ELSEVIER

Teaching and Teacher Education 21 (2005) 995–1006

TEACHING AND TEACHER EDUCATION

www.elsevier.com/locate/tate

Teachers' emotions in educational reforms: Self-understanding, vulnerable commitment and micropolitical literacy

Geert Kelchtermans*

Center for Educational Policy and Innovation, University of Leuven, 3000 Leuven, Belgium

Abstract

Based on narrative-biographical work with teachers, the author argues that teachers' emotions have to be understood in relation to the vulnerability that constitutes a structural condition of the teaching job. Closely linked to this condition is the central role played by teachers' ''self-understanding''—their dynamic sense of identity—in teachers' actions and their dealing with, for example, the challenges posed by reform agendas. The (emotional) impact of those agendas is mediated by the professional context, that encompasses dimensions of time (age, generation, biography) and of space (the structural and cultural working conditions). Finally, it is argued that the professional and meaningful interactions of teachers with their professional context contains a fundamental political dimension. Emotions reflect the fact that deeply held beliefs on good education are part of teachers' self-understanding. Reform agendas that impose different normative beliefs may not only trigger intense feelings, but also elicit micropolitical actions of resistance or proactive attempts to influence and change one's working conditions.
© 2005 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

Keywords: Educational changes; Emotions in teaching; Teacher identity; Micropolitics in schools

It's more than a feeling …
Boston

1. Introduction

In her editorial introduction to a special issue on emotions in teaching of the *Cambridge Journal of Education* (1996), Nias argued that affectivity is of fundamental importance in teaching and to teachers. She gave three reasons for making that claim. Firstly, teachers do experience intense emotions in their teaching: ''teachers feel—often passionately—about their pupils, about their professional skill, about their colleagues and the structures of schooling, about their dealings with other significant adults such as parents and inspectors, about the actual or likely effect of educational policies upon their pupils and themselves'' (Nias, 1996, p. 293).

*Tel.: +32 16 32 62 57; fax: +32 16 32 62 74.
E-mail address: geert.kelchtermans@ped.kuleuven.be.

0742-051X/$ - see front matter © 2005 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.
doi:10.1016/j.tate.2005.06.009

Feelings are just self-evidently part of the experience of being a teacher. Secondly, ‘‘teachers’ emotions are rooted in cognitions (…) one cannot separate feeling from perception, affectivity from judgement’’ (Nias, 1996, p. 294). Teachers’ thoughtful actions reflect emotional involvement and moral judgement. Finally, ‘‘neither cognition nor feeling can be separated from the social and cultural forces which help to form them and which are in turn shaped by them. The emotional reactions of individual teachers to their work are intimately connected to the view that they have of themselves and others. (…) So, the unique sense of self which every teacher has is socially grounded’’ (Nias, 1996, p. 294). Emotion and cognition, self and context, ethical judgement and purposeful action: they are all intertwined in the complex reality of teaching. In times of educational reforms, aimed at changing teaching practices for the better, these complexities are brought to the light even more prominently. That becomes clear from all the contributions in this special issue, appearing about a decade after Nias’ initiative.

Although the authors use very different conceptual and methodological approaches in their endeavour, they all avoid the pitfall of looking at emotions as merely intrapersonal, psychological phenomena. Emotions are understood as experiences that result from teachers’ embeddedness in and interactions with their professional environment. They are treated as meaningful experiences, revealing teachers’ sense making and showing what is *at stake* for them (as for example Van Veen, Sleegers & van de Ven rightly emphasize). This already indicates that emotions are not unimportant side-effects or marginal phenomena, but on the contrary, show that something is ‘‘at stake’’ that goes beyond the simple question of changing one set of practices for another. As such all the articles further document and explicate the fundamental importance of feelings to teaching, thus contributing to more appropriate theory building on teaching and educational reform.

Van Veen et al. use Lazarus’ cognitive social-psychological framework to show how teachers’ identity is affected in a context of reforms. Their in-depth analysis of a single teacher’s coping with the reform demands disentangles the interplay of individual values and norms on the one hand and the reform context in the school (and beyond it) on the other. The case shows that, although the teacher subscribes to the agenda of the reform (that reflects his personal beliefs and norms about good teaching), the working conditions under which the reform has to be implemented elicit more negative emotions and reluctance than one would expect on the basis of the teachers’ (cognitive) assent. As such the study nicely complements and extends the work Little has done on ‘‘disappointed reform enthusiasts’’ (Little, 1996).

