

Emotion, identity, imagery and hope as resources for teachers' work¹

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Emotion, Identity, Imagery and Hope as Resources for Teachers' Work

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Abstract

This presentation reports on a series of interviews from within a critical action research study with teachers in Adelaide's northern fringe. These interviews focused on what motivated and sustained teachers who had worked for many years within an area of significant socioeconomic challenge. In the context of a synthesis between critical and mythopoetic approaches to educational practice, the presentation explores features of the personal and professional lives of teachers. Among the features that emerge include: the interpersonal nature of the relationship between teachers and students; the complexity and paradox in public schools that seek to achieve accountability through power-oriented regimes of testing and curricula; the presence of emotional labour, love, and hope in teachers' work; the role of powerful metaphors in sustaining teachers in the pursuit of spaces of social justice in students' school experience. The voices that emerge from these interviews demonstrate that an approach to critical pedagogy that ignores the interpersonal, the imaginal, and the emotional are an insufficient basis for achieving critical aims. The presentation contends that the head, heart and hands are required for socially just middle school reform.

Introduction

In this paper, I would like to discuss the possibilities that an exploration of teacher identity and emotional labour present for furthering socially just school reform. In particular, I wish to share research findings from a series of interviews with teachers about what sustains them in their work in disadvantaged schools. It is my belief that such insights are invaluable not only to help prepare trainee teachers for work in communities facing significant socioeconomic challenge, but also to support existing teachers in their development and continued use of critical pedagogies in challenging contexts (Hattam, Prosser & Brady, 2005).

At a time when we are told increasingly that teaching is the transmission of information or the implementation of a standard curriculum, I see the reemphasis of the place of relationships and lived experience in pedagogy as central to a fuller understanding of the nature of teachers' work. It is an opportunity to explore emotion and identity in teaching with the goal of a more equitable valuing of the complex and changing persons of teacher and student. This paper contends that because pedagogy relies on the relationship between teacher, student, and knowledge of a changing world (Lusted, 1986), it inevitably involves both emotion and identity negotiation. It argues that teachers are more than deliverers of curriculum, students are more than outputs of an educational production line and because the complex and multiple person of teacher is involved in pedagogical moments, there are significant implications for their emotional work and identity. Further, because teachers invest so much of themselves in educative relationships with their students, teacher identity will have implications for broader educational reform and changes in pedagogy.

With these introductory thoughts in mind, this paper presents a number of elements that became apparent during the first year of a three-year critical action research project in Adelaide's northern urban fringe. It attends to the emotional aspects of learning, teacher identity and the potential insights that teachers' emotional responses provide into the social, political and historical environments in which teaching is embedded. The impact of recent education reform on teacher identity and the visions

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and ideals that sustain teachers in changing educational environments are considered, as are the resources teachers use to reconcile resulting paradoxes. It is hoped that this paper will not only provide insight into what ‘non-rational’ resources teachers use in challenging educational environments, but also how we can involve the head, the hands *and the heart* in designing more socially just pedagogy.

The Redesigning Pedagogies in the North (RPiN) project

The research findings in this paper are taken from a research project in ten schools within Adelaide’s northern urban fringe (entitled *Redesigning Pedagogies in the North*). This region experiences high levels of poverty, early school leaving and youth unemployment, as well as a reduction in traditional career pathways, due in part to the dramatic decline of the manufacturing industry over the last fifteen years (Thomson, 2002). The project commenced in late 2004, involving over a thousand students and thirty-two teachers. The project has been designed to collaboratively build curriculum and pedagogy that incorporates ‘funds of knowledge’ (Moll & Amanti, 1992) from student lifeworlds (Roche, 1987), to value the ‘virtual schoolbags’ (Thomson, 2002) of students, as well as teach the codes of ‘cultural capital’ (Bourdieu, 1984) in the mainstream curriculum. The pedagogy of the project is critical because it aims to prompt a deeper understanding of the deficit views of students that affect students, as well as provide opportunities for students, teachers and school communities to unsettle these views. Further, the critical action research method used in the project supports teachers to reclaim their work by producing knowledge and enhancing their expertise over their professional practice.

