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Enhancing the Quality of Teaching and Learning in Disadvantaged Contexts: Re-imagining the Teacher's Role

Abstract

Until recently, focus in South African schools has been on changing curricula, and in particular introducing learner-centred approaches as well as training practising teachers through in-service programmes. However, concern is now shifting to the ineffectiveness of the training programmes in equipping teachers to teach effectively, particularly in disadvantaged contexts. These contexts will continue to exist hence the need to empower teachers to effectively navigate contextual constraints and improve the quality of education. This paper explores the extent to which teachers working in deprived contexts seek to improve the quality of learning

and teaching by re-imagining their roles. The unit of analysis is a group of ten teachers of English First Additional Language a year after they completed an in-service course, Subject Didactics English, run by the University of South Africa. Findings reveal that for numerous reasons, teachers are too overwhelmed by contextual challenges to seek creative ways to overcome disadvantage.

Key words: English First Additional Language; re-imagining; teacher's role; quality of learning and teaching; disadvantaged contexts; agency

1. Introduction

Until recently, the drive behind educational reform in South African schools has been on changing curricula and in particular replacing teacher-dominated approaches with learner-centred ones as well as training practising teachers through in-service programmes to implement the reforms (South Africa, Department of Education 2006b; De Clercq, 1997). However, concern has been raised regarding teacher effectiveness, despite the training programmes, in equipping the teachers to teach effectively, particularly in disadvantaged contexts (Todd & Mason, 2005; Taylor, 2008). This paper is based on a study conducted on a group of teachers enrolled for an in-service course, Subject Didactics English, run by the University of South Africa (Unisa). It aims to explore the extent to which teachers working in deprived contexts seek to improve the quality of teaching and learning by re-imagining their roles. The findings reveal that for numerous reasons, the majority of teachers are ill-equipped to effect change by taking control of the challenges in their teaching contexts and expanding their roles.

2. Background: disadvantaged contexts

Much has been written about education in deprived environments worldwide (Todd & Mason, 2005; White & Reid, 2008; Lupton, 2004; Price-Robertson, 2011). However, most of it concentrates on macro issues such as change of policy and the provision of resources by government or lack thereof.

Studies have shown that very few teachers are prepared academically, culturally and professionally by their pre-service training to effectively teach in disadvantaged contexts (Todd & Mason, 2005; White, & Reid, 2008; Warren, & Miller, 2013). Teachers in these contexts struggle to perform their duties optimally because, among other things, they have few resources and limited systemic support to assist them (Vinson, 2007; Molo, 2010; Price-Robertson, 2011). These factors impact negatively on the quality of learning and teaching. Lupton's, (2004:3) observation is apt here. He avers that the "low quality problem in many schools in deprived areas lies within the schools themselves, accounted for by poor management and professional practice".

Samuel (2008) contends that although both micro and macro factors impact on teacher practice, those working in disadvantaged contexts should pay more attention to the micro – contextual forces such as lack of electricity at school and at home, lack of transport and low proficiency in the language of tuition which have a greater bearing on the daily delivery of the quality of teaching and learning. Thus, the focus has moved from merely acknowledging disadvantage and teacher training to the teachers' capacity to challenge and disrupt the phenomenon by re-imagining their roles to improve of learner achievement and well-being.

The study on which this paper is based sought to find out how teachers found spaces to re-imagine their roles given the contextual constraints. It does so by analysing actual practices and the discourse of teachers who mediate the possibility or non-thereof of this re-imagining.

3. Literature review and theoretical framework

For the purposes of this study, I ground the metaphor re-imagining in two related constructs namely identity and agency, both of which are crucial to teaching and learning in disadvantaged contexts. According to Wenger's (1998) Social Practice Theory, imagination is a distinct form of belonging to a particular community of practice, it is a form of identity, "a process of expanding oneself by transcending time and space and creating new images of the world and ourselves" (Wenger, 1998: 22). Anderson (1991) posits that imagination is a way to appropriate new meanings and to create new identities in response to new experiences. He uses the term imagined communities to describe an individual's belonging to a community whose experiences s/he shares vicariously. Kharchenko (2014: 21) concurs, adding that "throughout our life span, we inadvertently become members of numerous imagined communities". This is because learning is a social experience where the learner participates in a community and finds identity within that setting. Although identities are engrained in power relations, individuals can attempt to negotiate existing subjective discourses by imagining alternative selves (Reis, 2012). In the process of re-imagining, narratives play an important role as individuals continually endeavour to position and reposition themselves, creating new identities which reflect new ways of behaviour.

