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Media representation of teachers across five countries

Title:

Media representation of teachers across cultures in a globalised world

Corresponding author:

Dr Eileen Honan
School of Education
The University of Queensland
St Lucia Queensland 4072
Email: e.honan@uq.edu.au
Phone +61 7 336 56506

Authors

Alhamdan, Bandar; Al-Saadi, Khalid, Baroutsis, Aspa; Du Plessis, Anna; Hamid, Obaidul M.,
and Honan, Eileen

Affiliation

School of Education, The University of Queensland, Brisbane, Australia.

Biographical details

Bandar Alhamdan is a TEFL lecturer at King Saud University and a doctoral student at The University of Queensland. Bandar's research interests include TEFL education policy, EFL teaching and learning practices.

Khalid Al-Saadi has recently completed doctoral studies at The University of Queensland. He is a Lecturer in E-learning at Sultan Qaboos University. Khalid's research interests include E-learning, community of practice, and higher education professional development.

Aspa Baroutsis is a doctoral student at The University of Queensland. Aspa's research interests include teachers' work and careers, media representation of teachers and learning with information communication technologies.

Anna du Plessis is a doctoral student at The University of Queensland whose research interests include education leadership, teacher development, classroom and behaviour management strategies, teachers' work and careers with special focus on novice teachers and teachers in out-of-field positions.

Dr M. Obaidul Hamid is Lecturer in TESOL Education at the University of Queensland. He researches the policy and practice of TESOL in developing societies.

Dr Eileen Honan is Senior Lecturer in English and Literacy Education at The University of Queensland. Her research interests include the use of digital texts in classrooms, working with teachers as critical researchers, and educational reform in low developing countries.

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Abstract

This paper reports on an investigation into the representation of teachers in newspapers in five countries. An innovative methodology was used to develop a method of inquiry that supports a deeper understanding of media representations of teachers which can also be used by other researchers in comparative education. The paper explores relevant literature on teachers' work and media studies, and describes the decisions made about the selection of newspapers from the five countries and the analytical framework. Central to the project was the development of an analytic framework which we applied to our analysis of the media data collected from the five countries. The process revealed the construction of four categories of teacher identity: the caring practitioner; the transparent (un)professional; the moral and social role model; and the transformative intellectual. The aim was not to generalise categories but to offer them as they were found in newspapers during this time frame. The data analysis demonstrates the applicability of the innovative methodology while the project also contributes to locally translated understandings of teacher representations. The paper concludes with a reflection on the effectiveness of the methodology for comparative research.

Keywords

media representations of teachers; comparative representations of teachers; newspaper representations of teachers.

Introduction

In a climate of increased corporatisation of education, teachers are the object of media attention (Cohen, 2010, Hanushek, 2011). Research suggests that newspapers all over the world publish articles about teachers that are “frequently unfair” and “partially substantiated” (Pettigrew & MacLure, 1997, 392). They often blame teachers for poor student performance and poor educational outcomes (Ball, 2008) and present a negative image of teachers (Keogh & Garrick, 2011), creating a “crisis mentality towards education” and teachers (Thomas, 2006). This paper reports on an investigation to compare this media scrutiny of teachers across five different countries.

Aldridge and Christensen (2008) emphasise how the constant process of change causes education policies to travel worldwide with a major influence on local traditions and expectations that teachers act on in the classroom. Our aim in the paper is not to make generalisations about the media representations of teachers within or across the five countries. However, there are some remarkable similarities across the five countries and across quite diverse newspapers, in the constructs of teachers and teaching, that could reflect the influence of global processes and policies.

Although it could be argued that the social expectations of teachers and teaching are culture-specific, varying across countries depending on the beliefs, values, customs and ideas about what is important for education, similarities of their actual images were found in our newspaper data. This could be associated with the postcolonial spread of Western education into other parts of the world (Ball, 1998), the increased flow of students from the South to educational institutions in the North (Rizvi, 2011), the spread of homogenising education policies through different world bodies including the World Bank, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development

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(OECD) and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) (Jones, 2007) and/or the dominance of Western media in the rest of the world (Cottle, 2009). In other words, the local and culture-specific views of teachers might be increasingly replaced by universalising tendencies. However, very little is known about the similarities and differences of the emergent themes contributing to the images of teachers (Cole & Barsalou, 2006). In our study, we examined the local media perceptions of the different societal expectations of teachers to highlight similarities and differences between them while also attempting to understand the impact of these global homogenising trends on teachers and the teaching profession.