That teachers’ reactions (agency) to reform are mediated by the social and cultural context as well as by the teachers’ identity and the way it is affected by the demands for change, is also argued for by Lasky. More specifically she explores from a sociocultural perspective, the experiences of four teachers with ‘‘professional vulnerability’’. Drawing on a symbolic interactionist approach, Schmidt and Datnow also argue that emotions reflect the meaning reforms have for the teachers’ involved. Demands for change are interpreted by teachers through social processes of meaning construction. This sense-making determines teachers’ eventual reactions to the reform. The authors show that the sense-making is influenced by the complexity of the reform as well as the degree of impact it has on teachers’ classroom practices. Meaning-making, they conclude, is ‘‘emotionally laden as teachers sort through feelings of anxiety of the unknown, frustration of the ambiguous, joy and recognition of shared ideologies (i.e. reform and self), and guilt in constructing modifications despite possible professional repercussions’’.

In his study Andy Hargreaves contends that teachers’ (emotional) reactions to educational change can also be understood by looking at age (generation) and career stage. More specifically, he shows that the perceptions teachers from different generations have about the attitudes towards change among their older or younger colleagues may complicate the ‘‘emotional understanding’’ that is necessary between the members of school teams (differing in age and generation identity) to implement educational changes.

From a Foucauldian perspective, Zembylas conceives of emotions as discursive practices, as performances within the prevailing power relations and rules, through which particular identities can appear and others cannot. "The place of emotion in teacher identity formation plays a central role in the circuits of power that constitute some teacher-selves while denying others. The critical understanding of these processes of discipline and domination in teaching is crucial, if we are to promote the possibility of creating new forms of teacher-selves". His post-structuralist approach questions the concept of emotions as authentic reflections of individually felt experiences and of identity as a construction resulting from interpersonal processes of interpretation and sense making. It constitutes a strong and challenging perspective for researchers to become aware of more structural rules and processes that determine what can be thought and said about good teaching and being a (proper) teacher.

The special issue as such already presents an interesting and international (American, Canadian, Dutch) sample card of conceptual and methodological approaches to emotions and educational reform. I will try to engage in a dialogue with the authors, focussing on a number of what seem to me crucial issues in understanding emotions and educational reform: vulnerability, 'identity', context and (micro)politics. My argument is informed and framed by my narrative-biographical work on teacher development, as well as the micropolitical analysis of changes in schools and teaching in Flanders (Belgium). I will be critical and challenging at some points, supportive and confirmative at others, but always with the intention of contributing to the methodological rigor and the conceptual clarity in our research-based understanding of teachers' emotions in the context of educational reform.

2. Vulnerability as a structural condition in education

I stumbled into the issue of "teacher vulnerability" when I was analysing the professional biographies or career stories of experienced primary school teachers in Flanders (Belgium) in the early 1990s. Through repeated life history interviews, I collected extensive narrative accounts on teachers' career experiences (Kelchtermans, 1993, 1994). The narratives revealed several critical incidents (Measor, 1985) that showed how teachers often felt powerless, threatened, questioned by others (principal, parents) without being able to properly defend themselves, etc. Yet, linked to it were also accounts of not being in full control of the processes and tasks they felt responsible for as teachers. I referred to this dimension in teachers' job experience as "vulnerability", borrowing a concept from Blase. Blase (1988, p. 127) had examined the "phenomenology of political vulnerability" as experienced by teachers. He observed that as this experienced vulnerability grew teachers developed several protective coping strategies that resulted in conservative micropolitical actions aimed at preserving the status quo.

A secondary analysis of the career stories brought me to the conclusion that the "basic structure in vulnerability is always one of feeling that one's professional identity and moral integrity, as part of being 'a proper teacher', are questioned and that valued workplace conditions are thereby threatened or lost. Coping with this vulnerability therefore implies political actions, aimed at (re)gaining the social recognition of one's professional self and restoring the necessary workplace conditions for good job performance" (Kelchtermans, 1996, p. 319). The experience of vulnerability resulted from the fact that teachers felt not in control of what they considered to be valued working conditions (infrastructure, contract, professional relationships). Policy measures and imposed educational reforms that were not congruent with the teachers' deeply held beliefs about good teaching, but from which teachers felt they could not escape, clearly contributed to the experience of vulnerability and emotional disturbance (Nias, 1999, p. 226). So the experience of vulnerability is mediated by the context (policy environment, social and cultural climate in school, etc.) and is directly linked to teachers' identity. "Mediated agency" is a relevant concept to make sense of this experience of vulnerability—here I agree with Lasky—, yet I don't think vulnerability

