Title: (Re)Building Community by employing teachers’ agency for social reconstruction.

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Abstract

In this paper I intend to discuss aspects of teachers’ agency, specifically how teachers’ seek to broaden their agency so that teachers’ work extends beyond the classroom and school, and into the community. The examination of agency draws on the work of Archer (M. Archer, 1982; M. S. Archer, 1995) and realist social theory in which agency is enabled through interactions with structure. Evidence gathered from teachers and their representatives from 29 countries shows that teachers’ seek a broader education and social agency in order to address inequality, exclusion, privatization and commercialization of education and its consequential impact on the quality of education and schooling(Vongalis, 2003). Using these demands as a platform for further discussion, I examine how teachers’ agency is being employed, as a matter of urgency in a post conflict situation.

Teachers’ locate their work within the broader social parameters and construct their profession as not only class room practitioners, but they share a vision of the professional teacher as someone who has social responsibilities. Using bricoleur methodology and by piecing together the projected roles of educators in post conflict Iraq, it is possible to understand how teachers’ agency is co-opted to usher in a new regime of power that has a new role for education. What emerges is an understanding
of teachers’ agency and power. Employing teachers’ agency for social and economic reconstruction is critical for the new regime in Iraq. Returning teachers to the classroom is fundamental to recreating a sense of normalcy in post conflict situations and teachers’ agency becomes a means by with discontinuity with the past is enacted in practice. However, this raises issues about how the employment of teachers’ agency in Iraq illustrates that teachers are marginalized from the policy underpinning social reconstruction and education reform even in situations where they occupy a critical role in social rebuilding.

**The agents and systems**

Education systems are constructed as organizations that manage the interactions between structures and agents in order to perform specified education and social functions. Teachers are critical agents in the organization and management of education systems and while much research has been conducted on the globalization of education systems, the positioning of teachers, as key agents, is lesser known. As potentially powerful agents of educational change, the sheer numerical presence of teachers alone is a powerful reminder systemic agency of teachers.

The lived experiences of teachers, as they confront working within globalised education systems, suggests that teachers are strategically reconstructing their agency in order to reclaim the development of the profession and reassert the values underpinning the public ownership of education, as a common good and human right. The question of how teachers are responding to globalisation was the topic of the Third World Congress held by Education International in 2000.

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Results from data collected at the Education International Third World Congress, in which teachers and their union representatives from 55 countries shared their experiences and views, show ways that teachers are experiencing globalisation and educational reform as social, political and economic change in markedly different social contexts (Vongalis, 2003).

The day after the Education International third World Congress in 2000, the Bangkok Post ran the headline “Classroom sell-out irks teachers”. The article summed up the resolve of the 1,300 delegates at the Education International Congress condemning the “commercialisation and privatisation” of education (AFP, 2001:4). The article outlined the political concerns of teachers demanding a revision of neo-liberal trends in social and education reform. The politicisation of education and social reform is not surprising when put in the context of the development of the teaching profession that was active in shaping the demands for mass, public education in the newly industrialized states since the 1800s. Since those early years, the politics of education change have been at the fore of teacher interests and relations. As a professional class, teachers have occupied a strategic place in social reform through their strategic alliances with government and other civic agents. Responses to social and education reform throughout the last century, underpinned teachers’ need for ownership of their practice, fair and equitable working conditions, and giving voice and power to social classes less privileged and representative in public politics and decision making (Dale, 1989; Ginsburg, 1995; Lawn, 1987). Teachers influenced the social-political context that frames their work.

The current era, marked by a new global economy transforming economic and social
development, presents a set of contemporary issues confronting teachers. A consequence of globalisation has been the development of Education International, a global affiliation of teachers’ unions and federations from around the world. The organisation presents the collective political voice of teachers as a social movement organisation that seeks to embed teachers and education reform in the public politics of globalisation.

*Education International: A global teacher organisation*

In response to the emergence of global agencies in social policy development, the formation of Education International grew out of the recognition that teachers had to confront new global social conditions. An interview with Sharan Burrow, the Vice President of Education International until July 2001, provides the historical backdrop that steered the teaching profession towards a global organisation.

