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

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The opportunity to rebuild community after conflict requires rapid responses to reinstall key institutions. In this paper I will examine educational rebuilding and the role of teachers in the reconstruction of educational systems and the rebuilding of community. In doing so, discussion about how education and educators are coopted into the web of power exercised by the policy and practices of new regimes becomes a lens through which to understand how teachers are drafted into a new regime of truth and become part of the struggle to establish new power/knowledge discourses. Teachers’ locate their work within the broader social parameters and construct their profession as not only classroom practitioners, but as professionals with broader social responsibilities. Analysing policy from the current context of Iraq, the rebuilding of education systems and the place of teachers provides insight as to how a singular view of education permeates international policy. Within this vision, the role of teachers acts to usher in discontinuity and normalcy. Instead of being the agents of reconstruction, the type of educators emphasized in the new policy, normalize (dis)continuity, that is enacting the practice of breaking with the past, depoliticizing change, embedding an ahistorical view of context, all of which are sanctioned by new policy. Educators become the symbols of the new form of regime of truth that reframes education as managerialist discipline and practice.

Agency, Power and reconstruction

Nowhere are the transformative affects of education more apparent than in countries which are in conflict. The opportunity to rebuild community is not only a matter of discourse but also a necessity that makes the quality of that discourse powerful. In this paper I will examine the roles of education and teachers in the reconstruction of educational systems and the rebuilding of community. What becomes apparent in the examination of policy pertaining to education rebuilding are the essential questions about power and control. Power that is exercised by the policy and practices of new regimes becomes a lens through which to understand how teachers are drafted into a new regime of truth and become part of the struggle to establish new power/knowledge discourses. When dealing quite blatantly with power struggles, to chart what happens to education in the extreme situations, such as those experienced in the aftermath of war, terror and conflict, reveals the raw edges of rebuilding a critical social institution and the underpinning political strategies that qualify the rebuilding capacity of education. It also throws light on who are the agents of reconstruction and the diffuse way that those in power designate capacity. In light of this discussion, it raises issues about what happens to education systems and educators in the extreme situations when rebuilding organic social relations, rebuilding social relations and rebuilding work relations are critical? What can we learn from this about rebuilding our communities?
Teachers as forerunners of social justice turn

In 2003, I conducted research that attempted to show the concerns of teachers when asked about their experiences of teaching in the global economy (Vongalis, 2003b; Vongalis & Seddon, 2001). The diagram below illustrates the themes that emerged as key concerns of teachers who were educating in a global economy. Upon closer examination of these themes what became evident is the way that teachers contextualised their work within the broader implications of how their work and profession was being shaped by social, economic and political forces construed as neo-liberalism. The study revealed that it was the negative impact of neo-liberalism in educational reform that was hampering quality engagement of teachers with knowledge, pedagogy and educational and social relationships.

Figure 1 Emerging themes from teachers’ conversations about teaching in a global economy

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

Teachers regard the profession as a hybrid of social/education agents whose involvement in civil society would mean an active presence in awareness raising.
programmes, cross cultural dialogue, addressing the politics of social change, advocacy work, and promoting public dialogue about education as a public good.

Current education directives and educational research addresses the transformative capacity of learning (Arnold & Ryan, 2003; Brown, 2004; VCAA, 2004). How learning can change society and rebuild identity and values are focal points for educational policy. In these latest reforms called Essential Learning in Victorian Educational Policy, the quality engagement of teachers is identified as key factor in the ongoing development and success of education systems. For example, Arnold and Ryan (2003) address the need to deepen teachers’ functions within changing education systems. Although it remains unclear what ‘deepening’ means, underpinning these changes are clear social justice concerns that link quality educational outcomes to broader equitable social and community goals. There appears a distinct shift from the harsher, outcome driven educational goals that characterised the neo-liberal era of the 1990s towards a more humanistic approach to managing educational change. It would appear that far from being obstacles to reforms, as teachers and their unions were labelled in the 1990s when they did speak out again the marketization of education, the deeply held beliefs of teachers to focus on equitable outcomes and quality, public education has entered current discourse about educational reforms. Even during the neo-liberal hiatus of the 1990s, teachers advocated for the democratic, collective projects in rebuilding education systems.

