

Democratic Citizenship Education: An Opportunity for the Renegotiation of Teacher Identity in South African Schools

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Abstract

Curricular reform in South African schools, as initially encountered through outcomes-based education (OBE), and most recently in CAPS, has been criticised and interrogated, if not for its epistemology, then for its political desirability. While justifiable questions were and continue to be asked about the pedagogical adaptability of teachers to their new roles as facilitators of pre-determined outcomes, the same has not been said, or asked, about the preparedness of teachers to teach democratic citizenship education. It is necessary, therefore, to consider how prepared teachers are to teach and cultivate the principles of democratic citizenship education. Second, what considerations should be given to teacher identity in relation to democratic citizenship education? And third, how might South African teachers begin to take account of their identities and narratives, so that they might be placed to participate in teaching democratic citizenship education? In response, I argue that the contested nature of teacher identities makes possible particular contributions to democratic citizenship and democratic education, which are necessary for teaching democratic citizenship education.

Keywords: democratic citizenship education; teacher identity; narratives; democratic identities

Introduction

Key to educational reform in post-apartheid South Africa was to undo historical and racially-based inequalities, while simultaneously implementing an education system that would cultivate a

UNISA  university
of south africa
PRESS

Education as Change

www.educationaschange.co.za

Volume 22 | Number 1 | 2018 | #2309 | 17 pages

<https://doi.org/10.25159/1947-9417/2309>

ISSN 1947-9417 (Online)

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citizenship education necessary for a democratic society. Democratic South Africa was in need of an education system that would instil the values critical for a humane and socially just society. In this regard, the introduction of outcomes-based education (OBE), in 1997, was considered as a pedagogical route out of apartheid education (Botha 2002; Chisholm 2005, 81). On the one hand, OBE represented a vivid departure from a highly prescriptive and divisive apartheid education—known as Christian National Education (CNE). On the other hand, OBE envisioned the reconfiguration of the relationship between teachers and learners. In theory, this meant that learners would shift in their positions from passive recipients to engaged and critical participants. In turn, teachers were expected to adopt the roles of facilitators, whereby learners would be encouraged to engage in democratic practices of deliberation, and take responsibility for their own learning.

The induction of teachers into a post-apartheid curricula—first, through Curriculum 2005 (introduced in 1997), and the National Curriculum Statement (introduced in 2002), followed by the Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS) (phased in from 2004 to 2008), and most recently, an amended version of the NCS, entitled Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) (phased in from 2012 to 2014)—focused extensively on teachers’ subject knowledge and assessment practices (Christie 2006; Jansen 2004). In addition, there were a number of strategic initiatives and programmes, which looked at conceptions of democratic identity and engagement, such as the *Manifesto on Values, Education, and Democracy* (DoE 2001a), which aimed to assist teachers in addressing human rights and values in all learning areas, and *Building a Culture of Responsibility and Humanity in our Schools: A Practical Guide for Teachers* (DBE 2011). As will be discussed later, regardless of these initiatives, very limited, if any, attention has been paid to the particular experiences, narratives and identities of teachers. Consequently, although teachers have been expected to adopt and support waves of curriculum reform, very little is known about teachers and teacher professional identity.

Adding to the complexity of making sense of teacher professional identity is the often uncritical forms of understandings and acceptance of constructions of “the teacher” (Carrim 2001). There is a problem, as Britzman (1992, 23) reminds us, when the teacher’s identity is taken for granted, when it is approached in some a priori way—“embedded in the normative discourse of teacher education where the glorification of first-hand experience non-problematically scripts teacher identity synonymous with the teacher’s role and function.” Yet, understanding who “the teacher”

is, is not only necessary for the development of teacher education programmes, but is also imperative for establishing narrative discourses in relation to constructions of the “teacher-self,” and hence, teaching.

How prepared, therefore, are teachers to teach and cultivate the principles of democratic citizenship education? Second, what considerations should be given to teacher identity in relation to democratic citizenship education? And third, how might South African teachers begin to take account of their identities and narratives, so that they might be placed to participate in teaching democratic citizenship education? In addressing these questions, I commence by looking at notions of identity and teacher professional identity.