The convergence of International Federation of Free Trade Unions (IFFTU) and World Confederation of Teaching Professionals (WCOTP) in 1993, in Stockholm, came about as a result of the politics of 1989 and the reshaping of world politics. Prior to 1993, the ethos of organizations centred on cold war politics. The Berlin wall comes down; world politics reshaped... teachers have a common set of interests. Globalisation was drawing the need for consensus around issues of school reform and mobility. The result was a harmonious and welcomed merger and in 1995 The first Congress of IE was held in Harare, Zimbabwe (Burrow, 2000).

Education International, as the teachers’ global representative body, aims to become a catalyst in global social policy in order to articulate and pursue the interests of teachers at the macro level of policy construction. Education International holds World Congress meetings as a way to address the concerns of teachers in the global age. Third World Congress, held in 2001, addressed the theme of education in the
global economy and invited teachers and their union representatives to share their ideas and opinions on a range of professional issues. The Education International Third World Congress presented an opportune forum to gather information about teachers’ experience and reactions to globalisation.

The following tables show teachers’ concerns at the Education International Third World Congress.

Figure 1: Talking about teaching in the global economy

The topics that feature highly in teacher concerns include neo-liberalism, social conditions, teacher conditions, gender issues and the role of Education International.

Neoliberalism, as a social and economic policy was criticised by teachers and their representatives because it created an internationally competitive economies underpinning reform that resulted in furthering the gap between developed and developing regions (Vongalis, 2004). The process of implementing neo-liberal
reforms also meant a significant decrease in the public sector, decentralisation and entrepreneurial modeling, and reframing services, such as education, as commodities that introduced managerial discourse and practice as ways of thinking about education, teaching and learning. The ensuing privatisation of public institutions to focus on bottom line and not education meant the deprioritising of many educational ideas such as social justice and equity which had the capacity to further the marginalisation of the working classes and lower social economic groups. Teachers echoed other critical social theorists and activists (George, 1999).

Teachers expressed disagreement with neo-liberal policies, in similar arguments put forward by George, linking the neo-liberal social and economic reform to the privatisation of education and the exclusion of poorer children and learners, especially girls, the restructuring of learning for global economic utility, the marginalisation of teachers as social agents, and the degradation of working conditions for many teachers around the world. Arguments put forward by teacher union representatives suggest that there is a correlation between neo-liberalism and deteriorating education and working conditions for teachers that marginalize teachers from being socially active agents.

Teachers’ unions from Chile were notably outspoken about the social deprivation and exclusion resulting from policy reforms. Teachers from Chilean teacher unions outlined how neo-liberal policies have buried their countries in a cycle of underdevelopment. Chilean teachers outlined Chile’s infamous claim to fame as the world pioneer of neo-liberal policies. In 1980s, under Pinochet regime, the constitution was changed to alter labour code, health and social security laws and the
opening of the market included education. As a result, the role of the teaching staff changed completely. Due to neo-liberal tendencies and radical policies the constitutional rights were over ruled to suit neo-liberal agenda of change. Chilean representatives sought to highlight the harm of neo-liberal policies (Vongalis, 2003).

At a regional forum for African nations, African teachers concurred that neo-liberal social change had brought negative changes such as the increase in child labour leading them to call for an end to child labour. Fijian teachers pointed out that the lack of resources resulted in students not being able to perform and called on the government to deal with the social disparity. Another outspoken critic of neo-liberal reform came from the teachers in Nepal especially concerned about the escalation of (Vongalis, 2003). The teachers reported that neo-liberal reform is pursed in the context where 66 per cent live below the poverty line and 30 per cent have no schooling and lack basics such as food, clothes and housing.

The impact of neo-liberalism concerned the teachers’ unions from El Salvador. They condemned the privatisation of public services which is symptomatic of other socio-economic measures that dismantle the fabric of social welfare. They stressed that these reform measures are not resultant from a policy choice by the people of El Salvador but rather have been steered by the imposition of foreign capital structures as a condition of government borrowing from World Bank and IMF (Vongalis, 2003).