In terms of the organisation of the paper, we begin with a brief overview of the relationship between the media and teachers' work. We then introduce our theoretical framework followed by a description of our methodology processes. Our data analyses identified constructs of teachers and teaching that are discussed in the literature that we present in this paper to show the inductive and deductive connections made.

Media representations of teachers' work

The media representation of teachers and their work is increasingly impacting upon the actions of policy makers and the public perceptions of the success of education initiatives (Lingard and Rawolle, 2004). The media play a significant role in shaping perceptions of their readers while shaping society, its concerns and expectations about public matters such as teachers and quality education (Cohen, 2010; Hall, 1997; Mills & Keddie, 2010; Threadgold, 2006). Whitty (2000) argues that the development of a low-trust relationship between society and its teachers is often exacerbated by government and media attacks on teachers.

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There is a large body of work on media representations of different aspects of life and society in various fields including media and cultural studies (Gentz & Kramer, 2006; Talbot, 2007).

Within the education field, discourse analysts have reported on teachers represented in various types of media; for example the construction of teachers in popular culture (Weber & Mitchell, 1995), schools and classrooms in newspaper advertisements (Janks, 2010). Some of this work is informed by the work of Gunter Kress on the 'grammar' of images (Kress, & van Leeuwen, 1995). The representation of teachers in newspapers has received modest attention (Goldstein, 2011; Keogh & Garrick, 2011; Pettigrew & MacLure, 1997) and there has been little work that focuses on the language of the texts rather than the images. While there has been considerable work on comparing media accounts of the implementation of education policies across different countries (see for eg. special issue of *Journal of Education Policy*, 2004, 19: 3) comparative studies that identify similarities and differences of media representations of teachers are rare. As well, Downey and Stanyer (2010, 332) point out that generally "much existing comparative media analysis is ethnocentric, taking North American or Western European media as either normative models of what media systems ought to be like or making invalid generalizations about the character of media systems beyond the USA and Western Europe".

Theoretical framework

The extent to which media representations of teachers are 'true' or just is an empirical question. However, a prior question is related to epistemology. For instance, a positivist view would suggest that the "reality" of teachers and teaching as portrayed in the media has an objective existence outside the realm of language and representation. On the other hand, a constructionist (e.g., poststructuralist) view would deny this reality outside discourse and claim that how teachers are portrayed in the media is actually an act of discursive construction resulting from a

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power-knowledge nexus. While these epistemological differences surrounding the media representation of teachers may not be reconciled, whether newspapers *reproduce* the reality of teachers or *construct* it, there is no denying that the media coverage of teachers is offered against the background of socio-political representation (Luke, 2004).

We draw on sociocultural accounts of teacher identity that guide our view of the representations of teachers in the media as social constructs rather than a fixed reality (Goldstein, 2011; McLure, 2003). In our examination of the media representations of teachers across the five nations in three different continents (Africa, Asia and Australia), we found more similarities than differences about social expectations of teachers and the roles they fulfil in the learning and teaching environment. A Vygotskian (1978) sociocultural understanding of teachers is employed to view teachers as the knowledgeable other who operate within specific sociocultural contexts to perform socially sanctioned roles in the light of prevailing social expectations. However, our data reflected a great diversity in terms of teacher roles, activities, attributes and their levels of commitment to teaching practice and the profession.

Methodological processes

A five step analytic process was employed to investigate the construction of ‘good’ teachers within five national contexts: Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Oman, Bangladesh, and Australia. We were particularly interested in popular perceptions of teachers, and decided that newspaper accounts of teachers and teaching practices could provide us with some insight into these public perceptions. The first three steps of the process were completed by individual researchers on their own data sets while steps four and five were undertaken collaboratively on combined data.

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During the process the group met regularly and therefore each step was discussed, clarified and refined throughout.

Selection of newspapers

Before the process of data collection could begin we made certain methodological decisions about the focus of our attention, through constructing a set of criteria that would guide our newspaper selection in each country. We are cognisant that these selections themselves contribute to the constructed nature of our data set, in that a choice made about using one particular newspaper could mean particular versions of ‘good’ teaching are identified. For example, the Australian newspaper selected, *The Australian*, is owned by News Limited, a company that is often associated with conservative views and neoliberalism (McKnight, 2003).