is best conceived of as an emotion, as she argues. The actual epistemological status of her concept "vulnerability" remains rather unclear. In her formal definition she talks about a "multidimensional, multifaceted emotional experience that individuals can feel in an array of contexts. It is a fluid state of being that can be influenced by the way people perceive their present situation as it interacts with their identity, beliefs, values, and sense of competence. It is a fluctuating state of being, with critical incidents acting as triggers to intensify or in other ways change a person's existing state of vulnerability". The experience can be positive, so people willingly open themselves to the threat of being hurt. But vulnerability can also develop from negative feelings, resulting in withdrawal and protective stances. Unfortunately, Lasky's definition is stated as a claim without much argument, nor any positioning in relation to other theoretical attempts to conceptualize emotions or emotional experiences.[1] Bullough (2005) argues (following Solomon) that emotions imply judgements and that therefore vulnerability should be qualified as a *mood*, a passion which need not begin with a particular incident or object, and need not be about anything in particular. The "mood" refers to the experiential character, but it can trigger different reactions (as Lasky also contends): "Some teachers seek to make themselves invulnerable, immune to the possibility of failing, while others seem to enjoy risking self. Additionally, differences in the work context either heighten teachers' sense of vulnerability or diminish it, and enable or limit their ability to realize their aims and to preserve their senses of self" (Bullough, 2005, p. 23). It is clear that the degree to which teachers succeed in their actions will determine the kind of specific emotions that are felt.

In order to further clarify the phenomenon of vulnerability in teaching, I think one should go a step further and beyond the experiential aspect. I would argue that vulnerability is not an emotion, but the *a structural condition* teachers (or educators in general) find themselves in. Teaching implies an ethical relationship of responsibility in which one engages oneself as a person. This commitment can not be properly conceptualized as just an instrumental, intentional or technical relationship (see also Ball, 2003; Jeffrey, 2002). There is more to teaching and being a teacher than technically linking the means (teaching actions and methods) that promise to be most effective to the ends. Although, this instrumental concern in the teachers' job is a legitimate dimension, there is always more *at stake*. Since the relationship with students is an ethical one (Fenstermacher, 1990, p. 132), the teacher never has full control over the situation, nor over the outcomes of his/her actions. In spite of thoughtful planning and purposeful skilled action (however important they are!), the "pedagogical" relationship can never be fully controlled, nor can one be sure that one's actions will convey the meaning they were intended to have for the students. As such the educational relationship implies a dimension that radically escapes control and intervention. And as such it contradicts the fundamental activist bias in theory and intentional actions of teaching, with its taken for granted association of doing something, bringing something about… . This "entrepreneurial" (Masschelein & Simons, 2002), interventionist root metaphor is so strong that it makes it almost impossible to see and acknowledge the aspects of "passivity", of "being exposed" to the other, of "finding oneself in a situation" in which things "can happen, can take place" (instead of "being done"). These aspects are intrinsically also present in the educational relationship. As such the entrepreneurial metaphor operates as a powerful discursive pattern that limits the horizon of how one can think or speak about education, and thus

[1] The concept of vulnerability is discussed a.o. by Blase (1988), Bullough (2005), Kelchtermans (1996), Nias (1999). The unclarity on the conceptual (and epistemological) status is further enhanced since Lasky has used the term "vulnerability" literally in her interview for data collection ("when you think of the term professional vulnerability, what comes to mind?"). By doing so, the common sense understandings of the word in her data, have to be interpretatively linked to her formal definition, thus blurring the status of vulnerability as either a 'first' or 'second'-order concept and resulting in conceptual vagueness. As such she proves Hargreaves right in his claim that direct interrogation through named emotions is an unproductive approach because of "cultural and professional taboos surrounding some emotions, and because of the variations in the language that people use".

it constitutes "some teacher-selves while denying others" (as Zembylas argued). In other words, in order to understand vulnerability in teaching, it should not be conceived primarily as an experiential category, but as a structural condition that constitutes the specific character of the educational relationship and therefore also constitutes the self-understanding of teachers (see below). The condition of vulnerability can bring about both positive and negative emotions, but it is not an emotion in itself, nor an attitude, an agenda or a strategy. Taking this conceptual stance helps us to position the concept towards felt emotions, as well as toward actions and action agendas or coping strategies. Since a teacher or educator, because of the fundamental ethical character of the relationship, can never fully prove the effectiveness of his/her actions; since there is no uncontested moral stronghold to justify one's specific actions, etc., being a teacher implies that one's actions and decisions can always be questioned. In an international policy environment, where output measurement and accountability dominate the discourse and the imposed reforms, it can hardly come as a surprise that teachers often experience uncertainty, guilt, shame (for failing the students). Van Manen argues that teachers tend to focus on the "pedagogical", the complexity of relational, personal, moral, emotional, aspects of their everyday acting with children or young people they teach, and he concludes that "pedagogy is the condition for the instructional dimension of teaching (…) pedagogy makes the practice of teaching possible in the first place" (Van Manen, 2002, p. 137). "Making a difference as a person in pupils' lives" is the phrasing teachers often use to explain what keeps them going in the job (see e.g. Nias, 1999, p. 226–227; Kelchtermans & Hamilton, 2004, p. 791). Elliott, Bridges, Ebbutt, Gibson, and Nias (1981) talk about "answerability" to emphasize the interpersonal nature of teachers' commitment. Hargreaves and Fullan (1998, p. 49) argued "it is time we had a new kind of accountability in education—one that gets back to the moral basics of caring, serving, empowering and learning". As such it is no surprise that Schmidt and Datnow, for example, observed more and more intense emotions in teachers toward reform policies that immediately affect the level of their classroom, because in doing so the reforms touch upon their relationship with their students and thus on the very heart of teaching.

