by custom and covenant before social stability based on rational social contracts is firmly established. This perception confirms Giddens' view that modernity (in this case the modernist policy discourse of reflexivity and rational social contract) can only displace or appropriate tradition (in this case, the customary social order of rural schools).

Turning to the question of the strategies teachers use to negotiate the contradictions that arise within these "displaced" schools, I found further evidence of modernity's attempts to appropriate and shallowly assimilate traditional subjects in what I perceive as a strategy of mimicry. Here I used Fuller's description of the mimicry of third world states in their attempts to "look modern" to develop a clearer understanding of "the Western tension between individual development and bureaucratic forms of opportunity" (Fuller, 1991: 33) that third world states, schools and teachers must negotiate - a tension that is clearly present in policy on teacher roles and competences, and that corresponds with Hargreaves' (1983) notion of the contradictory aims of education under capitalism which constitute the primary constraint to which teachers must strategically respond. Arguing, with Bhabha, that the strategy of mimicry

creates "a double vision which in disclosing the ambivalence of colonial discourse also disrupts its authority" (1989: 235), I then attempted to read the strategy of mimicry as a response to, and disruption of, the Western modernist discourses of rationality, democracy, meritocracy and equal opportunity on which all of modernity's promises of progress rest. In my view this reading of the strategy of mimicry provides evidence to support Bhabha's theory that the agency of mimicry lies in its mockery of the "the reforming, civilising mission" (1989: 235) of Western modernity and reveals the persistence of colonial power relations in "the great tradition of European humanism" (1984: 236). This makes the concept of mimicry as a teacher strategy a valuable theoretical tool for examining teacher identities in a way that reflects back critically on the very discourses we must use in such an endeavour. For this reason, I recommend that the concept should be further developed, refined and sensitised to South African conditions by means of both empirical and theoretical work.

For example, in the present study, I examined one particular aspect or effect of teachers' mimetic strategies, which I called "false clarity" (after Fullan, 1991), and suggested that the often unfounded confidence of "new outcomes-based teachers" is partly a survival strategy under the current conditions of job insecurity created by rationalisation and redeployment, and partly a mimicry of the false clarity of policy publicity which oversimplifies and overhypes the new approach to education. In my view, teachers' false clarity is an effect of the superficiality of a policy system more concerned with bolstering the state's credibility by signalling a dramatic move away from apartheid education and by "looking modern", than with "the modalities of change at the classroom level" (Jansen, 1999: 145).

For teacher education providers, who have to make the link between the superficial, idealised political vision and actual classroom practices, policy itself provides little more than a set of abstract principles and "best methods" which we must then attempt to "transfer" to teachers by means of "generic" skills and values which are not generic at all to rural teachers in traditional contexts, and which they then tend to shallowly and mechanically mimic.

What policy's "enticement to mimicry" (Bhabha, 1984: 235) does is to strip the teacher of her "sense of plausibility" (Prabhu, 1990), and this situation is made worse by the reaction against the "content-based" approach of the past and the new emphasis in teacher education on

methods and outcomes which downplays teachers' main source of authority and plausibility in the classroom: a firm grasp of the formal, conceptual knowledge they teach.

My recommendations for teacher development were tentative and did not fully confirm the impressions with which I began this project, particularly in light of my personal experience of trying to encourage and assist teachers to reflect on their own subjective understandings of their work within their own contexts. I had started the project believing, like Jessop, that to work with teachers "within the less threatening domain of ordinary life" would be a good way of "nurturing the seeds of reflection on practice" (Jessop, 1997: 242). However, my foray into teachers' ordinary lives, was not a "less threatening" experience for all the teachers I worked with and I believe, like French, that their reservations about this kind of work "can't just be dismissed" (French, 1989: 7). A dominant theme throughout my study was the critique of modernity's false claim to universality. Perhaps the modern university repeats this false claim by venturing confidently into areas beyond the reach of modernist discourse with a "reforming, civilising mission" (Bhabha, 1984: 235).

This is why I concluded the discussion with the suggestion that perhaps the most valuable contribution teacher educators can make in helping teachers to develop their own sense of plausibility is to strengthen their confidence in the formal, conceptual knowledge of the disciplines they teach and the profession within which they work, and leave the rest to them. Such an approach to teacher education would hopefully strengthen teachers' confidence and plausibility without trying to "reform" them or impose on them any "appropriate" identity.

This study of teacher identities therefore ends with a reluctance to define what they are or what they should be. The best we can hope for is to develop an understanding of the social forces and discourses within which these identities emerge and in which their agency plays itself out. "Claims to identity must never be nominative or normative. They are never nouns when they are productive" (Bhabha, 1992: 55).

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## Appendix A: Research instrument

For a description of how this research instrument was developed and used, see Harley, et al, (1998) *The Real and the Ideal: Field Analysis of Roles and Competences of Educators*, Unpublished research report, School of Education, Training and Development, UNP.

Please note that the instruments have been slightly re-formatted to leave out the space that was allocated for field workers' comments. The second column is for indicating relative emphasis of each competence using a scale where 1 means the competence is strongly evident; 2 means the competence is evident; and 3 means the competence is not evident at all.

