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What Prevents Teacher Educators from Accessing Professional Development OER and MOOC? Storytelling and Professional Identity in Ugandan Teacher Colleges
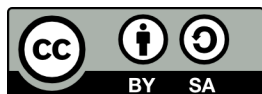
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Abstract: Tutors working in colleges of education in sub-Saharan Africa are responsible for teaching, and inspiring hundreds of thousands of aspiring teachers. Yet they have received little attention in the literature, often being depicted as a conservative cohort of professionals, unprepared for their role, yet resistant to change. This study reports on how 39 tutors from eight colleges in Uganda see their professional role and their responsibilities, and if professional development OER will have any impact on their professional role. The research adopted a storytelling approach. Tutors were supported in developing a (true) story about their work that they felt would give previously untold insight into their profession. The stories were analysed through a professional identity lens. The group emerged as agentive and caring, committed to developing as teacher educators but with a highly individual approach to their work. The nuanced understanding of tutor professional identity facilitated insights into why professional development OER aimed at this group did not have the intended impact.

Keywords: teacher professional development, OER, storytelling, professional identity.

Introduction

> … *by seeking help I became equipped, skilled and enlightened* (Norah, Cg1)

Like most stories generated during a storytelling research project with Ugandan teacher educators, Norah's focuses on professional learning. Norah narrates a trajectory for this learning which is replicated across the stories: a lack of skills or knowledge becoming visible through self-reflection and rectified through self-direction, a movement from embarrassment or shame to achievement and pride. In this paper, we unpack this trajectory within the contexts of education shifts in Uganda, and the attempted integration of a professional development Open Educational Resource (OER) designed to support teacher educators to develop their practice in line with the changing national agenda.

We draw on data from a research collaboration between The Open University, UK and Kyambogo University, Uganda. The study was initiated to understand the impact of OER resources developed by the TESSA (Teacher Education in Sub-Saharan Africa) Programme[1] on tutors' practices, and in particular a recently-launched MOOC (Massive Open Online Course). However, despite examples of impact identified through the MOOC's monitoring and evaluation activities, the preliminary stages of the research suggested that uptake in the Primary Teacher Colleges (PTCs) was limited; none of the

tutors participating in the research were aware of the MOOC; and only a minority had heard of TESSA more generally.

As these tutors worked in colleges where senior staff had participated in workshops to introduce the TESSA resources and the MOOC, this was unexpected. The research focus shifted to better understand attitudes to professional learning and mechanisms for knowledge sharing, and how these might explain the lack of demand for this sort of professional development.

Educational outcomes for children in Uganda remain low (MOES, 2016). Teachers are reported to struggle with the pedagogical skills and subject knowledge necessary to deliver the curriculum, with tensions between expectations for teaching and structural, cultural and financial school contexts (Bold et al, 2017; Bannink et al, 2019). PTCs produce around 7,000 primary teachers each year (Kyeyune, 2011), so the implication is that changes are needed in these institutions — yet little is known about the professional lives of teacher educators (also referred to as tutors) in these and similar contexts. Much of the limited literature available depicts a conservative cohort of professionals, unprepared for their role, who feel under-valued in the tertiary education hierarchy and who are resistant to change (O'Sullivan, 2010). This study aimed to move beyond this persistent characterisation. The research adopted a storytelling approach where tutors were asked to share and write a story about their experiences as a tutor that gave insight into their profession. The stories were then analysed to respond to the following questions:

1. What factors contribute to the professional identity of college tutors in Uganda?

2. In developing their identity as a tutor, what is important to them?

3. How does tutors' professional identity influence engagement with professional development activities?

A book containing all of the stories is available online[2]. In this paper we draw on excerpts to illustrate professional identity. It offers a specifically Ugandan lens to build on the work of Murphy and Wolfenden (2013), Stutchbury (2019) and Buckler (2019) — all of whom have emphasised the need for more professional dialogue between tutors to support their learning and professional identity development in contexts of policy change. In addition, by using an innovative storytelling methodology it provides deeper insights into tutors' professional lives and how professional learning might be accommodated and supported through — but not exclusively through — OER.

Context

A starting point for this paper is that the work of the thousands of teacher educators working in colleges and universities across the Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) region is both under-represented and under-conceptualised. In a global review of 137 papers about teacher education (Lunenberg et al, 2014), only two were from the 46 countries that make up SSA[3]. The key messages from the limited literature are that teacher educators are inappropriately recruited, under-qualified, discontented with their status, over-burdened and unsupported (see Ballantyne, 1999; Robinson, 2003; Baiyelo & Oke, 2015; O'Sullivan, 2010). They are positioned as experts within institutions (Akyeampong, 2017; Stutchbury, 2019; Murphy & Wolfenden, 2013), but also often depicted as inadequate and responsible for many of the failings at school level (see Obanya, 2015; Ogunyemi & Agbatogun, 2015; Pryor et al,

2012). In addition, much of the literature fails to recognise teacher educators as learners and takes very little account of what they need to learn, for what purpose and how this learning might come about. This matters because policy aspirations across SSA are asking for new approaches to teaching (MOES, 2012; MOGE, 2013). If teachers are expected to change, then teacher educators need to change as well.

