

Teachers' Lives and Educational Change

By

Choong Kam Foong, Ph.D.

Preamble

This paper aims to tell a story - a story of the sea and of beautiful sandcastles on the shore. Educational change like the rise and ebb of the sea is an epitome of the dynamics of growth and development. This story I am about to tell is about the implementation of an English language project, aimed at improving the quality of English language teaching and training. It fits in with the theme of the conference as it is about development and about language teaching improvement. Like in many countries, educational change in Malaysia has been system and innovation-focused rather than person-focused. This is not surprising as education in Malaysia is a centrally managed provision, and being so, takes on the hierarchical structures of government and administration, a legacy of its colonial history. It follows that all change initiatives are centrally-led, mandated and filtered through a cascading hierarchy right down to the teachers at the chalk face. In the 40 years since Independence, the policies in place have steered nationwide curricular change. However, research evidence from various countries suggests that despite widespread change at great expense, changes at the chalk face leave much to be desired. Is this the case for Malaysia too?

The cascade model – it came from ‘heaven’

The persistent use of the cascade system of implementation ensured that teachers remained the disciples of received wisdom. The consequence is a gap between philosophy and action, because the people who matter most in the implementation process, the teachers, have been left on the periphery of the change process. While teachers are told that they are the agents of change, and are empowered to use their professional knowledge and expertise to direct change, in practice, they have to adhere to implicit and explicit norms and support bureaucratically imposed conditions. As much of their professional life is entrenched in a culture of subservience to policy and directives, inspirational stories of transformative change are few. Teachers are often caught in a time lapse between beliefs and action. How then does all these affect the implementation of numerous innovations in the system?

Building sandcastles

Every innovation brings along specific behaviour change requirements. Teachers and trainers claim to ‘fall in’ and administrators are quite happy to hear that they are doing so. But in reality, are they just building sandcastles while the tide is out?

The Primary English Teacher Education Project (PETEP) was aimed at making a methodological change from the more conventional trainer-centred methodology to more trainee-centred methodologies. Two years after the project ended, I thought it would be interesting to know if the sandcastles or their remnants are still around given our penchant for innovations. Figure 1 provides a description of the castles built by 6 trainers, Chengai, Iris, Melor, Nyatok, Orchid and Vanda.

Figure 1: Patterns of interaction

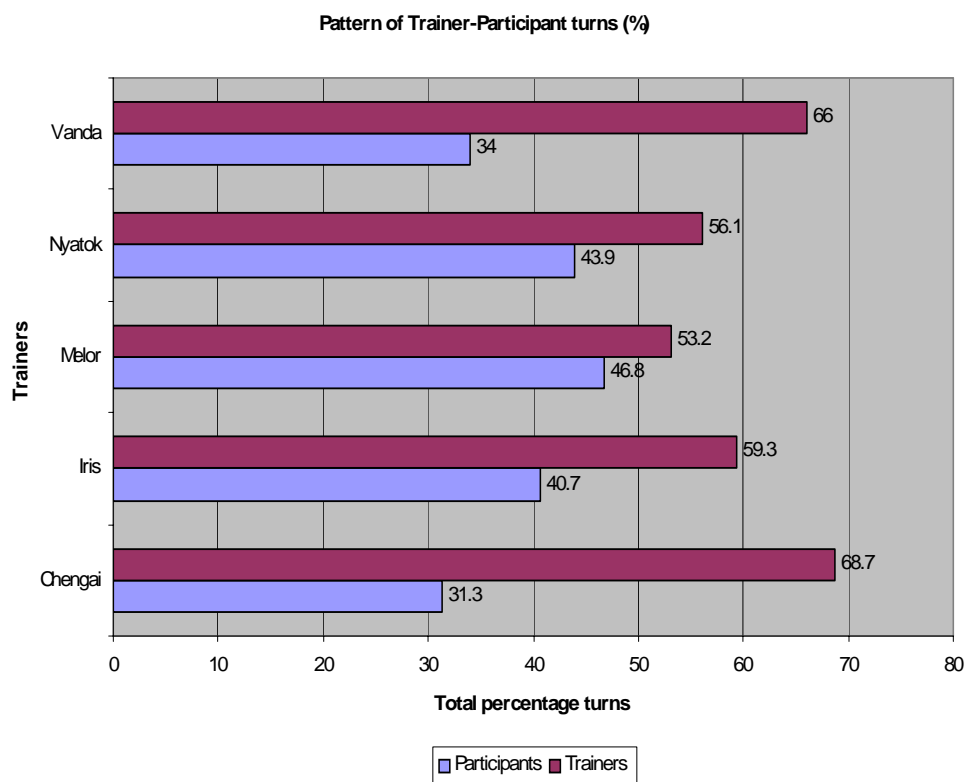
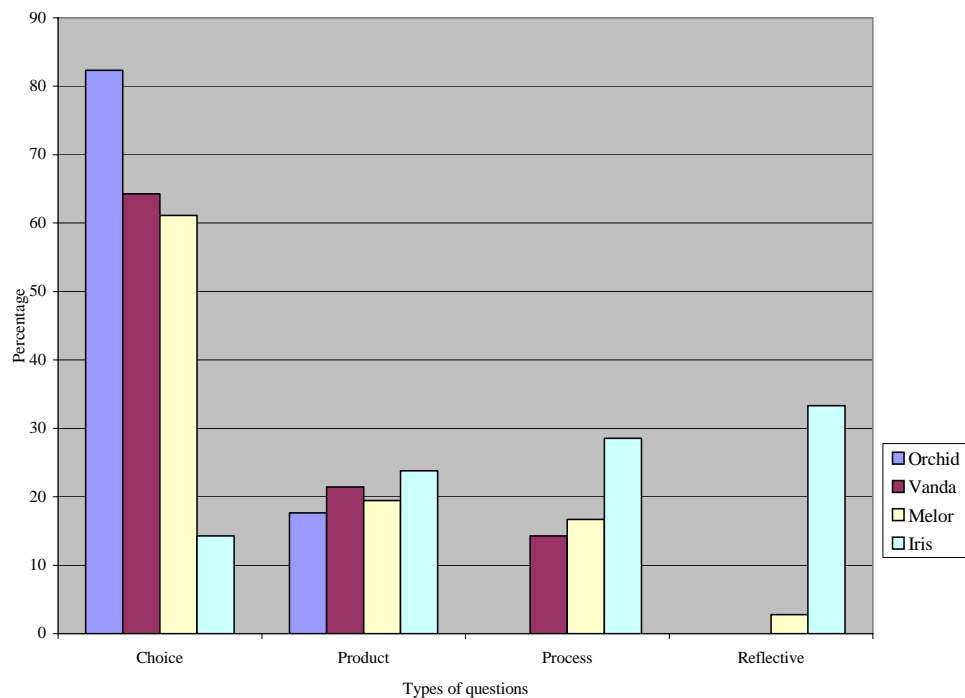