Kharchenko, (2014) contends that in English Second Language¹ contexts, imagined communities ensure positive language learning opportunities because through the process of re-imagination, both teachers and learners are placed in spaces where they gain new aspects of learning trajectories. In the context of this study, teachers of English First Additional Language (FAL) in disadvantaged contexts could benefit from identifying with similar communities of practice both inside and outside South Africa to enable them to share ideas vicariously.

From a psychological point of view, imagination helps people to achieve better self-regulation hence better control of the world around them. They develop agency to take control of their situations and effect change as opposed to maintaining a victim identity where their problems are assigned to factors beyond one's control (Ray, 2009). The hallmark of agentic behaviour is being able to behave differently regardless of what circumstances dictate as opposed to yielding to them (Bandura, 1989). In the context of this study, agentic behaviour is a prerequisite for the effective re-imagining of roles.

1 South Africa uses the term English First Additional language (FAL).

The construct has clear implications for teachers who operate in deprived contexts such as the participants in the study on which this paper is based, as it invites them to seek new insights and alternative approaches instead of viewing challenges with fear and insecurity (Sachs, 2003); it also helps them to step out of the cycle of blame (Hund & Knaus, 2011). In terms of teacher practice in the English FAL context, reimagining entails participation in enabling discourses to appropriate novel practices and in this way continuously reshaping or adopting new identities in line with the changing demands of the teaching profession and context. The process requires these teachers to mentally relocate themselves by seeking “other meanings, other possibilities, other perspectives” (Wenger, 1998:178) thus becoming members of an imagined community of English FAL practitioners based on their engagement in mutual professional practice regardless of where one is physically located.

The study on which this article is based is located within the above broad framework and seeks to find out how teachers find “spaces and opportunities to manoeuvre” (Lamb, 2000: 128) within the constraints imposed by disadvantage. Barber & Mourshed, (2007) observe that the teacher’s role is multidimensional encompassing both micro and macro issues. Re-imagining would entail being open to creatively engage with challenges at each level instead of adopting a victim mentality.

3.1. Re-imagining the teachers’ role

At a micro (individual) level, the teacher should see her/himself as a lifelong learner who seeks to improve his/her knowledge of English to gain confidence and exercise agency. Agentic behaviour enables the teacher to be self-regulating (Sugrue, 2004). In addition, s/he should engage in action research to identify problems in the classroom and seek ways to remedy them (Sachs, 2003).

As an educator, re-imagining practice enables the teacher to see him/herself as an innovative classroom practitioner who seeks to bring out the best in his/her learners. The currently advocated pedagogical practices require learners to be active participants in the learning process while the teacher acts as a facilitator (Mahalingappa & Polat, 2013). Re-imagining requires the teacher to structure lessons in a way that helps learners to self-regulate and take control of their learning. Learners should be encouraged and supported to engage in highly cognitive tasks in order to attain high levels of achievement. As Warren & Miller (2013: 94) contend, “the quality of instruction is imperative to enhancing student success”. The teacher should view teaching as a process of continuous job re-crafting (Nespor, Haneda, Cheng, & Mizumo, 2011). This involves accepting disequilibrium, being open to change and interrogating educational reforms critically, based on the learners’ context. According to these researchers, it is possible to improve instruction regardless of context but it means that teachers must do different things, not just do things differently (Elmore & Fuhrman, 2001; Barber & Mourshed, 2007). In other words, practices can be re-imagined through the daily practices of each individual teacher to understand how s/he negotiates disadvantage to provide a rich learning environment for learners.

At a macro (professional) level, re-imagining requires of the teacher to interrogate policy demands while at the same time re-shaping them to accommodate both the systemic and contextual expectations. S/he should see him/herself as a creative developer of curriculum who, not only questions decisions (Singh, 2011) but seeks to collaborate with other teachers both on site, in the surrounding area and in the community of practice as part of re-imagining his/her identity. This is because collaboration is key to improving learning in environments where resources are scarce.

