

**THE THINGS (WE THINK) WE (OUGHT TO) DO:  
IDEOLOGICAL PROCESSES AND PRACTICES IN TEACHING**

**Introduction**

Two decades ago, Lee Shulman observed:

“In reading the literature of research on teaching, it is clear that central questions are unasked. (...) Where do teacher explanations come from? How do teachers decide what to teach, how to represent it, how to question students about it and how to deal with problems of misunderstanding? (...) The cognitive psychology of *learning* has focused almost exclusively on such questions in recent years, but strictly from the perspective of learning. Research on teaching has tended to ignore those issues with respect to teachers” (Shulman 1986: 8)

In the two decades since Shulman made this observation, significant advances have been made in the study of teachers’ knowledge – content knowledge as well as ‘practical’ knowledge – and in the meantime, the whole dynamics of knowledge production and exchange between learners and teachers has gained depth and detail thanks to psycho-educational studies such as Allender (1991), classroom-ethnographic work such as Wortham (2006) and work focusing on narrative in teaching and learning settings (e.g. Juzwick 2004, Poveda 2004). The different ‘world views’ that teachers and learners bring into the learning environment can now be addressed with greater confidence. This paper follows Shuman’s appeal for a deepened understanding of teachers’ knowledge and will address this issue by means of an analytic approach focusing on ideologies. The focus on ideologies brings a different terminology to this field, but also an different epistemological and methodological framework.

The notion that teaching is a profession in which ideologies are a central concern is a truism but it merits reiteration. Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) described the educational field as one of ideological reproduction; so did, of course, Bernstein (1971) and many others: what happens in classrooms is part of larger structures of ideological landscaping, in which the ‘normal’ is distinguished from the ‘abnormal’ (Foucault 2003), and in which a wide variety of dominant ideological messages are inscribed in the general make-up of the system. This emphasis on dominant ideological modes in education has spawned its own counter-forces in the form of critical pedagogies and critical responses to dominant frames of reference (in the

field of language, see e.g. Fairclough 1992, Block 2003, Wallace 2003, Gee 2004, Collins and Blot 2003).

If we follow Voloshinov (1973), most of this literature is concerned with ‘established ideologies’: ideologies that operate at macro- and meso-levels in society, and are encased in the general structure and organisation of institutions. Apart from such established ideologies, however, Voloshinov also identified ‘behavioural ideologies’: ideologies that operate at a micro-level and that can be seen as everyday sedimentations of larger-scale ideologies in societies: the way in which such ideologies begin to give shape and meaning to our everyday behaviour and thereby become part of what Bourdieu (1990) called our ‘habitus’. Behavioural ideologies are habituated ideologies, ideologies that have become a habit, a default mode of doing and thinking things. Some recent work has drawn attention to ‘micro-ideologies’, i.e. specific ideologies that underlie particular forms of action including the use of language and thought, such as beliefs in the importance of ‘free trade’, the virtues of consumption or of ‘flexibility’ in the labour market (e.g. Silverstein 2000; Fairclough 2000; Blommaert 2005). Such micro-ideologies are not strictly separated from the larger established ideologies; yet, they allow for a considerable amount of *bricolage*, in which one follows one dominant ideology in one specific domain of life (e.g. the use of the car as a default means of transport), and a very different one in another (e.g. campaigning in favour of a cleaner environment or voting for a Green party). Micro-ideologies help to explain what some have called the ‘fragmentation’ of late-modern subjects (Deleuze and Guattari 1987; Zizek 1989), in that they help us understand that we are not facing a chaotic subject, but rather a subject that responds to multiple different ideological push-and-pull forces. In the educational sphere in the UK, but also more widely in the OECD context, these ideological push-and-pull forces manifest themselves in a range of often competing policy initiatives such as moves towards standardisation and personalisation or autonomy of decision making and central prescription.

In this paper, we are concerned with such microscopic behavioural ideologies, and we examine them in and through the discourses of teachers. Discourse, as we know, is a key ideological object, and ideologies appear crucially as *implicit* parts of discourse: assumptions, presuppositions, common ground we presume to be shared by others and thus is no longer in need of explication (Blommaert 2005, Chapter 7). Ideologies help us in making sense of particular topics by invoking bodies of shared assumptions, images, associations and forms of ‘logic’ – Bourdieu’s ‘practical sense’ (1990). The discourses we examine here are those produced by teachers, thus entering a field of professional habituation, and we focus on two different types of discourse (the two types that usually combine in professional habituation):

discourses *about* teaching, and discourses *in* teaching. We address things teachers say about their practices, and we examine their discursive practices. Thus, we can get a glimpse of two different faces of ideologies: ideological *processes* (i.e. the articulation of metalevel reflections in which ideologies become an *explanatory* frame of reference) and ideological *practices* (i.e. discursive activities in which ideologies become an *organising* frame of reference).

The main aim of this paper is not to expose ‘false consciousness’ but, instead, it is to search for ways in which we can examine what we can call the *infra-methodology* of teaching: the various routinised ways in which teachers organise and articulate their own professional being vis-à-vis ‘normal’, ‘common’ frames, partly searching for larger-scale and widespread ideological complexes (e.g. that of distinguishing pupils on the basis of national or ethnolinguistic belonging), and partly building on experiential wisdom – ways of solving problems in everyday practice. Identifying such micro-methodological patterns, we will show, offers us a layer of observable ‘teaching’ which often escapes the eye of the observer and often remains unsaid (or unsayable) for the teachers themselves, while being a crucial ingredient of their ‘professionalism’. This, then, will also allow us to argue that the process of teachers (in particular student teachers), consciously organising and articulating their own professional being can be seen as an important part of working towards fulfilling the academic and professionally-orientated criteria set out in the level description for Masters level against which higher education-based initial teacher education provision is being required to align itself in the UK by the Quality Assurance Agency if they want to continue to use the label ‘postgraduate’ for the qualifications they award.