Conceiving vulnerability this way as a structural condition of being a teacher,[2] helps us to understand the wide range of different emotions that go with it, in particular when dealing with calls for change. The lack of control, the fact that accountability procedures either neglect or instrumentalize (and thus reduce) the interpersonal dimension in teaching, the absence of an ultimate ground for justifying one's actions as a teacher—I would argue—, is a reality teachers have to *endure:* there is no escape from it. "To teach is to be vulnerable (…) to be vulnerable is to be capable of being hurt" (Bullough, 2005, p. 23). This explains why there are so many teachers—apart from the widespread criticisms that are mostly heard—who tend to be rather positive in their evaluation of standards and standardized testing. Standards and tests promise certainty or a final proof of one's "quality" as a teacher—even if it is a delusive certainty, that demands a very reductionist understanding (and experiencing) of the educational relationship.

On the other hand, the condition of vulnerability is at the same time that which constitutes the very possibility for the "pedagogical" to happen in the interpersonal relationship between teachers and pupils. The relationship of an ethical and thus vulnerable commitment opens up the chance that education (literally) "takes place". Such encounter makes the teacher feel that he or she is really "making a difference as a person" in the student's life. Joy, pride, existential personal fulfilment are the emotions that go with it. So vulnerability is not only a condition to be endured, but also to be acknowledged, cherished, and *embraced.*

3. Identity versus self-understanding

This rather extensive discussion on "vulnerability" was necessary to lay the ground for a

[2] Van den Berg (2002) would even speak about "existential condition".

discussion of teachers' sense of "identity" and how this is linked to an adequate understanding of their emotions when dealing with educational reforms. The central role of teachers' sense of identity in understanding their actions has been acknowledged for a long time and by many authors: "the teacher as a person is held by many within the profession and outside it to be at the centre of not only the classroom but also the educational process. By implication, therefore, it matters to teachers themselves, as well as to their pupils, who and what they are. Their self-image is more important to them as practitioners than is the case in occupations where the person can easily be separated from the craft" (Nias, 1989, p. 202–203). Studying teachers' professional lives, Ball and Goodson have argued that "the ways in which teachers achieve, maintain, and develop their identity, their sense of self, in and through a career, are of vital significance in understanding the actions and commitments of teachers in their work" (Ball & Goodson, 1985, p. 18). Parallel to these claims, however, post-modernism has radically criticized an essentialist and monolithic understanding of self and identity (see also Zembylas). Elsewhere (Kelchtermans, 1993, 1996, 1999) I have argued for a conceptualization of teachers' sense of identity that tries to avoid these flaws. Making careful analyses of teachers' narrative accounts of their career experiences, I reconstructed their *personal interpretative framework*, the set of beliefs and representations that teachers develop over time and that operates as the lens through which they perceive their job situation, make sense of it and act in it. In this personal framework two main domains were distinguished. On the one hand there is the *subjective educational theory*, the personal ('subjective') system ('theory') of knowledge and beliefs about education that teachers use when performing their job (in other words: their professional "know how"). On the other hand, but closely interwoven with the subjective educational theory, is the teachers' sense of self or sense of identity. I purposefully have avoided the notion of "identity" because of its association with a static essence, implicitly ignoring or denying its dynamic and biographical nature (development over time). Instead I have used the word "self-understanding", referring to both the understanding one has of one's 'self' at a certain moment in time (*product*), as well as to the fact that this product results from an ongoing *process* of making sense of one's experiences and their impact on the 'self'.[3] By stressing the narrative nature the essentialist pitfall can be avoided. One's self-understanding only appears in the act of 'telling' (or in the act of explicit self-reflection and as such 'telling oneself'). This way the intersubjective nature of the self-understanding was included in the concept itself, since the telling that reveals the self-understanding always presupposes an audience of 'listeners'. Nias has shown that teachers, when talking about their professional actions and activities, cannot but speak about themselves. This reveals the paradox that what teachers have in common is their individuality: "it was their persistent self-refentialism which made it possible to construct a generalized picture of their experience. Aspects of the 'self' repeatedly emerged as central to the experience of these teachers, even though each 'self' was different" (Nias, 1989, p. 5). The analysis of this "self-referentialism" in teachers' accounts of career experiences, brought me to a more differentiated concept of self-understanding, distinguishing five components in it (Kelchtermans, 1993). The *self-image* is the descriptive component, the way teachers typify themselves as teachers. The *job motivation* (conative component) refers to the motives or drives that make people choose to become a teacher, to remain in or to leave the profession. The self-understanding also