We also understand that the time frame in which the newspaper selection was done across the five countries influences what is and what is not included in these representations. For example, during this time an increase in cases of reported fraud in Bangladesh might have influenced the focus on teacher misconduct as represented in the media. Rather than making a case that our findings are generalisable to a whole national context or to the international global context, we are more interested in the local representation of discourses about professionalism of teachers and teacher identity. The criteria used to select newspapers were that they had national representation, a broad focus, a wide readership, and were available in a searchable online database. Questions of ownership also influenced our selections. One newspaper was selected from Australia (*The Australian*, TA), Saudi Arabia (*Al Riyadh*, AR) and South Africa (*The Mail and Guardian*, M&G) while two newspapers were selected from Bangladesh (*The New Nation*, NN, and the *Financial Express*, FE) and Oman (*The Oman Daily*, OD, and the *Al-Zaman*, AZ).¹ TA is owned by a multinational corporation, News Limited while AR, NN, FE and M&G are all

¹ These abbreviations for newspaper titles will be used throughout.

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privately owned. In Oman, the OD is government-owned so a second, privately-owned paper (AZ) was included to offer another perspective. All of the newspapers are available nationally rather than being focused on one particular state or province of the country in which it is distributed.

The second requirement was that the selected newspapers should have a broad focus and cover a wide variety of topics such as politics, government, business, the environment, society, education and sport. For example, the Australian Financial Review was not included as its focus was predominantly on business, finance and investment news while the FE (Bangladesh) was included because it significantly covers politics, society and education in addition to business and finance news. The third requirement was that each of the selected newspapers should have high sales and distribution rates and was popular with the readership. For example, the TA has a stable weekday newspaper circulation of 129 985 in the last quarter (The Newspaper Works, 2011) while the M&G (South Africa) had a weekly circulation of 50 000 newspapers (M&G reports strong circulation figures, 2011). We did not collect information about the nature of the readership of each newspaper but are aware that the perceived attitudes of readers can influence the construction of teachers and teaching within any selected newspaper.

The final criterion was that each had to be readily available in an online, searchable database or archive. It should also be noted here that three newspapers selected were not published in English. Individual authors from these countries translated the relevant news articles into English to add to our data set.

Step one: Selection of articles

A publication timeframe of seven months between 1 January and 31 July 2011 was set and used as a search limit for the selection of newspaper articles. For each of the selected newspapers, we

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used the search term ‘teacher’ when investigating the online databases. This, being a broad term, yielded a large number of articles. For example, the NN and FE search generated 642 news and opinion pieces; TA yielded a list of 486 articles while the AR search resulted in 418 related news items, articles, and opinion pieces over the same period of time.

Step two: Reading and culling

During this phase, each investigator read articles from his or her own country, applying four statements: ‘A teacher **is**...’, ‘A teacher **is not**...’, based around teacher identity situated in the context of socio-cultural expectations. This process was based on our growing sense of a binary being constructed within the data, based on a dichotomy between ‘actual’ and ‘ideal’ images of teachers. If an article explicitly rather than implicitly drew attention to the construction of these actual and ideal images of teachers, then it was retained in the data set. For example, in TA, 38 out of the 486 articles were retained or approximately eight per cent of the articles were found relevant. For the Bangladeshi newspapers, 88 items were retained from the 642 items (14%), while from the AR, 150 items (35%) were selected.

Step three: Sorting and refining

The data was then organised into a template which was used to record key statements using a notation system to identify the newspaper and the date of publication². Where possible, statements that were transcribed into the templates were used verbatim from the newspaper article and if necessary, translated by members of the group from the relevant country. We refined again to highlight the emerging binary and identified data that provided information about the ‘actual image’ of the teacher identified in the newspaper articles and identifying the ‘ideal image’ of a teacher. For example, actual images of teachers suggested a teacher is incompetent (MG25/3; RIY9/1), irresponsible and lazy (AZ26/3; 13/2) while ideal images of

² This citation system is used throughout this article.

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teacher suggest teachers should be more competent (RIY18/1; 1/1) and more knowledgeable (OD20/7).

Step Four: Development of themes

The challenging task of categorising the diverse themes emerging from the newspaper data from the five countries was performed by combining inductive and deductive processes to discover recurrent themes and thematic patterns (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2005). The categories of ‘actual images’ and ‘ideal images’ were examined to identify themes and sub-themes. Once the themes were identified, we read and discussed them in the group and tried to understand the social expectations that formed the various constructions of teachers that were expressed in newspapers. Here we turned to the literature to examine the various constructs of teacher and teaching available and whether these constructs were useful in organising and identifying categories.

Step Five: Review and re-develop

In seeking to address the challenge of categorising these diverse teacher representations, we identified four categories of ‘teacher’ based on our visualisation of teachers in various social and discursive spaces: as practitioners (in the classroom); professionals (as members of the profession); role models (in the moral universe); and members of the community and society. We again turned to the literature to understand how these constructs are elaborated, both theoretically and empirically, within the education field. Below we provide an overview of the literature in terms of the four categories of teacher identity.