Teacher education is complicated because student-teachers will learn as much from what is done as from what is said: it is important, therefore, that teacher education models the sort of pedagogy being promoted (Cochran-Smith, 2003). The Ugandan thematic curriculum for schools, introduced in 2006, aims to more effectively engage learners through dialogic teaching approaches (Altinyelken, 2010). At this time, the minimum qualification for tutors in Uganda was upgraded from a Diploma to a Bachelors' degree. The government also introduced an additional qualification — Certificate of Teacher Education Proficiency (CTEP) — but less than half of the 900 tutors who took the course passed the examinations (Kyeyune, 2011). O'Sullivan (2010) reports that CTEP — even for tutors who passed — did not support pedagogic change.

Following the introduction of the thematic curriculum, the Government of Uganda asked for educators to develop the skills and attitudes needed to be able to engage with technology to support teaching, and stated their intention to provide the necessary training (Altinyelken, 2010). Kyomuhendo and Kasule (2017) emphasise the cultural importance given to tutor professional knowledge in Uganda, an emphasis reinforced in high-status international assessments of educators in Ugandan settings (Wane & Martin, 2016).

Uganda continues to direct national and international funds towards teacher education. A Ministry of Education report highlighted four major investments, including £4m for the development of the 45 PTCs (MOES, 2017). This report also noted a key challenge in Uganda: the "over glorification of university education" and the "negative perception of vocational-skills training" (p. 10). Teacher education at PTCs sits uneasily between the two.

The TESSA OER were designed to provide professional development for teacher educators to support new curricula across Africa. They model learner-centred pedagogy (Schweisfurth, 2013) and focus on issues highlighted by teacher educator colleagues from across Africa in project-related workshops, for example, active learning and teaching, and ICT integration. The MOOC consolidated the OER into a discrete course for tutors. Evidence from MOOC evaluation surveys and case studies suggests that participation can fulfil its intended aspirations and provide tools to help teacher educators develop expertise in new pedagogies (Stutchbury et al, 2019). Uptake of the MOOC in Uganda was relatively low, especially given its promotion at a workshop which included senior representatives from every PTC and National Teacher College (NTC). [There were 308 registered users in Uganda between November 2017 and June 2019, compared to Nigeria (1293), Kenya (958) and Ghana (621)].

There is a tendency when interventions are not implemented to put this down to "barriers" (Schweisfurth, 2011). Checkland et al (2007) found that non-implementation of policy in the field of health was an emergent property of underlying realities and could be modified if these realities were addressed. 'Barriers' therefore are often framed as being external to the situation, and individuals become less important than the context. Building on Hodgkinson-Williams et al's (2017) suggestions about factors affecting OER uptake in similar contexts, this study aimed to better understand the working lives of tutors, their perceptions of underlying social and organisational realities that form

their professional identity and how these might impact on their uptake of professional development initiatives.

Teacher Educator Professional Identity

The second starting point for the study is the premise that "ultimately the quality of teacher education programmes is a reflection of the state of the hearts and minds of teacher educators and of their desire and ability to imagine their work in new and refreshing ways and then to take concerted action to realise their visions" (Dinkleman, 2011, p. 309). Having a clear sense of 'who they are' ('hearts and minds') and 'what they do' (how they imagine their work) is necessary to help teacher educators to respond to the changing context in which they work (Davey, 2010). 'Who they are' and 'what they do' can be expressed through the concept of professional identity. In this study, professional identity is considered to be 'emergent' as tutors take action in their colleges (Stutchbury, 2019). If we can find out about tutors' perceptions of professional identity it will provide insights into how they are constrained and empowered in their role and what sort of professional development might enhance their capacity to respond to changing contexts and policies.

A review of teacher education research reveals different perspectives on professional identity, depending on whether a socio-cultural stance (e.g., Menter, 2011, Swennen et al, 2010), a psychological perspective (e.g., Murray & Male, 2005) or a post-structural view (e.g., White, 2014; Dinklemann, 2011) is adopted. Drawing on Davey (2010) we take the view that professional identity embraces all these perspectives and:

1. is both personal and social in origin;

2. is multifaceted and fragmented, as well as evolving and shifting in nature, in response to national and institutional policies;

3. involves emotional states and value commitments;

4. involves some sense of group membership.