Figure 1 shows the percentage of turns taken by each of the trainers in their training session ranging from 2 hours to more than 20 hours of interaction. The data is based on the interactive sessions between trainer and participants and excludes the group work during which participants interacted amongst themselves. The percentage of group activities ranged from 5% of the total interaction time to about 20% of the interaction time. This meant that trainers spent a lot of time directing the learning and interaction even when they were engaged in group tasks. Trainer turns

were usually taken to elicit answers, to ask questions, to evaluate or to transmit knowledge by telling. To identify question types, I had used Mehan's (1979) typology because I felt it fitted in better to the sessions I observed. According to him, there were four types: questions of choice, product, process and reflection. Questions relating to choice are questions which expect a Yes/No answer or offer a choice. Product questions are factual questions eliciting factual information. Process questions are opinion-seeking questions while reflective questions critical thinking questions requiring reflection and projection. Figure 2 shows the extent of question types posed by four of the trainers.

Figure 2: Types of questions asked



The trainers used mainly questions that required one-word answers (choice questions) with Orchid using the greatest number followed by Vanda and Melor. Iris was the only one who seemed to demonstrate the use of more open-ended questions. It is interesting to note too that of all the sessions observed, her session had the largest number of participants and she was youngest and the only one who had overseas training at a very young age.

The question that I wanted to ask was whether these sandcastles were the same as the ones built for PETEP. The answer seemed to be an alarming ‘no’. From the analysis it seemed that the pattern of interaction was not quite similar to those activities in Box 1. Again, the question ‘Why?’

Box 1: PETEP training activities

- Awareness and experiential learning activities
- Collaborative and co-operative sharing in discussions
- Reflective strategies through gridding and journal writing
- Peer and self evaluation
- Action planning
- Feedback rounds

The significance of trainer dominance

The significance of trainer dominance has to be seen in relation to the type of training behaviors that serve to promote or to control learner participation. As Van Lier (1988: 216) suggests, the concepts of authority and control in the training room are central first, to the determination of the type and amount of participation and second, in relation to classroom research, to getting feedback on the effectiveness of the programme. So the pattern has to be analysed in relation to the given context and activity in which their meanings become visible. Context, according to Erickson and Shultz (1981, in Van Lier, 1988: 82) refers to the context of interactional talk in the classroom. This contextual view extends beyond the normally narrow confines of linguistic, cognitive and behavioural approaches to classroom research. Van Lier (*op cit*: 83) similarly asserts that the overt interaction between people illuminates their mental processes and communicative strategies.

If classroom talk is a means for organising control in the transmission of knowledge (Edwards, 1980: 237), it is essentially a social behaviour. If classroom talk is social behaviour, then the classroom must be seen as a social context where participants (both teachers and learners) bring with them their social and cultural behaviors that illuminate their respective conceptions of teaching and learning, a probable outcome of the wider social and cultural influences on classroom behaviour. Earlier on, Bernstein’s (1971) work on ‘linguistic deficit’ had suggested that the inability of learners to understand the linguistic code that teachers used might have denied them learning opportunities. If teaching is seen as an academic discourse as such, then teacher training is no different other than the fact that the content matter has a professional orientation. The skills involved in the exchange of information, opinions, and interpretations are essentially the same. The context however, may differ in terms of the participants’ level of maturity and life experiences, and their ascribed roles within the profession. So given the applicability to training

situations, the findings are quite alarming in the sense that the PETEP sandcastle seemed to have gone out with the tide! So what actually happened? To respond to this question, I returned to my life-history interviews which were conducted before the lesson observations. Table 1 is a summary of the biographical data.

The teacher as person or the teacher as ‘practice’

The biographical analysis in this study seems to indicate a link between the wealth of teacher experience and teacher practice. Life history research suggests that to understand something so personal as teaching, we have to understand the ‘teacher person’. Why is it so important to understand teachers? Goodson (1992) used the analogy of the singer and the song to illustrate the need to understand the singer in order to appreciate the song more fully. Likewise, in teaching, we have to understand the teacher in order to understand his or her teaching better. Traditional research based in the process-product paradigm ‘decimated’ teacher behaviors that were supposedly predisposed to successful learning, as if these behaviors could be clinically isolated. It also assumed the classroom to be the ‘black box’, where teaching and learning progressed in linear fashion. Such studies provided, unfairly, skewed evidence that led to compounding social pressures on teachers to perform. The argument for these studies is based on the idea that teacher behaviors can be taught and learnt or unlearnt.