### **Ideologies of education – ideologies of teaching**

As mentioned above, the field of education is heavily ideologised. Of all the institutions in society, it is probably one of the most sensitive to changes in society-at-large, as governments have a tendency of trying to make their mark in education. It is a terrifically expensive institution, but one that is felt to return a lot to society: a qualified labour force, a cohort of young – and not so young – people trained in the right values and imbued with a common outlook on life, a democratically-inclined citizenry, and a broad, educated middle class. Consequently, while governments may attempt changes in a wide variety of ways, changes to the fundamental structures of the educational system are rarely attempted, and every education system is at all times a (sometimes uneasy) compromise between tradition and stability on the one hand, and change and adjustment on the other.

Teachers very often, and quite rightly, have an impression of rapid, incessant change, as one guideline replaces the other, and as new systems of operating schools and judging performance replace older ones (even if they were not so old). And teachers often adjust quickly, though sometimes reluctantly, to the changes introduced at higher levels. Our first case discussion will illustrate this. Such changes are often seen as changes in ‘culture’ – from the good old days to a new regime of corporate managerialism, individual performance, lifelong learning and upgrading of skills, from supposedly homogeneous cohorts of pupils to multilingual and multicultural groups, from education-as-learning to education-as-far-more-than-learning (see Esteve 2000). The change in ‘culture’ is most immediately a change in discourses *about* professional practice: terminological changes in speaking about one’s own experience and role, about the school as an institution, about learners and about educational policy. It goes hand in hand with changes in practices (often discursive ones), with more in-service training, more importance placed on formal qualifications, and more external (‘quality’) control over actual teaching practices. And it is accompanied by systemic changes in the general structure of the educational field, with the logic of corporate management, efficiency and performance now entering the system in what Bourdieu (1998) would call a ‘heteronomic’ process: rules and criteria from one field influencing another, thus causing the loss of autonomy for that field and resulting in new paradoxes and forms of conflict. Corporate managerialism is one contemporary form of such heteronomy – in itself a chronic feature of the educational field for reasons explained above.

Heteronomy suggests that the educational field also becomes a space of competing and conflicting ideologies: it is not dominated by one general and overpowering ideology, but becomes a segmented field in which micro-ideologies are at play. A school can operate at one level within a corporate-managerial ideology and all sorts of administrative, control and resource allocation activities can bear clear traces of that. That does not mean, of course, that the actual teaching practices develop within that ideology: teachers can enter their classrooms with visions of what to do and how to do it that are still very similar to the ones held by the previous generation. And when teachers congregate in the staff room, yet another set of ideologies might be invoked: inter-individual competition and one-upmanship as effects of new forms of individualised performance assessment can coexist with a kind of *esprit de corps* in which seniority, experience, and reputation are central.

The point to be made here is that there is no, and has probably never been an ideological homogeneity in the field of education, and teachers move through different aspects of their jobs using very different ideological tools and orientating – often

simultaneously – towards different ideological ‘centres’: themselves, their colleagues, their groups of learners, the head teacher, the school as an institution with a tradition, the education system, the curriculum, the government, society-at-large, and so on. Their discourses reveal traces of such multiplicity and layering, as we shall see.

In what follows we will discuss two examples of teachers’ discourses. The first one is from the UK and involves a teacher who went to take a higher degree course in view of upgrading her qualifications; the second one is from South Africa, and involves a white female teacher working on basic literacy skills with a group of black learners. In both cases we shall see how the teacher organises her discourses in relation to multiple ideologies, from strictly ‘practical’ and operational ones to more general socio-cultural and political ideologies. In other words: the teachers bring into their professional activities a series of elements that belong to wider ideological views of society, of what they have to be as professionals, or of what their learners ought to become. This is done in two different socio-political and economic environments, and we shall see that the ‘national’ sphere plays a role in this. Furthermore, in both cases the teachers are clearly situated in a changing environment. The UK teacher finds herself in a process of adjustment to new forms of managerial culture in the field of education, which creates new issues of professionalism. The South African teacher works in a society that struggles to get rid of the legacy of Apartheid, and in which identities and roles have been redefined. Both will, in other words, be facing elements of an ‘old order’ alongside elements of a ‘new order’, and both will have to navigate the paradoxes and difficulties caused by such uneasy ideological marriages. Let us now turn to these examples.

### **Ideological processes: professional upgrading in the UK**

In our first example we shall examine the ways in which a professional teacher (Michele Burns, henceforth MB) narrates her own experiences of professional upgrading. In doing that, she offers us a glimpse of her ideological processes: the way in which she conceptualises ideas, images and beliefs about herself as a teacher in a changing educational environment, and how such ideas, images and beliefs have explanatory value for her. MB had several years of experience as a teacher before deciding to enrol in a one-year Master of Teaching (MTeach) course in a major educational institution in the UK – an entrance into a world of academic discourse *on* her profession. Throughout the course, MB (like the other students) kept a diary of her experiences, and we shall use materials from that diary and from the published reflections on the diary in what follows. We will focus on parts of MB’s narratives of experience in the academic course, notably the parts where MB submits orientations to

different forms of knowledge. The case is fully documented in Burns & Pachler (2004), and readers can refer to that paper for details and references to related research.