Within this framework, how tutors carry out their role (their agency) will be constrained and empowered by the social structures in which they operate (Archer, 1995). Social structures include roles and responsibilities (institutional structures), the curriculum and policy environment (embodied structures) and the ideas that underpin the activities of the teacher educators (discursive structures) (Scott, 2010). Structure and agency are seen as dialectic, giving rise to emergent properties that are not reducible to the sum of their parts (Tikly, 2015). Interactions between agents, between structures and between agents and structures can give rise to professional identity (as an emergent and fluid state) which cannot be reduced to the components from which they arise. Through taking action in their social setting, therefore, professional identity will emerge. Complementing Davey (2010) with Scott (2010), we propose that the professional identity of teacher educators will have several interrelated dimensions:

• past histories including roles and experiences

• the professional knowledge they hold and value

• how they see this complex role

- the political, institutional and cultural environment in which they work and their response to that environment
- the relationships they have within the institution with peers, teachers and students
- their sense of agency.

From our collective experience of working at the college level in Uganda, we recognise that tutors are not often encouraged to examine their identity or their practice or question the status quo — reflexivity and reflexive discourse are not common. Yet this does not mean that they are not 'agentive'. For example, they can negotiate difficult economic or political situations and create opportunities (Stutchbury, 2019). Their agency is not necessarily directed towards pedagogic changes, and the challenge for teacher education is to understand how it might be (see Pawson & Tilley 1997). This challenge shaped the second research question, which acknowledges that professional identity is, in part, self-constructed. We also recognise (as highlighted in Wolfenden & Adinolfi, 2019) that agency in relation to professional decisions can manifest as 'non-action' and that this is different to a lack of engagement. In this research we were interested in recognising tutors' professional identity and what this means for their professional practice (particularly in relation to taking — or considering taking — action to *develop* their professional practice) through a research design based on storytelling.

The Study

A team of four researchers (two UK-based and two Ugandan) visited eight colleges in July 2018. We spent one day together in one college to collaboratively refine the methodology and then split into two teams, with one team visiting three colleges and the other visiting four. The team conducted semi-structured interviews with college principals and vice-principals. These were designed to elicit contextual information to better understand the social environment of the college. However, the primary activity in each college was a storytelling research workshop.

Using a Storytelling Approach to Explore Professional Identity

'Stories' are often associated with fiction or entertainment. But the process of generating (non-fiction) stories through research aims to be as rigorous as other qualitative approaches such as interviewing and focus groups. In fact, these methods are often used to help build the narrative and generate data within the process. Krueger (2018) describes the disciplined inquiry necessary for story research; a process which demands focused preparation and follows deliberate and transparent steps to generate and document participants' stories.

Storytelling — as we use it in this research — positions the storyteller at the heart of their story. This helps us to understand how they see themselves in relation to the structures within which they exist and how they see themselves in relation to other people in these structures (Bhaskar 1994). It does not just extract knowledge from participants but supports them to think about and share their experiences differently and, through this, can "humanise and politicise learning processes" (Wheeler et al, 2018, p. 1).

Across the eight colleges, 39 tutors participated in the workshops to develop and share a story about their professional experiences. To minimise disruption at the colleges we did not have a strict sampling policy. We suggested to Principals that the workshops would work better with < 8 participants and the tutors who attended were those who were either selected by the Principal and

released from teaching for the day, or those with a light-teaching schedule on the day of the workshop who volunteered out of interest. We did not turn anyone away who wanted to participate, so workshops had between 3-10 participants.

We drew on the transformative storytelling approach developed by Wheeler et al (2018) but adapted it to be workable in one-day workshops, maintaining a focus on the core elements of the approach: iteration, listen and trust. Through a range of creative activities, tutors were supported to write a story they thought would help people to understand what it was like to be a tutor in Uganda. While the stories are — for each tutor — a personal story, the iterative nature of the workshop activities encouraged multiple sharing of each story as it developed. The intention was that this would support understanding across the group of tutors and researchers of how stories are linked to each other, and the wider society in which they are positioned (Trees & Kellas, 2009).

This approach aligned with our conceptual frameworks of professional identity, and Bruner's writing about the symbiotic nature between "our experience of human affairs" and "the narrative we use in telling about them" (1996, p. 132). We drew on the work of Jackson (2013) and the idea that telling stories to other people about our experiences can change our sense of who we are. The space to iteratively articulate an experience and shape it into a coherent narrative can help people to see the links between individuals, their actions and the institutional structures in which they are operating. A portrait of professional identity emerges through a cycle of reflection and narration around how the teacher educators were — or could have been — agentive in relation to the event they describe in their story. We do not suggest that the stories provide a comprehensive account of the tutor experience, therefore, rather an insight into how tutors see themselves and/or how they want to be seen by their colleagues and the outside world.