However, I contend that while behaviors are amenable to change, we cannot deny the contribution of the teacher self and biography in the teaching process and to focus only on the outer ramifications of inner thinking may limit our understanding of teaching and learning. What seems to have been the case is treating the *teacher as practice* (Goodson, 1993:224) instead of the teacher as person. What makes the teacher the way he is or she is? What informs his or her view of the world and of teaching? What makes a teacher behave in certain ways in the classroom despite his or her training? What makes him or her believe in certain approaches to teaching? Polanyi (1958: viii) says that “within every act of knowing there enters a passionate contribution of the person knowing what is being known... as a vital component of knowledge”. Pollard (1985) argues that ‘self’ is the teacher’s primary concern, manifested in the form of ‘enjoyment’, workload, ‘health and stress’, ‘autonomy’ and ‘maintenance of self-image’. Instructional strategies and discipline are considered as secondary concerns acting in the interest of the primary. Others (Ball and

Table 1 Biography, learning and teaching experiences

Name	M/F	Age	Back'gd SES	Motivational childhood experience	Ambition	Learning experience	Personal teaching style	Why stay on in teaching	Left teaching because:
Chengai	M	49	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Educated in Chinese medium primary school 	engineer	Didactic, drills, teacher-centred, self-directed	Didactic, transmission of knowledge, focused on exams	Has learning opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wanted a change of experience Training is higher than teaching
Iris	F	33	Middle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sister model who was her teacher 	not teaching	Didactic, teacher-centred, games, student-centered (overseas experience)	Interactive through question and answer, focused on exams	Helping weak students to do well	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disillusioned with inability to help weak students friends were leaving administration was not supportive
Mawar	F	56	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Need to move out of economic rut 	lawyer	Didactic, teacher-centred, drills, games, problem solving	Transmission, with a mix of jokes and project work teacher-centred, focused on exams	Enjoyed interacting with students, felt rewarded and effective to see students achieved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Was transferred because qualified staff was needed in a new TTC nearby
Melor	F	44	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Loss of mother Need for recognition 	lawyer	Didactic, drills, teacher-centred debates, drama	Transmission, teacher-centred, focused on exams	Felt effective when students performed well in exams To continue learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Followed husband on transfer
Nyatok	F	49	Middle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Worked hard to live up to maternal expectations 	journalist	Didactic, drills	Transmission, teacher-centered, focused on exams	Enjoyed interacting with students, felt happy to see students achieving	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wanted a change of environment Felt teacher training has higher status Overload at school
Vanda	F	46	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Early loss of parents Living with a community of teachers 	lawyer	Didactic, drills, games, songs - mainly in Sunday school	Transmission, teacher-centred, structured, focused on accuracy, project work	felt rewarded when students achieved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disillusioned with focus on examinations Discipline problems

Goodson, 1985; Sikes et al, 1985) see the ‘self’ as not only central to the day-to-day concerns but also to those in the past and future, throughout the career. Pintrich (1990: 827) argues that the focus on the socio-cognitive dimensions in research on personal development is inadequate. Korthagen (1993: 319) proposes that the “deeply ingrained and partly unconscious feelings and dispositions developed” in early life continued to influence the here and now. Brown (2000:194) in his autobiographical study on transition into teaching argues that the past shapes the present and calls for a model of personal development that involves the cognitive, affective and psychic dimensions. So what do we know about the ‘trainer as person’?

Socio-cultural background

The trainers in this study came from different age groups spanning roughly three decades, with the most senior at 56 and the youngest at 33. During these three decades Malaysia went through three paradigm shifts from Classical Humanism to Reconstructivism and Humanism (Clark, 1987) in our approach to curriculum and instructional methodologies in education, spurred on by wider changes in the socio-economic and political life of our young nation. Within this time span and context, these trainers would have experienced in their roles as learners, teachers and trainers, and changes in values and outlook of the wider society based on these major shifts. Assuming that each generation has its own values system, Boyatzis and Skelly (1991:10), in their study of American organizations, generalized that people appear to hold beliefs and values consistent with the values of the era in which they grew up. This generalization suggests that past learning experiences and background, nurtured by the socio-cultural orientation of the time, may have an influence on present behaviors and beliefs. Similarly, Foulkes (1975:60), the psychotherapist, argues that the cultural values of the family ‘imbued and impregnate the individual from his earliest phase of life, and even before birth with the total value system’. This means by adulthood, values and beliefs are already deeply entrenched. Nias (1989:21) suggests that this ‘substantial self’ is hard to reach even by reflexive activity (introspection and self-examination).

In Malaysia as in most Asian societies, at least in the past 40 years, there was the prevalence of a conservative attitude towards teacher authority amongst all the different races, born out of a tradition of respect for those with knowledge. The data in my study seemed to reveal that although the participants went through three different paradigm shifts as learners, they unanimously perceived their learning experience to be teacher-centred and transmission-oriented. They also perceived their teachers to be the fount of knowledge. This perception could mean two things, first, that the cultural conservative view of teachers was part of the participants’ upbringing and so they perceived teachers to be the authority in classrooms, irrespective of actual teacher behaviour.

Second, it could mean that changes in curriculum throughout the three decades had not made an impact on teachers and their approach to teaching. Changes in philosophical orientation in policy had remained at the theoretical level. Their teachers of their time, and their families with their traditional values, have ensured that the cultural notion of 'teacher' as respected guru or 'see foo' was passed on. In the data, only one of them said she experienced student-centred teaching, but that was on a 6-year overseas training programme. For the rest, they reported that teacher-centredness was the norm right up to university level. Traditional teaching was therefore the main enculturating force throughout their childhood and adulthood. Situating these trainers now, in the context of their time, and expect them to change almost immediately, because someone from 'out there' tells them to change, is almost naïve beyond imagination.