In her diary, MB uses what appears to be a classification of different types of knowledge. These different types are all encased in different discourses about knowledge, and so we get several different meta-epistemic discourses deployed in the diary, with rather interesting connections and relations between them. A first type of knowledge MB discursively distinguishes is what we could call *experiential professional knowledge*: things that have to do with her 'everyday activities' as a teacher, and which she shares with her immediate colleagues. Now, consider the following diary fragment:

#### Example 1

The entire ICT team was crammed into the small office with sandwiches on laps and cups of coffee precariously balanced on piles of paperwork. An MFL colleague had joined us and a member of the English department (who intended to just use our kettle and run) also lingered. Why on earth did we gather such a crowd? Because we had been telling stories. It all began innocently with:

"Phew!" I just had a lesson with...."

And continued with:

"When I am with him I..."

Until we attempted a group consensus following:

"When I worked in my last school, we did..."

We seemed to be retelling 'crisis' points in our teaching and we were all demanding professional feedback, judgement, acknowledgement and support. The countless ideas were flowing yet getting quickly cast aside as the next idea was offered. All were eager to contribute; all had something valuable to say.

It set me thinking that this informal soaking of professional sponges was in danger of getting lost forever.

MB is speaking in a voice here that articulates lived experience – an emotive, personally committed, individual and inter-individual voice. This voice and the knowledge it articulates are downplayed; observe the frequency of qualifiers suggesting low-keyed, low-value status

for what is being told: “telling stories”, “innocently”, “countless ideas... quickly cast aside”, “informal”, “in danger of getting lost forever”. We get images here of a fast, chaotic exchange of “stories” that are connected to teaching but do not represent its core – they are “crisis points”, that is, marginal moments in which ‘professionalism’ is called into question. The term ‘professional’ occurs twice in a relation of distinction to something else. The first time, it is used *in contrast with* the “stories” told: we tell crisis stories, and we want professional feedback on them – that is, we want a *different* kind of story. The second time, the “professional sponges” are soaking in an “informal” well – in something which is different from the “professional”. So what we see here is that MB sketches a complex of knowledge that exists alongside and apart from “professional knowledge”, in a somewhat uneasy relationship with it because it only has limited legitimacy: it is an “informal”, “innocent” complex of “stories”.

The tone changes when MB situates the diary, now part of the MTeach course, into her ‘professional’ sphere:

### Example 2

... the journal provided a better opportunity in which to capture and record day to day (and face to face) teacher narrative and demonstrates some of the process and parity between the characteristics I am expected to demonstrate as a mentor, i.e. authority, counselling, coaching and leading, and my role as a classroom teacher.

This is a different voice. A shift has occurred between one complex of knowledge – the personal one, here called “teacher narrative” – and another one, that of *the professional habitus*. Note how this professional complex is described primarily in terms of “roles” and “expectations”, things that seem to exist outside and beyond herself. MB now refers to at least two roles: “mentor” and “classroom teacher”; the former involves “expected characteristics” such as “authority, counselling, coaching and leading”, the latter remains unqualified. Note also that these “expected characteristics” are all part of (and borrowed from) a *regulatory discourse on education*, from the official, institutional discourses that define roles and practices in education. Thus, whereas MB adopted a highly personal, emotive, lived-experience voice in describing what is here called “teacher narrative”, the voice she adopts here is a supra-individual abstract one: she speaks *in terms of* the education system. We are facing two different worlds of knowledge here, and the connection between both is discursively presented as quite problematic.

Now, consider a third discourse. MB describes her encounter with academic frameworks, notably with the work of Bruner.

### Example 3

In particular, my thinking has been influenced by Bruner's work which emphasises the need to learn how to learn for which I found substantiation in some of my journal's 'stories'. Bruner (1985) argues that humans understand the world in two ways: the 'paradigmatic mode of thought' – people seek understanding by way of reasoned analyses, logical proof, empirical observations – and the 'narrative mode of thought' where people filter and make sense of experiences through stories. They create plots, scenes and characters to explain what they do. In the narrative mode, the world is explained in terms of 'human actors' striving to do things over time and rather than reflecting directly on the world, narrative thought is concerned with the experience of that world through someone's eyes. Narrative enables the conceptualisation of what 'could' be done as much as what 'is' done. Another feature of narrative is what Bruner calls 'implicature' – a borrowed term from conversation theorists who use it to represent the information that must be assumed in order to follow what is being said. Bruner refers to the narrative mode as "a primitive category system in terms of which experience is organised" (1986: 18)

This is *academic discourse* 'pur sang'. MB shifts into the discursive genre conventions of talking science, summarizing a complex oeuvre and defining its concepts in relation to a particular research issue, and using standard academic writing tactics such as reference formats (e.g. '1986: 18'). The research issue, here, are the "stories" and "teacher narratives" mentioned earlier, and Bruner's work seems to offer MB a particular discursive tool by means of which she can now establish a better connection between such "stories" and the "professional" sphere. The following example clearly establishes this link:

### Example 4

In order to unpick the teaching and learning that takes place in my classroom, office and Master of Teaching sessions, what follows is an explanation of two of the three strands of my teaching role. As a middle manager, I am expected to offer guidance to junior colleagues on the processes of the department I lead but, more interestingly, also on the processes of teaching and learning for trainee students. As a mentor, my

mentees presume I have all the answers yet my personal and professional biography, experiences and beliefs determine the direction I take them in. The journal was a useful mechanism to uncover the complex relationships that exist and how the undertaking of the Master of Teaching and my ‘dipping into’ educational research helped me to understand the impact of the mentor on a student teacher.