At the Education International Congress, representatives from the El Salvadorian teaching fraternity revealed that government efforts to sell the coming attraction of neoliberalism, included a US $45 million advertising budget selling privatisation by creating “the right conditions and attitude”(Vongalis, 2003). By their own admission,
teachers’ unions in El Salvador, struggling against privatisation of public institutions and neo-liberal reform, have not been able to make much progress against neo-liberal social policy so the effects of the privatisation of services and institutions such as education, continues to create a climate of job instability, a freeze salaries for six years, and an increase in the recruitment age. Teachers are expected to study longer, qualify later, be paid less and reduce their entitlements by qualifying for teacher pension and retirement plans much later in their career. The El Salvadorean teachers point out that their experience is the reality for all workers and to the detriment of the whole society.

Paralleling the detrimental impact of neo-liberal reforms were teachers’ awareness of the erosion of teaching conditions and teachers’ role in education. Teachers and their representatives were all too aware of the marginalisation of teachers as social agents. That is, the decreased input from teachers into education reforms and changes. At the collective level, the decreased influence of teachers’ unions meant a degradation of working conditions for many teachers around the world so much so that teachers from developing countries saw the profession as one for the ‘working poor’. The feminisation of the teaching force and the negative impact this had on pay and conditions meant that the professional status of teachers was at risk from being reframed in terms of skills and practice that could be taught through minimal retraining. The vocationalisation of the profession related to the idea that it could be reframed as a casual nurturing job that suited women. The lack of female representation at the upper levels of education management and leadership in policy and institutions continued to feed the cycle that women could not assume authority
within the profession (Vongalis, 2004).

Underpinning the teachers’ view of educational reforms is the political impetus that teachers seek to harness in order to redress the patterns of reform and reconstruct new agential boundaries that reclaim their sphere of influence. In speaking out against neo-liberalism, the degradation of teaching conditions, the decreasing impact of the teacher in educational policy and practice, teachers are seeking ways to enhance social and educational capacity.

Uncovering teachers’ agency in reconstruction

What can be surmised about teachers’ responses to teaching in a global economy is the emphasis on the potential for social capacity of teachers’ work. Teachers’ locate their work within the broader social parameters and construct their profession as not only educators limited to class room practitioners, but they share a vision of the professional teacher as someone who has social responsibilities. Teachers’ social agency capacity, which allows them to speak out again the marketisation of education the utilization of education as a commodity and the increasingly narrow definition of what education means. The anti neo-liberal stance underpins the capacity for teachers to address economic issues that are at the heart of development and reconstruction of societies. These examples of teachers’ social agency expand teachers’ agency, from mainly the school and class rooms, into the social space where political dialogue and action are contextualized.

Nowhere are the transformative affects of education more apparent than in countries which are in conflict. The opportunity to rebuild community is not only a matter of...
discourse but also a necessity that makes the quality of that discourse powerful. Analysing policy from the current context of Iraq, the rebuilding of education systems and the place of teachers provides insight into the role of teachers and education at critical junctures.

Considering the current post conflict situation in Iraq, where there is a new regime of power, within the policy and practice of the new regime it is possible to piece together a strategic use of education and educators. It addresses the question of teachers’ agency capacity when faced with the necessity to rebuild community with and through education.

**Educators, education: reconstruction and power**

Current education directives and educational research addresses the transformative capacity of learning (Arnold & Ryan, 2003; Brown, 2004; VCAA, 2004). How learning can change society and rebuild identity and values are focal points for educational policy. In these latest reforms called Essential Learning in Victorian Educational Policy, the quality engagement of teachers is identified as key factor in the ongoing development and success of education systems. For example, Arnold and Ryan (2003) address the need to deepen teachers’ functions within changing education systems. Although it remains unclear what ‘deepening’ means, underpinning these changes are clear social justice concerns that link quality educational outcomes to broader equitable social and community goals.

There appears a distinct shift from the harsher, outcome driven educational goals that characterised the neo-liberal era of the 1990s towards a more humanistic approach to
managing educational change. It would appear that far from being obstacles to reforms, as teachers and their unions were labelled in the 1990s when they did speak out again the marketization of education, the deeply held beliefs of teachers to focus on equitable outcomes and quality, public education has entered current discourse about educational reforms. Even during the neo-liberal hiatus of the 1990s, teachers advocated for the democratic, collective projects in rebuilding education systems.