The trainers were mainly from low economic status background. According to Kohn, (1969) in his study of class-associated conditions in the US that affect psychological functioning, lower segments of the class hierarchy, particularly among females, stressed conformist values in child-rearing,. These conformist values include a predisposition for authoritarian conservatism and other-directedness. However, in this study, though authoritarian conservatism was evident to some extent, other-directedness was not. In fact, except for one, all five participants demonstrated self-direction from an early age, irrespective of gender. Here, socio-economic condition was a motivation for diligence. Chengai was determined to study on his own and grappled with the English language when he was barely 13 years old. Mawar was tenacious in her persistence to further her education by offering to do odd jobs just to pay for her school fees, and later on, to actively seek opportunities to upgrade her knowledge. Melor, was seeking additional pocket money by giving private tuition when she was fifteen. Vanda was teaching Sunday school when she was only 14 years old. So while the system they lived in might have a predisposition towards authoritarian conservatism, it did not constrain them from taking control of their own lives by seeking means to upgrade their socio-economic positions. It seems more probable that low socio-economic circumstance encouraged or promoted self-direction. There was an incentive value in acquiring knowledge for upward mobility, especially in the case of Chengai and Mawar.

Besides socio-economic background there were also other experiences in the trainers' childhood that seemed to have an effect on their need to achieve. The loss of a parent was seen as psychological and emotional deprivation. However, instead of wallowing in despondency, it became an intrinsic motivation for two of them. Melor lost her mother early and she translated this need for attention by taking an active part in debates and activities that put her in the limelight. The early taste of success and gratification developed into a need to achieve. In her later

professional life, she was inclined to academic knowledge to show off her intellectual capacity. She called herself an 'intellectual snob'. She exploited this interest and her intellectual capacity to gain entry into her husband's circle of friends. Vanda on the other hand, demonstrated conforming attitudes by doing well in her studies to please her teachers. She too lost her parents at an early age.

A strong sense of respect for parents and family members could also affect motivation. Nyatok has a high regard and respect for his mother and her teaching of moral values like public accountability and responsibility. He translated this into his teaching by being committed and dedicated to his work. He was the only trainer who kept complete records of his work. Iris has a high respect and regard for her sister's intellectual and managerial skills. She was the person who motivated and literally defined Iris future career. Iris felt she could not betray her confidence. So she had to try her best to live up to her expectations.

These apparently negative background factors motivated and developed in these trainers a strong sense of commitment and responsibility in their work as teachers. They were driven by the ideal of making a difference to other people's lives in the same way they had benefited from others. A classic case was Mawar when she described how she helped her students and also to make a financial contribution to her alma mater. These are emotions nurtured by teachers of their time, and in the present, they wanted to carry on that tradition.

Schooling experience and mental models

In the study, schooling experience seemed to leave an enduring mark in the minds of the 6 trainers and in their views of teachers, teaching and learning. Teaching is a personal activity, not only because 'the way each teacher behaves is unique (Nias, 1989: 13), but also because the intensity of experience in schools and classrooms may lead to the formation of mental models about teachers and schooling and learning experiences. Lortie (1975:79) suggests that the countless hours spent in classrooms and schools as students and the personal predisposition of prospective teachers formulate the basis of beginning teachers' thoughts and behaviors. Though Lortie was talking about beginning teachers, we cannot ignore the fact that this would be part of the 'shadowy selves' of teachers long after the initial years of teaching. Nias (1989) found that these 'latent models' still exist well into the 9th year of teaching. She argues that the best way to understand how teachers construe their work and the developing relationship to it is to grasp the importance of their attachment to a sense of personal identity. She said of her sample of primary teachers,

... exist as people before they become teachers and their work calls for massive investment of their 'selves'.

Nias, 1989: 2

One aspect of schooling experience is therefore seen as an influence on learning (to be a person) and the other is teaching (learning to be a teacher). The persistence of early learning experiences on teaching behaviour and thought has been extensively researched since Lortie's (1975: 64) landmark work 'School teacher'. Similarly, in this study, all the participants recalled vividly the teachers whom they felt made a significant impact on their learning. They remembered mostly their primary school teachers and their personal qualities that remained imprinted in their minds more than twenty years later. Table 2 shows my participants' constructs of their 'significant' teachers. This justifies further the need to focus on the teacher as 'person'.

Table 2 Range of common constructs for 'significant teachers'

Constructs	Chengai	Iris	Mawar	Melor	Nyatok	Vanda
Knowledgeable	√	√	√	√	√	√
Disciplined /firm			√	√		√
Caring and kind		√	√		√	√
Encouraging		√	√	√	√	√
Empathetic		√	√	√	√	
hardworking			√	√	√	
Enthusiastic			√	√		√
Good communication skills				√	√	√
Variety of activities				√	√	√
Good delivery skills	√			√	√	√
Structured	√		√	√		
Analytical	√					
Tactful	√					
Critical	√					
Flexible	√					
Approachable	√					

What was remembered of teaching and learning were these enduring personal qualities rather than subject matter. In addition, most of these significant images were of primary school teachers. This seemed to highlight the important role of primary school teachers in their interaction with children in their formative years. Only one participant found teachers at the tertiary level, after much soul-searching, significant. Of the qualities remembered, being knowledgeable and firm came out the most commonly mentioned, and usually the first. Then came other qualities like being kind and caring, encouraging, empathetic, fun, supportive, hardworking, enthusiastic, have good communication skills, demonstrate variety of skills, good delivery skills and so on. However, all these cannot be applied to Chengai's constructs. His teachers were mainly those who were his university lecturers or trainers whom he met on in-service courses. Schoolteachers seemed to have little impact on him. His constructs were quite different from the rest other than the construct

'knowledgeable'. His constructs were structured, practical, analytical, critical, tactful, flexible, and approachable. Most of his attributes relate to academic skills rather than to the affective side of teachers. His world of teaching is in the cognitive realm. Teachers whom my participants felt were ineffective were those who were lacking in knowledge, authoritarian, lazy, lacking direction (too flexible) and lacking the personal touch. Table 3 shows the participants definitions of the constructs from in-depth interviews and personal construct interviews.