So here we see how academic discourse seems to offer a link between two previously separate entities: personal experience and professional roles (here expanded to “middle manager”), both being identified as separate complexes of knowledge and articulated in very different discourses suggesting a problematic relationship between them. In doing so – in bridging the gap between ‘illegitimate’ experiential knowledge (‘crisis stories’) and ‘legitimate’, expected professional knowledge – a new opposition is created, of course: between the two already separated complexes of knowledge, and a third one, academic knowledge. Academic knowledge does not really integrate the two previous forms of knowledge; it remains a separate entity that can act as a switchboard between both forms of knowledge, as in Figure 1.

### Figure 1

This implicit construction of three different worlds of knowledge is revealing as well as slightly disconcerting. MB sketches a universe of professional activity in which day-to-day experience is separated from institutionally regulated roles and expectations – in which the teacher experience is separated from the teacher role, so to speak. Both appear as rather deeply different phenomena, an uneasy match at best because of the fundamental inequality between both. The daily experience is qualified as lacking legitimacy, as “stories” of unclear status; the institutionally specified roles are qualified as robust and unquestionable, as things that generate clear expectations. And the link between both is formed by yet another complex of knowledge, academic this time. This third part helps becoming a better professional because it establishes legitimacy for the daily experiences. Note – here is the disconcerting part – that these experiences had no legitimacy prior to their discursive reframing into academic discourse. The effect of this discursive reframing on MB’s ‘quality’ as a professional is real. Consider the following example from the end of MB’s account:

### Example 5

The undertaking of a Masters degree, the reading of educational literature and the keeping of the journal has provided me with confidence to tackle difficult management issues and litter my conversations with relevant and topical educational news.

So here we get the conversion of experiential knowledge into professional “confidence”, as well as (tongue in cheek) into a new and symbolically valuable way of having conversations with peers.

How does this fissure between everyday professional experience and institutional professional roles, mediated by academic professional discourse, come about? In order to answer this question, we may have to move beyond the level of the strictly practical to higher levels of institutional structuring within the national order of things. For in the actual practice of being a teacher, what probably dominates is the daily *implementation* of institutional requirements in concrete practices; the oppositional separation between talk on such practices and institutional roles and expectations is a form of conflict that is counterintuitive with our ideas of actual efficiency-in-classrooms. In addition, whereas the professional knowledge domain could be seen as relatively new, the experiential one is undoubtedly something that connects MB’s generation with previous generations of teachers. Classrooms, groups of unruly pupils, problem kids and feelings of personal inadequacy are an enduring feature of the teaching professions. The key to the answer may lie in a term used by MB in examples 4 and 5: “management”.

The educational field in Britain has undergone a vast and extensively documented series of changes in ‘culture’ (Lambert & Pachler 2002; Patrick, Forde & McPhee 2003; Rampton 2006: Chapter 1), heteronomic in the sense that rules and expectations from the field of business management have encroached on the organisation of schools and on the regulations of teaching practice. These changes have brought a new lexicon in the field – a series of new labels and acronyms, a series of new terms for roles, practices and relationships (‘stakeholders’, ‘leadership’, ‘management’, ‘efficiency’, ‘autonomy’, ‘meeting targets’, ‘being proactive’), some old terms acquiring new meanings (‘the curriculum’, ‘standards’, ‘equal opportunity’, ‘responsibilities’), rights-and-obligation discourses and a series of euphemisms (‘problems’ have become ‘challenges’, ‘issues’ or ‘concerns’). Apart from that lexicon, it has also brought in heteronomic schemata and frames – the forms of organisational logic in which ‘efficiency’ is ‘measured’ against ‘objective standards’, in which ‘leadership’ has to ‘take responsibility’ for ‘meeting the challenges’ defined in the ‘targets’, and in which a Head Teacher can have the flexible and mobile career trajectories and be paid salaries

commensurate with those of business executives. This is the logic of modern consumerist business: a pragmatic but standardised complex of practices which develops on the basis of (and derives legitimacy from) two instruments: political vision and scientific research. As for the former, it can be adapted to circumstances; research however has now more than ever become the instrument for turning blatantly ideological arguments into neutral, irrefutably factual ones. Science is, in actual fact, the representational instrument for making politics invisible and ideology-free.

The intrusion of this heteronomic lexicon, schemata and frames creates the layered, multiple overlay of ideologies in the professional habitus of teachers. We have seen that MB disqualified her and her colleagues' 'crisis talk' – even if such talk was 'valuable' and, as we saw later in her story, became an important thing to understand. This disqualification was done by means of a contrast with institutionally specified roles and expectations – things that belong to the 'new order' in education. And when both domains could finally be linked through academic knowledge this led to improved *managerial* skills and to an increase in *social capital*, because the discourse of science could be deployed now as part of a 'new order' professional habitus, as speaking to "a commitment to professionalism" which is "consistent and must endure for the length of a career" (Patrick et al. 2003: 241). Academic knowledge, in other words, provided the connection between a new, heteronomic politics of institutionality in which the middle-management role of the mentor consists of providing 'professional' (i.e. perpetually upgraded) answers to issues arising from experiential knowledge – and it made the incoherence and conflict that was there invisible.

Observe that the notion of 'professional' here stands for a 'new order' kind of professionalism, one that stands in a problematic relationship with the 'informal', unpredictable and serendipitous aspects of teaching practice, and emphasises standardisation and uniformization of practices. MB's construction of three different complexes of knowledge and the relations between them is an almost perfect replica of the ideological imagery of the new order in the educational field and in society at large. This is the field of tension in which many teachers in the UK may find themselves: part of their reality pulls them in one direction, another part in an opposite direction. Tensions between these directions can be resolved by 'professional upgrading', that is: by acquiring academic knowledge sensed to neutralise these contradictions by providing an 'objective' overlay for the conflicts in everyday practice and so offering replicable, uniform models for professional practice. Note that, as mentioned earlier, this should not be read as an accusation of false consciousness: it is the way in which teachers are sensitive to historical changes, compelling them to adapt to innovations and

become part of these innovations. The notion of ‘professionalism’, consequently, becomes the centre of such adaptive exercises: ‘professionalism’ is a historically sensitive, ideological term. In our next example, we shall see similar effects of history on a teacher’s habitus.