[3]Here an interesting and self-critical comment has to be made on far-reaching side-effects of the hegemony of English as 'lingua franca' for international communication between researchers. To refer to teachers' self-understanding in Dutch (my mothertongue) I chose the word "professioneel zelfverstaan". This is both a *noun* and a *verb*, thus referring to both the process of understanding oneself in a particular way (making sense of one's historically and biographically embedded experiences) and to the (always tentative and preliminary) result of that understanding at a particular point in one's lifetime. In my English writings this—fundamental-meaning was lost as I started using "professional self" or even "professional identity", believing that those were the only proper translations (Kelchtermans, 1999), thus contributing myself to an essentialist (mis)interpretation of my work.

encompasses the *future perspective* that reveals a person's expectations about the future ("how do I see myself as a teacher in the years to come and how do I feel about it?"). The evaluative component or the *self-esteem* is important for the discussion here. This component refers to the teacher's appreciation of his/her actual job performances ("how well am I doing in my job as a teacher?"). Finally, there is the normative component of the *task perception*. This encompasses the teacher's idea of what constitutes his/her professional programme, his/her tasks and duties in order to do a good job ("what must I do to be a proper teacher?"). The task perception constitutes the normative basis for teachers' judgements and decisions, all of which have moral consequences since they affect the lives and needs of youngsters for whom the teacher is and feels responsible (Hargreaves, 1995, p. 14). It reflects—in Greenfield's words—the moral orientation, being "a point of view or reference point for action, influence, or decision that is rooted in an understanding of and a commitment to what is in the best interests of children from an educational and developmental perspective" (Greenfield, 1991, p. 161). In the reality of classroom and school, however, teachers have no choice but to act: to decide on what to do and then do it (Loewenberg-Ball & Wilson, 1996, p. 187), without having a solid basis to ground their decisions. There is no consensus on what is "in the best interest of the students".

"Attending to the moral dimensions of teaching usually involves distinguishing between better and worse courses of action, rather than right and wrong ones. There are no clear rules of thumb, no useful universal principles for deciding what to do. (...) They (= the teachers-GK) must live their moral lives in the swamp, (...) especially when moral certainties grounded in tradition or science are collapsing and people must rely on their own reflective resources as a basis for moral judgment" (Hargreaves, 1995, p. 15). This lack of a firm ground to justify one's practice and the moral decisions in it, are part of the vulnerability as the fundamental condition of the teaching job. Teachers' decisions (and their moral consequences) can always be contested or disputed (see the example of Catherine's being attacked by a parent in Zembylas' article), and by doing that the teacher's moral and professional integrity is questioned (Kelchtermans, 1996; Kelchtermans & Hamilton, 2004). It goes without saying that intense emotions will accompany this experience. Therefore teachers' self-esteem reflects the balance between self-image ("what I am doing?") and the task perception ("what ought I be doing?"). From this integrated concept of self-understanding it comes as no surprise that—as Schmidt and Datnow observed—emotions were more diverse and intense as educational reforms demanded different actions at the classroom level. If the demanded changes require giving up ways of doing that reflect deeply held beliefs and norms on good teaching (task perception), the reforms implicitly or explicitly question the teachers' self-esteem and will trigger intense emotions of doubt, anxiety, guilt, shame... Or as Catherine in Zembylas' articles says "I realized at some point I was forced to use words and ideas that I didn't really believe in... such as 'teach to the test', 'you have to be neutral and objective', etc. This marked a tremendous emotional struggle in my teaching. Either I was doing something wrong or they completely misunderstood me". The opposite can be true as well, as Van Veen et al. show with the case of David to whom the reform goals provide an acknowledgement, legitimation and justification of his task perception. To paraphrase Zembylas: David's emotions reflect the endorsement of his self-understanding that is produced by the discursive practices in the reform.

The struggles of the teachers in Lasky's article to either maintain the "synergy between an emphasis on academics and a culture of caring (being) needed to promote optimal student learning" also illustrate the fundamental embeddedness of the task perception in one's self-understanding. Fundamental educational values and norms are not just "external" issues of "knowledge", but as elements in the teacher's task perception they are a component of the self-understanding and thus not emotionally in-different. My point is that professional values and norms ought to be understood as—and thus conceptualized as—intrinsic parts of the 'self', if one wants to develop a proper understanding of teacher emotions in times of reform.