In addition to understanding how identity manifests in different contexts, it is necessary to make sense of what exactly identity is. As Beauchamp and Thomas (2009, 176) observe, to make sense of identity, one has to “comprehend the close connection between identity and the self, the role of emotion in shaping identity, the power of stories and discourse in understanding identity, the role of reflection in shaping identity, the link between identity and agency.” One also has to make sense of the contextual factors that might promote or hinder the construction of identity. Given these complexities, Connolly (1991, xiv) conceives of identity as relational and collective. For him, identity is defined through the collective constituencies with which one identifies or is identified by others. Likewise, Taylor (1989, 34) explains that an individual cannot describe him- or herself without taking into account others around him or her: “We are selves only in that certain issues matter for us. What I am as a self, my identity, is essentially defined by the way things have significance for me.” In this sense, an individual’s frame of reference is shaped and defined by his or her particular social and moral spaces. Following on this, Mendieta (2008, 407) describes identity as being constructed, invented, imagined, imposed, projected, and as a “social locus” of how an individual positions herself within a particular context. Depending on how an individual negotiates the particular influences of her “social locus”—whether imaginary or not—the social space, states Mendieta (2008, 412), is continually shifting and transforming. Mendieta (2008, 412) contends that if identity is influenced by a constantly changing “social topography,” then identities have to be understood as “fragile negotiations” with their respective “social topography.”

When it comes to teacher identities, it might be necessary to distinguish between professional and personal teacher identities. On the one hand, professional teacher identities are influenced by

particular formal contexts, and are pre-determined through sets of frameworks or guidelines in relation to a required set of behaviour. In South Africa, for example, the body responsible for the promotion of the professional development and protection of ethical standards is the South African Council of Ethics (SACE). The function of SACE is not unlike that of other teacher professional bodies, such as the General Teaching Council (GTC) in Scotland, the Ontario College of Teachers (OCT) in Canada, or the National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) in India. These professional bodies are responsible for determining the minimum qualifications for registration, co-ordinating and regulating teacher education programmes, providing academic support to teachers, and promoting and conducting innovation and research in various areas of teacher education. As Sachs (2001, 155) notes, teacher professional identity stands at the core of the teaching profession, and provides a framework for teachers to construct their own ideas of “how to be,” “how to act” and “how to understand” their work and their place in society.

What might be less clear, and certainly more complex to standardise or regulate, are notions of personal teacher identities. According to Pajares (1992, 307), personal teacher identities are influenced by particular beliefs, values, perceptions and judgements. Pajares (1992, 307) explains that there are multiple and different kinds of beliefs, which include “beliefs about knowledge (epistemology), about the performance of teachers and their students (attributions, locus of control, motivation, test anxiety), about perceptions of self (including one’s self-worth, self-concept, self-esteem, and sense of agency), and about confidence in one’s performance (self-efficacy).” Beliefs, continues Pajares (1992, 309), can be formed by chance, an intense experience or a succession of events. Moreover, these beliefs include those that the teacher has about him- or herself and about others. A teacher might, for example, because of particular religious or cultural beliefs, believe that meting out corporal punishment is in the best interests of a child. This might be his or her personal belief, which might also be institutionally promoted and reinforced. This belief might be at odds with his or her professional teacher identity, which deems corporal punishment as not only unacceptable but also illegal. Such tensions between professional and personal teacher identities, state Beauchamp and Thomas (2009, 177), highlight the complex and contested nature of the various understandings of identity, in particular the connection between identity and self, and the unclear distinction between personal and professional identity. There appears to be accepted agreement among scholars that teacher professional and personal identities are fluid and dynamic,

and that these shift and reshape in relation to their context—thereby confirming their relationality (Beauchamp and Thomas 2009; Olsen 2008; Sachs 2001).