This case has focused on discourses *about* teaching, in which we saw ideological processes at work: ways in which larger ideologies enter the professional habitus of a teacher as a new metadiscourse on ‘professionalism’. This is one side of the coin; the other one is the way in which similar ‘percolations’ of macro-social ideologies occur in the everyday professional practices of teachers, in their discourses *in* teaching. To this we now turn.

### **Ideological practices: teaching literacy in South Africa**

Our second case addresses ideological practices and will look at how ideologies organise teaching practice. Whereas we looked at discourses *about* professional practice in our first case, we will now focus on discourses *in* professional practice. And whereas MB’s own trajectory to some extent epitomised the changes in the educational field in the UK, the main tension in our second case will occur between individual teaching practices and macro-social developments.

The UK is not the only country that has undergone significant changes in the education system; South Africa, of course, is still very much a changing society where some processes of transformation move at a breathtaking speed and others crash into insurmountable obstacles for implementation. The end of Apartheid in 1994 started a process of radical, total transformation of *ideas* in and on society, of the frames and concepts used for addressing social questions and useful for the necessary structural and material transformation process of a fundamentally unequal society. Education, evidently, is seen as one of the major instruments, if not the most important one, for this transformation of ideas, and admirable efforts are made to recast the education system on a basis of equity and equality, democracy, mutual respect and tolerance. The catch-phrase used to capture this new culture is *Ubuntu*: the African concept of being human. Education is seen as a basic human right and South Africa is envisaged to be a place in which ‘all people have access to lifelong education and training opportunities which will contribute towards improving the quality of life and build a peaceful and democratic society’ (Department of Education, 2001a).

Such efforts notwithstanding, the education system in South Africa faces monumental obstacles. The main problem is that some Apartheid structures have been carried over into the post-Apartheid system. Despite the concerted efforts, part of which have been legislative, the hang-over effect of an entrenched policy, institutional practices and attitudes operating at

every level in society for almost 300 years is clear. As a consequence, education remains unequal and deeply divided. In spite of legislation that entrenches integration, multilingualism and multiculturalism, the majority continues to be disadvantaged. The government has tried to improve the provision and quality of education through increased funding and the introduction of a new curriculum, but although the education budget is increased, it never seems to be sufficient to address immense backlogs left by discriminatory education systems. Black schools are still poor schools, with extremely limited resources and located in communities that lack the capacity to invest in the schools. The explosive growth of urban slums since 1994 – the so-called ‘townships’ – leads to a situation in which more and more schools are needed in expanding, very vulnerable and marginalised communities. There is a disastrous shortage of newly trained teachers, dearly needed because an experienced teacher in present-day South Africa is synonymous to a teacher trained under the Apartheid system. And the lack of newly trained teachers is compounded by an almost genocidal HIV-AIDS infection ratio also among education professionals, announcing a dramatic shortage of person power in schools in the near future. (cf Meerkotter 2003; Subreenduth 2005) And finally, the revolutionary changes in South Africa have not yet led to a profoundly new post-Apartheid vision of education, and both the curriculum and the teacher education/training programmes still display a dominance of traces of the past. What has happened is the *uniformisation* of the education system, introducing Outcome Based Education (OBE) as a model for all schools in 1998, and an equal opportunities-orientated, OBE-based national Curriculum in 2000.<sup>1</sup>

In OBE, all schools work to similar standards and have to achieve similar outcomes, in an attempt to abolish the deep inequalities in the Apartheid system. At the same time, this outcomes-based model that came to be known as ‘Curriculum 2005’ (C2005) attempts to enable learners to enter, and to be part of, the globalised, industrialised world of the twenty first century. Thus the type of learner envisaged is “one who will be imbued with the values and act in the interests of a society based on respect for democracy, equality, human dignity, life and social justice” (Department of Education, 2001b). Although C2005 is potentially a positive move away from older, racist models of rote learning and teaching, it is not free of contradictions. The general norm is that of Western-style – that is, previously ‘whites-only’ –

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<sup>1</sup> Prior to 1994, South Africa had a fragmented system of 17 different education systems answering to the National Department of Education. All were governed by different authorities for different population groups. The 18 departments are now reduced to 9 provincial education departments, all of which resort under the National Department. The post-Apartheid uniformisation was consequently a major administrative and governance accomplishment, and racial classification was no longer used to differentiate. See *An Assessment of Ten Years of Education and Training in South Africa*, Chapter 3 (Department of Education 2005, [www.education.gov.za](http://www.education.gov.za)).

formal education (cf Wood 2005). Despite the optimism palpable in the ‘new’ curriculum the western/white culture undoubtedly holds sway, clearly perpetuating differences in the quality/standard of education ‘delivery’.