Table 3 Table of constructs and definitions of good teachers

Constructs	Definitions
Knowledgeable	Content knowledge or subject knowledge
Disciplined /firm	Control over behaviour. Make us toe the line.
Caring and kind	Concern about students doing well, both in a personal or 'business-like' sense.
Encouraging	Supportive
Empathetic	Understanding
hardworking	Spending on students' work and preparation
Enthusiastic	Love for subject, love for students, doing things differently that excites
Good communication skills	Public speaking skills, people skills
Variety of activities	Different types of activities
Good delivery skills	Way they handle subject matter and relate to students learning.
Structured	Focused, clear
Practical	Ability to relate to actual teaching context
Analytical	Able to differentiate what is good or not good, critical
Tactful	Diplomatic way of handling differences, not blunt
Flexible	Adaptable
Approachable	Not bossy

In addition to making an impact on their learning, they also attributed the influence of these teachers on their teaching behaviour. Mawar, now in her 20th year of training, for instance, claimed she still had very vivid memories of her teachers whom she held to be models in her teaching career. These were activities that they used that she enjoyed and which she used in her own teaching and training. There seemed to be a high degree of congruence between the qualities she believed teachers should have and her own behaviour. Throughout her career, she continued tirelessly to improve her knowledge base. She sought the help of outside agencies as well as paid for her own further studies. For this, she even sacrificed her leave and took no pay leave. As for Vanda, she placed great emphasis on grammatical accuracy in her teaching. She attributed this to her teacher who was a disciplinarian and a grammarian. She was severely punished in her faulty language as a child. In her training of teachers, she was vigilant at spotting errors, including correcting journal entries!

Chengai on the other hand, did not make any direct attribution to his mental models, in fact, initially, he said he had no memory of any significant teacher in his life. It was only upon further

discussion, he decided he did have a few. He remembered he taught using the same strategies his teachers used when he was an untrained temporary teacher. But later on, he said his teaching was basically an outcome of his own thinking about what his teachers did or said which he used to refine his own views or ways of learning and teaching. In other words, he re-framed and re-casted his views and actions in the light of what he saw or heard. He was, in other words, theorising or schematising his experience (Korthagen and Legewerf, 1996). So, unlike all the others, he actually theorised or intellectualised his learning from people he interacted with. It was an extremely individual way of learning from experience. It was for this reason, he made no direct attribution to anyone.

While some teachers were positive images, others were negative or so-called 'anti-models'. Anti-models were derived from negative images of teachers whom teacher educators did not want to emulate. They identified their teachers' weaknesses and vowed they would not be the kind of teacher their teachers were. Nyatok and Melor both had negative memories. Nyatok believed in emphasizing the affective to raise students' self-worth and self-esteem to enhance learning based on a bitter experience at school. Melor, on the other hand, was disgusted by teachers who were not sure of their knowledge base. She had little respect and patience for people who did not know their facts. So she said she was ever conscious about content knowledge. Iris carried with her a sister-teacher model that shadowed her throughout her career. She admired her sister who was her teacher whom she felt had a great personality and managerial skills.

Mental image of teaching style and training style

Five of the trainers described their teaching style as teacher-centered with an emphasis on drills. This meant that when they were teachers at school, despite the changes in curricular approach, their teaching had remained the way they were taught. This did not seem surprising bearing in mind that all of them were 'schooled' in a transmission, teacher-centred culture where teacher authority was seen as essential for effective learning while respect for such authority was seen as an indicator of good discipline. Teachers were seen as the embodiments of knowledge and like Nyatok, Vanda, Mawar and Chengai, they felt accountable to pass on their knowledge. This tradition of teacher-centredness was beneficial to both teachers and students. It benefits teachers because it enhances their professional authority and efficacy. It benefits students because it prepares them to do well in examinations. And in terms of cost-effectiveness, it by far outweighs other strategies especially, like Nyatok said, in getting the syllabus completed in time for the examinations.

All the participants said they used a variety of activities in some way or another in their teaching. However, we must be clear that a variety of activities may not equate student-centredness. A teacher can be equally didactic when organising and directing activities.

Iris, however, believed her teaching style to be more interactive. She said she used the question and answer technique to elicit student participation. She felt she should not let her students become inhibited like she was in her days as a learner. She was not sure if her teaching strategies were reflective of her training. But again, a series of questions, depending on the type and way in which they were asked and responded to, could equally be a guise for a lecture. She said she was very interactive and ‘open’ in her first year of teaching but after that she said she had to teach according to the format of the exam for she feared her students would lose out. She was in a sense trapped by psychological guilt. Like most teachers she felt responsible for their students and likewise, in taking credit for success, she also took responsibility for failure.

Perceptions of teaching and training seemed to be portrayed as polarities. Were these perceptions framed by their mental and emotional states since in the past they were not happy teachers? Or were they trying to make training look better because they were the ‘new inhabitants’ of this field? These are questions I thought worth asking to keep me alert to the issue of veracity in qualitative research. However, the analysis seems to indicate the strong influence of prior teaching and learning on their perceptions of teaching. Table 4 provides a summary of their views of teaching and training.