Teacher identities: practitioners, professionals, role models and transformative intellectuals

Noddings (1997) argues that the conceptualisation of teaching as a practice places responsibility on teachers to discover motivating factors behind learning practices and to encourage students' interests. Central to this construct is the view that a teacher should develop a positive caring relationship close to friendship with students (Noddings, 2003; Goldstein, 2004). Noddings (2003) believes that teaching practice is constructed as a process that involves attending to students, being responsive and acting with care in different teaching activities and practices regardless of whether this set of activities is relevant to the practice itself. One personal quality that resounds throughout the literature is 'caring' for students (Dunne, 2003). A teacher's job is not simply to "secure demonstrable learning on a pre-specified set of objectives"; it extends well beyond introducing the content of the subject to include everyday life issues (Noddings, 2003, 243). This is called "responsiveness to others" (Blair, 2009, Dunne, 2003, Hansen, 2001, Higgins, 2003, Noddings, 2003) and entails the exchange of synchronous and diachronous goods of teaching practice (Blair, 2009). Teachers are expected to improve and advance students' competence in a specific subject while developing students' disciplinary competence (Dunne, 2003; MacIntyre, 1998, 1999) and develop them as "whole persons" (Noddings, 2003).

Teachers as professionals are often described in opposition to practitioners. For example, Hoyle (2008) believes that the professional is identified when "the knowledge, skill and commitment of practitioners is continuously enhanced in the interests of clients" (p. 288). Englund (1996) characterises teacher professionalism as a pedagogical concept concerned with the quality of teaching. Teachers are expected to "be professional" referring to the "quality of what [teachers] do" including conduct, demeanour and standards (Hargreaves, 2000, p. 87). Teachers as professionals are expected to take responsibility for their actions and conduct, often linked to

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teacher behaviour (Phelps, 2006). This aspect of professionalism focuses on teacher accountability (Day & Smethem, 2009) and transparency. The rise of the public accountability movement and the lack of trust in the teaching profession are attributed to the presumed need to reduce the power of professionals (Day & Smethem, 2009; Hoyle, 2008) with associated reduction in teacher autonomy and an increase in self-regulation.

Teachers' moral and social roles are often associated with characteristics of the ideal, superhuman teachers. Teachers are often viewed as moral citizens (Watson, Miller, Davis & Carter, 2010), although there is no consensus as to what 'role model' teachers provide or what exactly is meant by a "moral character" (Schwartz, 2007, 1). Nevertheless, there are prevailing expectations in communities about teachers' moral conduct, referring to teachers' actions and dispositions (Campbell, 2008). Johnston, Juhasz and Marken (1998, 162) indicate that morality is "the relationship between what people do in social settings and the inner values, beliefs and standards that lead them to particular courses of action". Teachers can be considered moral agents when their values, behaviours and attitudes are associated with socially desirable actions (Norberg & Johansson, 2007) while they significantly contribute to students' moral development (Osguthorpe, 2008; Revell & Arthur, 2007). In addition, when teachers attend to the moral dispositions desired by their societies, they are likely to influence the development of their students' moral conduct in the future (Osguthorpe, 2008). Consequently, such influence may also play a positive role in students' achievement. This is consistent with the views of Stronge (2007), Stronge, Ward, Tucker and Hindman (2007) and Watson et al. (2010) indicating a direct relationship between teachers' behaviours and their students' academic performance. In this sense, morality includes characteristics and virtues that encourage good actions.

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There are several interrelated perspectives that construct teaching as a political enterprise, requiring social and political activism both inside and outside the classroom. Social reconstructionism invited teachers to take up social and political roles to reconstruct society in a period of economic and socio-political crises (Murrow, 2011). Some variations of social reconstructionism are social justice teacher education, anti-racist teacher education and critical teacher education (Cochran-Smith, 1999; McDonald & Zeichner, 2009; Zeichner, 2011). Under the influence of Critical Theory, these perspectives have been underpinned by a concern for social equity and justice (Bronner, 2011). Almost all critical perspectives including critical pedagogy (Freire, 1974) construct teachers as transformative intellectuals, as opposed to passive technicians, in line with a view of teaching as a vocation or calling (Kumaravadivelu, 2003).