Exacerbating notions of professional teacher identity are what Jansen (2001, 242) refers to as “powerful images of the idealised teacher.” The teaching profession, explains Sachs (2001, 153), is perceived to contain and fulfil particular traits and expectations. In turn, these traits are projected onto a teacher’s professional identity—yielding images of “the teacher.” Yet, as Francis and Le Roux (2011, 300) observe, like a personal self, a teacher’s professional self is composed of multiple identities, which are constructed through the “interconnections between personal identity, social identity, context and the roles teachers play in schools.” Likewise, Zembylas (2003, 108–9) dismisses assumptions of a singular “teacher-self” or an “essential teacher identity” hidden beneath the surface of teachers’ experiences. Such assumptions, says Zembylas (2003, 108–9), are extended into popular cultural myths about teaching, “such as the idea that the teacher is the expert or that the teacher is self-made.” Every education policy document, states Jansen (2001, 242), whether explicitly or implicitly, whether consciously or unconsciously, holds “preferred and cherished images” about “the teacher”—as if such an image can at all be understood as a homogenous entity.

Teachers and Their Contesting Narratives

South African history brings another uncomfortable dimension in that inasmuch as schools were previously segregated, so too were teachers and teaching. To this end, teachers taught in schools that matched their racial and ethnic identity. While there were indeed exceptions, whereby “white” teachers taught in “coloured,” “black” or “Indian” schools, “white” learners would never have been taught by any other than a “white” teacher. As Gutmann (2009) points out, when individuals themselves identify racially, ethnically, or religiously as a consequence of being identified with groups, they often develop hostilities toward other groups and a sense of superiority over them. Hence, if one assumed that post-apartheid desegregation of schools would have translated into the migration of teachers as much as learners, then this assumption is sorely misplaced. Indeed as Jansen (2004, 117) contends, the problem of managing diversity at historically “white” schools, which have experienced an influx of a range of diverse learners, is not the accommodation of these learners, but rather the absence of diverse teachers. This diversity is evident in race, culture, ethnicity, religion, and language. Schools, and especially historically “white” schools, however, continue to appoint teachers along racial lines, because of profound racialised conceptions of

“white” competence and “black” incompetence (Jansen 2004), which are, in turn, sustained by an argument for the preservation of “standards” (Soudien and Sayed 2004, 101). In this regard, the historical imageries that have given shape to “white,” “black,” “Indian” and “coloured” teacher identities, remain contentiously present and largely unexplored (see Davids and Waghid 2015).

Weldon (2009, 177), for instance, describes the historical imagery of teacher identities as “traumatic,” since apartheid used teachers—across racial spectrums—as key role players in the propagation of an unequal and divisive education. It is an undeniable and unmapped reality that teachers, across racial identities, played particular roles in either propagating apartheid “truths,” or in denying them. Moreover, they also (un)consciously submit to its legacy in terms of its racist assumptions regarding learner capability and competence. Just recently, a “white” teacher at a private school in Johannesburg was found guilty and subsequently fired on a charge of racism. According to newspaper reports, the teacher told “black” learners that they were only getting good marks because they sat next to “white” learners. He is alleged to have told a “black” learner after a test that “You disappointed the blacks by getting a good mark.” He also allegedly told a “black” scholarship learner who got a good mark, “Well done, you’ve started thinking like a white boy” (Anderson 2017).

It is not unusual to find an unwillingness on the part of certain teachers and school leaders to break from the past by persisting with practices that continue to be couched in a language of authoritarianism and alienation (Moloi 2007; Ngcobo and Tikly 2008). According to Waghid (2009), values, such as compassion, respect, acknowledging the other, responsibility, participation and inclusion, appear to be ideas that remain remote from what it means to teach and to learn. Under such circumstances, states Levinson (2015, 203), teachers suffer “moral injury,” that is, “the trauma of perpetrating significant moral wrong against others despite one’s wholehearted desire and responsibility to do otherwise.” Of course, it is possible, and indeed the case, as Levinson (2015, 203) observes, that teachers will try to avoid moral injury in intrinsically unjust contexts. In this sense, a significant number of teachers in apartheid South Africa used their professional identity, or what Levinson (2015, 203) refers to as “teacher voices,” to protest systemic injustices, or “exited” the school setting altogether. But, for those who might have opposed apartheid ideology, enacting justice under conditions of pervasive injustice might not have been an option. Then, of course, there were those teachers who, in fact, supported the ideology of apartheid, and continue to do so. For Levinson (2015, 203), therefore, teachers are seldom in a position to escape