Data Collection and Analysis

The 'data' consists of 39 hand-written stories (between 200-1000 words in length) (Uganda College Tutors, 2019) and the notes from discussions around story development[4]. Analysis of a story process requires a different approach to what might be used for an interview transcript, and we drew on a quote from Walter Benjamin (1973): "a story [...] does not expend itself. It preserves and concentrates its strength". We first aimed to identify this 'concentrated strength' and looked for story archetypes (Lewis, 2011) framed around the six dimensions of teacher educator professional identity set out above. We asked ourselves 'What dimension does this story *mainly* speak to?' The researchers each identified one archetype per story, before sharing and debating these until we (as a group) agreed. We then re-read the stories and workshop notes and asked ourselves 'What else is the tutor communicating?' in order to elicit what appeared to be important to the tutors in relation to how they represented themselves as professionals. This was an iterative, dialogical process of analysis that began in the workshops themselves and was naturally influenced by our own histories, positionalities and professional interests and experiences. We were careful to acknowledge these when different interpretations of the data arose. Relatedly, while reflecting on the stories and the workshop notes, we considered what was *not* discussed, as well as what the participants chose to share (Rosiek & Heffernan, 2014): the research team have a long history of involvement in teacher education and it was interesting to consider why key issues from the wider field were absent in the stories. The interview data was used to triangulate and contextualise the storytelling data.

Findings: What Do the Stories Tell us about Tutor Professional Identity in Uganda?

While much of the literature positions teacher educators' practice in Sub-Saharan Africa as static and resistant to change, tutors in this research presented themselves as dynamic, and open to — as well as able to enact — change. In the first stage of analysis we categorised 20 of the 39 stories under the archetype of 'professional knowledge', i.e., this was the primary dimension of identity that was showcased through the story. The second stage of analysis revealed that, in 26 of the stories, tutors emphasised the importance of continuing to learn and develop professional practice throughout their career. The low levels of engagement with the OER, therefore, appeared even more perplexing. In this section we showcase excerpts from the stories (Uganda CollegeTutors, 2019) organised around our professional identity framework. We then draw on this data to suggest why the OER may not have had the anticipated impact within the colleges.

Past Histories

The stories suggest that despite low salaries tutors feel that their role is a respected one, valued by society. This is particularly in comparison to the role of a teacher which tutors spoke of somewhat negatively. Haruna's story (Cg5) compares an incident from his days as a teacher when he was threatened by a parent wielding a panga, to the respect he commands now he is a tutor: "Of course I don't tell student-teachers that they won't be respected, we have to tell them that [teaching] is an honourable profession. But they do already know how other people view teachers, and often come to me and ask 'once I am a teacher, what does it take to become a tutor?'" Peter (Cg7) writes how he "encourages all students… to read hard and become tutors themselves". Because most of the tutors started their careers as teachers, this is significant in terms of their identity — defined in relation to what it no longer is as much as what it is now.

Over the past decade, as we discussed above, the Government of Uganda has invested in tutor professional development. As a result, younger tutors had been promoted from schoolteacher to college tutor following a period of upgrading at university. However, a common experience among the older tutors was receiving notification of a promotion from teacher to tutor with no warning, no training and little time to adjust, or they were suddenly moved from one subject area to another within the college:

> I trained as a secondary school teacher to teach agriculture, but in 2004 I was posted to a PTC and appointed to teach agriculture… I will admit myself that I had inadequate experience. I always felt challenged… because these students were me not so long ago! (Samuel, Cg1)

> I remember how I felt when my boss asked me to teach local language education, I thought to myself 'this is going to be a big challenge'. I did not even know where to begin, you see I had never taught this subject, not even for a second […] It was more than difficult, it was like writing on water, really a nightmare. (Jackson, Cg1)

Norah, whose story we opened this paper with, describes how she was unexpectedly promoted from being a secondary school teacher to a tutor of primary-level student-teachers with no additional training. Norah was so "unsure and scared" about her ability to supervise trainee teachers' practical work that she went out of her way to avoid it, making excuses to her students, and feeling wretched about it.