Table 4 Summary of trainers’ views of teaching and training

Teaching	Training
Teaching is imparting knowledge.	Training is helping people develop knowledge.
Teaching is telling, explaining, unloading.	Training is developing awareness and skills through discovery and reflection.
Teaching is more structured and subject-based	Training is more flexible and more skills focused.
Teaching is helping students achieve results.	Training is teaching students how to teach.
Teaching is taking students through one-step at a time.	Training is getting students to think about their teaching.
It is preparing students for life.	Training is preparing students for a specific career.
Teaching is going through routines - using the same tested methodology to produce results.	Training is dynamic - introducing a range of methodology and skills to suit different types of students.

The trainers’ views of teaching are lock-step, structured and routinised. Altogether, the picture is far from appealing. Training is seen as developmental, flexible and dynamic. According to Lortie (1975:61), teachers bring with them to teaching a long ‘apprenticeship by observation’. This means their view of teaching was acquired through their experience as learners in the classroom.

If this was the case, then these trainers' perceptions seemed to reflect their learning experience, which has been nurtured by a transmission-based and teacher-centered pedagogy. And against this backdrop, they taught in the same way as they were taught irrespective of the training they received in their teacher training course. In fact, all the participants indicated that their preservice training had contributed little to their actual teaching.

The developmental view of training seems to be a reflection of their own development as trainers. Five of them said that they found their entry into teacher training to be a positive experience. They found that teacher training stimulates them intellectually as they get to return to the theoretical and academic fundamentals. Like Melor, she felt she should have entered teacher training earlier. Perhaps it is the flexibility in the time-table, the maturity of the students (less discipline problems), the nature of the curriculum, and more importantly, the lack of league tables that attracted teachers to teacher training. This probably, is the main reason why trainers seem to be far happier in teacher training.

Response to innovations

Trainers' response to PETEP must be seen against the backdrop of experience they brought into the Project discussed earlier. Table 5 illustrates the conceptions of learning, teaching and training trainers bring into the Project.

Table 5 Experiences before PETEP (in years)

Experience	Chengai	Iris	Mawar	Melor	Nyatok	Vanda
Learning	19	18	18	18	19	18
Teaching	20	3	5	12	6	17
Training	2	3 months	20	4	9	2
Other experiences	KBSM ¹ , SAC ² , PBCP ³ , KBKK ⁴ , just completed master degree	KBSM	KBSR, KBSM, PBCP, SAC, KBKK, just completed master	KBSM, PBCP, SAC KBKK	KBSM, PBCP, KBKK, SAC & Just completed master	SAC, PBCP, KBKK,

This implied that PETEP training was pitched against this baggage of experience and deep-seated prior learning, teaching and training experiences. PETEP is after all only one of the many innovations that trainers encountered in their professional life. If the argument that prior learning experiences is a critical issue in teaching and training, then first, we can understand that training

¹ KBSM - New Integrated Secondary School Curriculum

² SAC - Self-Access Centre Project

³ PBCP - Process-based Coursework Programme

⁴ KBKK - Critical and Creative Thinking Programme

cannot ignore the wealth of experiences brought by these trainers into the training room. Second, we need to know if trainers are aware of this ‘invisible’ baggage that they brought along. Third, we need to know what we (trainers and participants) can do with this baggage.

All the trainers except for one perceived that PETEP had made a significant difference to the way they view teacher training. Table 6 shows what they said about their views of training BEFORE PETEP and AFTER PETEP.

Table 6 Before and after PETEP views of teacher training

Before PETEP	After PETEP	C	I	Ma	Me	N	V
Training was getting students to learn how to teach	Training was getting students to think about how to teach, to reflect.	√	√			√	√
Training means focusing on the procedures of teaching	Training means focusing on the students		√		√	√	
Started with knowledge in the trainer’s head	Start with where the students are, their prior experiences.	√	√		√	√	
The trainer is responsible for training students	The students are responsible for themselves.			√			
Training means telling people what’s on the menu	Training is finding out what you want to know.	√		√			
Training is imparting knowledge	Training is interaction and sharing, thus creating knowledge	√	√		√	√	√
Training is telling them what you know.	Don’t talk too much. Give them room to breathe.	√			√		√

It is interesting to note here that the most senior member identified virtually no change in her position. In fact, Mawar honestly admitted that she was resistant to PETEP strategies and ideas. She felt the flexibility of experiential learning and process-based training did not fit in with her structured and pragmatic view of training. While she said she ‘expected to be told what to do’, she could not respond to the approach that ‘tells’ her to be more flexible. Mawar, actually, had used her previous experience on the SAC project to filter her perceptions of PETEP. The SAC was very structured in its approach to training. There were clear guidelines in the writing of materials, and in the training. PETEP was exploratory all the way. So she was completely out of her element. This annoyed her. However, she acknowledged that the experience showed her that it was an alternative way of training people. But she felt she could not make any direct attribution to the influence of PETEP on her practices. She believed that professional change was an accumulation of experiences. In this sense, she said her present practices were a follow-up of the SAC project.

Nyatok said he was very lost and frustrated by the concept of ‘process’. It threw his whole world upside down. To him training was transmission. However, his readiness to learn gave him a new

insight to a different view of training, which coincided with his view of affective education. Vanda was not very articulate about the changes she encountered though she made direct attribution to PETEP. She seemed to lack the vocabulary to articulate these changes. Melor was very enthusiastic about PETEP. She claimed she was already familiar with some of the ideas and was eager to learn more. Iris and Chengai seemed very articulate about the changes they made. PETEP was like a whole new world to them despite their KBSM training. Chengai intellectualised the experience with his usual sense-making. His response supports the notion that teachers do reframe their experience in their light of their understanding. It also proves that while prior learning experiences may be important, they are amenable to change (Kennedy, 1990; Freeman, 1991, 1992). Iris felt PETEP gave her a new dimension in training. She thought training was just telling students how to teach. PETEP made her aware of the lack of student involvement and thinking.