<b>MEDIATOR OF LEARNING</b>	<b>1 2 3</b>	<b>Comment</b>
1 Has sound knowledge of subject content		
2 Uses appropriate learning/teaching strategies and resources so that learners reach the desired learner outcomes.		
3 Prepares thoroughly		
4 Teaches in a manner which encourages the development of life skills (such as creative and critical thinking, conflict negotiation, communication skills).		
5 Sensitive to the diverse needs of learners and has an understanding of the barriers to learning and how to deal with them.		
6 Uses the language of instruction (or other official language, where necessary) appropriately to communicate key concepts		
7 Manages different kinds of classroom learning (individualised, small group, whole class teaching).		
8 Creates a democratic, but disciplined classroom atmosphere, where learners are actively involved in the learning process.		
9 Uses various assessment instruments and approaches for formative and summative assessments.		
10 Gives frequent and constructive feedback to learners		
11 Considers and utilises learners' own experiences as a fundamental and valuable resource.		
Additional competences?		

<b>PASTORAL ROLE</b>	<b>1 2 3</b>	<b>Comment</b>
12 Communicates with parents to discuss the well-being, conduct and progress of their children.		
13 Exercises authority with compassion.		
14 Respects the dignity, beliefs, and constitutional rights of learners and, in particular, acknowledges the uniqueness, individuality and specific needs of each learner.		
15 Takes reasonable steps to ensure the safety of learners.		
16 Strives to enable learners to develop a set of values consistent with those upheld by the Bill of Rights (eg. non-discrimination, respect of human dignity, equality etc.).		
17 Promotes gender equality.		
18 Understands and responds to the social and educational problems in their school/community context (eg. violence, drug abuse etc).		
19 Assists in overseeing learner counselling and career guidance		
20 Involvement in extra-school programme (sport/ artistic/cultural activities).		
Additional competences?		

<b>ADMINISTRATOR</b>	<b>1 2 3</b>	<b>Comment</b>
21 Plans and co-ordinates integrated and team teaching approaches to learning.		
22 Co-ordinates and controls all the academic activities of each subject that he/she teaches.		
23 Makes appropriate use of numeracy, technology and computer skills and media literacy.		
24 Performs one or more of the following administrative duties: eg. fee collection, fire drill, first aid, time tabling, controlling stock and equipment.		
25 Keeps complete and comprehensive student academic records.		
Additional competences?		

<b>DESIGNER OF LEARNING PROGRAMMES</b>	<b>Comments on knowledge, skills and values</b>
26 Interprets and designs learning programmes, some of which focus on ethical issues in religion, politics, economics, human rights and the environment.	
27 Analyses the ways in which barriers to learning may be overcome through the design and creation of innovative learning programmes.	
28 Prepares lessons taking into account the needs of learners and new approaches.	
29 Designs original learning resources including charts, worksheets, experimental kits etc. which are appropriate to age, language, competence, gender and culture of learners.	
30 Understands how learning materials can be used to construct more flexible and individualised learning environments.	
31 Evaluates and adapts learning programmes.	

<b>LIFE LONG LEARNER</b>	
32 Remains informed of current developments in educational thinking and curriculum development.	
33 Has an understanding of and the ability to use effective study methods.	
34 Participates in a general school/educator appraisal process in order regularly to review professional practice with the aim of improving teaching, learning and management.	
35 Is able to do basic research (reflecting on and analysing educational situations) and apply educational research meaningfully to educational problems.	
36 Participates in departmental committees, seminars and courses in order to contribute to and to update one's professional views and standards	
37 Accesses and uses common information sources such as libraries, community resource centres and computer information centres.	

**COMMUNITY AND CITIZEN ROLE**

- 38 Is able to deal with four types of community: other teachers and unions; other schools; parents; business N.G.O.s etc.
- 39 Takes initiative and acts decisively in solving problems, such as conflict situations in the classroom and school.
- 40 Upholds the principle of academic integrity and the pursuit of excellence in education.
- 41 Contribute to the professional development of colleagues by sharing knowledge ideas and resources.
- 42 Respects the various responsibilities assigned to colleagues and the authority that arises therefrom.
- 43 Accepts the professional obligation towards the education community and induction into the profession of new members.
- 44 Has knowledge of the values and customs of the community.
- 45 Promotes education in the community and helps to build links between community and the school.
- 46 Collaborates with educators from other schools.
- 47 Is committed to developing the local community.
- 48 Respects the role of parents and the community in school management and assists in building structures to facilitate this.



## **Appendix B: Letter sent to students, inviting participation in the Supervised Independent Study and requesting permission to use their findings as data for my research**

31 May 1999

Dear

From a list of names of B Ed students who have elected to do *Classroom Studies* in the second semester, you have been randomly chosen as a possible candidate for a Supervised Independent Study module in the second semester of this year.

### **What is Supervised Independent Study?**

Supervised Independent Study (SIS) means that you work on a long-term project with the assistance of a supervisor. So, instead of writing essays and exams, you carry out a research project, submit a research report and give a short oral presentation on your findings. If you pass, you are awarded full credit for one B Ed module.

So, if you are interested in research and value the process of working closely with a supervisor, then please consider this option. The details are as follows:

The *Classroom Studies* module requires you to carry out a research project in which you compare the latest policy on teacher roles with what teachers are actually doing in the classroom. Every student who does *Classroom Studies* will carry out this research and write a short report on their findings. Students are carefully guided through this process.

If you choose to take the SIS option as well as *Classroom Studies*, you will be asked to participate in a very similar research process, only you will be the subject of your own research and you will have my assistance as your supervisor. You will use the research instruments provided in the Classroom Studies course materials to compare your own classroom practice with policy requirements. I will spend a day with you in the classroom observing and discussing your practice and I will help you to record, analyse and interpret your findings. You will then be asked to write a 25 page report on your findings, on which you will be assessed. You will also be asked to give an oral presentation to the rest of the SIS students, and to discuss any questions we might wish to ask you. This oral presentation will also be assessed.