The conceptualisation of teachers as social and political agents supports the construction of teachers as transformative intellectuals. Some studies (e.g., Baladi, 2007; Davari et al., 2012; Goldstein, 2004; Lin, 2004; Picower, 2011) have highlighted the critical role of teachers in raising students' socio-political awareness about oppressive conditions surrounding their lives and raising their voices against such conditions with the hope of empowerment and change. At the same time, other studies have shown that teachers may not necessarily believe in transformative goals of education (e.g., Cox & Assis-Peterson, 1999) or that there is little that teachers can do, despite their awareness, in the face of curricular and institutional constraints (Hamid, 2007). A characteristic of these studies is the focus on developing critical awareness seen as a prerequisite for social change in favour of the marginalised groups. Dove (1995) argues that teachers in the "developing world" were practically engaged in socio-political actions to reconstruct societies in the post-colonial era but that these roles declined towards the end of the 20th century in the wake of the bureaucratisation of mass school systems.

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In the next section we present our analyses of the media representations of teachers using these four categories of teachers. The analyses do not aim to generalise but to connect locally translated media representations of teachers to these constructs of the caring practitioner; the transparent (un)professional; the moral and social role model; and the transformative intellectual.

We believe that the combination of inductive and deductive approaches as well as our discussion around the constructs within the collegial environment of the dialogic space resulted in a theoretically sound and robust framework comprising these four categories of teachers.

Nevertheless, we need to point out some limitations in the way we framed the study. For instance, although we describe four distinct categories, we are actually talking about the same individual and therefore an overlap of these different constructions is unavoidable. For example one pervasive theme across the data was teachers being involved in sexual offences. This could be identified as part of the construction of teachers as practitioners, professionals, moral citizens, or socially active citizens. Therefore, instead of treating the four constructions as theoretically distinct, the framework should be seen as a convenient heuristic that allows us to examine and make sense of the data.

Data and analysis

The caring practitioner

The construct of the ‘caring practitioner’ was ubiquitous across the data collected from the newspapers from Bangladesh, Oman, South Africa and Saudi Arabia, but received minimal coverage in the Australian newspaper. The expectations of teachers as practitioners are very similar suggesting that the constructed version of the caring practitioner teacher is to some extent universal. The data highlighted two important qualities of a teacher as a practitioner, namely being responsive to students and acting with care. In the Bangladesh newspaper, teaching is seen

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as a caring profession (FE4/5; FE8/4) where teachers are expected to be attentive to students without any bias (FE30/1). In South Africa, newspapers reported that teachers are expected to focus on students (M&G15/07), prioritise their needs (M&G22/06) and concerns (M&G10/06). In the two Gulf countries, Oman and Saudi, the news articles reflected a view that teachers are held responsible for addressing students' needs (AZ26/3; AR19/7; 18/4; 3/4; 28/3).

In newspapers from South Africa and Saudi Arabia, teachers are perceived as significant adults in learners' lives (M&G11/03; AR21/7; 4/5) where they play a role in shaping students' future plans and aspirations (AR24/7; 18/1). In the Bangladesh and South African articles, teachers are expected to build the minds of their students (FE2/1; M&G 8/04) and in the Oman data, they are required to develop students who can hone their own intellectual and social capacities (AZ26/3).

In the Bangladesh newspaper, it was suggested that teachers should conduct classes smoothly and effectively (FE30/1) through the creation of conducive learning environments (FE2/1) using understandable and simple language and giving extra time to students who need help (FE30/1). In Saudi Arabia articles, teachers are expected to enhance students' motivation to learn (AR7/5; 4/5; 31/1) and to discover the specific skills and talents of their students (RIY26/7; 4/5). The Saudi data suggest that teachers should consider student differences, needs, interests and ambitions (AR19/7; 18/4; 3/4; 28/3); the use of new teaching methods, including student-centred methods and group work (AR7/5; 4/5; 13/4; 28/3); and extracurricular activities to fulfil other non-curricular goals (AR19/7; 24/1). In the South Africa news, teachers play a pastoral role and notice signs of children in distress (M&G 11/03). Similarly, in the data from Oman, teachers need to encourage students to make connections between real world experiences and what they study in the classroom (OD23/2).

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Developing a positive relationship with students is another characteristic of the caring teacher which circulates in Bangladesh (FE2/1; 2/1; NN21/7) and South African (M&G10/6) newspapers. In the Saudi data, teachers were expected to respect their students and treat them with dignity (AR8/7; 27/4; 25/4) and in the Oman newspaper, they were expected to treat them in a way that could inspire them to work harder and become better students (OD23/2).

What is evident in newspaper reportage of this construct is that the representations of teachers as practitioners were all about the ideal image of teachers rather than the actual. Furthermore, these expectations of teachers to act as caring practitioners seemed to describe a ‘superhuman teacher’ who should have a particular set of qualities: one who attends to students responsively, acts with care, focuses on students, prioritizes students’ needs, plays a role in shaping students’ future, considers students’ individual differences, enhances students’ motivation, and develops a positive caring relationship with students.