moral injury fully—since it is highly unlikely for anyone in an unjust society to escape such injury. To this end, she maintains that although it is the teachers who suffer the moral injury, “it is society that owes them moral repair—most importantly, by restructuring educational and other social systems so as to mitigate injustice” (Levinson 2015, 203).

Inasmuch as conflicting narrative accounts of teaching and teacher identities present particular challenges for schools, and society, it is, however, these same contesting narratives that contribute towards democratic ways of thinking and acting. Schools, like any other community of people, are necessarily beset by difference, disagreement, and conflict or controversy. Mouffe (2000) asserts that if we want people to be free we must always allow for the possibility that conflict may appear and provide an arena where differences can be confronted—this is the function of a democratic arena.

Taking the aforementioned discussions into account, I turn my attention to the teaching of democratic citizenship education, as espoused through curricular reform, in particular CAPS.

Teaching and Democratic Citizenship Education

All the versions of the OBE curricula, from Curriculum 2005 to CAPS, contain implicit directives that teachers ought to teach and inculcate notions of democratic citizenship education in their learners. The principles espoused by CAPS (DBE 2013) include the following:

- Social transformation: ensuring that the educational imbalances of the past are redressed, and that equal educational opportunities are provided for all sections of the population;
- Human rights, inclusivity, environmental and social justice: infusing teaching with the principles and practices of social and environmental justice and human rights as defined in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa; and
- Valuing indigenous knowledge systems: acknowledging the rich history and heritage of this country as important contributors to nurturing the values contained in the Constitution.

In addition to curricular reform, there were other strategic initiatives specifically geared at teachers—but without their direct involvement. Framed as encapsulating democratic South Africa’s commitment to cultivating citizenship education, the first of these initiatives was the *Report of the Working Group on Values in Education* (DoE 2000). This report culminated in the *Saamtrek Conference on Values, Education and Democracy* (DoE 2001a), which, in turn,

produced the second strategic initiative, entitled the *Manifesto on Values in Education* (DoE 2001b). The *Report of the Working Group on Values in Education* (DoE 2000) highlighted six qualities, which the education system should actively promote, namely:

- Equity
- Tolerance
- Multilingualism
- Openness
- Accountability
- Social honour

In turn, the ensuing *Manifesto on Values in Education* (DoE 2001b, 3) extended the aforementioned to include the values of:

- Democracy, social justice, and equality;
- Non-racism; non-sexism;
- Ubuntu (human dignity);
- An open society, and accountability (responsibility); and
- The rule of law, respect, and reconciliation.

These values are to be taught in a way that will bring the principles of the Constitution into the life of a classroom, as well as applied practically in programmes and policy making by educators, administrators, governing bodies and officials. The Manifesto stipulates that there is “no intention to impose values, but to generate discussion and debate, and to acknowledge that discussion and debate are values in themselves” (DoE 2001b, 3). Instead, the Manifesto recognises that values, which transcend language and culture, are the common currency that makes life meaningful, and the normative principles that ensure ease of life lived in common (DoE 2001b, 3).

Next came the *Guidelines for the Implementation of the ACE on Integrating Values and Human Rights in the Curriculum* (DoE 2003a), which served as a discussion document to assist tertiary institutions and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in providing an Advanced Certificate in Education (ACE) on integrating values and human rights in the curriculum. This was followed by the *Manifesto on Values, Education, and Democracy* (DoE 2001a), which aimed to assist teachers in addressing human rights and values in all learning areas. And, *Building a Culture of*

Responsibility and Humanity in our Schools: A Practical Guide for Teachers (DBE 2011) provides teachers with “practical examples across a number of learning areas on how to develop a variety of lessons around rights, responsibilities and values as individuals and as citizens in a democracy” (DBE 2011, iii).