4. Contextualized understanding

All the articles stress and acknowledge the role of the context in understanding teacher emotions. Emotional (re)actions are mediated by self-understanding, but also by the contextual conditions. Though I am joining the authors in this, I would still like to stress on the one hand the importance of the temporal dimension in context, and on the other the relevance of the research on (organizational) working conditions in understanding teacher emotions.

4.1. Time, age and generation as context

Teachers' emotions need to be understood from their embeddedness in particular contexts (schools, policy environment). However, context not only has a "spatial dimension", but also a temporal one. Teaching is not only embedded in space, but also in time. There is always both a "where" and a "when". Teachers' coping with reform agendas (and the emotions that go with it) always takes place at a certain moment in time and thus at a certain point in their lives and careers. Hargreaves' article explicitly brings this important and often neglected temporal dimension to the front, looking at the role of "age", "generation" and "career stage" in teachers' understanding of educational change. These aspects of time-context, he argues, can explain the difficulties to achieve the "emotional understanding" (Denzin) that is necessary for school teams (as mixed-age groups of professionals) to implement innovations. The findings presented in his article largely confirm earlier work on teachers' lives and careers (Huberman, 1993; Sikes, Measor, & Woods, 1985) and further exemplify that properly contextualized thinking about teaching, schooling and reform needs to include the temporal dimension: "change and people's experience of it has organizational and sociological dimensions as well as developmental and psychological ones (…). In educational and organizational change, it is not just personality and personal development that matter. Age, career stage and generational identity and attachment matter too", the author rightly concludes. Yet, both the design of the study and the presentation of the findings may elicit an overly deterministic understanding of age and generation as explanatory concepts in teachers' dealing with change. Hargreaves presents data collected from 42 teachers in 15 schools, which he organizes in three "generations" according to their career stages: young teachers (5 years or less), mid-career teachers (6–19 years) and late career teachers (more then 20 years). The extensive research on beginning teachers' careers shows wide agreement that the object of study concerns the first 5 years in teaching. It is, however, much less evident that one can just as meaningfully divide and understand the rest of the career in two other phases, each covering a time span of about 15 years. Even the attempts to develop age-related models of the teaching career—as for example Sikes et al. (1985) do—come up with a more differentiated typology (more and shorter phases). Furthermore, the importance of, for example, Huberman's study (1993; see also Huberman, Thompson, & Weiland, 1997) on teachers' careers partly stems from the fact that he disconnected career stages from strict age limits, but looked for a distinctive criterion in terms of the dominant themes or agenda's that were on teachers' minds in each career phase. Hargreaves' data draw on teachers' recollections of changes in their dealing with reforms and on their perceptions of the ways older and younger colleagues react to it (*attribution*). Although difficult to judge on the basis of the article, the actual interview procedure may have induced the respondents to attribute more to age than they would have done without being explicitly asked to. Van den Berg (2002) for example shows in a review that teachers use a wide spectrum of sources to attribute meaning to their (and others') experiences. By asking teachers to compare their own reactions and how they differ from older or younger colleagues, the respondents in Hargreaves' study are already positioned as "different" from those other groups. As a consequence the interview stimulates them to compare their own situation (self-perception) with the others, who are defined in terms of age and generation (older/younger). This way age may be attributed more explanatory power than for example the particular working conditions in the school or the

school history with educational changes. For that reason I would have welcomed an interpretative comparative analysis of the data from respondents working in the same school. Such a contextualized case-study approach could have revealed both the organizational and psychological dimensions in teachers' experiences with change, as well as their interaction. It might have shown to what extent the cultural and structural working conditions in the school interfere and actually determine teachers' (emotional) dealing with reform demands. It would in any case have provided a more convincing basis for the claims on age and generation as determining factors for emotion than the article does now (implicitly overstating the generalizability of this exploratory study of a limited sample).