If you do undertake the SIS, I would like to ask your permission to use the findings in your report as data for my own research project. If you give me this permission, I will not use the names of you or your school, so any information about you or your school will be treated with respect and confidentiality. We would also like to ask you to grant an interview of 1-2 hours to Volker Wedekind who is doing research on teachers' life histories. The interview with Volker is entirely optional.

### **Why is the SIS a good idea?**

To be honest, we came up with the idea of this SIS module because we are interested in carrying out further, more detailed research into classroom practice, and we place a very high value on the participation of teachers in this research. But we realise that teachers are very

busy and that it would be unfair to ask you to carry out time-consuming research with no recognition or reward. The advantage of the SIS option is that you get a B Ed module out of it, and you also get excellent preparation for the *Classroom Studies* module. At the same time, you are developing your own research skills (which are very important if you plan to study further after your B Ed) and you are also contributing to a broader body of research which aims to develop our understanding of new policies and how they affect teacher practice.

The SIS also provides you with an opportunity to work closely with a supervisor and to receive the individual assistance that large student numbers do not often allow. I will give you help with carrying out your research. I will mark a first draft of your report and provide you with detailed feedback, and I will meet with you regularly (both privately and in groups) to discuss your progress and to give you any academic support you might need.

### **A rough outline of the project**

If you enrol for the SIS, we will need to meet to discuss time frames and dates, but the following dates provide a rough idea of the deadlines to which we would have to work:

July holidays	Read <i>Classroom Studies</i> (You will be guided in this reading by regular meetings held on campus during the holidays)
August	Carry out research and plan research report (This process will be supported by weekly meetings and private consultations with Liz)
September 15	Submit first draft of research report (Again, you will be assisted by weekly meetings and private consultations, as well as a detailed assessment of your first draft with suggestions for improvement)
September 30	Give oral presentation on research findings (This will give you an opportunity to hear about other students' findings, to ask questions and to discuss your own findings)
October 10	Submit final research report

### **What to do now**

Please consider this option carefully, and if you are interested in undertaking the SIS, please fill in the following form and send it to me in the stamped envelope provided, and please also give me a call at **0331 - 260 5076 (w)** or **0331- 455800 (h)**. Thank you for taking the time to read through this letter. I look forward to hearing from you.

Best wishes

Liz Mattson

## Appendix C: Examples of field notes on classroom observation

**School: Rural secondary school**

**Teacher: Mr M teaches Business Economics and Accounts to Grades 8 - 12**

On arriving at the school at 8.20 am, about 300 latecomers, including learners and teachers were gathered outside the locked gates. The principal refused to let them in until 8.30. This is a daily occurrence and the principal was clearly exasperated: “We have done everything; we have prayed about it, but still they come late. So what can we do? It’s a culture of impunity.”

Mr M later explained that most learners catch buses from outlying areas, and even those who don’t rely on buses wait for the buses to arrive before they come to school. “This whole school depends on transport. If there’s no transport, the school doesn’t function.” Mr M travels about 40 minutes each way by bus or taxi every day. There was not one car in the school car park.

Mr M apologises for the state of the school, explaining that the school is very poor and quite old. He points out a new red-brick block of classrooms, explaining that the government started to upgrade the school, but ran out of funds. He jokes that the new block acts as an incentive to the lower grades to work hard so that they can progress to the comfort of the new building.

Business Economics lesson  
Grade 10

Ritual repetition of catch-phrases of the discipline is more evident with code-switching. Mr M would talk in Zulu with a few English phrases repeated over and over: “costs of production”; “reduction of expenditure”; “three digit inflation”; “money in their pockets”; “personal disposable income”; “consumer price indices”, etc. This was also highlighted by the class chorusing the “answer” in unison to questions and unfinished sentences. The answer was always a phrase unique to the discourse of economics.

Teacher: What do you have at the end of the month?

Learners: Income.

Teacher: Right. Income. What do you have after you’ve paid taxes?

(Silence from learners)

Teacher: Personal ...?

Learners: Disposable income.

Teacher: Right. Personal disposable income. At the end of the month after you’ve paid your taxes, you have personal disposable income.

No open-ended questions were asked. Each question had an unambiguous correct answer, and all questions came from the teacher. Learners asked no questions themselves.

A competence needed by teachers in under-resourced schools is the efficient and creative use of limited resources. Moving desks and chairs from one classroom to another; handing out and collecting in textbooks before and after each lesson; grouping learners three or four to a textbook; passing one textbook around the class to show and explain a diagram to each learner; drawing an accounts ledger on the blackboard. These activities can take up a good portion of the lesson.

As we left the classroom and explained to Mr M that we had seen all we needed for the purposes of our research, he smiled, nodded and said, "That's how we teach them". Ken saw this comment as a socially graceful way of acknowledging that we had realised one lesson would be much the same as another, that there was a model of teaching and learning that was tried, trusted and accepted. Who was meant by "we" and "them"? Was he referring to teachers and learners in that school? in that community? in rural schools? in African schools? "That's how we teach them" was in a sense a statement allowing some closure on discussion of what we had seen - a tacit acknowledgement that teaching is an identifiable model that seldom changes because it is accepted and expected by "we" and "them".