Due to this orientation, the proposed method of the project did not overtly seek to investigate teacher identity and emotional labour as part of the initial research plan. The process with the teachers initially asked them to reflect on what they believed to be ‘good’ pedagogy within middle schooling. The consensus of the teachers confirmed an emphasis on relationships (Lusted, 1986), authenticity (Newmann, 1996), connectedness and intellectual quality (Lingard, Ladwig, Luke, Mills, Hayes & Gore, 2001; Luke, Elkins, Weir, Land, Carrington & Dole, 2003). Based on these discussions, a self-reflection checklist was produced and the thirty-two teachers were asked to use this to reflect on their pedagogy. After completing this task, the teachers participated in group discussions, which were transcribed. It was the reading of these transcriptions that formed the genesis of this paper. This process has been organic, with teachers in the project’s workshops offering emotive accounts of what drives them to be teachers, stories that reveal their changing teacher identities and the personal narratives that have informed their professional growth.

The Case Study

This paper is built on a case study of three teachers drawn from within the RPiN project during late 2005. I selected the three teachers because they had demonstrated openness in group discussions to reveal emotional, imaginative and identity aspects of their work. Veronica, Sharyn and Bob (pseudonyms) came from different schools in Adelaide’s northern urban fringe, two of which were secondary schools. Each of them had worked in the northern suburbs for over ten years, while two lived locally and one lived twenty minutes drive south of their school. All had taught in other places, with Veronica coming from interstate, Bob having taught for many years in a small rural community and Sharyn having teaching experience in both rural and north-eastern suburbs’ schools.

All three teachers are teaching middle year classes. Veronica is a senior primary teacher who radiates passion for her work and her students. In her own words, she is ‘a busy person by nature’ who ‘never knows when to quit’ and her smaller stature belies her great strength and drive. Sharyn is a curriculum line manager in her school, but maintains teaching responsibilities in the middle school (which is located within a secondary school). She stresses that ‘you’ve got to find ways to maintain your optimism’ and need ‘a sense of humour’. It is these qualities that impress you on first meeting her. After having a line manager responsibility in his last school, Bob is enjoying the shift back to teaching both middle and senior secondary classes. While Bob makes free reference to his ethnic appearance and heritage, he describes himself ‘raised as an Aussie’. Bob identifies himself strongly with the northern urban region, having worked there as a taxicab driver for many years before teaching. All three expressed enthusiasm to be part of the interviews and each expressed satisfaction at having had the opportunity to reflect broadly on their person and teaching practice.

Emotion in teachers' work

Until a decade ago, the role of emotion in teachers' work, teaching and student learning was largely unexplored. Notably, Boler (1997b) provided the first overview of the conceptualisation of teacher emotion through a review of past approaches to reason and emotion within different paradigms. Her purpose was to provide a foundation for a systematic study of emotion and power relations as well as foster the critical self-reflection on emotion that could cultivate democratic teaching approaches.

This interest in emotion coincided with a special issue of the Cambridge Journal of Education one year earlier. Most relevant to the concerns of this paper was the argument put forth by Nias (1996) that because teaching involves human interaction, it must have an emotional dimension and emotions are not separate from teaching and learning. She argued that emotion and reason weave together in learning and to separate them led to weaker understandings of teaching and learning. This view is supported by educational research (Boler, 1999; Dewhurst, 1997) and neurobiological research (Damasio, 1994, 2000; LeDoux, 1992), which highlights the complex relationships between cognitive and emotional parts of the brain. In this view, teaching involves more than teachers rationally and effectively delivering content, with thinking and learning involving both head and heart. Since that time, emotion has continued to be a topic of educational research (Hargreaves, 1998, 2001; Nias, 1996; Sutton & Wheatley, 2003; van Veen & Lasky, 2005).