These are the historical and macro-social frames in which teachers enter their classrooms each morning. They often enter an under-resourced classroom with few didactic support instruments, often in a social environment where illiteracy is the norm rather than the exception, and facing a student population familiar with poverty and marginalisation, for whom education is (against all odds) one of the very few potential instruments for upward social mobility. Our second example observes such a teacher, and we shall call her Ms Hall.<sup>2</sup> Ms Hall is a white teacher in a primary school in a desegregated suburban primary school in Johannesburg; she is an experienced teacher with almost 30 years in the teaching profession. The school itself is indicative of the macro-processes we discussed above, i.e. cultural and political ideological landscape. Children in this school came mainly from townships near Johannesburg, and some from the suburban neighbourhood. The language of teaching and learning is English and the majority of learners were black, with insignificant numbers of white and Indian learners. This positions Ms Hall vis-à-vis her learners. This school was initially a whites-only school until 1989 when it was closed down. Reasons for the closure were manifold – teachers were resistant to admitting black learners, numbers dropped and learners were forced out after their parents campaigned against allowing black learners into the school. As a result, the school doors were locked and the gates were chained for almost 2 years. It was only in 1992 that children of all ‘races’ were admitted. Ms Hall was one of the teachers appointed to continue in the new order.

Ms Hall is conducting a class period for 6-8 year old Grade One children, focusing on acquiring new English vocabulary, then moving into English spelling and then into mathematics. She produces an amazing amount of meta-level instructions and directives during her teaching: course content goes hand in hand with the regimenting of bodies, the

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<sup>2</sup> Ms. Hall is, like all other names used in the discussion here, a pseudonym. Fieldwork was done in the last school term of 2004, i.e. August to December. Children in this classroom were in their first year of formal education. The class was composed of 47 learners, 29 boys and 18 girls, ranging in age from 6-8. Data was collected as part of the SANPAD research project. The reader must note that we use the terms ‘white’ and ‘black’ here as a reflection of institutional racial labels still valid in post-Apartheid South Africa, which also have an enduring social, cultural and political reality there. People are still categorised as ‘white’, ‘coloured’ ‘Indian’ or ‘black’, and many post-Apartheid policies are developed for specific racial groups. Racial essentialisation as well as ethnic and ethnolinguistic essentialisation belong to the ideological legacy of Apartheid. In both instances, features are ascribed to groups of people as essential, timeless and pervasive characteristics of their ‘group’.

(re)directing of gaze and gestures, general moral instructions on desired behaviour, and references to images of success. Consider the following examples, in which T is Ms Hall.

Example 6

T: (ADDRESSING A GIRL) ... (inaudible) Can you ride the big bus? Yes. What do you need to do to ride a big bus?

GIRL: (inaudible)

T: No, you must try hey. Correct. Remember what we say? Same with your homework. Can you read it? You must practice. (ADDRESSING THE WHOLE CLASS) Is once enough?

ALL CHILDREN: No!

T: No, you won't get (inaudible) try ... you need to practice over and over. Not only children, even adults have to practice things. If you want to do it well, you have to practice over and over. (ADDRESSING OTHER BOYS WHO HAVE THEIR HANDS RAISED) No, I am not asking you. I'm waiting to hear all these quiet people here who haven't said anything to me. (NOW ADDRESSING A GIRL) Leave your shoes now, please leave it.

Ms Hall here starts from the (evasive) answer of a girl, lifting it from a personal admonition ("No, you must try hey. Correct. Remember what we say?") to a more general comment on the importance of practice in learning ("Same with your homework. Can you read it? You must practice"). This, then, is immediately moved to the level of collective learning ethos: all children are addressed and enter into what is obviously an established routine of slogan-and-response ("Is once enough? – No!"). This drill moment is followed by an elaborate comment underscoring its importance: "you need to practise over and over. Not only children, even adults have to practise things. If you want to do it well, you have to practise over and over". A class interaction moment is here, so to speak, lifted out of its immediate context and redeployed at a more general level of rules and expectations with regard to achievement. This spills back over into a classroom routine, with a selection of potential answers to the question that triggered the remark. Note that in this selection process, Ms Hall refers to behavioural features of pupils ("No, I am not asking you. I'm waiting to hear all these quiet people here who haven't said anything to me"). And as her eyes scan the group of pupils, she sanctions the body posture of one girl: "Leave your shoes now, please leave it". Thus, packed in this small exchange we see a trajectory from individual failure to accomplish expected behaviour

to collective rules and expectations, to comments on the ‘body maps’ of pupils in relation to learning: fondling your shoes is not a ‘learning movement’.

Similar instructions are given in example 7, which occurs during a transition point in the class period. Ms Hall shifts the subject from vocabulary to writing.

### Example 7

(a few minutes later: transition from vocabulary to spelling)

T: OK, everybody sit up, breathe ... (inaudible). We are going to go back to our paper. I want you to look at me. I want you to open your spelling book. Mpho, please, look at me. I want you to look at me when I give an instruction. You need to look at the person who is talking, and listen, and it is easier and better ... look at me and listen to me. Don't ask the point from anybody what you need to do. And I want you to open your spelling book at a place ... (pause) where you have been writing sentences. So, ... (pause) you are going to open your book and you are going to find a place where you have been writing sentences at home. (THE CLASS BECOMES VERY NOISY)

In this example, Ms Hall marks the transition from one subject to another by a body-disciplining instruction: “everybody sit up, breathe”. This is followed by another directive asking for a book to be opened on a certain page. But while this activity is in progress, Ms Hall starts giving instructions as to body posture again:

“I want you to look at me. I want you to open your spelling book. Mpho, please, look at me. I want you to look at me when I give an instruction. You need to look at the person who is talking, and listen, and it is easier and better ... look at me and listen to me.”