In order to enhance the quality of learning and teaching in disadvantaged contexts, the teacher has to re-imagine his/her role at three levels which are not distinct but interconnect in complex ways: as an individual, as an educator teaching English (FAL) and as a professional interacting with the community and educational systems. This triad encapsulates the complex and interconnected role of the teacher.

How teachers enrolled for an in-service course with Unisa re-imagine their practices in the context of disadvantage is what this paper explores and describes through the lived experiences of ten teachers.

4. The study

The study was carried out in 2013 on a group of ten teachers who had undergone a Subject Didactics English in-service course in 2012. This programme is located in the Department of English Studies, at Unisa. The study is part of an on-going departmental project aimed at improving the quality of courses on offer. Unisa is an open distance education institution (ODL) hence the need to reduce the transactional distance by listening to the students' voices. The thesis is that although resources to enable the implementation of the mandated educational reform are scarce, teachers can still provide quality education and to do this, they have to re-imagine their roles.

4.1. The participants

All the ten teachers were teaching English as a First Additional Language (FAL) in disadvantaged contexts: townships, rural and informal settlements schools. Between March and August 2013, I spent five working days with each teacher. During my time at a school, I was able to observe lessons, interview my former students and examine learners' work and language texts in use. I was also able to observe the school atmosphere during each entire school day. The prolonged stay with each participant enabled me to obtain thick descriptions relevant in exploring teacher discourse and behaviour. The data presented in this article are therefore part of a large corpus of data on the different aspects pertaining to teacher professional development, teaching and learning in disadvantaged contexts.

To pre-empt concerns about power relations, the study was conducted a year after teachers had completed the course and therefore they did not fear any reprisals. The participants were made aware of the purpose of the study and signed consent forms. They were also informed that they could withdraw from the study if they so wished.

5. Methodology

A qualitative paradigm was adopted for this study because the investigation is on ways of knowing that are adopted by teachers for understanding the deprived context as well as being an effective teacher for a school in that context. Qualitative research falls within the interpretive approach which enabled me to understand the working world of teachers and their classroom practices and how they are re-imagining their roles to provide quality teaching.

5.1. Research questions

- To what extent do teachers re-imagine their roles in the quest to provide quality teaching and learning in deprived environments in South Africa?
- What problems do they face in their quest to improve the quality of teaching and learning and how can the problems be addressed?
- How does the professional development programme offered by Unisa support their attempts to reposition themselves?

5.2. Research instruments

Data were collected using two naturalistic ethnographic methods namely: semi-structured interviews and lesson observation. These methods are ideal for understanding the context of instruction and learning (Erickson, 2006). The two instruments were augmented by notes from a researcher reflective journal.

- Semi-structured interviews

The interviews were based on a protocol comprising of a sequence of questions to be covered (Appendix A) but there was also openness to changes in sequencing and the opportunities for probing for details. Each interview lasted 1 hour. The interview questions were defined by the research questions but the main part of the interview was guided by prompts and follow-up questions based on my own observations. Thus, the interviews also included support questions unique to each individual.

The interview was designed to elicit self-reflection on participants' multidimensional role and in particular, how they negotiated disadvantage to provide quality teaching. I asked teachers to talk about the trajectory of their work: their current work practices and contexts, the problems they face and how they address them, as well as the impact of the Subject Didactics English course they had just completed. I used the accounts to "locate and trace the points of connection among individuals" working in different parts of the country within the context of disadvantage namely— rural, informal settlements, townships (DeVault & McCoy 2006).

- Lesson observation

Class-based observation was captured in an observation protocol (Appendix B) which included items such as the relevance of teaching strategies and texts, the use of available teaching aids, the use of technology, accommodation of learner differences and quality of written work. This instrument was meant to record as objectively as possible what occurred in the classroom and in particular how teachers navigated the different factors relating to disadvantage to provide quality teaching. A four point rating scale was applied in respect of each evaluation question. The intention was to determine how teachers re-imagined their classroom practice and the influence of the professional development course on their instructional practices. To augment the findings, I recorded my own insights in a reflective journal that I kept throughout the school visits. I focussed on subjective and implicit aspects such as provision of a conducive learning atmosphere and learner behaviour.