However, it is perhaps Boler (1997b, 1999) who has put forward the most elaborate argument for the coming together of critical pedagogy, imagination and emotion to this time. Noting that cultural studies and critical theory have traditionally neglected a systematic study of emotion (usually dismissing it as irrational), she explained that traditional Marxist views ignored emotion as anti-rational, while neo-Marxist interests in discourse communities have only begun to acknowledge emotion by claiming rational elements within it. In response, she suggested that critical and cultural studies needed to consider the emotional as it was a vital but little understood part of power relations and capitalist modes of production. To support her argument, Boler turned to feminist critique, which resists a emotion/reason dichotomy, emphasising emotion as collaboratively constructed and non-gender specific. As a result, she portrayed emotion as socially and culturally constructed within historical power relations (Boler, 1997b). Thus, emotion was located in its social and historical context and open for use to explore these relations. For Boler (1999), emotion can not only uncover structural injustice, but also develop a site for political resistance. The coming together of critical orientations and the emotive in educational environments allow students to learn how to articulate their feelings as expressions of what is important, as well as catalyse transformation by imagining and developing expectations that exceed that offered to them. However, Boler (1997) also explained that passive empathy may read the world but not change the world, may individualise collective injustices, and may create a gap between empathy and action. By focussing the emotions on the collective, looking for a semiotics of empathy and using testimony to connect individuals to their contexts, Boler (1997, 1997b, 1999) argued that groups could move beyond guilt and powerlessness to cultivate democracy through empathy.

Another writer whose work explores the place of emotion in teaching and learning is James Hillman. Hillman (1981) used the term 'the thought of the heart' to explore thinking and learning that involves both mind and emotion. For Hillman, the 'thought of the heart' (which is the thought of images, emotion and imagination) is central to the 'imaginal', which is a more authentic and all encompassing way of thinking and learning. This idea continues to influence curriculum writers in their exploration of the 'imaginal' in teachers' work and lives.

In my interviews with teachers, numerous examples of the emotional and imaginal emerged. For Veronica, emotions could not be separated from the life of the school:

Because of the complexity of the school, and the complexity of the kids and their lives... a lot of the stuff you do is socialisation and helping them articulate things that they feel, you know it's either mad, glad or sad. So emotions play a huge... it affects your whole teaching life in here.

Sharyn also spoke of the emotional implications of working in an urban fringe school:

You have a lot of sad stories in a school like this, and you often talk with kids just in a casual way, sometimes it takes me by surprise, like sometimes you think that nothing else is going to shock you... but then causally a kid will tell you a story about something that has happened on their weekend or in their life that is incredibly sad. I'm saddened again by it... but you, you've got to use those experiences to say "Right, well I've got to give these kids the best I can personally give them".

For Sharyn her teaching has increasingly become about sharing her life stories, self and emotions. For Bob, emotion is inseparable from the image and essence of being human:

That's who I am; I am an emotional person, I can't hide it, it's obviously precarious but there it is, and I'm comfortable with that, that I bring it into the classroom. So when I say 'emotion' I see a human being. I see everything. I see happiness, angry, loving, caring, rude. The main thing that I want them to see is that I am happy to be here...

When they are down, I gently pick them up, and when we're on a high we really rock and roll, so it's an emotional ride.

Clearly, these examples indicate that teacher emotion can be involved in pedagogical moments and educative relationships. This has important implications for teachers' work, but also, as I will discuss in the next section, for teacher identity.

Teacher identity: An anchor in the storm

Recent educational reform in Northern America and Australia has had significant implications for teachers' emotional work and identity. Lasky (2005) explains those teachers who entered the profession at a time of liberalism and economic well being (where the rationale of education was primarily about student development), have lived through the impact of an economic recession, and now face a time of managerialism and competition (where the rationale of education is primarily about serving the economy). Her research shows that despite the pressure from such change, these teachers use their lives to put into action what they maintained were important, at their own emotional cost. Teachers reported a sense of guilt as they saw themselves decreasingly effective and feeling heartbreak because more students were set up to fail. Despite this, the teachers persisted in making themselves vulnerable and open to students because they saw it as central to student engagement, learning and socio-emotional development.