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

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

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

For example, in the Iraqi conflict, schooling was resumed in 2003, well before the conflict situation and social and economic stability looked like being achieved (WorldBank, May 21, 2004). On Wednesday, 7 April, 2004, the BBC news reported that,
School attendance has risen from 60% directly after the war to more than 95% in this year's national exam week, according to Unicef. But much work remains to be done to restore the country's crumbling, overcrowded classrooms. http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/3605821.stm

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

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

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

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

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

Therefore, instead of restoring education, the aim is to rebuild as a new institution that is discontinuous from what has gone before. It is this political decision making to break with the past, even though it has been exemplary, that raises questions about how those in power go about making decisions about governance and establishing ways of cementing truth and legitimacy. In a context where clashing versions of truth and ways of acting are central to understanding what is going on, assessment of power
and how it is exercised becomes critical in understanding the strategic place of education and educators in the legitimization of power.

In the chaotic context of reconstruction, Foucault’s questions about power, politics and the work of intellectuals, and I include educators in this category, are central. For many the idea that educators can be defined as intellectuals is an anomaly. Considering the extensive deprofessionalisation of teachers in the last decade, for example, it would appear that teachers have become only classroom practitioners (Britzman, 2000; Connell, 1995; Hargreaves, 1994). However, to embrace the full meaning of being a teacher/educator is to acknowledge that the educator is both intellectual and practitioner (Giroux, 1988). Teachers’ problematising of globalization and neoliberalism exemplifies the roles of intellectuals to question the way that things are done and to reexamine the rules and regulations that shape institutions. By questioning the politics of education change and examining the roles of teachers in implementing change, professional teacher organisations around the world created an awareness and political will to resist neoliberal reforms by laying them bare and questioning their rationality. Both Foucault (C.Gorden, 1980), who argues that intellectuals must problematise their rules and regulations and Giroux, both construct the educator as a public intellectual with capacity to politicise institutional change. Certainly, in post conflict rebuilding, creating a space for the educator to resume teaching and learning is a key indicator of the transformation of conflict into normalcy. The educator does the transforming by using education and knowledge as a vehicle for enabling a new discourse that marks the end of conflict and the beginning of something new. Transformative education reflects morphogenetic capacity of agency (M. Archer, 1982), that is when teachers, as critical agents in education systems, use their authority and autonomy to transform the way structures are devised and operated.

When organisation such as the World Bank, USAID and the United Nations are involved in shaping institutions, the context is set for conflict between opposing ideas about the place and role of education in society. Teachers’ relations with the World Bank and its restructuring programs during the height of neo-liberal reforms is well documented (Vongalis, 2002, 2003a; Waters, 1998). It could be argued that in post conflict situations the teacher is more critical the agent of transformation. For example, UNESCO discussion papers about rapid educational responses outline intervention programs where teachers’ basic duty is to convey information about health, environment, disease and peace building (Aguilar & Retamal, 1989). In the same discussion paper, a key area of concern is the long term viability of intervention programs.

However, even in context when social change is initiated and sustained though the rebuilding of education systems, the teacher-agent is constructed as a shadow of the social agent, in other words, having minimal capacity to be engaged in discussions and actions that direct the rebuilding of community. In this context educators are engaged with the practices of immediacy but disengaged from the discussions and conversations about longevity of policy and practices.

In post conflict situations the teacher is critical the agent of transformation. In UNESCO discussion paper about rapid educational responses that outline intervention programs, teachers’ basic duty is to convey information about health, environment,
disease and peace building (Aguilar & Retamal, 1989). In the same discussion paper, a key area of concern is the long term viability of intervention programs. My contention is that teachers are employed as bridging agents rather than transformative agents. It reflects the managerialist approach to social change, that is the delineating of roles and responsibilities. Even in context when social change is initiated and sustained though the rebuilding of education systems, the teacher-agent is constructed as a character player in the theatre of change so there role is limited in the rebuilding of community.

The marginalised positioning of educators exemplifies Foucault’s notion of modern power play where the mechanisms for using power are not so much through repression, in this case, educators are critical, however, power acts to construct new identities, knowledge and capacities that reconfigure what is or is not possible (C.Gorden, 1980). In other words, the analysis of rebuilding education in this deliberate way illustrates how the identity of the educator is being reproduced in new communities. Irrespective of the historical place of educators in the community, educators are conduits of power. For example, US policy employed a De-Ba’athification of teachers, thereby re-educating teachers with new political attitudes that in effect depoliticise teaching. The new policy sanctions a new stage for educators far from social realm. The educators’ view of what constitutes knowledge, truth and practice in education is diminished, as is the capacity to unmask the traps and domination of particular powers that would be embedded in a political role for educators. Educators in the post conflict context act to break with the past and discontinue past practice. This role is the way that educators normalize the introduction of new education systems.