Tutors took it upon themselves to get up to speed. One day Norah worked up the courage to ask a senior colleague for help. She frames this as a turning point in her career, from which she has "not looked back". Jackson writes "Like a small stream, I was a trickle, but I […] tried to imagine my potential as a mighty river. I tried to learn as much as I could about the subject. I visited resource centres, I scoured the college library… I read the syllabus, I re-read the curriculum… So I started slowly and in fear, but with persistence… now [two decades later] I am so resourceful in local language teaching that others come to me for guidance… I am now that mighty river". Samuel writes "I took on this task with commitment and intent… while I had serious doubts to do the work well, I now feel confident and enjoy the profession I did not train in, which came as somewhat of a surprise". The 'sink or swim' situation that launched these tutors' career in teacher education appears to have shaped their identities around being responsible for their own success.

Professional Knowledge

As noted, we identified professional knowledge as the most common story archetype. While some did emphasise the importance of collegial learning — "The tutoring journey brings with it extended, life-long friendships with colleagues who become people to learn from and learn with." (Peter, Cg7) — the notion of working and learning independently was a much more regularly recurring theme. The most commonly described method was the importance of trying out new techniques and reflecting on student interest, behaviour, feedback and grades to evaluate effectiveness:

> Later the students were amazed that the salt that had formed was of the same nature, colour and taste that they had dissolved in their water earlier on. They began to shout 'Wooh! This science is truly a miracle!' [...] I realised how different their excitement was [...]. Their reaction just made me feel it was my best lesson as a tutor! (Terah, Cg5)

> I asked the students what they knew about circle properties. I was surprised by their answers: 'it is difficult!' It is for mathematicians only!'… I don't know why but I had a quick realisation that if they feared the topic, the plan I had made for the lesson would not do anything to help them feel less afraid. I abandoned the lecture notes I had planned on using… I just got the students to draw circles and we talked about them together. (Richard, Cg8)

Given that tutors' professional learning was predominantly self-directed, formal training courses, which were only rarely available, were highly valued. On occasion they could lead to promotion but the intrinsic value of these courses and their contribution to building other dimensions of professional identity was specifically highlighted in eight stories. They most commonly described training focused on learner-centred approaches:

> I used to use the lecture method – just as I had been taught. I would prepare my notes from the textbooks, stand at the front and deliver my lecture. Afterwards the class was usually somewhat quiet. I never really knew if they had taken the knowledge in, or not. Then, I was invited to a workshop on different methods of teaching Science. My eyes were opened up! I quickly developed an urge to try practical methods! Only a week after I attended the workshop, the opportunity arose… (William, Cg5)

Abdallah (who chose not to reference his college) wrote: "…[it] was time for me to get serious and practise [learner-centred methods]". He describes how he was able to engage a student who was bored in Kiswahili lessons by teaching her the Kiswahili words for amusing insults. He attributed formal training to giving him the confidence to "understand the kind of people you are dealing with"

to "kill negative attitudes" towards difficult subjects. Tutors linked the ideas and approaches gained through formal development programmes to a shift in how they saw their role and their students, which we turn to now.

How Tutors See Their Complex Role

Taken as a whole the stories suggest that tutors recognise their role as extending beyond the classroom. Many highlighted the responsibility to support students (men and women mostly in their late teens and early 20s) through a wide variety of social issues. In 'Unique duty as a tutor', Augustine (Cg7) wrote about a situation that opened his eyes to the challenges young people face: "…an idea sparkled in my mind that teaching was not enough, however engaging and practical the methods, these young people also needed mentors to talk to and guide them through their studies". Sarah (Cg8) writes about a time she found two students unconscious after a drug and alcohol binge: "I had a choice. I could discard these boys, or I could help them… I made more of an effort to get to know them as people and encouraged other people to do the same so they would feel they had support all over campus".

Some stories also point to the external-facing role of tutors. In 'Teacher educators as a community resource', Waliya (Cg2) was invited by a former student to visit their school and lead some informal in-service training for the teachers. This was so successful she now offers the training to other local schools. In fact, almost all the stories, whatever the focus, contain an explicit or implicit message about the value of the tutor role: to society in general, or examples of being celebrated by others for their work:

> A tutor's students are like arrows which shoot up in various directions, and every arrow has a catch, which is a successful career. I have trained students who have gone on to become classroom teachers, of course, but also politicians, head-teachers, mentors and counsellors… I like to think: each year 500 students pass through my hands. These students go on to become teachers and teach 100 children each year. Many of these children will be inspired by the teachers I taught, and they too will join the college… and they too will become teachers and teach 100 children, and the journey continues. (Peter, Cg7)

However, while it is widely reported in the literature that classrooms in Uganda are not supporting the learning of all children (Bannink et al, 2019) there was no reference across the stories — explicitly or implicitly — to the collective effort required from tutors and colleges to respond to such a big challenge. None of the stories pointed to a level of urgency that we might expect on improving teaching and learning. In fact, without exception, challenges written into the stories were articulated as personal. While there were examples — like in Norah's story — of having taken or given advice to someone, problems and, ultimately, solutions lay with the tutor themselves, in their own immediate sphere of influence. This is also apparent in the way the tutors wrote about success in their role; it mainly linked to students' immediate enthusiasm for or understanding of a particular idea or concept or validated by a high examination pass-rate. Success is only linked to the ongoing work of their students in primary school classrooms in three of the stories (including Peter's story, above).