There is also an ongoing tension about what is the 'right way' to teach and what is the 'right sort' of teacher. This tension emerges because of social, historical and institutional pressures and their mismatch with the hopes of teachers for education. They negotiate these tensions through teacher identity, with the resultant long-term struggle often leaving teachers emotionally drained and despairing; which raises the important question of how teacher identity is sustained.

Lasky (2005) argues that as the priorities of education have changed there has been an impact on teacher identity. She found that some teachers saw themselves as old, useless, impotent 'dinosaurs' by holding on to the values that formed and underpinned their teaching identity. Yet hold on to them they do, despite their formative experiences of teaching and teacher identity being in such conflict with recent change.

For teachers in this study, their core values and notions of professionalism were an anchor in a stormy political and reform climate (p. 913).

It is precisely because teachers hold on to these formative visions and identities that they find coherence in changing educational environments.

For Veronica, teaching is as an active and positive challenge, but she sees educators ‘being kicked around’ with the Australian political climate adding to this challenge:

As a teacher, we are public enemy number one. Everybody blames us for everything. You know the sad thing that I perceive as happening is that we are freedom fighting, maintaining our democracy... our policy makers are doing all the things that happened in South America thirty years ago, where you attack the intellectual base and you slowly take away the freedoms, then you demonise the trade unions, and demonise the teachers. We’re the demons; we’re the people that they kick as hard as they can to stay in power... they kick us collectively, but individually we can still make a difference.

Veronica’s early experiences of teaching were formative and sustaining, in part because she fell into teaching at a younger age, almost as a second option. However, Veronica completed the training, but still did not want to become a teacher because of the bad image the profession had in the community. This changed once she worked in a school as she found ‘that the more I teach the more I want to be a teacher’. As Veronica looks back, she sees how influential her early teaching years were:

As far as my teaching training, I actually came through some glory days, which were really good, so there are practices put in place that I just think are not beneficial for the kids at this school, so... you just come in and do the things that we know... I mean I don’t go with the trends.

Sharyn also sees her teacher training taking place in the ‘glory days’:

I know it’s a very 70’s thing to say, but the reason that many of us got into teaching is because we actually wanted to make the world a better place, and... unless teachers have the broader understanding about where education fits and how important it is in society, then it’s harder to sustain the kinds of energy that I think they need.

Bob explained that he became a teacher later in life because he enjoyed teaching in other capacities and wanted to formalise his abilities. He came into teaching aware that it no longer had the high status that it did when he was young (especially, he said, because he came from an ethnic background), but that does not worry him as he still believes that teachers play an important part in society. However, for Bob it is his formative experiences as mentor and coach that came with him into teaching that now sustains him in his teaching:

My personal belief is whether you are a teacher, coach or anybody, if you have a philosophy it helps... If someone is coming hard at you, you can either go hard back at it, and hope you are stronger than the person, or you can shift your body and see the hard as it goes past, so yeah, that’s my type of philosophy... and living now. What happened yesterday is finished.

Meanwhile, Veronica described her philosophy of needing to ‘love the students’ so that you can support them. Such philosophies link to Liston’s (2000) exploration of sustaining teacher identity through the consideration of emotion in teaching. Drawing on Palmer, Liston specifically explores the potential of love to empower and sustain teaching.

If we are to hold paradoxes together our own love is absolutely necessary – and yet our own love is never enough. In a time of tension, we must endure whatever love we can muster until that very tension draws a larger love into the scene (Palmer, 1998, p. 85).

In paradox we reach for an enlarged love, one that, we hope, can embrace and endure the tensions entailed in our teaching dilemmas (Liston, 2000, p. 94).

For Liston, teachers need to overcome struggles in their teaching by loving their work, their students and their teacher identity more deeply. By drawing on the emotive, symbolic and metaphorical notion of love, they can find sustenance.