Ken's thoughts on the same lesson: If teaching is a process of bargaining and exchange, then what the teacher has to trade for the good behaviour of the learners is his knowledge. To maintain his status as a professional or expert in the classroom, he needs recourse to an expert code, to the body of theoretical knowledge that qualifies him as a professional. Discipline/discourse of economics presented as a closed system. For example, if the costs of production go up, the price of the item goes up. If the costs of production go down, the price of the item goes down. Economics presented as a predictable model made up of rules and formulae. Learners need to know the model, know how each part fits together (eg. costs of production linked with price of item in causal relationship). They are learning a code which can be manipulated according to rules of the discourse, not acquiring meaning. Do learners even expect meaning anymore? Don't ask questions, even when something makes no sense in relation to their experience, or when something is contradictory or illogical.

**School: Semi-rural primary**

**Teacher: Mrs G teaches all subjects to Grade 4**

School: some doors, windows, light fittings and plug points have been stolen; textbooks and paper stolen - Teacher thinks learners might help thieves to break in; blackboard vandalised and mended with glue - difficult to write on; some learners don't have pens; very few textbooks - exercises from textbook must be written on blackboard and copied into exercise books: some exercises photocopied.

Classroom decorated with posters, some painted, made from collages. Learners seated in groups of 4-5, working on sums. Air of creativity and purpose in the room.

Lesson on prepositions

Teacher writes prepositions on blackboard; says each one; then chanted by class; teacher points to each one; chanted by class. There seems to be an unwritten and invisible script which gives learners their cue to chant in perfect unison; teacher simply needs to wear a certain expression on her face, perhaps raise an eyebrow, turn an ear towards the class, point to a word on the blackboard. The cues are not known or visible to the researcher, but the learners know exactly when to speak and what to say.

Responses are demanded frequently and in unison. Questions are answered in chorus with a loud and enthusiastic "Yes, Teacher" or "No, Teacher".

Teacher involves learners actively - gets them sitting on their desks, under their desks, behind and in front of each other, asks questions, such as:

T: Ayanda is standing in front of Thokozo. Where is Ayanda standing?

Ls: Ayanda is standing in front of Thokozo.

T: Where is Ayanda standing?

Ls: Ayanda is standing in front of Thokozo.

Then she asks without first giving the answer. Puts the duster on a seat next to a child.

T: Where is the duster?

Ls: The duster is .... (confusion - some start saying "on", some say "next to", then the sentence disappears in a hesitant mumble from just a few learners.)

T: The duster is next to Zanele

Ls: (with renewed confidence) The duster is next to Zanele!

T: Where is the duster?

Ls: The duster is next to Zanele.

In fact there are a few possible answers to the question. For example, the duster is both on the seat and next to Zanele. Both answers are right, but when there is some choice and the safety of chanting in unison is lost, learners quickly keep quiet or revert to a mumble. No one risks finishing the sentence aloud. The answer given by the teacher is then accepted as the right answer and the learners chant it happily.

“Elaborated language codes and specialised principles of classification which structure formal school knowledge” (Taylor in *Getting Learning Right*: 112) seen as distant, and, in some ways, kept distant, kept distinct from everyday knowledge. In this sense, teacher subscribes to a performance model.

Because there is only one textbook, the teacher has to copy an exercise on the blackboard for the learners to copy into their exercise books. In the textbook, the illustrations clearly show a mouse in relation to a hat and the learners have to give the correct preposition for each sentence. In transposing the exercise onto the blackboard, the teacher simplifies the illustrations, drawing a ball in relation to a box. In the textbook the reference point is clearly the reader, but when it comes to giving the correct answers, it is clear that for the teacher, the reference point is the linear flow of the sentence, so that “next to” becomes “behind” or “in front of”. Many learners clearly had the answers right assuming that they were the reference point, only to be told by the teacher that they were wrong. No mention was made of reference points and it didn't seem to occur to anybody that the teacher and the learners might have been working with different ones. Also, some of the teacher's drawings were not clear - it was highly debatable whether the ball was drawn next to, behind, or above the box (in other words, many of my own answers were wrong according to the teacher). But the learners simply accepted that they were wrong. To make matters worse, the teacher then handed out a photocopy of the textbook exercise and asked the learners to do it for homework. The same exercise was to be repeated, but this time the reference point was the reader, so the learners' chances of getting the answers right this time were not good either. Surely a lesson like this does more harm than good. Learners would be forgiven for thinking there is no logic to prepositions at all.

(Issue of textbooks - good illustrations are essential - need to be well thought out and carefully designed in relation to the purpose of the lesson)

The language gap marks a very clear distinction between formal, specialised (school) knowledge and personalised, local (everyday) knowledge. For example, instructions are given in Zulu; content is given in English, and the two don't often overlap.

Observing a Zulu lesson was the most fascinating part of the day. The learners were finishing off some Maths in the ex books, when the teacher went and wrote *Uhlelo* (Language) on the blackboard and a list of Zulu proverbs (each proverb had a word missing and the point of the lesson was to introduce new vocabulary by getting learners to fill in the missing words). The teacher then began a sentence in Zulu and the Learners picked up from there and chorused a long Zulu verse. To an outsider (I do not understand Zulu) what was most apparent in this recitation was the learners' enjoyment of the language itself - they relaxed, smiled, performed actions to go with the verse and spoke with utter concentration, fluid rhythm and varied expression. The *sound* of the verse was beautiful and compelling, with perfectly pronounced "clicks" and rhymes. I felt as if I was listening to an award-winning Eisteddfod choir who had been rehearsing for hours, yet the recitation was apparently spontaneous.