Few would disagree with Waghid’s (2004, 534–35) contention that there is little doubt that cultivating in learners the values of democracy can produce a greater awareness of what it means to be a “good” citizen. This means that if post-apartheid South Africa is intent on cultivating citizens who respect equality, and have regard for the other, then it becomes imperative that learners are inculcated into these value systems. What remains doubtful, however, is whether teachers in South Africa are adequately prepared—both in terms of capacity and willingness—to be teachers of democratic citizenship education. While teachers, in terms of CAPS, are expected to instil and cultivate the above principles, among others, the curriculum does not take into account any notions of teacher identities, and how these might impact on the teaching of democratic citizenship education. To date, the arena of teacher identity and its influence on curriculum and classroom practices remains largely unexplored.

If one accepts that it is possible to *teach* learners how to be democratic citizens, then the first point of concern centres on who does the teaching. Presumably, it is expected that a teacher of mathematics, accounting or English, would necessarily have the subject knowledge and skills to teach these respective subjects. Should one, therefore, also expect that teachers who are teaching democratic citizenship education have the necessary skills to do so? Presumably, the numerous initiatives and guides linked to the teaching and cultivation of the values associated with democratic citizenship education are meant to assist teachers in this regard. But there is an essential difference between the teaching of mathematics or accounting, and the teaching of democratic citizenship education. While the teacher of mathematics or accounting is expected to teach that specific subject within a classroom, the teacher of democratic citizenship education is expected to teach democratic citizenship education through practical demonstrations, enactments and engagements. The potential impact of citizenship teaching, Biesta (2011, 1) argues, “is always mediated by what children and young people experience in their everyday lives” about democratic ways of acting and being and about their own position as citizens—and such everyday “lessons” in citizenship are not necessarily always sending out positive messages. This means that a teacher of democratic citizenship education would have to believe in the values of respect, compassion,

inclusion, fairness and listening to the voices of disagreement. As such, a teacher of mathematics, accounting or English would need to teach these subjects while simultaneously demonstrating what it means to act as a democratic citizen.

Harber and Serf (2006, 987) explain that, if formal education is one important agency that could help to foster and develop characteristics of democratic citizenship, then it can be argued that the organisation of democratic citizenship should reflect democracy in its daily practices. This is because democratic values and behaviours are learned as much by experience as by hearing or reading about them. In this regard, the learning of democratic skills and values in practice in terms of institutional and curriculum organisation is only possible if schools are structured and operated in this way (Harber and Serf 2006, 987). Teachers would therefore “need to learn ways of working democratically in both the whole school and the classroom as an integral part of their teacher education, given that their previous experience in school and higher education will not necessarily have prepared them” (Harber and Serf 2006, 987). In this sense, democratic citizenship education is not simply a matter of implementing a formal curriculum, or abiding by a set of guidelines. The teaching of democratic citizenship education is influenced by a teacher’s identity, and how he/she lives by the values of democracy. It therefore becomes necessary to make sense of how teachers conceive of themselves in relation to propagating the democratic values, as espoused through CAPS.

A study of South Africa’s democratic transition, states Kubow (2009), reveals that democracy’s conceptualisation is embedded in a host of sociocultural, economic, and political conditions that have shaped citizen identity and nation-building in particular ways. To expect, therefore, that teachers, who themselves might have jaded views about their sense of self and who are unfamiliar with a praxis of democracy, might somehow know how to act democratically, is questionable. As previously discussed, democratic ways of thinking, being and acting cannot simply be taught. Democratic ways have to be made visible in the interactions and engagements in a classroom. To this end, it makes no sense for a teacher to claim to be cultivating a democratic classroom if he or she humiliates learners when they seemingly step out of line. Learners, as Biesta (2011), reminds us, learn from what they experience in the world around them, and while the classroom represents just one corner of that world, it has the capacity to become a highly influential one. Consequently, curricular reform cannot be limited to teacher preparation in relation to content knowledge only. Curricular reform has to be accompanied by consolidated efforts to reconcile the displaced

identities splintered by apartheid with what it means to belong, to act with responsibility, and to be willing to be held accountable. If apartheid provided the licence to be sceptical of and undermine the other, then democratic education ought to be the shift towards co-existence and understanding. Such a shift requires conversation, deliberation, compassion and disagreement, with a willingness to engage from the perspective of the other which can only be initiated, practised and cultivated by a teacher, and then imitated by learners.