(Dis)Continuity as normalization: The symbolic theatre of Teacher professional development
The critical issue in the continuous discontinuity is that education policy and practice become a theatre for symbolic jingoism and ongoing dependency that represents one form of political power crushing another. Duggan’s experience of the reconstruction of the Cambodian education system is a case in point. In that case, reconstruction of the education sector creates a culture of economic and social dependency from the donor organization or government. Duggan (, 1996 #8) and recent work by the author (Vongalis, 2003a) have demonstrated how the economic interests of global organizations impact on the restructuring of national education systems. For example, consider the assistance of USAID in Iraq with its two pronged policy.

USAID’s Year 1 Education Program—worth $74 million through primary education activities and approximately $70 million through secondary education activities—employs a dual strategy that focuses on emergency actions to support the resumption of schools while laying the foundations for critical reforms to ensure that the education system and schools can play a constructive role in rebuilding social cohesion and progress in Iraq (http://www.usaid.gov/iraq/pdf/iraq_year1_overview.pdf.)

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

USAID's goals are to increase enrollment and improve the quality of primary and secondary education, ensure that classrooms have sufficient materials, facilitate community involvement, train teachers, implement accelerated learning programs, and establish partnerships between U.S. and Iraqi colleges and universities (http://www.usaid.gov/iraq/accomplishments/education.html).

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

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

Matter of factly, the damage of US led sanctions and their devastating impact of the Iraqi education systems are ignored. Instead, the previous regime is to blame and ipso facto education contributed to poor economic and social conditions. What is also interesting in the castigation of the previous regime is the discursive markers of educational success embodied in the quote. That private enterprise is associated with health and education classifies agents within these three spheres as critical professional talent. Couched in the language of economic opportunity and returns, education suffered greatly under the previous regime.

It is argued that prioritizing educational rebuilding ensures the resumption of normalcy and discontinuity. Within this policy implementation priorities also single out the role of teachers to usher in discontinuity and normalcy. The return of teachers to school and classrooms in Iraq signifies a resumption of routine life for parents, children and subsidiary industry that support education. In this case, the educator becomes an important social symbol of continuity in the business of life.

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

Iraqi Teachers Returning to Work
 Iraqi teachers who were persecuted for their political beliefs during Saddam's regime are finally returning to their chosen professions. Approximately 15,000 teachers were fired by Saddam's regime for political reasons, including relatives of Iraqis who were executed, exiled, or imprisoned. To date, 4,700 have been re-hired by the Ministry of Education and 1,100 more will be rehired.
in the next few days. In addition, the Ministries of Education and Higher Education and the Supreme National De-Ba'athification Commission, are working to ensure that the de-Ba'athification appeals process is accelerated and implemented fairly and efficiently. Securing the best possible teachers for Iraq's youth is vital to the future of freedom and prosperity in the new Iraq.

Source: Coalition Provisional Authority, Baghdad May 3, 2004
http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2004/05/20040503-5.html

What is revealing about the rhetoric of the press release is the way that teachers are constituted as political actors, in this case, the returning teachers were those who opposed the ousted regime. The return of these political actors to the classroom, part of the de-Ba’athification process, is a sign that political normalcy is returning. This poses the question whether teachers will be defined as political actors in subsequent education policy, in the light of global trends to depoliticize the profession (Britzman, 2000; Vongalis, 2003a).

It must be noted that reports vary as to how many teachers were sacked by the US administrators for being aligned to the previous regime and then how many were rehired in the new climate. Indeed, reports hint that the same cohort of teachers went through the firing and re-hiring. Politically, the firing of teachers “smacked of an ideological witch hunt” and prompted anti American sentiments. In the spirit of inclusion, democracy and based on the assessment that teachers really do not have political persuasive powers over students, the rehiring of teachers was recast as a step towards rebuilding social identity, unity and the ‘graduation’ of Iraq’s sovereign powers in determining national policy. Teachers represent the kind of professional who is able to put aside politics and this capacity is especially endorsed when it sits comfortably with the idea that “Teachers don't have the power to convert a classroom of kids” (Asquith, 2004). In other words, the return of teachers to the classroom is a political act to mark the resumption of civic society however, once in the classroom the political persuasive power of teachers is deemed negligible.