In terms of their roles, they felt PETEP has given them an opportunity to develop but they did not find it easy to play their role as PETEP trainers because they encountered various problems in implementation. In the case of Nyatok, he had problems in getting his in-house training done, Iris had problems convincing her staff, Chengai had difficulties with his principal, both Melor and Vanda have difficulties with their head of department and members of the department. Mawar did not have problems because she was an administrator and was skilled in managing her role as a leader. As for the strategies, all of them perceived the strategies to be useful. Nyatok honestly proclaimed that in times of examinations, he would revert to the lecture mode. As for reflections they saw it as a form of feedback on the tasks given. There were no evidence of reflection being integrated into training, except for Chengai's training workshop where there was time for facilitators' reflections and participants 'required' journal entries. While they all diplomatically said they have the support of their administrators, there was no evidence to show that their administrators fully understood what was necessary to support their staff. It seemed 'support' has to be redefined as more than mere availability of funding. The presence and participation of the head at training workshops seemed to be important, an issue highlighted by Fullan (1991).

Transfer of training

All the trainers observed did not demonstrate much transfer in their training practices. All of them demonstrated didacticism in various ways such as control over knowledge and perceptions through focusing, questioning and materials. The gap between their espoused understanding of PETEP principles and their training practices was clear but they believed that they had made a difference in their practices since PETEP. This might be true to a certain extent for there were attempts to

employ PETEP terminologies and activities such as discussion, feedback round and reflection. The critical issue was how these were carried out.

Personal and professional growth

The trainers felt they have gained both professionally and personally from their involvement in the Project as in Table 7. Their professional image has been enhanced by their involvement in various initiatives of the ministry and the community. They have become more aware of the values of collaborative work. They seemed to have more self-esteem and are more committed to their views of training, for example Iris felt she had more self-esteem than before, though she still felt she needed to have another course in developing self assertiveness. From ‘nobody’ they have now become ‘somebody’ with the confidence to contribute for example, both Vanda and Nyatok felt PETEP had transformed their professional portfolio. Currently both ran courses for the State and NGOs. These are activities they never dreamt that they would ever participate in.

Table 7 Benefits from the Project

Trainer	Benefits
Chengai	More aware of himself as a learner, more aware of process rather than content in training, more sensitive to participants as ‘people’
Iris	More confident, more sensitive to the viewpoints of other people, more assertive
Mawar	Aware of alternative viewpoints
Melor	Changed outlook on teacher training, enhanced professional image and efficacy, aware of how to ‘manage’ people, involved in other initiatives and community work
Nyatok	felt more professional, more effective, more daring, not afraid of making mistakes, developed rapport with head of department, became more ‘marketable’ - sought after to conduct courses, became more aware of wider issues such as management
Vanda	More confident, played a more significant role in management and decision-making, increased her skills in documentation, enhanced belief in interactions, more aware of the value of professional sharing, the need for reflection, more involved in networking with teachers and colleagues.

Conceptualising life history and educational change

This section draws together the main issues that came out of the life histories, practices and constructs of the teacher educators. These are:

- The importance of personal concerns
- The subjective realities of teachers’ lives
- The personal nature of teaching

All these issues highlight the centrality of personal agendas at the heart of educational change.

Any innovation that meets the teacher will first be evaluated on the basis of ‘what it means for me to change? This is because teaching is an extremely personal activity. It is an activity that is part

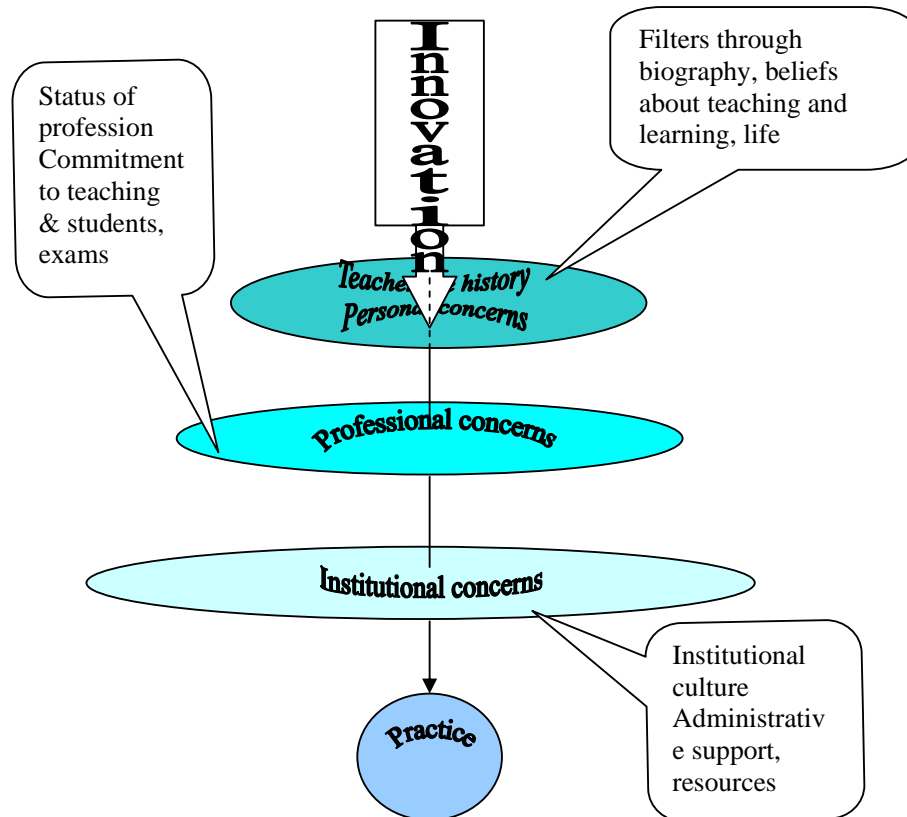
of what we are, and it is as old as Time. The way teachers teach reflects his or her personal beliefs in what it means to be a teacher, and what teaching and learning is all about. The only problem here is that, much of this knowledge is tacit. Changing practices has to go through several layers of beliefs systems to find the heart of teaching. Innovations that promised magical transformation, at best, last a year or so. For change to last, and for teachers to change, we have to address the core issue – teaching and being a person are intricately entwined. Figure 3 conceptualizes the issues raised by wide-scale change.