**How do teachers work to rebuild societies?**

Recently, Smith et al (2004) suggested that educational policy is a kind of theatre where ‘symbolic’ politics are on show (Smith, Miller-Kahn, Heinecke, & Jarvis, 2004). The symbolic gestures are those which pay lip service to values such as democracy, while the reality of marginalisation and unfair patterns of distribution ensures that exclusion continues to be the lived experiences of a significant number. The notions of symbolic policy and politics resonate with the politics of rebuilding nations and institutions where the perception created by the discourse of rebuilding creates a sense of true democracy resultant from regime change. Post conflict contexts, such as Iraq, are constructed with deliberate discontinuity from the pre-conflict giving centre stage to democratically laden discourse. There is a complicit community in constructing discontinuity and the kinds of thinking and acting that takes place in the rebuilding phases.

The sense of urgency in re-establishing an education system in post conflict contexts underlies the need for an intact education system to complement social and economic reconstruction based on the stabilization of financial, legal and political structures. Rebuilding education systems brings to the fore issues concerned with agency power.
and knowledge raising questions about how people make decisions about governance and establishing ways of cementing truth and legitimacy. In a context where clashing versions of truth and ways of acting are central to understanding what is going on, assessment of power and how it is enacted becomes critical.

For example, in the Iraqi conflict, schooling was resumed in 2003, well before the conflict situation and social and economic stability looked like being achieved (WorldBank, May 21, 2004). On Wednesday, 7 April, 2004, the BBC news reported that,

School attendance has risen from 60% directly after the war to more than 95% in this year's national exam week, according to UNICEF. But much work remains to be done to restore the country's crumbling, overcrowded classrooms (BBC, 2004).

Rebuilding systems brings to the fore issues concerned with power, as in who has the authority to determine the shape of educational reform and what constitutes knowledge. On a deeper level, it prompts questions about the kinds of policy and discourses evolving from a post conflict situation. The World Bank Vice President for Middle East and North Africa downplays the issues of knowledge and power in rebuilding education systems giving credence to the assumptions that there is a neutral process by which education systems are restored. Christiaan Poortman states,

While the Ministry of Education is undertaking the development of a new curriculum, this grant [from the World
Bank] will be used to print and distribute existing textbooks to ensure that Iraqi students and teachers start a new school year this September with sufficient teaching and learning material (WorldBank, May 21, 2004).

In this case, the Ministry of Education is making the curriculum and content decisions; however, they are in turn being influenced by external consultants who have ‘done this before’. A Press release from the White House illustrates the blurred lines of decision-making and power. The release states that the Minister of Education is in charge of the in country consultation, with whom is not made clear, but, there is also clear process model to follow about what has happened elsewhere. Leslye Arsht, Senior Advisor to the Ministry of Education in Iraq states,

The Iraqi Minister of Education, Dr. Ala ‘din Alwan, will begin a process across Iraq in which all sectors of the country will be engaged in talking and thinking about what the education system should look like and deliver here. This follows the model of other countries around the world that have been allowed to democratize their education system. The important thing is Iraqis will decide what is best for their children. …To help them – we are collecting the experiences of other countries that have emerged from authoritarian rule such as Bosnia, Latvia, and the Czech Republic (Arsht, 2003).

But there are clear indications from the language of the press release about the type of education to be ‘delivered’. There are assumptions that the previous regime opposed democratic education, as indeed any authoritarian system does. There are numerous
examples that this is not the case. But what is a glaring oversight is the education system in Iraq was considered among the best in the Middle East, until sanctions severely impacted on the capacity to provide quality and equitable schooling to all levels.

Therefore, instead of restoring education, the aim is to rebuild as a new institution that is discontinuous from what has gone before. It is this political decision making to break with the past, even though it has been exemplary, that raises questions about how those in power go about making decisions about governance and establishing ways of cementing truth and legitimacy.