4.2. Mediating working conditions

Age and generation—both in themselves as well as in terms of the meaning teachers attribute to them—are important in disentangling the complex differences in teachers dealing with change. Yet, one needs to be cautious not to de-contextualize the analysis again (this time overemphasizing time and downplaying space as context dimensions). Goodson rightly argued that different segments have to be distinguished in educational change processes: the internal, the external and the personal. At the same time they have to be understood in their interplay (combining for example historical and ethnographical work). "Internal change agents work within school settings to initiate and promote change within an external framework of support and sponsorship; external change is mandated in top-down manner, (…); personal change refers to the personal beliefs and missions that individuals bring to the change process" (Goodson, 2001, p. 45). Teachers' career stories and their self-understanding reflect and include former experiences with educational change. The same is true at the school level, where stories about historical change experiences (that are told and retold) constitute an important component of the school culture in which teachers work and (emotionally) cope with reforms. The fact that structural and cultural working conditions in schools play a key role in teachers' sense making of their job experiences and thus of educational reform agendas is demonstrated in the findings of Schmidt & Datnow, Van Veen et al. and Zembylas. And as such they join a long list of other authors (for example, Smylie, 1995; Little, 1996; Van den Berg, 2002). Although there can be no doubt about the impact of school-external policy measures and changing demands in society on teachers' sense making (see Lasky, but also Hargreaves, 1994; Troman, 2000; Ballet & Kelchtermans, 2004), understanding the emotions in teachers' dealing with reform would strongly benefit from careful case studies at the level of the school. Without contradicting Lasky's claim that "political and social context along with early teacher development shaped teachers' sense of identity and sense of purpose as a teacher" (thus mediating teachers' agency), I want to argue that the working conditions at the school level play a crucial role as mediating factors, interfering in the processes of teachers' sensemaking of changes in policy and society and the emotions that go with it.[4] Staessens (1993), for example, identified three types of school cultures mediating the teachers' response to a school restructuring reform. Coburn (2001) describes how teachers co-construct their understanding of policy messages on reading instruction, decide on the way they will translate them into classroom actions (or decide not to) and negotiate the conditions for that implementation. The social networks and interpretation processes in schools mediate between implementation of the reform and the policy measures (Coburn, 2001). The work of Achinstein (2002) on conflict and of Avila de Lima (2001) on friendship exemplifies how (emotionally laden) relationships among school staff interfere with teachers' interpretation of and reactions to changes (see also Clement & Vandenberghe, 2000). Contextualizing processes of (emotional) sense-making in the structural and

[4]In their review Richardson and Placier concluded that the individual and organizational approaches on educational change are still largely "living apart together": "one of the most interesting findings from our work on this chapter is the degree to which both the individual and organizational change literatures stand on their own-almost entirely uninformed by the other" (Richardson & Placier, 2001, pp. 937–938).

cultural working conditions strongly adds to our understanding of emotions in teaching.

4.3. Mediating micropolitics

Just like teachers' self-understanding, also the cultural and structural working conditions in schools are neither static, nor eternally given. They develop and change, both influenced by the circumstances and by interventions of (groups of) teachers. Teachers have a more or less clear, more or less shared idea of what are to them valuable and necessary working conditions to do a proper job in that particular school, with that particular population and community. Doing a good job on the one hand means being effective as a teacher, while on the other experiencing satisfaction and fulfilment. Those valuable or necessary working conditions—I have argued (Kelchtermans & Vandenberghe, 1998; Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002a, b)—constitute *professional interests* and teachers will engage in *micropolitical action* to establish, safe-guard or restore them when they are absent, threatened or destroyed. The professional interests concern material and organizational conditions, the quality of interpersonal relationships (social–professional interests), the prevailing definitions of good teaching (cultural–ideological interests) and one's self-understanding. Reform policies that threaten those valued working conditions will elicit (positive or negative) emotions and micropolitical actions (for example forms of resistance). Or as Zembylas contends from his post-structuralist perspective: ''emotion is interwoven with issues of power, identity and resistance in teaching''. As a dimension of their professional development (Hargreaves,1995), teachers develop what we have called ''micropolitical literacy'' (Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002b), the competence to understand the issues of power and interests in schools. This literacy encompasses a knowledge aspect, an operational and an experiential aspect. The *knowledge aspect* concerns the ability to recognize, interpret and understand (''read'') the micropolitical character of a particular situation. The repertoire of micropolitical strategies and tactics teachers manage to skilfully and effectively apply in order to influence the situation (resist and protect, or proactively change it) constitutes the *operational or instrumental aspect*. But this knowledge and skill inevitably goes hand in hand with the *experiential aspect*, referring to how one feels about one's micropolitical understanding and actions. This understanding and the implied need for action often trigger intense emotions, both positive (joy, pride, increased self-esteem, fulfilment, etc.) and negative (powerlessness, frustration, anger, grief, etc.). The case of David in Van Veen et al. illustrates how teachers, when confronted with reform agendas react micropolitically: David accepts and subscribes to the change agenda, since it fits with his own idea of good teaching (task perception), yet when the specific conditions in which he is supposed to implement the reform no longer match his ideas, he engages in intentional political action to change things. These attempts go with intense emotions of anger and frustration. Similar processes can be observed in Zembylas' case study of Catherine and the changes in her self-understanding over time in changing working conditions. His analysis shows how the ''emotional labour'' reflects different actions and strategies in negotiating the emotional rules as well as the social and structural working conditions, in which she finds herself. For example, she manages to preserve her own pedagogy by showing that it goes with positive results on the state-mandated accountability test. Emotions, Zembylas rightly argues, are social and political in character. A careful analysis of the interplay between teachers' emotions and micropolitical actions on the one hand and the working conditions in the school on the other can deepen our understanding of how this interplay mediates the (emotionally laden) meaning of reform policies. Research on the intensification of teaching, for example, shows how the local working conditions buffer, modify, and mediate the policy demands and thus their impact on teachers' actions and job experiences (see e.g. Ballet & Kelchtermans, 2004).