Imagery and myth in critical pedagogy

As the previous section alluded to, teacher identity exists within a context of paradox, power, ideology and politics. As van Veen and Lasky (2005) noted, the emotional journey of teachers and their identities are not separate from these contexts and can provide insights into the social, political and historical environments in which their teaching is embedded. It is here that examples of critical pedagogy, imagery and the mythopoetic can begin to be seen in the reflections of teachers.

One prominent social influence on teachers is the negative stereotypes about teaching in Adelaide's northern urban fringe:

That's interesting how we talk of [teaching in the north] in terms of sentencing, it's funny how teachers do that. It's not horrible teaching out in the north; it's hard work and it's really challenging, but I think that keeps you real as a teacher (Veronica).

Bob does not accept the stereotype that students in the north of Adelaide cannot succeed and are harder to teach.

We get the image that [the kids in] the north aren't academic – what a load of rubbish... We've got kids here that people think don't work – rubbish, they work. When we get them out on work experience they shine...

For Bob, part of this is opposing deficit images about the students, school and community:

I said [to the students] "When people see us as working class, or low socioeconomic area, being working class is a pretty important thing. We should be proud of it because the working class denotes that when the job needs to be done, we do it, we roll up our sleeves, we don't complain, we just do"... our kids shouldn't be embarrassed by it; they should be extremely proud.

Sharyn also seeks to resist deficit images:

It's actually about opposing the deficit model of "We're a poor suburb, or we don't get the funding we need, it's really sad, it's really inequitable, and therefore it is going to be difficult for our kids to achieve", and those things may be true but they don't get you very far... the culture of this school has been building a rhetoric that breeds success... If you start to feel successful, you feel better about yourselves and you will become successful, that kind of cycle.

Veronica agrees, but also notes some challenges for education in the north:

It's not that poor kids can't learn, but if you wake up in your nice middle to upper class home and mummy has made you breakfast, and your clothes are fresh, and you've had a good nice sleep because your room is upstairs and you can't hear the noise downstairs, and you live on a big block of land where you don't have much contact with the neighbours and you 'choof off' to school with your belly full and with a lovely lunch box, I mean of course you are going to do better than a kid who drags himself to school with no sleep... It's like when a horse starts a horse race, like they're weighted and what we need to do is make sure we are weighting education so that all kids are starting here even.

What the above examples highlight is the potential of emotion and imagery as a site to explore and resist injustice (Zembylas, 2003). They show the tensions that result from a clash of contexts and

teacher values through simple metaphors or images. Over many years, these struggles can ‘affect your energy levels’ (Bob), ‘make you feel disillusioned’ (Sharyn) and ‘get under your skin, then you are done for’ (Veronica). Some writers have portrayed this process through the images of ‘spiritual pain’ (Dubus, 1996) or ‘the windblown soul’ (Freedman, 1990). To consider such things within the life of teachers, one needs to move beyond simple imagery, embrace the paradoxes in teaching, and explore deeper personal responses.

Hope and imagery as teacher resources

Each of the teachers in this case study were engaged in emotional labour due to a metaphorical (or narrative) attempt to make sense of the challenging identity and pedagogical work in which they were inevitably involved. For instance, Bob opposes the idea that students should stay in one classroom and resists the pressure to monitor student movement. He allows students to move around the school because they are working on things and at different levels, even though he knows he is ‘breaking school policy’. For Bob it is a matter of trust:

I do trust them. I might get kicked in the gut, but I’ll pick myself up and get kicked again... I see that I am a bit of a buffer between policy and students.

This image of taking hard knocks and picking yourself up when teaching draws on a deeper metaphor of karate:

You just accept it, it’s what teaching is... it is a grind, teaching is a grind, but I have a philosophy that life is a grind... when I was doing a particular technique and I’m having difficulty as is expected, because I am a westerner, I said to my sensei, “This is hard, please help me. What’s an easy way?” and all he said was “Yes it is”.