Unable to follow the "content" of the lesson, I was perhaps more open to observing other dynamics. Right from the start of the Zulu lesson, there was a marked change in the energy of the classroom, as if everyone breathed a huge sigh of relief. The learners relaxed visibly and got ready to enjoy themselves; the teacher became more animated and more friendly. The rapport between teacher and learners was clearly evident for the first time that morning. The learners seemed genuinely fond of her and eager to please her, participating with remarkable enthusiasm; the teacher became charming and charismatic, acting things out for the class, making them laugh, touching them with affection. The formality and the chorusing fell away and communication between and among teacher and Learners seemed freer and more direct. Learners gave long, complex answers to questions (unlike the formulaic answers they gave in English) and the teacher did not respond with a "yes" or "no" (as she did with the English lesson), but encouraged them to speak, gave them clues and led them to the correct answers.

During the Zulu lesson I felt invisible. For the first time that morning, the teacher and Learners seemed completely unaware of me, caught up in the enjoyment of the lesson. Leading up to the Zulu lesson, I had felt the teacher becoming more and more uncomfortable with me, apologising to me for every small thing that went wrong, explaining the interruptions when she was called away to attend to other matters as acting deputy-principal, explaining that she had prepared notes but the photocopier wasn't working, etc. But during the Zulu lesson it was as if I was not there. I couldn't help wondering whether the teacher had deliberately chosen to switch quite suddenly to Zulu because that was *her* domain and she knew I couldn't judge her there, perhaps as a way of reclaiming her classroom back from this intruder who had thrown her off-balance. If this was her intention, she succeeded. The lesson was beyond my comprehension, not only in terms of the language spoken, but also because the intimacy and enjoyment set up between teachers and learners excluded me entirely. I felt envious and left out.

Remarkable discipline in the class. Learners participated fully and with a lot of enthusiasm.

**School: Semi-rural primary**

**Teacher: Mrs N teaches all subjects to Grade 6**

(Ken Harley's notes)

Grade 6 Maths

About 60 Learners seated in groups of 7-8, going over homework on decimal fractions, Learners reproducing homework solutions on blackboard.

A few latecomers reprimanded sternly but not unkindly.

Key to decimal addition seen as keeping decimal comma in place, presumably the reasons for this were dealt with before. Despite learners being called to write on blackboard, things keep moving (unlike some of the painfully slow stuff we've seen)

If I could characterise the lesson in any way it would be purposeful busyness. Difficulties were dealt with, but things kept moving.

Despite the crowded classroom, space is well utilised and although the building is quite humble the walls are bright - covered with poster, charts, maps, photos, etc the teacher's table is untidy - many books (not a feature in most other classes) are strewn around. And a copy of *Classroom Studies!* In comparison with some of the other classes, most of the learners were engaged with the task at hand.

After homework revision finished, another set of sums given. No contexts given for the sets of figures - one wonders what they represent or what we're measuring: is this a puzzle of a ritualistic kind, part of the mystery of a School Subject, or do the figures have some meaning related to life as we know it? Do they solve problems we need to tackle? Don't know. Seems a bit disembodied but has rules: 1) keep the decimal commas in line; 2) add correctly.

Immersion: The teacher is very much part of the class, moving from table to table, dealing with individual difficulties, interspersing Maths issues with questions, eg why no school uniform. Learners raise hand when task complete and teacher moves to each one, checking their answers. There's some pressure here as there are lots of waiting hands.

How do we judge learner activity? In previous lesson, learners were active in a more muscular way, going to the blackboard, writing on the blackboard, correcting each answer, etc. Here I'd say Learners were active at a more individual level and in a more cognitive way. They were actively engaged in the task. (see Taylor and Vinjevoold p 65)

Balance of lesson swings, lots of hands up, individual difficulties dominate, inevitably holding up the process as increasing numbers of learners wait. (Jackson, *Life in Classrooms* - one thing kids really learn at school is to wait their turn) This goes on 15-20 minutes.

Switch to newspaper activity. Put away books. Take out newspapers (*Echo* supplements) teacher writes 10 quick questions on blackboard, eg. How much does it cost? Can you find a man with glasses? Look for a pair of shoes, etc. Teacher not using notes. Questions written up

quickly (less than 3 minutes) then learners start. Teacher hands out large sheets of paper (1 per group) and collaboration begins: some answers are written, others have to be cut and pasted on the paper. Groups get going in quite an excited way. Some of the final instructions and hints are lost as learners are not keen to lose the opportunity to win “the prize” for the first group to complete the task successfully ( a bar of chocolate on the teacher’s desk). Very busy hum. (Teacher has done *Newspapers in Education* course) First group to complete presents to class, answers checked. Envious but generous cheer as the prize is awarded.

All papers put away and girls sent to the toilets. Very useful concluding remarks from teacher- Structure of newspaper explained, eg. if looking for sports item, go to back of paper, etc. How do so many girls get to and from toilet so quickly? [An interview the teacher after the lesson revealed that girls are sent to the toilets during lesson time and forbidden to go to the toilets during break time in an attempt to prevent the boys from abusing the girls in the toilets - a problem which the school had faced the previous year and which the teacher now felt had been solved by this new rule.]

On the teacher’s table are some jars filled with a curious variety of powders. These are handed out. Group leaders empty the jars outside - apparently these contained sand. Photocopied sheets handed out with a little salt poured onto each. On the sheets are crossword puzzles. [I’m struck by the enormous demands this kind of teaching places on the teacher - time and energy all drawn together in organisation. Teacher is responding to situations and making judgement calls all the time.]

Group leaders return from outside with fine sand in the jars. Sand and salt are now mixed. Question: Once mixed, can one identify the elements in the mixture? Explanation in Zulu. Again, I’m struck by the response when Zulu is used. Purpose is to illustrate the concept of a mixture. Completing the crossword is an individual activity, but learners discuss difficulties with each other. Seem to struggle, but are engrossed.