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

What is evident from the training workshops is the dominant discourse about teachers’ work which reframes and rationalises their work within the parameters of quality control and accountability. Teachers’ technical knowledge about student learning and evaluation, effective lesson planning and class room management defines the professional in the new context. Added to this, is the emotional labour that teachers are expected to import into their work considering the post conflict traumas. A glaring omission is the intellectual capacity of teachers to address the ongoing political and social issues that underpin discontinuity of cultural practices and the introduction of a new sort of normalcy.
According to Fevre,(2000) the overt use of educators as emotional labour increases professional uncertainty because there is an educative focus on individualism and personal development that decontextualises the education from broader social and political context. Educators are encouraged to construct identity for themselves and their students, as individualized, emotional and introspective not as a way to form a politicized or social understanding of who we are. Fevre (2000) calls this the demoralization of educators where “a deeper process of stripping out morality from our lives that leads to a loss of purpose in the Western culture, and the loss of belief in what might yet be possible”. In other words, instead of being the agents of reconstruction, educators are the means by which discontinuity with the previous social and political context is created. By normalizing discontinuity, that is enacting the practice of breaking with the past, along with government backing for the continuity of education provision, in a new form, educators become the symbols of reconstruction and the return to normalcy and the classroom the new theatre.

**Alternative discourses**

Rebuilding education systems provides the opportunity to reconceptualise education. In UNESCO policy, this entails also the “reorientation of textbooks, to remove messages leading to ethnic or religious division, hatred and intolerance”, ([http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php- URL_ID=15006&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html](http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=15006&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html)).

The cognate discourse about educational change and revival in Iraq represents a distinct view about the way education needs to be revived. Discursive changes in policy reveal the new ways of thinking and talking about education and its relevance to re-establishing normalcy and with that ushering in the discourse of managerialism and globalization in education. New discourse in mainly US based education policy introduce the practices of management, staff development and supervision that reflect ‘best practice’ and legitimize the reconstruction of education systems. If we ask how the dominant discourse of education cements the new regime of truth, then the discourse-practice cycle provides clarity. Discursive practices determine what counts as valuable, important and truthful. It is valuable and important for Iraq to establish an education system that reflects the ideology of the new regime, especially considering the amount of funding poured into it by the new powers. The administrators and teachers need to appropriate the practices that reflect and enable the discourse of policy. In the process, the practices reproduce the discourse and the discourse continues to validate practices (Anderson & Ginsberg, 1988).

However, there are deficiencies contained in the policy of a managerial model of education are suggested by US based policy in Iraq. For instance, according to an Iraqi Observatory adviser,

> Unless you use the terms “occupation” and “colonialism,” he said at that time, you aren’t really addressing the present dynamic in Iraq (Quilty, 2003).

Education has to address the issues of conflict that are related to the reinterpretation of national history, ethnic identities and divides, and conflict. In doing so, addressing ethnic divides, embedding awareness raising programs and cross sectorial dialogue, (ethnic, culture, class and gender) means the politicization education. Without
acknowledging the complexity of how education and schooling is tied to building social cohesion, there is a danger that education become a disengaging institution that is disconnected from the concerns of community and society. Sobhi Tawil and Alexandra Harley (2004) have built a number of case studies of conflict rebuilding and their conclusions are interesting. They argue that in “order to ensure that processes of education reform are meaningful contributions to reconciliation and peace building, the subtle and complex relationships between schooling and conflict need to be explicitly recognised and examined”.

Education can present an alternative discourse to managerial structures provided that it is not coopted by powers that seek to reshape institutional relationships, control ways of thinking and acting and embed rules and regulations that legitimise the coopted version of education. There are resistant voices in Iraq who question the path of reconstruction. For instance, in the case of Iraq, social agents problematise the current reforms.

“We don’t want to advance American interest in Iraq but where those interests coincide with what is positive and progressive for Iraq – development, technical investment, investment in human capital – there’s no reason to oppose this just for the sake of opposition. “We’re trying to navigate between a rejectionism and collaboration” (Quilty, 2003).

Critical voices raise concerns about governance and policy and whether it represent the needs and interests of the Iraqi people.