The transparent (un)professional

The newspaper constructs of teachers as professionals predominantly focused on negative aspects of teachers’ conduct, demeanour and standards. The Saudi newspaper frequently commented on the significant role teachers have in the quality of education in that country (AR9/7; 7/7; 3/5; 25/4; 11/4; 14/2; 21/1; 12/1; 2/1). The South African and Bangladeshi newspapers also mentioned quality teaching. However, this was in the context of striving for an ideal of quality education that was characterised by an environment of student achievement and excellence (M&G25/3; FE3/6). This was presented as the opposite of what was actually happening in schools.

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The Australian (TA26/ 3) and Saudi (AR2/4) newspapers specifically identified transparency in teacher behaviour as an essential component of teacher accountability. There was a need for education authorities to set targets for teachers to meet and enforce these through student testing and other mechanisms to control and regulate teachers.

What became apparent was the repeated focus of the newspapers on the negative unprofessional behaviour of teachers and teacher misconduct. The most prevalent problems referred to teacher interaction with students, in particular regarding behaviour management. The Saudi (AR24/7; 29/6), South African (M&G 10/6) and Omani (OD17/2) newspapers made specific reference to the power that teachers hold over students. In the data from Saudi Arabia, the suggestion was made that some teachers are unable to manage and discipline students in their classes (AR11/7) and in Oman newspapers, that they should not misuse their power to beat, insult or verbally abuse their students (OD17/2).

Other negative behaviour reported by Bangladeshi newspapers was a lack of dedication to the profession (FE 22/5), inefficient functioning at school (FE12/7) and irresponsibly taking leave (NN 25/6). This was echoed to a certain extent in a South African newspaper report that suggested some teachers were not proud of the teaching profession (M&G15/7) and a Saudi newspaper that suggested that teachers lack sincerity and willingness to make sacrifices (AR6/7). Reference to negative teacher behaviour was also made in an Australian newspaper that suggested that teachers were helping students cheat in the annual national standardised test (TA30/4) and the Omani reports on teachers who were acting immaturely (AZ26/ 3), and were irresponsible, lazy and known to skip classes (AZ13/2; 26/3). Teacher misconduct was also reported in the newspapers, including a call to sack poorly performing teachers in Australia (TA26/4) and a concern that teachers were involved in corruption and the violation of rules in

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Bangladesh (NN2/6) or committing a crime that violated society's trust in teachers (FE12/7).

One aspect of teacher misconduct reported in newspapers was related to sexual misconduct which appeared in Bangladesh (FE12/ 7; 22/7; 20/5; 11/5; 21/1; NN12/7; 20/7; 20/7; 19/7) and Australia (TA9/7; 15/6; 7/6), with one newspaper report in Saudi making reference to this topic (AR17/6).

It was evident that teachers were being constructed as (un)professionals while at the same time an ideal 'superhuman' teacher was being described. The Omani (OD27/4) and South African (M&G10/6) newspapers described moral and responsible behaviour as central and important to the profession. Ideal representations of teachers were seen in Saudi Arabia newspapers, where it was considered necessary for teachers to fulfil their professional responsibilities (AR15/6; 27/1), to be hardworking (AR 19/7; 27/1) and have a strong zest for teaching (AR26/7; 19/7), while in the Oman news, this related to teachers being responsible for responding to the classroom needs of their students (AZ26/3). In the South African data the ideal teachers were described as those who would behave honestly, compassionately and with self-discipline (M&G10/6), confidence (M&G15/7) and high level of commitment (M&G25/ 3; 8/4; 22/6), demonstrate a concern for others as well as themselves (M&G10/6) or to put the needs of their learners first (M&G22/6) and be punctual (M&G15/7).

The Australian newspaper limited the conceptualisation of teacher quality to honesty (TA12/5). Honesty was also considered an ideal quality in teachers by the Omani (OD17/4) and Bangladeshi (NN21/7) newspapers. As well, the Bangladeshi newspaper considered that teacher characteristics should include being neutral, kind-hearted, friendly, knowledgeable, brave, sincere, dynamic (NN21/ 7), cordial, selfless, and a motivator of children (FE2/1), attentive to students and unbiased (FE30/1), sincere, punctual and respectful (FE3/6). This data provides the

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strongest example of the 'hero' teacher narrative (Blackmore & Thomson, 2004) with superhuman qualities.