Responses to Political, Institutional and Cultural Environments

The complexity of tutors' roles has been recognised at policy-level: two years before the research took place, the Ugandan National Assessment of Progress in Education board carried out a study into the

literacy and numeracy proficiency of children, in-service teachers, pre-service teachers and tutors (UNEB, 2015). The report pointed to a range of issues in the colleges that trickled down to impact on children's learning and how colleges could better support and prepare student-teachers to deal with challenges at school level. Only two stories alluded to this:

> The moment I interacted with the community I saw that even those I did not teach were saying that I was a good teacher educator, simply because I didn't just teach students to pass their exams, but I also gave them insight into the world of schools […] All in all, a good teacher educator should be one that engages their students positively and talks about negative effects that might hamper the teachers' career in the process of their duty to educate the masses. (Nuhu, Cg3)

'When change changes you' (Josephine, Cg7) is a story within a story. In it, a tutor tells her student-teachers that they are going to learn about conducive classroom environments, and proceeds to tell *them* a moving story about the relationship between a teacher and a child who has become withdrawn due to a difficult home life and bullying. The story concludes: "Then one student said 'but Madam, I thought this lesson was about how to make the classroom conducive to learning'. I said, 'but it was'. A conducive environment doesn't start with wall charts or bright posters or the way in which you arrange the desks, a conducive environment starts with you, and the care, love and empathy you demonstrate for the children you teach."

Relatedly, none of the stories referenced the revised curriculum for schools, or how their own teaching had had to adapt to support teachers to engage with this curriculum Only two of the stories referenced the changing nature of the teaching role and the identities of young people joining the college:

> Teaching a 21st century teacher can be challenging if you don't understand them and teach them in the way they want to be taught. You have to listen to them to be able to respond to their specific needs. (Ally, Rufungura PTC)

Overall, the stories suggest that individual tutors are less engaged that might be expected in the external environment, especially the urgent — and very public — message around the need to improve the quality of learning and teaching in Uganda. Rather than relate their role to this challenge, they nearly all focused on their immediate students, and on helping them to succeed in their examinations. None of the stories talked about students' teaching practice, or visiting students in schools, except one case of a tutor's informal visits unrelated to her formal responsibilities (Waliya, Cg2).

Relationships

Looking across the stories, the relationship between tutors and individual students appears to be hugely important. In 'Making the difference', for example, Stephen (Cg7) writes about a student who struggled in his class. He took a special interest in this student: "I took on the role of John's social studies tutor, but also his mentor, guide and coach. I offered him remedial classes every single day."

Other stories highlighted how tutors' experiences had led them to be kinder and more tolerant of poor behaviour, understanding that it was often underpinned by some deeper emotional problem: "[this experience] reminded me that understanding students as individuals, understanding their backgrounds is important, but also the things that are going on in their lives as they study."

(Augustine, Cg7). In 'Love not fear' (anonymous) the tutor took a diploma in special needs education and learned to be more inclusive: "I also learned here that the stick I had been carrying was scaring the learners, and that love, a positive attitude and kind language were the keys to motivating learning, not fear."

Relationships with colleagues, on the other hand, were mainly represented as reserved and hierarchical. They were most commonly described in terms of the giving and receiving of advice or being directed to do something by someone in authority. The hierarchical nature of relationships in the colleges is illustrated in a number of stories (described above) in which tutors describe being asked to do something of which they had no previous knowledge or experience.

In all the examples of these requests there was an acceptance that having been asked to do something by the Principal it should not be questioned. There seemed to be no expectation of being offered training or support, and no apparent resentment at being put in this position. Rather, there was a sense of pride that the person in charge had faith in their ability to take on this challenge.

There are only two stories which describe how tutors have worked together as a professional group. For example, Norah, (Cg1) wrote "Now, years later, I actively try and share my skills with other tutors who are new. Therefore, I encourage other tutors to feel free to consult each other. As tutors we should always share, consult and discuss amongst ourselves, to become better teacher educators and learn new strategies to overcome our challenges." However, both examples allude to the notion that this practice of working together is not the norm, rather something these tutors have worked hard to facilitate; there is an implicit suggestion that sharing knowledge and skills is a top-down practice.