In the chaotic context of reconstruction, Foucault’s questions about power, politics and the work of intellectuals, and I include educators in this category, are central. For many the idea that educators can be defined as intellectuals is an anomaly. Considering the extensive deprofessionalisation of teachers in the last decade, for example, it would appear that teachers have become only classroom practitioners (Britzman, 2000; Connell, 1995; Hargreaves, 1994). However, to embrace the full meaning of being a teacher/educator is to acknowledge that the educator is both intellectual and practitioner (Giroux, 1988).

Teachers’ problematising of globalization and neo-liberalism exemplifies the roles of intellectuals to question the way that things are done and to reexamine the rules and regulations that shape institutions. As shown in figure 1. teachers have questioned educational reforms through their unions and professional organizations. By questioning the politics of education change and examining the roles of teachers in implementing change, professional teacher organizations around the world created an
awareness and political will to resist neo-liberal reforms by laying them bare and questioning their rationality. Both Foucault (C.Gorden, 1980; Foucault, 2002), who argues that intellectuals must problematise their rules and regulations and Giroux, construct the educator as a public intellectual with capacity to politicise institutional change.

In post conflicts situation it is organisations such as the World Bank, USAID and the United Nations are primarily shaping institutions. Teachers’ conflicted relations with the World Bank and its restructuring programs during the height of neo-liberal reforms is well documented (Vongalis, 2002; Waters, 1998). However, it could be argued that in post conflict situations the teacher is more critical the agent of transformation. Certainly, in post conflict rebuilding, creating a space for the educator to resume teaching and learning is a key indicator of the transformation of conflict into normalcy. The educator does the transforming by using education and knowledge as a vehicle for enabling a new discourse that marks the end of conflict and the beginning of something new. Education that seeks to transform society through policy and practice illustrates the morphogenetic capacity of agency (M. Archer, 1982), that is when teachers, as critical agents in education systems, use their authority and autonomy to transform the way structures and processes are devised and operated.

In post conflict situations the educator is a critical agent of transformation. In UNESCO discussion paper about rapid educational responses that outline intervention programs, teachers’ basic duty is to convey information about health, environment, disease and peace building (Aguilar & Retamal, 1989). In the same discussion paper,
a key area of concern is the long term viability of intervention programs. My contention is that teachers are strategic agents used by governing powers to enable emergency measures but also represent a return to reclaiming and resolving conflict in accordance with the governing regime.

The strategic use of educators exemplifies Foucault’s notion of modern power play where the mechanisms for using power are not so much through repression, in this case, educators are critical, however, power is strategically used to construct new identities, knowledge and capacities that reconfigure what is or is not possible (C.Gorden, 1980). In other words, the analysis of rebuilding education in this deliberate way illustrates how the identity of the educator is being reproduced in new communities in order to reclaim the right to rebuild in a certain vision. Irrespective of the historical place of educators in the community, educators are conduits of power. A clear example is where the US instigated the De-Ba'athification of teachers, thereby re-educating teachers to take on new identity without the previous political attitudes. In effect, to deploy teachers in the new classrooms meant a strategic redefinition of their agential capacity and resulted in attempts to depoliticise teaching. For example,

The politicization of education, which requires filtering out political pressure, propaganda, and violent tendencies from the curriculum (CoalitionProvisionalAuthority, 2003).

The new policy from the governing regime sanctions a new stage for educators where politics are associated with propaganda and violence and thus removed from the curriculum. But, the idea that politics is a way to understand power and ensure representation is not raised so that ruling politics are left to those in governing
positions thus teachers’ identity and capacity for political and social dialogue is negated.

The depoliticising of teachers reflects the managerialist approach to social change, whereby governing agents have the power to delineate roles and responsibilities. Even in context when social change is initiated and sustained though the rebuilding of education systems, the teacher-agent is constructed as a character player in the theatre of change. The educators’ view of what constitutes knowledge, truth and practice in education is diminished, as is the capacity to unmask the traps and domination of particular powers that would be embedded in a political role for educators. Educators in the post conflict context occupy a strategic role that breaks with the past and discontinues past practice.