Here, the body is aligned with a particular speech act: when someone speaks, the gaze should be directed towards that person, because “it is easier and better”. Looking and somebody and listening are merged into what one can see as the ‘learning body’ again: in order to be an instrument for learning, the body needs to be positioned in certain ways and not in others. This same motif – gaze direction as a precondition for learning – is reiterated in the next example. But there, Ms Hall adds a new series of instructions about body movements:

### Example 8

T: Where do we find sentences all the time? That's all we have to know about them?  
Sarah? (SARAH REMAINS QUIET) Hlabi?

Hlabi: In books.

T: In books. They make up ... lots of sentences make up a story book. And what is a sentence made up of? In the sentence, there are lots of ....?

CHILDREN: ... words.

T: ... words, and you have to learn that we are going to learn our sounds and when we put sounds together they make words, and I will be doing sentences as well. Please look at me. What must we always remember when we want to write our own sentence? A sentence needs three things. We have been doing this every day. Now let's see ... Mpho?

MPHO: The first thing that a sentences needs ...

T: (correcting) a sentence needs ... yes ... pardon

MPHO: ... a capital letter.

T: It starts with a capital letter. That's how we know that it's the beginning and the ...

OK, where will that word be on the page? In the middle of the page? ... (inaudible)

OK.

GIRL: ... (inaudible)

T: What does that mean? ... what?

GIRL: (inaudible)

T: Excellent. Everybody, point to the left of the board. When you're looking at the board, point to the left. Point to the top left of my board. (CHILDREN DO AS TOLD) Point to the top left on your table. Point to the top left of the door. OK, that's right... Right, it is very important that (inaudible) top right. Why can't we start at the bottom right? Why can't a sentence start there?

GIRL: because then it would be fun.

T: It would be funny, yes, funny, yes. But why not? When we start to read, what is the reading direction?

CHILD: left to right.

T: The reading direction is left to right, so, now, let's read using our peters pointers, everybody. (CHILDREN START READING ALOUD).

The question and answer sequence on the construction of a sentence spills over in a collective instruction about the direction of writing: from left to right. And that instruction is followed by instructions on how to move the body while tracking lines:

“Everybody, point to the left of the board. When you’re looking at the board, point to the left. Point to the top left of my board. Point to the top left on your table. Point to the top left of the door. OK, that’s right... Right, it is very important that (inaudible) top right.”

We see how Ms Hall engages in the basic physical, bodily actions that surround literacy: the body needs to be postured in a certain way, and movements need to be deployed in specific regimented ways as a corollary of reading. Reading, here, is detached from meaning and brought into the realm of body movements (“now, let’s read using our peter pointers”, i.e. our index fingers). Once these are established, and triggered by the comment from one of children (“because then it would be fun”), Ms Hall can engage reading as meaning extraction.

So far, what we have seen is how Ms Hall, in teaching language and literacy to her first graders, deploys theories of the body as a learning instrument. In order to be able to learn, one’s body must be disciplined and organised, and several of her pupils do seem to struggle with this part of learning. Observe, however, that comments on body movements are not framed punitively but rather in terms of learning mechanisms and opportunities: she frames it *pedagogically*, not just in terms of classroom discipline. And it is packaged in a wider complex of explicitly stated norms and expectations with regard to achievement. In the following example, amidst an abundance of instructions on body movements and posture, we find a further reference to these wider expectations:

### Example 9

T: When you first started, started to write a sentence it was quite difficult for some time. Each day, if you write one sentence it is going to be easier. Hlabi, sit up my boy. (inaudible) We need to do it. Right. Hands down, please. So today I want you (T NOTICES A PROBLEM WITH A BOY AND TURNS TO HIM) Please listen to me. I am asking you to write this way (DEMONSTRATING ON THE BLACKBOARD). OK, I want you to write from left to right of ... the page (TURNING TO THE WHOLE CLASS AGAIN). Everybody must find a book ... at home and you must write a sentence for me.

Another sentence, a new one, a new one. You have got some already, I want to see a new sentence (THE CHILDREN WRITE THE SENTENCES AND READ THEM)

Here, Ms Hall ‘exports’ classroom practices, so to speak, to the pupils’ home environment: “Everybody must find a book ... at home and you must write a sentence for me”. This reference to the home environment as an extension of the school environment again recapitulates the motif of practice: “When you first started, started to write a sentence it was quite difficult for some time. Each day, if you write one sentence it is going to be easier”. This echoes her metaphoric use of the ‘big bus’ in example 6 which simply means that practice makes perfect. In order to ride a big bus or to master your sentences ‘you need to practice over and over’. And it is again accompanied by frequent references to body movements that are not conducive to learning (“Hlabi, sit up my boy”, “Hands down, please”) and other body movements that accompany literacy practices (“I want you to write from left to right of ... the page”). This two-pronged reference to the body – negative and positive – is carried over into the period on mathematics:

#### Example 10

(a few minutes later, during the mathematics part)

T: One hundred, and fifty is half of one hundred. So, half the number is in the middle, OK. Now the better way of saying this is half way. OK, it’s half way. (addressing a boy) Listen to me. I say this must be here (DEMONSTRATING ON THE BLACKBOARD), and this must be here. Always. Sit still. (turns to the class again) Right, keep your number at number ... keep your finger at number 50, and let’s count backwards from number 50 now. Everybody.

CHILDREN: 50, 49, 48, 47 ...

And here, we see a synthesis: negative conditioning of the body (“Sit still”) and positive conditioning (“keep your finger at number 50”) merge with content: “let’s count backwards from number 50 now. Everybody”. Everybody can be taken literally here: it is every *body* that has been so organized as to enable, in Ms Hall’s view, a process of learning.