[Frequent references in lesson to “Standard 3” work as a point of reference. Interesting. Part of conception of learning as clearly sequenced, hierarchical process? If so, somewhat at odds with the constructivism of OBE and the “new” system.]

Crosswords pasted into workbooks. Couldn’t see the crosswords so I don’t really know what they’re about. Answers to crossword are chorused - water vapour, oxygen, nitrogen, etc. Now we know what air comprises, and we can’t see the mixture of elements as with the salt and sand.

Now - Reverse sides of large sheets used for Geography. 3 sections: country, capital, products exported, main river

[Teacher often says, “Now we are ... listening”. Variation of activity, maintenance of pace, learner activity depends very much on maintenance of clear boundaries between listening and doing. Creation / maintenance of joint understandings is necessary.]

There’s a stick on the windowsill next to teacher’s chair. Wonder if this is a coincidence.



[Compared to Table Mountain school, more covered in ten minutes than 1 ½ hours there.]

[See additional competences - checklist approach doesn't really convey the "inside" nature of successful teaching. Success of many activities depends on something else - joint understandings of what school is, role of teacher, role of learner, the frame in which it happens, the creation and maintenance of boundaries, e.g. "listening" and "doing". In turn the achievement of some of these accomplishments seems to depend on the teacher herself - do learners take her seriously? In this case, yes.]

Activity completed, homework given. Boys go to toilet. I'd wondered about them. A girl who doesn't look very happy accompanies teacher to the table. 2 pills are taken from teacher's bag and given to the girl who goes outside, presumably to get water. Achieved quite unobtrusively.

[If this was a one-off, stage-managed lesson, it isn't a rarity - learners seemed to know the routines, roles and rules.]

## **Appendix D: Examples of interview notes**

The following notes were made during interviews with two teachers - both women teachers in rural primary schools, both teaching Grade 7. The two interviews represent opposite ends of the spectrum in terms of the teachers' interest in the research process and willingness to share their experiences. The first teacher, who is a very successful student and fluent in English, was highly co-operative and interested. The interview lasted over an hour and we parted with a sense of friendship. The second interview was with a teacher who is failing the course and whose English is not good. She was also extremely shy and awkward, refusing to make eye contact and giggling a lot. The interview lasted a few minutes as the teacher was very guarded, often laughing at my questions and refusing to answer them until eventually I gave up. The other interviews fell somewhere between these two extremes, with most teachers showing a genuine interest in the research process and the instruments, and varying degrees of ability and/or willingness to seriously reflect on their practice in relation to the research question.

### **Interview One**

(The notes consist of the teacher's words as I transcribed them during the interview)

My overall feeling is that most of the skills I don't have. It was exciting to work with the instrument. I had to concentrate on things I usually overlook. Sometimes I just teach without really being conscious of everything I do.

My strongest roles were Mediator of Learning, Administrator and Pastoral Role. My weakest roles were Community Developer and Lifelong Learner. In the middle was the Designer of Learning Programmes. I do that but there are problems.

With Mediator of Learning, the problem is with our learners, their age and language. Children don't understand English at all, some can't even read. We can't separate the slow learners because there aren't enough teachers. I have 18-year-olds in Grade 7. Sometimes you teach knowing they are not grasping anything. I suggested to the principal that we separate those with problems in one class but he disagreed.

For 3 years I taught Grade 5 and continued with them to Grade 7 and my product was marvellous. They can communicate. They're doing well in secondary school. They're so lucky they have a white teacher now. They're so excited. They came to thank me. But the learners I have now are from the other teacher. They ask me, "How come these others can speak so fluently but you can't teach us?" I can't explain. It was a matter of three years.

I try to teach the three skills - listening, reading and writing. But our textbooks are outdated. I have to write everything on the blackboard for them to practise reading and then they can't take it home. Sometimes I make notes on my typewriter at home and photocopy them in town.

The textbooks are too theoretical. I want to teach them about things they can see and touch and know about. They used to learn by memorisation and that way the learners couldn't apply or transfer their understanding to contexts outside of the textbook or the test. I'm trying to run away from that.

Geography is interesting for them because it's about things they can see and touch. But with History it's still Jan van Riebeeck. We have a circuit syllabus we have to stick to. The teachers of the circuit come together with the SEM and we make a year plan. It doesn't work properly because teachers teach for the exam even if they know it's outdated or irrelevant. But when teachers complain they're seen as rude or lazy. People think they're just afraid their children will fail because they don't teach properly.

I influenced the circuit syllabus for English so that we teach according to themes. We formed subject committees and planned themes for Grades 4 - 7, like Communication, pollution, crime, water, school premises (keeping them nice), and hobbies. Each theme has reading, listening, writing, grammar. I gave a workshop on teaching these themes and the teachers were so excited. We must continue like this until C2005 is introduced. Now we're assessing continuously, formally and informally.

#### Designer of Learning Programmes

We don't have enough resources. Also, there's that, I don't know how to put it, in our learners. They don't say when they don't understand, they don't feel free. They just sit and listen. It has to do with all of us as a team. I introduce learners to active participation and group work but they're not used to it. Only by the end of the year are they responding. We all need to use the same methods. Children just sit and listen. I never know if they understand or not.

Giving individual attention is a problem because learners laugh at each other and mock one another which makes them afraid to speak or read aloud. This is solved a bit by group work.

Even with tests, there are not enough resources to copy tests. I write the test on the blackboard and while I'm writing the learner discuss the questions. A lengthy test, you have to write and rub out, write and rub out. Some are finished, some aren't. You are compelled to shorten your questions.