5.3. Data analysis

Interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed and returned to participants for possible corrections and clarifications (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). They generated a large corpus of data but only relevant information was used in the analysis. A method of grounded content analysis and the open coding procedure was adopted. This analytic process entailed reading the data several times until it was assigned codes which were later grouped into categories. Further reading and comparison of responses led to the identification of variations and similarities among the responses (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Cresswell, 2008). Once I settled on the themes, I reread the data identifying evidence for each theme. Thus, participants' statements were taken at face value as representing the views of the people affected by disadvantage and struggling to re-imagine their roles.

A lesson observation protocol was used to analyse lessons. Performance was judged against set criteria: against each item in a category, I ranked each student's classroom performance according to the descriptors on the observation protocol and then examined the rankings to determine the student's performance on each of the items.

Results from the two instruments were collated and a narrative was developed to present the findings in the following section.

6. Findings and discussion

The focus of the study was to determine how teachers navigated contextual factors in their working environment to provide quality learning and teaching. The themes in the Venn diagram below were constructed to depict the teachers' understanding of their multidimensional and interconnected role at three levels: the individual, the classroom practitioner and the professional.

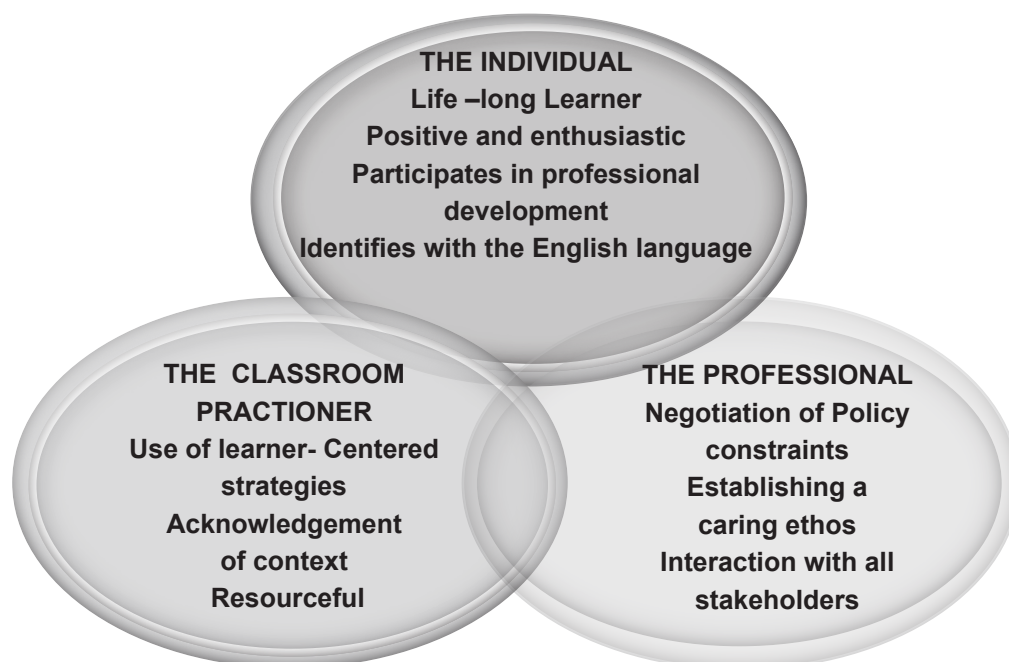


Figure 1: A triadic representation of the re-imagined teachers' role.

Theme 1: Reimagining the teachers role as an individual

All the participants are second language speakers of English hence their attitude to the English language and language proficiency have an impact on teaching and learning in environments where learners do not have access to first language speakers. Re-imagining themselves would entail taking ownership of the language by showing enthusiasm and being life-long learners who seek to improve their knowledge base as well as practice. Through their example, learners would be encouraged to access English outside school and accept it as part of their identity. The following quotations indicate how teachers repositioned themselves in relation to the English language.

English is my second language and therefore I also struggle sometimes. There is no time to read books; we work too hard here. Even weekends we teach and the paperwork is too much.

We speak English during these lessons only. Everywhere we use isiZulu our home language. Some of the teachers even teach their subjects in isiZulu. They say as long as learners understand their subject matter they are happy. It's not their job to teach English.

At this school, people laugh at you if you speak English; they don't even answer you. It's difficult for me to encourage learners to speak English outside class.