*(Dis)Continuity as normalization: The symbolic theatre of Teacher professional development*

Strategically, educators normalise the rebuilding projects of governing regimes as soon as they step into a classroom or operate a school. Their role, once in this position is to continue rebuilding as planned by governing powers. In doing so, educators act to make normal the new practice and policy which also means they discontinue previous ways of practice and policy.

The critical issue in the continuous discontinuity that defines educators’ role is that education policy and practice become a theatre for symbolic jingoism and ongoing dependency that represents one form of political power crushing another. Duggan’s experience of the reconstruction of the Cambodian education system is a case in point.
In that case, reconstruction of the education sector creates a culture of economic and social dependency from the donor organization or government. Duggan (1996) and recent work by the author (Vongalis, 2003) have demonstrated how the economic interests of global organizations impact on the restructuring of national education systems. For example, consider the assistance of USAID in Iraq with its two pronged policy.

USAID’s Year 1 Education Program—worth $74 million through primary education activities and approximately $70 million through secondary education activities—employs a dual strategy that focuses on emergency actions to support the resumption of schools while laying the foundations for critical reforms to ensure that the education system and schools can play a constructive role in rebuilding social cohesion and progress in Iraq (USAID, 2003a).

There is no doubt that aid in rebuilding education systems is critical to any nation or community after disruption; however, the policy of rebuilding to model particular dominant systems of education illustrates the power dynamics of those who are able to resource education. For example, USAID has clear visions about the purpose and role of education that are all encompassing.

USAID's goals are to increase enrollment and improve the quality of primary and secondary education, ensure that classrooms have sufficient materials, facilitate community involvement, train teachers, implement accelerated learning programs, and establish partnerships between U.S. and Iraqi
colleges and universities (USAID, 2003b).

Who can argue with the organization able to resource most aspects of educational reforms. But what is disconcerting is the way the legitimacy is given to those who have the funds to restore normalcy. The power of restoration of normalcy and ensure discontinuity go hand in hand with USAID vision. The way change is justified glosses over key political points about the past. Consider the following,

Under Saddam Hussein's regime, a whole generation of Iraqis grew up disconnected from the rest of the world. Unemployment and low salaries forced Iraqis to abandon professional jobs and accept menial labor. Professional talent declined in health, private enterprise and education. Economic conditions led to poor labor efficiency where the available labor pool was ill-matched to economic opportunity. This mismatch led to poor economic and social returns on education (USAID, 2003b).

Matter of factly, the damage of US led sanctions and their devastating impact of the Iraqi education systems are ignored. Instead, the previous regime is to blame and ipso facto education contributed to poor economic and social conditions. What is also interesting in the castigation of the previous regime is the discursive markers of educational success embodied in the quote. That private enterprise is associated with health and education classifies agents within these three spheres as critical professional talent. Couched in the language of economic opportunity and returns, education suffered greatly under the previous regime.
It is argued that prioritizing educational rebuilding ensures the resumption of normalcy and discontinuity. Within this policy implementation priorities also single out the role of teachers to usher in discontinuity and normalcy. The return of teachers to school and classrooms in Iraq signifies a resumption of routine life for parents, children and subsidiary industry that support education. In this case, the educator becomes an important social symbol of continuity in the business of life.

However, the nature of the continuity is dependent on the social and political changes that create a space for education in the post conflict context. A recent press release from the Whitehouse pronounces the return of teachers to the classroom as a political win for the occupying powers. The press release states,

**Iraqi Teachers Returning to Work**

Iraqi teachers who were persecuted for their political beliefs during Saddam's regime are finally returning to their chosen professions. Approximately 15,000 teachers were fired by Saddam's regime for political reasons, including relatives of Iraqis who were executed, exiled, or imprisoned. To date, 4,700 have been re-hired by the Ministry of Education and 1,100 more will be rehired in the next few days. In addition, the Ministries of Education and Higher Education and the Supreme National De-Ba'athification Commission, are working to ensure that the de-Ba'athification appeals process is accelerated and implemented fairly and efficiently. Securing the best possible teachers for Iraq's youth is vital to the future of freedom and prosperity in the new Iraq.
What is revealing about the rhetoric of the press release is the way that teachers are constituted as political actors, in this case, the returning teachers were those who opposed the ousted regime. The return of these political actors to the classroom, part of the de-ba’athification process, is a sign that political normalcy is returning. This poses the question whether teachers will be defined as political actors in subsequent education policy, in the light of global trends to depoliticize the profession (Britzman, 2000; Vongalis, 2003).