Therefore, if teachers are struggling to reconcile their historically oppressed or historically privileged identities with a national identity of equality and belonging, then this struggle needs to shift from the privacy of their classrooms to larger political concerns. Curricular reform has to be as much about initiating learners (citizens) into something worthwhile (Peters 1966) as it is about capacitating teachers (citizens). In this regard, a narrative approach to teacher identity development is a useful means and space through which to make sense on the one hand, of democratic notions of identity, and on the other hand, how these identities might facilitate the cultivation of citizenship.

Renegotiating a Renewed Teacher Identity

If we agree with Carr's (1998, 325) view that the curriculum plays a significant role in social and political spheres of society in inducting learners into the culture, practices and social relationships of their society, then we have to consider teaching as a thoroughly contextualised social process. For this reason, Weldon (2009, 185) asserts that change at classroom level is the most difficult to achieve. It is here where it matters most for societies in transition—such as from apartheid to democracy—not only in terms of curricular knowledge, but also for inculcating the democratic values for the new society. Seemingly, what appears to be discounted from the debates on curriculum implementation—and no more so from the apparent inadequacy of public schools to cultivate spaces of democratic engagement—is not only the socio-political contexts in which a curriculum is taught, but the socio-political context of teachers. When a collective memory, such as that of apartheid, is “traumatic,” explains Weldon (2009, 177), there is “tension in societies emerging from conflict between those who feel it is better to forget a traumatic past than remember it, and those who feel that it should be remembered.” The majority of teachers in South Africa are in need of deep personal and professional change and support. This change cannot come from a curriculum, which teachers are required to teach, if they themselves are detached from its values.

Similarly, the change that is necessary in teachers cannot be realised if the institutional structures of schools are trapped in discourses of hegemonic practices of decision making.

For Weldon (2009, 185), in order to emerge from an identity-based internecine conflict and trauma (such as apartheid), it is necessary to address a shift beyond formal curricular reform, and to take into account the historical meanings of identity within the national context. Similarly, Zembylas (2003, 108) argues that emphasising the historical contingency of the teacher-self “avoids the problematics of normalizing identity and allows teachers a broader range of strategies to negotiate their relations with others and with themselves.” If teachers recognise this contingency, maintains Zembylas (2003, 108), “they can move beyond dogmatic conceptions of identity that delimit their potential responses to their social positioning.” Critical to such an endeavour, states Zembylas (2003, 109), is that identity “is not a pre-existing, stable element that becomes disciplined through discourses and practices of emotion, but something that is constituted through power relations.” In this regard, explains Zembylas (2003, 112), identity consists of what one knows best about one’s relations to oneself, others and the world. Yet, it is often constituted by the things about which one is least able to talk. One might ask, therefore, whether any group of teachers has ever had a conversation about the influence that apartheid has had on their teacher identity. Which tensions, if any, exist between what has been foisted upon them through apartheid ideology and how they desire to see themselves? As teachers struggle in the process of “coming to know,” according to Zembylas (2003, 114), the teacher-self is “constantly contested and fractured by the intersection of activities, judgements, emotions, and desires” (Zembylas 2003, 123–24).

What, therefore, can teachers do to take account of their identities, so that they might be better placed to participate in teaching democratic citizenship education? Teachers, through their personal identities, bring profound diversity and diverse experiences to the classroom. Each one of them has a particular story of what brought them to teaching, how they experience teaching, and how they engage with those they teach. A number of them might be encountering diverse classroom settings for the first time. It is not unusual to find teachers teaching the very learners with whom they were previously not allowed to learn. Similarly, teachers might find themselves in staffrooms where they might not necessarily feel a sense of inclusion and belonging. All of these experiences contribute to who the teacher is, and how he/she enacts his/her teaching.