Change is external and linear

The current practice of top-down change denies educators the self-direction they are capable of. A linear view of educational change is external to teacher personal concerns, professional concerns and institutional concerns. These concerns are the sum total of every stakeholders' concerns in the system. With a linear unidirectional change, these concerns are on hold and remain in situ either taking the form of non-action or frantic activity that serves confusion more than it serves change. As a result, it becomes the norm in some contexts where constant change is misinterpreted as dynamism. Dynamism is a reflection of committed and conscious change. Committed and conscious change can only be an outcome of an internal need for change.

Allowing the change to be the outcome of an internal process of reflection is a far more sensible approach because it can take account of the personal, professional and institutional concerns of the people involved in the change. A linear model of change that is externally decided will not be able to account for the internal organics of the organisation that has to implement it. Furthermore, external agencies that decide on the value of an innovation possibly have a different philosophical orientation to those who actually have to implement it, bearing in mind that change agents have their own personal biography and life history that might be quite different from those from the outside.

Figure 3 Conceptualisation of personal life history and educational change



Ownership

Fullan (1991) talks about the ownership of change. Ownership is when people own the change because they believe in it and because they want it. Externally imposed change produces external ramifications of the change effort. They are often characterized by excessive fanfare meaning nothing. Taking root requires personal commitment and belief amongst all concern parties. At the moment we tend to look at the lone change agent, as if change can be effected through the skills of one person. In education, we tend to gather together a group of teachers from all over the country, label them as change agents, teach them *about* the innovation and when they return, they will be able to implement the change as if by magic. The trainer, like the ones in my study, are excited and motivated by the nomination and at workshops, they found the collaborative climate extremely energising. However, when they return, they are all alone. Faced with institutional concerns they succumb to the problems of day to day routines. Implementation becomes a dream. And in their reports they wrote about the difficulties of timing and of getting permission to carry out their in-

house or their training. These are things that are not in the training given to them. Clearly not only do they have self-doubts because of the risks involved in trying things out on their own, there also other variables they have little control over.

Articulating change and practising change

This study found that some trainers were capable of articulating the change but were quite unaware that they were practising otherwise. The perceived gap seemed to be a characteristic of externalising our notion of change because it was not something that came from within us. We tried to make the strange familiar by recasting it in the mould we know best. This reframing and recasting has the effect of theorising change without practising change. For those incapable of articulating change was probably not because they have not understood but they were unused to talking about their actions. So it is quite common in our system to see the physical presence of an innovation than to see it being practised in the classroom. And when people do talk about the change they would direct attention to these artefacts. This came out very clearly in Mawar's case because to her change is just changing the environment. That is the first level of change. Internalising change would have to go through her beliefs system and if it fitted in with the evidence from her life history that such an approach would be beneficial, then she would probably change.

External change and internal change

This study has also found that wide-scale change tends to escalate ahead of internal change. Trainers at the moment are involved in another wide-scale change. The rapid involvement in change gives a veneer of growth and development and provides trainers with a sense of well being. But the issue is whether this external change is in synchrony with the internal change. From the evidence, it seemed change is still evolving from the surface level.

Prior learning experiences

The study has further revealed that prior learning experiences seem to play a far more important role in structuring teaching than any formal training programmes. The wealth of learning and teaching experiences seems to be enduring and is often called to the surface in the face of challenge. The disregard for formal training programmes at preservice level is worrying. Does it mean that there is a dire need to realign our training practices to draw on the personal concerns and biography of our students at the very beginning of training?

Primary school teachers are lasting models

This seemed to support the idea that we really need to contextualise our teacher education in the person of the teacher. The fact that these teachers were remembered more for their personalities than their pedagogical methods also highlighted the need to look at the development of teacher attitudes and beliefs in teaching.

Socialization into teaching

This issue perhaps provides us with a view of how teachers learn and the kind of environment they worked in. The study revealed that mediated entry into teaching is non-existent while socialization into training is almost totally dependent on self-direction. This is significant in highlighting the capacity for self-direction and therefore innovations could be derived from within institutions rather than from outside. The perception of trainers towards collaboration is a healthy sign that much can be gained if colleges could be given the freedom to innovate. That professional experience is seen as an accumulation and integration of life experiences is important to the extent that there is much to be learnt from a biographical approach to teacher education.

The way forward

The intention of this study has been to find out the extent to which an innovation has been internalized by trainers involved in the project. The conceptualization here points to the importance of prior learning experiences and the need to contextualise teacher education in the life history of teachers. It highlights the need for a review of the way teachers are trained and the way innovations are implanted into an educational system. From a research perspective it highlights the power of life-history research in education.

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