It must be noted that reports vary as to how many teachers were sacked by the US administrators for being aligned to the previous regime and then how many were rehired in the new climate. Indeed, reports hint that the same cohort of teachers went through the firing and re-hiring. Politically, the firing of teachers “smacked of an ideological witch hunt” and prompted anti American sentiments. In the spirit of inclusion, democracy and based on the assessment that teachers really do not have political persuasive powers over students, the rehiring of teachers was recast as a step towards rebuilding social identity, unity and the ‘graduation’ of Iraq’s sovereign powers in determining national policy.

Teachers represent the kind of professional who is able to put aside politics and this capacity is especially endorsed when it sits comfortably with the idea that “Teachers don't have the power to convert a classroom of kids” (Asquith, 2004). In other words, the return of teachers to the classroom is a political act to mark the resumption of civic society however, once in the classroom the political persuasive power of
teachers is deemed negligible.

The depoliticisation of teachers is ensured through the implementation of policy that reconstructs teachers’ work as practice removed from history or politics. Thus teacher training largely funded by USAID's targets changes in teaching philosophies though training programs underpinned by concepts like leadership, critical thinking, mutual respect, freedom of expression and team work. The workshops for what were professional teachers, included lesson planning, classroom management, learning strategies, performance and measurement, punishment and reward and parent-school partnerships. Unfortunately, with the de-ba'athification of teachers, there appears to be a presumption that teachers also lost their teaching capacities.

What is evident from the training workshops is the dominant discourse about teachers’ work which reframes and rationalises their work within the parameters of quality control and accountability. Teachers’ technical knowledge about student learning and evaluation, effective lesson planning and classroom management defines the professional in the new context. Added to this, is the emotional labour that teachers are expected to import into their work considering the post conflict traumas. A glaring omission is the intellectual capacity of teachers to address the ongoing political and social issues that underpin discontinuity of cultural practices and the introduction of a new sort of normalcy.

According to Fevre,(2000) the overt use of educators as emotional labour increases professional uncertainty because there is an educative focus on individualism and personal development that decontextualises the education from broader social and political context. Educators are encouraged to construct identity for themselves and
their students, as individualized, emotional and introspective not as a way to form a politicized or social understanding of who we are. Fevre (2000) calls this the demoralization of educators where “a deeper process of stripping out morality from our lives that leads to a loss of purpose in the Western culture, and the loss of belief in what might yet be possible”. In other words, instead of being the agents of reconstruction, educators are the means by which discontinuity with the previous social and political context is created. By normalizing discontinuity, that is enacting the practice of breaking with the past, along with government backing for the continuity of education provision, in a new form, educators become the symbols of reconstruction and the return to normalcy and the classroom the new theatre.

An analysis of education reforms in Iraq show that the role of teachers acts to usher in discontinuity and normalcy. Instead of being the agents of reconstruction, the type of educators emphasized in the new policy, normalize (dis)continuity, that is enacting the practice of breaking with the past, depoliticizing change, embedding an ahistorical view of context, all of which are sanctioned by new policy. Educators become the symbols of the new form of regime of truth that reframes education as managerialist discipline and practice.

There appears a stark contrast between the potential for broader social agency to ensure the social justice aims of education, as suggested earlier in this article, and the consistent narrowing of educators’ agency away from social justice issues. Teachers regard the profession as a hybrid of social/education agents whose involvement in civil society would mean an active presence in awareness raising programmes, cross cultural dialogue, addressing the politics of social change, advocacy work, and
promoting public dialogue about education as a public good. However, even in extreme cases where rebuilding civic systems is critical; educators are coopted to implement change that depoliticises and displaces the social and educative capacity of their agency.
References:


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