Their Sense of Agency

Much of the literature on tutors in Sub-Saharan Africa suggests that they struggle to act agentively. Buckler (2019), for example, describes how tutors at a college in Ghana feel frustrated and insulted by restrictions on their behaviour and teaching. Stories across our collection, however, showcase agentive acts both inside and outside the classroom. For example in 'Going digital' Susan (Cg6) writes about how she revolutionised PE teaching at her college by co-opting the IT department to help her students to access sports and training videos online. Grace (Cg5) describes how she fought for the admission of a visually impaired student who senior colleagues wanted to reject on grounds Grace thought to be uninformed by contemporary inclusion policies. William (Cg5) writes about a time he overlooked a misdemeanour from two cheeky but promising students that would have led to an exclusion if the Principal had found out. The story is written with much comedy but the decision to protect their academic record was reached through serious deliberation. More generally, agency is represented through the most common story archetype — the proactive decision to build their professional knowledge. For example: "The task ahead of me was enormous but I knew that I had to tackle it wholesomely" (Henry, Cg3), "This story is about how I helped to shift the reality [of student re-takes] to a number of distinctions" (Kwizera, Cg3).

It is important to remember that the stories present a persona that the tutors constructed through the narrative, and the approach itself encourages participants to put themselves at the centre of their story. However, the fact that so many tutors chose to write a story which positions them as agentive suggests that there are more opportunities for agentive behaviour within the tutor role than the literature has previously implied.

Discussion and Conclusions

The stories reveal a group which values the professional knowledge that they hold and see themselves as more expert than the teachers they are preparing. They enjoy the recognition this brings and feel pride when their students do well. They are caring, motivated and will seek advice when they encounter difficulties. For many a key part of their identity has been shaped by the past experience of having been assigned to a role in the college that they had not trained in. They accepted the situation and saw themselves as independently responsible for their own development. Overcoming difficulties alone was a source of pride, although formal professional development opportunities were enthusiastically embraced. How can what the stories suggest about tutor professional identity help us to understand why the OER did not take off in the colleges as expected? We suggest four key interrelated reasons.

Expectations of and for Professional Development

The tutors framed 'Professional Development' in their stories as an opportunity to attend a formal programme. In all cases this was something that they were 'selected' to attend by a member of the senior team and the training itself took place face-to-face outside of the institution. While there were many examples of tutors seeking additional knowledge or skills, these were all informal opportunities and were viewed as serving a different purpose, i.e., responding to an immediate need. While the underpinning ideas of the OER were present in tutors' depiction of their work, they find themselves in a hierarchical system with very little autonomy over their professional progression. In addition, tutors were keen to gain promotion before they retire, to enhance their pension. Promotion is not necessarily related to demonstrated skills in learning and teaching but rather to attending particular promotion programmes and passing exams; these kinds of formal professional development opportunities were highly sought after especially among the older participants. Finally, none of the tutors referenced the Internet as a location for formal professional learning and the challenges they identified in their work were very specific and related to a perceived lack of understanding around a particular subject or pedagogical approach. Few looked online for learning opportunities, but even if they had it is unlikely with these intentions in mind that they would have come across the OER. The senior staff who had attended the OER workshops recognised tutors' desire for professional development and had responsibility for allocating places in programmes but most had not shared these free resources with the tutors. We suggest, therefore, that the TESSA OER do not align with college staff's collective understanding of the opportunities for and outcomes of developing professional knowledge, including a lack of formal accreditation.

Tutors not Recognising the Long-term Challenges that the OER Aim to Address as their Challenge to Tackle

The MOOC was designed around the challenges in education in Uganda at the primary level and aimed to address these at the college level. However, there was no sense of collective ownership of these challenges or similar challenges facing many other countries — chronic underachievement, a lack of support for teachers, under-resourcing and new curricula calling for radical new approaches. For nearly fifteen years, teachers and tutors have been working in the context of a new thematic curriculum, demanding the ability to communicate enhanced subject knowledge in creative, inclusive, ways. The effort expected from teachers and teacher educators is considerable; they are all being asked to teach in a way in which many have not been taught and have no experience. The tutors

identified some of these challenges as they related directly to their own work but the challenges at the primary level were not recognised as their own. They were understandably preoccupied with the immediate risks to their success and that of their students, for example, long commutes to colleges, intensive workloads, a lack of resources for teaching and student-wellbeing. Their professional time, energy and agency was directed towards these local issues, not the more widespread impact of their role beyond the college.

While the notion of group membership (Davey, 2010) is important in the shaping of their professional identity, there was no sense in these stories of tutors feeling part of a professional *team* — people working together to recognise, discuss and address the national-level task of how to prepare teachers for a new, more inclusive context. This builds on an observation from Moon and Umar (2013) that there is a culture of individualism in which the autonomy in the classroom extends to all aspects of work of teacher educators, and meetings are administrative rather than discursive or developmental: the desire to change among these tutors is strong but the individualism culture is still evident.