But one set of agents is conspicuously silent in this debate. Ideally, critical agents in the dilemma between rejectionism of the incoming power and collaboration with new ways of educating are the educators themselves. It is the educators who can implement a relevant form of transformative practice that blends the new with the concerns from the past. But this is only possible if teachers are given more power than suggested by classroom practices. It means training teachers in social and political education practices that politicize learning as a way to move from the conflict towards a post conflict education that aims to understand that what has come before is important to comprehend. This training draws on progressive pedagogies that critically frame learning and teaching.

An example of Reconciliation Pedagogy using a Resistance Model teaching was undertaken by the Education for Social Justice Research Group, University of South Australia. Their project sought to develop and research a model for teaching which engaged participants in the struggle for social justice in education and society. The utilisation of a Gramscian approach to resistance informed the project team as it sought to actively engage participants as ‘agents in the struggle’ against injustice (Lester-Irabinna, Tur, & Rigney, 2003). The underpinning principles were based on the process for unmasking power, language, culture and history to the practice of education and unpacking the different kinds of ‘knowing’ or different versions of the truth.

The content of teacher training went beyond the management of learning, but focused on the social and community issues that underpin conflict. The educators’ role was to explain and tackle the issues using a social justice framework that leads to positive actions and consciousness-raising. The educator is therefore embedded in the broader
social and political policies and practices that seek to discontinue inequalities at their structural and cultural sources. This includes the identification of structures and ideologies which create unequal educational outcomes and inhibit the role that education might play in a broader political struggle (Lester-Irabinna et al., 2003).

As an embedded social group, teachers can make specific political demands for peace, human rights, education rights, children’s rights and so on. As educated professionals embedded the social, cultural and class dynamics, they can negotiate on behalf on marginalized, disadvantaged groups and dislocated groups with government or governance organizations to politicize the experiences of groups of people and ensure representation at the highest levels. Teachers can negotiate policy reforms for the inclusion of marginalized groups into the political processes. This type of political lobbying pressures power groups to make concessions and redefine the political representation. As a distinct professional groups, whose interests are essentially the equity, access and opportunity through education, then the risk that teachers will be consumed by larger political debate and become entangled in party politics needs to be minimized.

However, the real politik of reconstruction looks more like the RISE program. The Revitalization of Iraqi Schools and Stabilization of Education (RISE) program includes topics such as tolerance, conflict reduction and resolution, trauma reduction, nutrition and basic health skills. It also includes professional development about child-centered education, active learning, participatory techniques and peer learning. However, the RISE discourse centres on program management and deficit learning for teachers in techniques of teaching. The functional paradigm that redesigns education clearly steers away from exposing conflict laden context, the historical positioning of teachers in this context, and steers away from pedagogy for the unmasking power, language, culture and history. In other words, would such words as “colonization”, and “occupation” be part of the professional development of teachers?

The discourse of policy and rebuilding illustrates the concertive power that encloses teachers’ agency in the classroom. The locus of educational rebuilding is far removed from the agential capacity of teachers. Instead of fostering teachers’ public intellectual agency that would generate a broader policy base for reforms and rebuilding in the light of the community struggle to create the education systems that are needed, educators become agents of new and problematic discourse-practice. In effect, they are the soft enforcers of the new regime of truth and a new form of power that colonises education.

A central objective of educators is to ensure that questions about social justice and ethics remain central to educational opportunity. However, when analysing the role of educators in rebuilding communities where critical issues of identity, power and independence are central to social and educational debates, teachers have become strategic agents for new power structures. Archer’s (M. S. Archer, 1995) morphogenesis capacity of agency which would construct teachers as transformative agents able to interact with those parts of restructuring that serve to transform society and education in accordance with the aforementioned concerns. In this model, teachers’ create their own strategies to assert power and control. Therefore, educators would be responsible to creating a policy discourse that shapes practice in accordance with unmasking power, language, culture and history and unpacking the different
kinds of ‘knowing’ or different versions of the truth. Educators would have significant control over curriculum and knowledge as well as opening a public space where educational reform is problematised instead of normalized.

There is potential for educators to be progressive and transformative agents in the rebuilding of education systems. However, as illustrated by the case of Iraq, the rebuilding of education becomes a stage for embedding set of political and disciplinary practices that consolidate new regimes of truth. As an institution, education is seen as a more pervasive yet unobtrusive way of establishing governance, control and regulation. In this power play, teachers become the soft agents of the new control regimes. Through discontinuity and normalization of the new social context, the discourse of managerialism woven in policy, the re-training of teachers through administrator led programs and the absence of political reading of change, the rebuilding of communities in post conflict situations has more in common with colonization rather than liberation.

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