Moral and Social Role Models

The newspaper data contained four categories of morality based on society's perceptions of teachers as moral citizens: a caring and friendly nature, respect, motivation, trust and honesty. These are characteristics that teachers as moral citizens display (Campbell, 2008; Calabrese, Goodvin & Niles, 2005; Eisenhauer & Pratt, 2010; Helterbran, 2008; Osguthorpe, 2008; Stronge, 2007; Watson et al., 2010). The moral teacher is constructed as a carer, encompassing social and emotional connections and "promot[ing] students' positive interpersonal experiences" (Narvaez & Lapsley, 2008, 159). Caring teachers listen and pay attention to students' concerns (Stronge, 2007) with implications for classroom achievement (Calabrese et al., 2005).

In the newspaper data, the ideal teacher begins to take shape, as the caring practitioner is conflated with the moral citizen who acts as a role model for her/his students as well as society as a whole, in contrast to the transparent (un)professional who is not to be trusted. Ideal teachers, in data from all five countries, are described with different attributes that demonstrate their caring behaviours. In the Bangladesh news articles, they are perceived as polite (FE2/1), friendly and kind-hearted (NN21/7) whereas in South African news, ideal teachers are required to be compassionate with self-discipline (M&G10/06). In the Oman data, the caring teacher is described as respectable (AZ26/1) who has dignity and exemplifies a good model (OD17/2.), and in Saudi Arabia articles, ideal caring teachers are those who are willing to engage in dialogue with students in the classroom (AR31/7; 24/7; 8/7; 4/5; 2/4; 28/3).

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Respect appears to be an essential state of morality for teachers, guiding them in conducting themselves in the classroom, school and society (Campbell, 2008). LePage et al. (2011) add that respect is a fundamental value of what constitutes a moral teacher. In our data, “ideal teachers” are perceived as highly respected members of society whose work deserves appreciation (OD20/7; AR22/7; 23/6; 3/5; 1/5; 27/4; NN1/6). However, Saudi Arabian newspapers describe teachers as not receiving justified respect (AR23/6; 27/4; 6/4). Similarly, teachers appear to have a modest social status in Oman newspapers where students respond to them inappropriately and even threaten them (OD20/5).

Arnon and Reichel (2007) explain that students recognise their “ideal teachers” as moral agents who motivate and inspire them to achieve their ultimate goals. Engaged interaction between teachers and students unlock self-motivation and encouragement (Campbell, 2008). In news articles collected from Australia, Saudi-Arabia, Oman, Bangladesh and South Africa it is expected that teachers will act enthusiastically, encourage and motivate students (NN21/7; M&G8/04). Additionally, the newspapers expect “ideal teachers” to act as a continuous source of inspiration for students (M&G8/04; FE2/1) enhancing their motivation to accumulate knowledge and to be studious (AR7/5; 4/5; 31/1). Importantly, teachers are regarded as important role-models in the expansion of students’ interests and improvements of life chances in the Saudi Arabia newspaper (AR21/7; 4/5), while those who are unwilling to make sacrifices (AR6/7) are criticised.

Honest teaching (Campbell, 2008) implies teaching “controversial issues in an impartial way, be[ing] truthful in giving feedback to students, and refrain[ing] from cheating students out of worthwhile learning experiences” (Osguthorpe, 2008, 296). Honesty as a moral characteristic requires teachers to act responsibly in the way they treat their students and build relationships

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with them. Teacher/student relationships are based on trust corresponding with “societal values, norms, and laws that are also in line with most parents’ reasonable expectations of public education” (Campbell, 2008, 612).

The newspaper data construct different views of teachers in relation to trust across the five countries. For example, in South African news, teachers appear to be losing social trust (M&G10/6) and in Saudi reports, they lack sincerity (RIY6/7). Similarly, they are labelled as “cheaters” in the Australian press (AUS30/4) and in Omani articles, are represented as lacking in dignity or initiative (OD17/2; 20/7). Additionally, in the Oman newspaper, teachers are looked down on and cannot be trusted because they act immaturely and irresponsibly (AZ26/3).

Transformative Intellectuals

In our newspaper data, teachers are constructed as transformative intellectuals who are expected to complete socio-political work through building the minds of students as well as contributing to the building of the nation as a whole. Newspapers in Oman (OD20/5; 20/7) portray the expectations that teachers should be actively involved in developing the education process and building the new generation. The ideal images of teacher, in particular in Bangladesh and Saudi Arabia newspapers, suggest that teachers are expected to play a crucial role in students’ life and future. As a “continuous source of inspiration” (FE2/1), they are expected to build “minds of students” (FE2/ 1) shaping “students’ future plans and aspirations” (AR24/7; 18/1) and “groom future citizens, leaders and workers with appropriate skills, knowledge and values” (FE4/5; OD20/5). This is comparable to what Gainey and Winn (1996, 52) describe as teachers “sowing seeds” in students, helping them develop new visions of the world and acquire the necessary skills to implement those visions.