The Importance of OER 'Champions'

The TESSA programme's efforts to engage a wide audience of tutors with the MOOC drew, in part, on Wolfenden et al's (2017) study of OER engagement in higher education institutions in East Africa. They emphasised the importance of local 'champions' of OER who drew on them in their teaching and promoted them among their colleagues in and beyond their institutions. By strategically engaging college principals and deputy principals with the MOOC through workshops, it was intended they would enact this champion role on return to their institutions. In fact, when interviewed (six months after the workshop), most spoke sheepishly about not having got around to sharing the workshop resources. The walls of the college libraries were covered with posters promoting various education initiatives; TESSA, quite understandably, may have been viewed by the Principals as just another competing programme and a diversion from the core curriculum. These libraries were full of books but mainly multiple copies of a small range of textbooks. There were signs banning students and tutors from taking their own books or electronic devices into the libraries. The practice of using a range of resources to support tutor learning and delivery of the curriculum was not established within the colleges. While many tutors described finding their own resources for learning this was positioned as an individual innovation and not something that was commonplace. While the MOOC aligned with the national framework and curriculum and modelled the kinds of things that are valued at a policy level, the workshops did not engage or persuade the senior staff members to be 'champions' in the way that was hoped. This is something that the programme needs to give more attention to in the future by finding ways to engage with existing agendas at a college level.

Technology

Hodgkinson-Williams et al (2017) highlight access as a key constraint in the uptake of digital resources and it is crucial that this element is recognised in terms of these tutors. Only three of the stories feature ICT and the opportunities it affords. Only half of the tutors have email addresses and interviews with College Principals suggested that the level of ICT skills amongst the staff is quite low. In some of the rural colleges, electricity supplies are erratic, making accessing digital resources even more difficult and unlikely. Notices in the library of some of the colleges also suggest that the electronic devices that students have access to (mobile phones) are seen as a distraction rather than an educational resource. Even the tutors who owned a smart phone and could get online the connection was not made between

professional learning or the availability of resources and the Internet. ICT is still regarded as an 'add on' and is part of the social rather than the professional lives of tutors.

Concluding Thoughts

The stories have helped us to understand how tutors see their professional identity and the things that are important to them. It challenges the existing literature, and portrays an engaged, proud professional group. However, they work in a very hierarchical system, which means that they have little autonomy over their careers. Many take personal responsibility for solving immediate problems (like being asked to teach an unfamiliar subject) but not for their professional development, other than pushing to attend up-grading courses.

In some ways this study demonstrates the untapped potential of this workforce; the storytelling methodology gave the tutors the opportunity to demonstrate that they see themselves as agentic and can enact agency within their professional settings. However, collective ownership of the challenges facing the broader education system and issues facing teachers, alongside mechanisms for collaborative working, are required to harness the energy and commitment and agency displayed by this group of college tutors. Without a collective effort — and support for teacher educators to work as a collective — interventions at the college level may be unlikely to have the desired impact on teachers' work in schools.

The insights that have emerged from the tutors' stories have significant implications for the implementation of educational initiatives. TESSA was originally conceived as an initiative in which the effort was focused on the site where change is needed most — the classroom (Elmore, 1980). Gathering evidence (Stutchbury, 2016; Wolfenden et al, 2017; Hodgkinson-Williams et al, 2017) suggests that without institutional support and a cultural shift that encourages the sharing of resources, this is not enough. Many TESSA champions have emerged over the years but deep penetration into the system has only come about through a combination of champions, and engagement at the top. For the TESSA MOOC initiative, this did not happen in Uganda. However, the evidence from this research is that there is a desire to learn, a sense of moral purpose and professional resilience amongst this group, which could be harnessed more effectively to improve teaching and learning at the college, and the classroom level.

Notes
1. TESSA is a pan-African network of teachers and teacher educators, in partnership with The Open University, UK, see http://www.tessafrica.net/
2. http://www.tessafrica.net/sites/www.tessafrica.net/files/files/TESSA_UgandaResearch_StoryBook_OnlineVersion.pdf
3. These two studies were both from South Africa. The review contained 23 papers from the Netherlands — a country with a population less than half that of Uganda's.
4. Only two of the eight colleges had Internet access, and one of these had only one working computer. We invited tutors to bring laptops to the workshops but only one tutor did. This meant that stories were scripted and edited by hand and gives an insight into the more general access to computers at work (and, as suggested by the Ugandan researchers, the practice of not using personal computers for work activities). The research team typed up the stories and the analysis was undertaken using the on-screen versions.

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