With competence 26 ("Interprets and designs learning programmes, some of which focus on ethical issues in religion, politics, economics, human rights and the environment"), that's a difficult issue! I have to be very careful. I'm in an IFP area. They are so sensitive. Like my colleague was teaching about premiers. The learners said the president was Buthelezi. She tried to correct the mistake but the learners were not happy. On election day learners were saying Mandela was dead. I couldn't comment. They'd think I was on the other side. I just said, "Mandela is an old man. You should be kinder."

In 1993, my first year at the school. After assembly we had news that a van of children had been shot. Four learners died and two from the neighbouring school. These children were new in our school, running away from an ANC area, coming to an IFP area. The one who shot them was a relative. It was a revenge killing. The other one is paralysed. She doesn't come to school anymore. We had a memorial service. Our principal told learners to wear uniform to show you are just a school child. Whoever wants to kill you must know he is killing an innocent child.

After that, enrollment decreased. Many people left our area. My colleague had to leave the

school because she had kept learners in the classroom when they wanted to go and see what had happened. She was trying to control them because it was dangerous. After that she was threatened. She had to get a transfer. The community supported anonymous letters she received. Strange cars used to drive around the school. She had to leave. So we have to be very careful.

The area wasn't safe at all. Learners were carrying guns. Boys who left school in Grade 6 went to train as soldiers. They were rude. All of them went, those rude boys, to become soldiers. Now it's much better. But some were so involved in violence that they are used to fighting among themselves. They don't carry weapons any more. They fight empty handed.

Policy doesn't understand. Sometimes you cannot say what's true because of fear. We tried to get the minister of transport to visit our school because our roads are bad and wanted attention. The indunas said he couldn't come, they don't want any ANC people here. Even the taxi drivers wanted him but the chief said no. So some things in policy are not practical.

Also critical thinking is not realistic. Some parents do appreciate it, but I really cannot understand that community. They are that type of people who want respect. I had a learner, she was 16. In June exams her parents came to tell me she was not writing, she was staying at home for several weeks because she had lost her boyfriend who was a famous taxi driver in the area and she had to observe customs to make her clean, like slaughtering an animal of some kind. More than that she had to be out of sight of many people. It was the first time I experienced that. I didn't question it. I just accepted it. For me, the girl was too young for all these things.

As community developer

Just today I went to visit a learner who was sick. They hadn't taken her to a doctor. I offered to pay for a doctor but her guardians were using a traditional healer - someone who prays and gives water. For three days she's away from school. I really don't understand. Sometimes it's hard to help. I was going to take the child to the doctor because she's an orphan but that was against the guardians.

Lifelong learner

As a wife it's very difficult. I think I'm overworking. I've got too many roles. The principals have been away for weeks, so I'm principal, deputy principal, HOD, and class teacher. There's not enough of us. I'm also trying to study and I've got four children and my husband is also my child because he can't do anything for himself. He's spoilt. Now that I'm studying I feel this is too much. He gets time to study but I don't. Financially we're having hard times too.

## **Interview Two**

(These notes were made immediately after the interview)

The teacher is deputy principal and acting principal and she teaches guidance to Grade 7 (this seems to be her only teaching load). After we have observed one 30-minute lesson, she makes it quite clear that will not teach any more and sends the learners outside to play. She takes us to her office which is empty but for her table and chair and the tray of Coke and biscuits that

has been prepared for us. The room is used as storage space for stationery and is full of unopened boxes. There is no sign of any work, no papers, books, etc. (this might be because they have been locked away for security reasons). She tells us she can't talk for long as she has to go to a textbook requisition in town at 11 am. She has not worked with the instruments because she has been absent from the school for the past two weeks, attending a principals' workshop. When asked about the workshop, she refuses to comment; she just shakes her head and laughs. She also will not talk about her Guidance programme. When asked what subjects she covers, she answers, "Just general subjects". When asked what themes she works with, she answers, "Just guidance". She says she doesn't use a textbook but she can't describe a learning programme either. I leave the school asking myself, "What does she do?" Mthembeni's field notes show that he is under the same impression:

The deputy principal's office is a store room. One cannot think the office belongs to someone who is involved in teaching. It is not clear what exactly she does at school during the week.