One way of making sense of these experiences is through listening to teachers' narrative accounts. Scholars like Connelly and Clandinin (1990, 2), Fay (1996, 186), and Conle (2000, 49) are in agreement that humans tell and listen to stories: "They are therefore story-telling organisms who, individually and socially, lead storied lives" (Conle 2000, 49). Connelly and Clandinin (1990, 2) contend that while "education is the construction and reconstruction of personal and social stories; teachers and learners are storytellers and characters in their own and other's stories." In this respect, teachers have particular narratives or stories that are constitutive of democratic citizenship education. McAdams (2001, 117) explains that life stories are psychosocial texts that are jointly crafted by the individual and the culture within which the individual's life has meaning. In this sense, the autobiographical stories of teachers reflect who they are, which, in turn, reflect the world in which they live. Through inserting their own stories about oppression, marginalisation or exclusion—whether as a perpetrator or victim—teachers can begin to offer a more nuanced account of democratic citizenship education, while simultaneously making meaning of and for themselves in relation to others. In this sense, as teachers reflect upon and narrate earlier experiences or traumas, their meanings, according to Connelly and Clandinin (1990, 9), shift over time. It might be, therefore, that a teacher who measures learner capability in terms of race or ethnicity, reflects and reconsiders such a perspective, not in relation to his or own beliefs, but in relation to how such views might inflict moral harm on others. Such an account of democratic citizenship education implies a deep attachment to what it means to act with mutual trust and regard for the other. Such an account also recognises that teacher identity cannot be divorced either from curricular reform or from the teacher–learner relationship.

On the one hand, the different narratives of teachers provide particular insights into contested teacher identities—that is, different life experiences yield diverse and complex identities. On the other hand, the value of these narratives resides in their contribution and cultivation of conceptions of democratic identities. Democratic identities, states De Groot (2017, 4), can be envisioned as one of the main constituting components of democratic engagement, next to democratic literacy and competences. De Groot (2017, 4) continues that when teachers acknowledge and actively support the contested nature of citizenship and citizenship education, they help students to gain insight into a variety of images and narratives on good citizenship in society, and into how these images and narratives change over time in conjunction with shifting norms and values in society and geographic and socio-economic conditions.

Embarking on practices of storytelling would create the spaces for teachers to give expression to who they are, and what identities they bring into their teaching and their classrooms. That these stories will, at times, be in conflict and create antagonism, is necessary for teachers to begin to shift towards healing. Todd and Säfström (2008, 3) assert that antagonistic conflicts are necessary for democracy; they give meaning to democratic politics: “That is, in order for democracy to be democratic, we need to begin with antagonism, where a variety of different truths can make their appearance.” One of the tasks of democratic education and democratic expressions, state Todd and Säfström (2008, 8), “involves the turning of antagonisms into agonisms, of providing a space and time for students [and teachers] to express views that create not only a culture of pluralism, but that tie these views to larger political articulations.” What different and opposing stories bring is an affirmation that democratic education is necessarily beset by diverse and divergent viewpoints, that it is not determined or defined by agreement, but rather by a recognition of difference.

Conclusion

In this article, I have drawn attention to the fact that the extensive curriculum reform, considered necessary for the cultivation of a democratic South Africa, has not taken account of the complex narratives and identities that teachers bring into their teaching. This neglect continues to have far-reaching consequences not only for the teaching of democratic citizenship education, but for how teachers and learners configure themselves as democratic citizens. To this end, spaces of engagement, dialogue and deliberation have to be created whereby teachers might begin to share their stories and their understandings of what it means to teach, so that they begin to embody the values of democratic citizenship education, rather than merely imparting these. I have argued that contested democratic teacher identities can only serve to enhance diverse understandings of democratic citizenship, and are necessary for teaching and cultivating democratic citizenship education.

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