In the above quotations, participants repositioned themselves as victims of circumstances beyond their control. First, they argued that because English was not 'their language' their language skills were limited but this did not seem to worry them. Secondly, they could not encourage learners to speak English outside the classroom because it was deemed as socially unacceptable in the environment. The responses share a common thread: the attitude to the English language and identity. Although English is the language of teaching and learning in South African schools from Grade 4 to Matric, in disadvantaged communities, access to academic English in the form of oral and written texts is difficult. In these contexts, speaking English gives one a snobbish identity leading to exclusion or 'othering' (Lee, 2008). This is exacerbated by the teachers' belief that proficiency in English is unnecessary because it is not their language. Citing numerous constraints such as a heavy workload and the lack of libraries in their environments, these teachers do not do any reading outside of the texts they teach. These factors contribute to limited proficiency and invariably impact on the quality of learning and teaching.

Because participants could not re-imagine themselves to take ownership of this language, they could not expand their horizons by seeking alternative ways to negotiate these boundaries. Being second language speakers of English, teachers can take ownership of the language and use it to empower themselves and their learners as they re-imagine other identities. They need a positive attitude that emanates from the realisation that the English language is shared and changed by users to suit their own needs and is not merely learnt to achieve native-like competence (Crystal, 2003). In this study fear of 'othering' was a big limitation.

Theme 2: Reimagining the teachers' role as classroom practitioner

For this theme, the interview data and classroom observational evidence revealed a mixture of compliance and resistance to disadvantage. The predominant discourse was that of the victim of circumstance. There was also significant compliance where teachers just followed the prescribed text on the grounds that the government had not supplied them with any other materials. In some instances, the texts were not enough to go round, making it difficult for learners to do homework: *We do not have enough textbooks and learners have to share. This is a problem because they cannot do homework.*

Although we have textbooks, learners have no readers and therefore they cannot improve. We need a library.

In these text-poor environments, the school offers the only means of accessing books which are necessary if learners are to develop high levels of literacy in language; the lack of books impedes learning. This is confirmed by Taylor, (2008: 9) who argues that “the adequate provision of books and stationery is a prerequisite for reading and writing”.

While they bemoaned the lack of reading material, teachers did not re-imagine their roles by exploring alternatives. Hence, contrary to curriculum expectations, their lessons were teacher-dominated and textbook-bound. Teachers were unwilling or not confident enough to venture outside their comfort zone by using different materials or trying out new strategies; they did not develop creative responses to the challenges in their contexts. *This new way of teaching (learner-centred approach) is difficult for us teachers. We don't have things like computers for them to learn on their own.* Eight out of the ten teachers were computer illiterate resulting in the total absence of the use of technology, including the cell phone, in language teaching.

The sheer weight of these disabling factors accounted for the discourse of disempowerment that was very visible in the interviews. *We lack many things at this school because the parents are poor and unemployed.* According to Lupton (2004) context should not be neglected because it impacts negatively on school practices, curriculum coverage, classroom practice, teachers' activities, time allocation and organisation. From my observation, most of the teachers went through the motions of teaching without giving due attention to the dynamics of teaching and learning. Because of a lack of resources in their contexts, participants reported that they are unable to implement the innovative strategies they learnt from the in-service course. The dichotomy between theory (the Subject Didactics course) and practice was very pronounced in the participants' responses which were typified by the following discourse:

We rely on these courses but it's difficult to implement most of the ideas because there are no resources. For example, you say in the Study guide “show a video” but we don't have electricity.

However, in the middle of this despair, there were rare pockets of resistance to disadvantage where teachers used their creativity to design quality activities that their learners enjoyed. For instance, a grade eight class teacher used pictures to maximise class discussion and output from learners. The topic was covered in the learners' books but she re-imagined her practice to make it relevant, interesting and more importantly, fun for her learners. Although sourcing the relevant materials was a challenge, she was persistent and proactive:

I ask for newspapers from the shops and use whatever I can. Friends are always willing to give me magazines after they have read them. We are doing the theme Sport and I know my learners are interested in soccer so I collected pictures of their favourite local

soccer heroes and articles of soccer games. Although they cannot express themselves well in English, I could see they were trying.