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The Oman, Bangladeshi and Saudi newspapers highlight the ideal construction of teachers as “nation builders”. While the Bangladeshi newspaper’s expectations appear to be more rhetorical (NN20/7; 21/7), not detailing the what and how of this nation-building work, the Saudi data are more explicit about how teachers can perform this work. Teachers should display “Saudi” identity and “teaching should be Saudized” (AR19/7) and they will “play a role in the establishment of the Saudi national unity” (AR29/6; 9/6; 28/4; 27/4; 7/4; 4/4; 4/1; 2/1) while in the Oman data, teachers are expected to take initiative (OD28/5) and productively build the nation. Moreover, while the Bangladeshi data vaguely mention teachers’ professionalism, sincerity, punctuality and dutifulness in giving quality education to turn students into worthy citizens (FE3/6), the Saudi data point out specific, although non-curricular, tasks. Teachers should teach “tolerance, equality and acceptance of others” (AR 21/7; 22/6; 9/6); educate students about “drugs” (AR25/3; 18/3; 11/3; 4/1); “traffic safety” (AR4/1); “sex” (AR2/3) and “terrorism” (AR4/ 4). In the Australian news articles teachers are expected to advance students’ fundamental values (TA30/7) while in Oman newspapers, they are expected to display more authority within classrooms (OD20/5) as they focus on socio-political consciousness and commitment to understand those values and inculcate them in their students. This socio-political consciousness is realised within the Australian and South African data through the construction of teachers as unionists (M&G15/7; TA25/5; 11/4) and in the Saudi Arabia newspaper, through the accentuated focus on the socio-political views of the government which teachers are expected to uphold (AR27/7).

Conclusions and Implications

This study was undertaken to investigate a comparison of the representation of teachers in the localised press. We did this by devising a framework embedded in media representation and teacher identity situated in contexts of socio-cultural constructivist theory (Vygotsky, 1978). The

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framework consisted of four constructs of teachers: as caring practitioners, transparent (un)professionals, moral and social role models and transformative intellectuals.

Our aim was not to generalise the teacher representations in media across the five nations or to make universalising or essentialising claims about the nature of teachers and teaching in these five countries. Nevertheless, it appears that within the specific time frame in which the investigation was completed, the newspaper summaries reflect societal expectations of teachers being role models who represent these societies' aspirations, for example, being honest, caring, and accountable for the preparation of students in a holistic way for their future. Teachers are expected to lead by example as the knowledgeable adult. This relative emphasis on what teachers do in the classroom could be due to the increasing bureaucratisation and corporatisation of education all over the world that holds teachers primarily accountable for how well they perform their job in their immediate work environment (Ball, 2003; Webb, 2005).

The methodology took us on a challenging journey while providing us with a clear road map to make sense of a vast amount of data. The challenges were embedded in working as a group while following comparable processes across the five nations. The methodology provided us with a reliable approach to manage the data and open the research field for further investigation. Plausibly, media representations of teachers in each of the countries were influenced by prevailing socio-economic and politico-historical situations, social problems and needs as well as the culture of the society. For example, the countries under investigation had diverse human development index numbers (HDI), with Australia ranking second, Bangladesh 146th and Oman, Saudi Arabia and South Africa ranking 89th, 56th and 123rd respectively. The innovative methodology provided us with the opportunity to discuss and explore the variable representations of teachers in the newspapers, understood through the lens of selective data

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sources, the time-frame, the degree of state control over media and ideological interests of the media owners. For instance, although our selection of the newspapers for each country was guided by, among other criteria, their coverage and importance, we cannot presume that the data collected during a short period of time gave us a general picture of media representation of teachers in the society. With this caveat, we could argue that the disparate emphases on teachers' moral, social and political roles may be understood from a range of prevailing socio-economic, political, educational, cultural factors in the respective countries. For instance, social expectations of teachers in Saudi Arabia to educate students about terrorism and other issues can be related to the recent global socio-political developments, and Bangladeshi teachers' engagement in private tutoring to its recent popularity all over the country (Hamid, Sussex & Khan, 2009).

We encourage researchers in this field to explore the possibilities opened by our methodology as it brings comparative research to your door step. We believe that further research is needed on media representation of teachers nationally and transnationally to validate the insights that the present work has generated and further investigate the teacher role framework that we devised to guide our investigation.

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