## **Appendix E**

### **Scenes from the research field**

## Contrasts



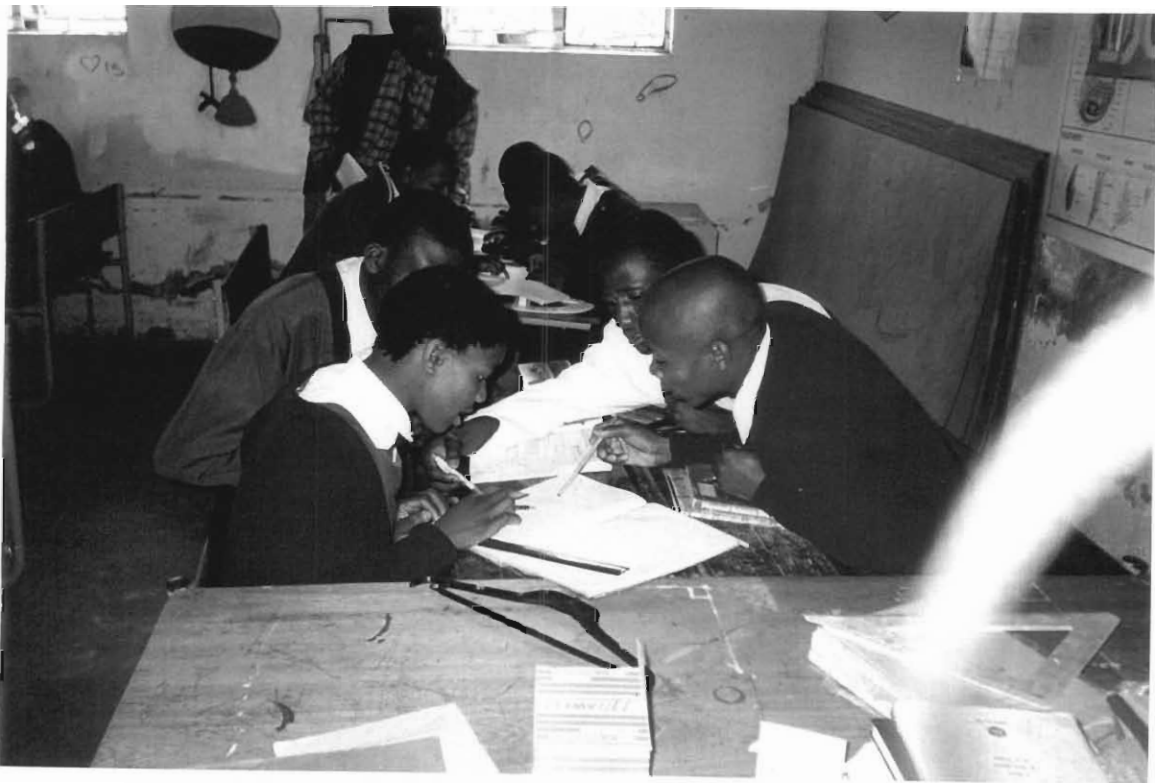
The orderly entrance of an ex Model-C school.



The playground of a rural primary school where enrolment has dropped since the area was ravaged by political violence and four learners were killed in an ambush on their way to school in 1993.

## Mechanical solidarity

This rural secondary school functions peacefully and effectively according to the traditional values held by the surrounding community.





## Scenes from rural schools



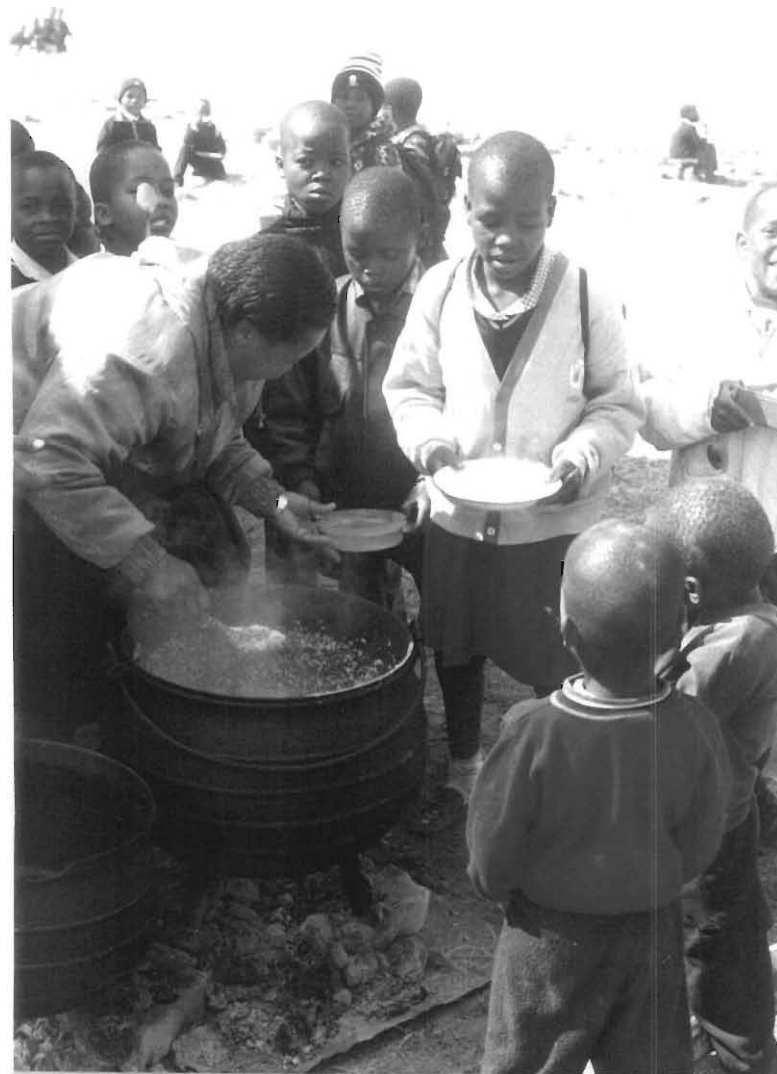
At this rural primary school, serving a community of plantation workers, there are too many children to fit into the three small classrooms, so grades are combined and lessons often take place under the trees.



In most rural schools, if there isn't a feeding scheme, there are hawkers selling chips and fruit.

## Feeding schemes

At this primary school in a rural area where most of the people are unemployed, teachers complained that learners do not cope because they are “always hungry and drowsy”.



At break, learners sat quietly and ate rice and soup provided by a government feeding scheme. It seemed that few of them had the energy to play.



## Scenes from rural schools



Extra-curricular cultural activities and feeding schemes are a common feature of rural schools.

Group work and “active learning” is often a matter of cutting and pasting.



## Field work



Interviews with teachers involved informal discussion, often during a guided tour of the school, as well as more formal discussions using the research instruments.