This teacher was among the few who did not follow the textbook but used texts from other sources to achieve the expected outcome(s). Her classes were lively because, as she explains above, not only was the subject interesting but at a cognitive level, she was able to skilfully contextualise her teaching thereby moving beyond the discourse of deprivation to that of empowerment by exploiting the positive events in the learners' community and maximising learner participation. This was a demonstration of her ability to tap into community resources, internalise new ways of thinking and re-imagine her teaching.

Theme 3: Reimagining the teacher's role as a professional

As in theme 2, the majority of responses were characterised by negative discourse. Participants bemoaned the lack of exchange of ideas with colleagues adding that the atmosphere was not supportive to opening up spaces for professional development at school level because of a lack of interest. Other factors identified as impacting negatively on professional development were apathy by parents, child-headed households and bureaucratic policy directives that are imposed from above.

We invite parents for consultation but they don't come. Most parents are illiterate so they do not participate in school activities

Some learners are heads of households and they are de-motivated when it comes to learning. They don't have time to study after school because they have to do housework.

When asked about collaboration with other teachers, one participant had this to say: *There is no time because as you can see, our timetables are full and we teach on Saturdays. We need officials to come and demonstrate how to teach well in these conditions; all of us here are struggling.*

Thus, teachers were very articulate about the constraints they face at a professional level. Although they were aware of the negative effects of disadvantage on the cognitive development of their learners, they ascribed blame to factors beyond their control. They exonerated themselves, refusing to see how they, through their inaction, could be part of the problem.

Ability to confront debilitating factors emanates from confidence to exercise agency which in turn enables one to do something differently in order to change the situation (Sannino, 2008; Singh, 2001). Confidence emanates from a strong belief in oneself and one's abilities. It enables one to speak in a strong voice and be open to new ideas and experimentation (Protheroe, 2008).

However, in the middle of this negativity were a few pockets of resistance to disadvantage. For instance, at one school, three teachers (including the participant) were able to

secure creative ways of participation by parents and the community by starting a feeding scheme.

We run a feeding scheme at school using donations from local businesses. Parents were at first unwilling to give their labour but now they see the value because their children can participate in class; they do not complain of hunger. They are now exposed to school and even ask how their children are doing. Discipline has improved because learners know their parents are watching them.

The above is an example of a teacher's professional role as carer. In deprived communities, some learners go without food; this impacts negatively on learning. By starting this project, the teacher acknowledges that her role stretches beyond the classroom. Findings of a study by Christie, Butler & Potterton (2007), show that for quality of learning to take place, it is necessary to create caring environments. These emanate from sustained interactions that take place at different levels: between the school and community, among teachers within the school and in the classroom between the teacher and learners. In the example given, even illiterate parents were able to contribute by being there for their children and encouraging good behaviour. Re-imagining therefore goes beyond being a classroom practitioner; for maximum effect, the teacher has to aim at enhancing both the affective and academic domains of the learner (Weiss & Pasley, 2004).

The dominant discourse in the findings is that of disempowerment and apathy with pockets of enthusiasm, reflecting a continuum from a position of compliance where teachers felt disempowered to re-imagine their practices due to limitations of spaces to manoeuvre (Lamb, 2000) to that of resistance where a few teachers manipulated some of these constraints to create spaces within which they exercised autonomy.

The two positive examples however demonstrate how participants re-imagined their roles to include aspects other than routine classroom teaching. Thus, instead of total compliance with restrictive measures, in isolated cases the teachers sought creative ways to expand both their teaching repertoires and their learners' horizons. The teachers were resistant to disadvantage and persistent in seeking solutions to problems and executing novel ideas. They are an indication that with effort and enthusiasm, it is possible to effect change in these contexts. This view is consistent with that expressed by Benson (2010: 273) who contends that although teacher autonomy "is constrained or facilitated by structural factors within schools or education systems, it also depends upon interests and internal capacities of individual teachers". In the feeding scheme example, the teacher was able to re-imagine her role to include aspects that fall outside the traditional role of a teacher of English and secure creative ways of parent participation.

Disadvantage will continue to typify schools in South Africa for a long time to come. Generic solutions such as the ones given in the Subject Didactics English course that Unisa runs will not solve the problems because each context is different; teachers should be empowered to resist negative forces in their quest to provide quality learning and

teaching. People cannot be developed; they can only be helped to develop themselves hence professional development programmes can only assist in this process but the drive for self improvement should come from within.