Bob uses the same philosophy with his students when they find school or learning difficult. Another aspect of this philosophy is Bob’s sense that it is his responsibility to be in the right frame of mind and maintain sensitivity to the students:

If we can learn to accept, then I think it’s a powerful way of getting through your life... I learnt that the only time I am in trouble was when I was in a bad mood and... I try to remember that every time I walk through the door [into the classroom] that I have to be in a good mood... and to give and to receive and to give to them.

For Bob, the notions of acceptance, giving and receiving have great power. Patience and hope are also an important part of his teaching. Veronica agrees:

The whole profession is hope isn’t it? I mean you like to think that you do make an impact, whether it is positive or negative, but everything we do is hope.

Veronica’s hope is also in creating greater social equality. She sees her role in the community to help people not be ‘hoodwinked by things, and believe things without stopping and thinking’. The symbolic resource she draws on to understand this is her class origins. She identifies her father’s trade unionist background and her convent schooling as highly influential. Interestingly, it was not the teachings of Catholicism that resulted in her social justice values:

It was about the girls I went to school with... they’d take me home and go “Mum, this is my friend, she is poor”, so I was like their token poor friend, but I think that didn’t make me want their life, it made me realise there were fights to be fought.

It is within the context of her story of class that she explains why she teaches in the north. She feels that the ‘kids are more real’ and that it probably is because of her coming from a similar background. The images that support the rendering of Veronica’s teaching experience are those of struggle and battle. The nature of the fight is inherently political in her mind and not surprisingly, it is also through

this political lens that Veronica understands the social, political and economic challenges facing public schools in her region. However, class and politics are not the only resources that Veronica draws upon. She also has a strong self-story around motion and busyness. She describes teaching as a profession in which you cannot stay still and that it suits her, but the constancy of this can be demanding and she worries that she might burden others with it. To help her in this Veronica uses her daily drive home from school to partake in a process of self novel creation. Her role as parent has also been important to her in that it informs how she envisions her teaching and experiences with students. For her it has changed her relationships with students and she now acts according to how she would like her own children to be taught.

Sharyn expressed similar sentiments about the impact of seeing oneself as parent and teacher:

I have a son who is nearly fifteen, that's highly motivating for me as a teacher. I want to be the kind of teacher that I would expect him to have in his high school... and the kids I teach, I want them to have the sorts of experiences that I want him to have at school... my son had a teacher he adored in primary school, he knew all about her life and family and he adored her... he was engaged by her and felt privileged. I've always been a bit guarded... I want to be more like that.

This sharing of herself aligns with Sharyn's belief that the role of teaching is 'to nurture souls':

I would say that religion hasn't been very important to me, but the old idea... of the human spirit, that's something I really do believe in and that's something that shapes my decision to be a teacher and to work towards the common good... it's important in terms of sustaining optimism.

Sharyn maintains that optimism through a commitment to making the world a better place, which she builds on her humanist values. She describes herself as 'teaching for world peace and to solve world problems' and believes in people's freedom to do as they wish as long as they do not harm others. She believes in valuing the person and tries to contribute in 'a more altruistic level to the way society is'. Sharyn also holds to a sense of everyone having a fair go, with the same opportunities and experiences, and teachers supporting students by developing real relationships.

In the examples above it is apparent that because teachers and students invest themselves in educative relationships, how the teachers see themselves and their role has important implications for redesigning their pedagogy and sustaining their teaching. However, their response to recent changes in educational priorities also has a large impact on the success or otherwise of these initiatives. As Lasky (2005) notes, besieged teachers who are struggling to hold on to what they believe is important are more likely to be reform mediators than reform innovators. If critical pedagogy is to play a role in teachers resisting injustice and promoting socially just educational reform, then it must consider the emotional and imaginal lives of teachers.