Ms Hall uses a variety of micro-ideologies in these examples, and these examples direct her classroom practices. We get a “rhythmic architecture” of classroom talk in which both pedagogical and moral/ideological are encapsulated (cf. Juzwik 2004: 360). She relies on ‘classic’ formats of collective response cries and learning routines (such as the collective

counting backwards in example 10) and on practice and repetition, emphasizing drill and collective discipline as conduits for learning – one particular complex of micro-ideologies. But in addition, she seems to hold strong views on how bodies should be disciplined, so as to be or become instruments for learning. An unruly body, a chaotically moving body, a body turned away from the centre of attention: all of these are negatively qualified as obstacles to the kind of focused attention that is sensed to be required for learning. Complementing such negative views of the undisciplined body, she provides lots of instructions about a positively conditioned, a positively disciplined body: a body orientated in particular ways towards people and objects involved in the learning process. Such disciplined bodies and activities need to be carried over from the school into the home environment: learning can't stop at the school doors. All of these micro-ideologies combine in what has a poignant old-fashioned smell: this is old-style pedagogy revolving around discipline, control and surveillance over bodies in order to control minds (Foucault 1974, 2003), repetition and exportation of learning modes into everyday life. *Learning as disciplined behaviour* seems to be central to Ms Hall's pedagogy.

This pedagogy, as mentioned above, is deployed vis-à-vis a group of black township learners, in a post-Apartheid system which subscribes to equal opportunities and one uniform set of standards for everyone. This is where, almost invisible, the higher-level influences from history enter the scene. The standards now democratically set for every South African child are, of necessity, racially marked – they couldn't *not* be in a country where everything that had to do with quality, achievement and upward social mobility was racially stratified. Thus, what we see in these examples is how a particular pedagogy, strongly organized around the disciplining of the body, is aimed at directing the young black learners into an upwardly mobile – white middle-class – trajectory. Ms Hall is enforcing on her black learners a white middle-class habitus: one which is stereotyped as hinging on a conditioned, disciplined body and mind and flexed in the rigors of physical and mental exercise – learning and identities go hand in hand here (cf. Wortham 2006). Transition in South Africa seems to express itself in the form of continuity, but similar ideological fissures and paradoxes to the ones we encountered in our UK examples occur: the elaborate discourses on bodily discipline in relation to learning refer to an old order of things, but they are deployed in a new order of things.

## Conclusion

Let us recapitulate the main point of this paper. Teachers are, in practice, heavily loaded with different ideological tools, and such tools respond to the immediacy of the classroom situation as well as to more distant images of social success, professional accomplishment and quality in education. The empirical face of such ideologies is a mixture of various discursively organized elements, some of which respond to the ‘core’ of teaching – on-the-spot decisions in the practice of teaching – while others respond to what teachers pick up as social and political beings in a society in transition. In teaching, we see mixtures of Voloshinov’s established and behavioral ideologies, to return to a distinction introduced earlier. The mixtures are very often uneasy, uncomfortable ones, and the paradoxical or contradictory nature of various aspects of the job are, as in the case of MB, often perceived as problematic and negatively reflecting on professional quality, or could be read, as in the case of Ms Hall, as undesirable traces of an unwanted past.

These mixtures belong to the infra-methodology of teaching – another aspect of teachers’ knowledge and one that has by and large escaped the attention of researchers since Shulman (1986). These infra-methodologies of teaching are often not addressed in formal training programmes for teachers, yet should be, particularly if these programmes are offered at Masters level as they constitute a powerful layer of tacit understanding which feeds into notions of good professional practice. Investigating the actual habitus that organizes teachers’ professional practice requires attention to such meso- and macro-ideologies, because perceptions of success and failure might often be lodged in feelings and ideas about how one fits the current system – how one adjusts to new directions in the system, while keeping in touch with the ‘basics’ of teaching technique and method. Research into this layer of infra-methodologies is often neglected, as the phenomena discussed here are often dismissed as elements of personal style, accidental events, details. We hope to have shown how much *structure* one encounters at this level of naturalized, normalized professional practice, and how an analysis of these phenomena *as structural elements of teaching* can contribute to an understanding of the way in which everyday teaching practices are socially, culturally and historically contingent. In a retrospective article almost two decades after his 1986 appeal, Shulman concluded:

“the analysis of teacher learning in our efforts has moved from a concern with individual teachers and their learning to a conception of teachers learning and developing within a broader context of community, institution and profession”.  
(Shulman & Shulman 2004: 267-269)

We hope to have offered evidence of the fact that this move towards more social and political dimensions of teachers' practices is indeed valid and useful. In the same breath, we believe we have added some qualifications to Shulman & Shulman's view of the relationship between individual teachers and 'the' (singular) community. Our two cases showed the instability of the concept of 'community': in both cases, our teachers were caught between 'old' and 'new' states of affairs, and moving between both involved shifts in one's position in relation to audiences, identities, roles and actions. 'Community' is always a multiple, unstable notion, and to the extent that every act of learning involves repositioning within and across communities, it is also a dynamic one.

There is indeed one big lesson to be learned from this: teachers' concepts of professionalism as well as of their practical implementation are not a separate and enclosed zone, and despite the best efforts of training and government bodies to turn it into an autonomous and self-contained space, it keeps all sorts of windows open on developments and changes in society, history and politics. This insight, of course, is hopeful. It offers hope against forces that present it more and more as a quasi-industrial sector in which optimal 'professionalism' and adherence to 'good practice' and standards discourses are the main tools for performance. The very concept of professionalism, as we hope to have demonstrated, is invested with interests that surpass strictly didactic practices, and this is an effect of the particular location of teachers and the teaching profession in the wider panorama of social forces – professionalism is 'praxis' in the Marxist sense of the term.

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