Establishing a caring ethos

Teachers in disadvantaged contexts occupy anomalous organisational positions that are often overlooked in the traditional definition of a teacher's work. Learners will have needs that are not directly related to the scheme of work but impact on learning. For instance, I noticed that the number of pregnant learners in these schools is high, requiring the teacher to treat such learners with sensitivity. One role they need to re-imagine is that of giving positive affirmation to learners affected by disadvantage because attention should be on the provision of an enabling environment. The negative discourse that characterised participant responses should be minimised because learners thrive from positive reinforcement. If a teacher has high expectations of students, they will try to live up to these ideals (Hund and Knaus, 2011). Emphasis should be placed on what learners, parents and contexts have and are able to do within their particular contexts.

7. Recommendations

- In-service teacher education courses should emphasise reflective practice. Reflection on their roles empowers teachers to be self-critical towards how they are mediating structural and contextual constraints (Rowland and Barrs, 2013) hence it is a crucial aspect of mindful teacher practice. As Pavlenko (2003: 266) posits, "re-imagination is only worthwhile if it is followed by continuous reflective action and change".
- Instead of professional development, the emphasis should be on teacher development (TD) where training takes place in the environment in which the teacher works and experts help in addressing specific problems the teacher faces including how to manipulate the available resources to enhance learning.

8. Conclusion

Although the sample is small, the findings from this study are important because they challenge and inform the work of teachers. One cannot homogenize disadvantage. Teachers working within this context should commit to continuously changing and challenging what it means to be an effective teacher in their particular context. As the findings indicate, the teacher's role is multidimensional, requiring him/her to expand beyond the classroom to include the contextual dynamics. Ultimately, a teacher's capacity to disrupt and challenge stereotypical meanings of disadvantage and re-imagine roles involves on-going dialogue with self, other teachers, learners and the community.

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APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Recent approaches to teaching and learning require the teacher to change his/her role from one who imparts knowledge to a facilitator of learning. What is your understanding of your role as facilitator?

- How do you create a learner-centred classroom?
- What is your attitude towards the language that you teach?
- What do you do to improve your language proficiency?
- How do your learners feel about learning and speaking English?
- How supportive are school authorities to the use of English in school?
- How do the parents and community encourage learners to learn English?
- What challenges do you face in your attempts to teach English effectively?
- What challenges do learners face in their attempts to improve their English language proficiency?
- What are you doing to address them?
- What collaborative activities do you engage in with teachers of English in this school and in surrounding schools?
- Apart from being a teacher in the classroom, what other roles do you play?



Appendix B

LESSON OBSERVATION INSTRUMENT

A total of five lessons per student were analysed under the following descriptors:

Not achieved (NA)
 Under achieved (UA)
 Partially achieved (PA)
 Achieved (A)

Lesson Observation Protocol

Name of Student :

Name of School:

Date:

Class:

Lesson Duration:

Number of Learners:



CLASSROOM MATERIALS (√)

Chalkboard	Desk and chair for each learner	Duster and chalk	Electricity	Door and windows	Visible learning and teaching aids	Enough room for movement	General state of classroom
Comments							

CATEGORY ONE: INTRODUCTION

Descriptors:	1 NA	2 UA	3 PA	4 A
Lesson outcomes clearly stated.				
There is a defined introduction to the lesson.				
Uses teaching material effectively to bridge the gap between the known and the unknown				
Comments				

CATEGORY TWO: FACILITATION SKILLS

Descriptors:	1 NA	2 UA	3 PA	4 A
There is a clear teaching point that is linked to the stated outcome(s).				
Activities are sequenced logically with whole class activities preceding individual work.				
Teacher selects tasks skilfully according to learners' needs.				
Ideas are presented logically from the known to the unknown.				
Activities promote participation and interaction.				
Teacher uses appropriate visual aids to illustrate new concepts.				
Questioning elicits development of higher order skills.				
Teacher uses authentic texts.				
Teacher uses a variety of resources to enrich the learning experience.				
Teacher uses group or pair work meaningfully.				

Activities are at an appropriate level of difficulty.				
Teacher's subject knowledge is sound.				
Teacher is confident in his/her use of English.				
Teacher makes effective use of time available.				
Comments				

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