Summary: The head, hand and heart of critical pedagogy

The interviews that are the foundation of this paper were conducted at the end of the first year of a three-year research project. As a result, there remains plenty of opportunity to confirm the following observations with more interviews of greater depth with these and other teachers in the project. In particular, there is within the teacher responses a tension between emotion as a site of affective resistance and emotion as a negative construction that signifies the times, which deserves further consideration. Further, future interviews would benefit from a closer examination of the connections between student-teacher relationships, curriculum learning and learning about life. With these qualifications in mind, there appears to be six emerging trends within these accounts of teachers working in Adelaide's northern urban fringe.

Firstly, these teachers did not feel they had the time to think deeply or broadly about their work. They also confess some hesitance to do so. However, when the teachers took the opportunity to reflect on their lives and pedagogy there was evidence of them drawing on deep resources to sustain practice.

Secondly, there is evidence of that which most educators know, but some political leaders and policy makers are reticent to admit. These teacher accounts show that there is much more to teaching than banking information, delivering set curriculum and implementing standardised tests. Relationships are central to pedagogy and involve the complex and multiple persons of teacher and student. One aspect of this that was apparent in the interviews is the emotional involvement of teachers. While this varies from teacher to teacher, these teachers who are committed to teaching long term in challenging socioeconomic environments speak of engaging in significant emotional work.

Thirdly, these interviews produced evidence to support Lasky's (2005) observation that the formative experiences of teachers are vital to teacher identity and ongoing teaching practice. All three teachers spoke of how the values they brought with them into teaching and the beliefs about education at the time of their teacher education continue to influence them (despite recent changes). Further, there was evidence of the clash between their formative values and current contexts producing emotional work and requiring some sort of practical and philosophical response. For one it was in the composing a novel of her day, another in the acceptance of 'the way' and the other in the nurturing of souls.

Fourthly, the interviews showed evidence of a philosophy that sustained these teachers in their work in Adelaide's northern urban fringe. This philosophy gave them a means to contextualise their emotional effort and attempt to reconcile the paradoxes of their teaching experiences. It enabled teachers to mediate their emotional reactions through a connection to a larger social imagining, be it social justice, Eastern philosophy or liberal humanism. Thus, the three teachers revealed philosophies that held emotive power, drew on imagery and evoked narratives that verged on the spiritual. In their accounts, there was clearly evidence of the 'mythopoetic' (Bradbeer, 1998; Holland & Garman, 1992; MacDonald, 1981; Prosser, 2006) at work, sustaining and shaping these teachers and their practice.

Finally, the interviews offered some insight into the conditions required for teachers to redesign and reinvigorate their pedagogy. While it is still too early in this project to see the impact of specific pedagogical changes during the last year, there are common factors in these teacher accounts of changed pedagogy. These include:

- the presence of a supportive colleague or mentor within the school;
- an openness to engage with school community contexts;
- both practical and philosophical means to manage the emotional work that comes from the daily demands of teaching and pedagogical change;
- a strong sense of teacher identity that is sustained by a sense of the place of themselves as teacher and teachers in the world.

The above findings are a challenge to those within critical approaches who would over emphasise the rational in critical pedagogy and social change. If pedagogy is relational, as these teachers attest, then it should consider both the rational and emotional aspects of learning. As a consequence, critical pedagogy should consider the insights that teachers' rational and emotional responses provide into the social, political and historical contexts in which their teaching is embedded. Further, it would seem that pedagogy must embrace the sustaining visions and images that help teachers reconcile the paradoxes between their teaching ideals and current educational contexts. Meanwhile critical pedagogy should consider how emotional labour and associated 'myths' might facilitate or obstruct changing pedagogy for socially just reform. If critical theory is to reinvigorate and redesign pedagogy, it must consider how the complex person through head, heart and hands can empower that reform.

Conclusion

In this paper, I have explored the possibilities that teacher emotional labour, identity, imagery and hope present for furthering socially just school reform. In particular, I presented research findings from a series of interviews with teachers about what sustains them in their work in disadvantaged

schools. I did this in the hope that it might prompt further discussion about the role of 'non-rational' resources in the preparation of trainee teachers for work in communities facing significant socioeconomic challenge, and in supporting existing teachers to sustain the use of critical pedagogies in challenging times.

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