5. Drawing the strings together

Understanding the place and role of teachers' emotions in meaningfully dealing with their daily

job situation in general, and the calls for reform by policy and society, constitutes an important agenda for researchers. It demands the conceptual and empirical disentanglement of teachers' self-understanding on the one hand and the cultural and structural working conditions on the other. This analysis cannot limit itself to questions of technical efficacy and instrumentalism (increasing efficiency and effectiveness), but has to include the more messy issues of emotional commitment as a person, the ethical normativity in the idea of 'good' teaching and the (micro)political action to influence the working conditions, considered necessary for proper action. The technical, moral, political and emotional dimensions in teaching, teacher development (Hargreaves, 1995) and thus self-understanding as a teacher constitute the dynamic and complex reality in which teachers have to live their professional lives. That professional life demands from them value choices and engagement of one's person, with the unavoidable risk that those choices and commitments may be questioned or disputed. This condition of vulnerability makes teaching fundamentally "emotionally non-indifferent". I am using a double negation here to make a strong assertion.

Yet, on the other hand it is this inescapable vulnerability that ultimately constitutes the very possibility for teachers to 'educate' and to teach in a way that really makes a difference in students' lives. Policy makers—as well as the technocratic educationalists who eagerly assist them—would benefit from acknowledging these fundamental complexities in teaching and being a teacher. It would help them to moderate their ambitions to steer and change education and schooling. Teachers' ongoing emotional struggles with demands for change, as well as their thoughtful professional hesitations about these demands (resistance) may constitute a more "effective" warranty for "good education" than their compliance to the policy agendas and the accompanying professional "self-understanding" they demand. In the end it is the teachers, the women and men in the classroom, who determine whether good schooling actually "happens". Their professionality as well as their commitment are crucial in this. Teachers' emotional practices therefore deserver further critical, conceptually sound and methodologically rigorous attention from researchers. Because its about "more than a feeling…" and in the end it is about good education and school improvement.

References

Achinstein, B. (2002). *Community, diversity, and conflict among schoolteachers. The ties that blind*. New York, London: Teachers College Press.

Avila de Lima, J. (2001). Forgetting about friendship: Using conflict in teacher communities as a catalyst for school change. *Journal of Educational Change*, *2*, 97–122.

Ball, S. J. (2003). The teacher's soul and the terrors of performativity. *Journal of Education Policy*, *18*(2), 215–228.

Ball, S., & Goodson, I. (Eds.). (1985). *Teachers' lives and careers*. London, Philadelphia: Falmer Press.

Ballet, K., & Kelchtermans, G. (2004). De ervaring van geïntensifieerde werkcondities. Het verhaal van een vernieuwingsgezinde school. [The experience of intensified working conditions. The story of a highly innovative school.]. *Pedagogische Studiën*, *81*(6), 457–472.

Blase, J. (1988). The everyday political perspectives of teachers: Vulnerability and conservatism. *Qualitative Studies in Education*, *1*, 125–142.

Bullough, R. V., Jr. (2005). Teacher vulnerability and teachability: A case study of a mentor and two interns. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, *32*(2), 23–40.

Clement, M., & Vandenberghe, R. (2000). Teachers' professional development: A solitary or a collegial (ad)venture? *Teaching and Teacher Education*, *16*, 81–101.

Coburn, C. E. (2001). Collective sensemaking about reading: How teachers mediate reading policy in their professional communities. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, *23*(2), 145–170.

Elliott, J., Bridges, D., Ebbutt, D., Gibson, R., & Nias, J. (1981). *School accountability*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Fenstermacher, G. (1990). Some moral considerations on teaching as a profession. In J. Goodlad, R. Soder, & K. Sirotnik (Eds.), *The moral dimensions of teaching* (pp. 130–151). San Francisco: Jossey Bass.

Goodson, I. (2001). Social histories of educational change. *Journal of Educational Change*, *2*, 45–63.

Greenfield, W. D. (1991). The micropolitics of leadership in an urban elementary school. In J. J. Blase (Ed.), *The politics of life in schools* (pp. 161–184). Newbury Park: Sage.

Hargreaves, A. (1994). *Changing teachers, changing times. Teachers' work and culture in the postmodern age*. London: Cassell.

Hargreaves, A. (1995). Development and desire. A postmodern perspective. In T. R. Guskey, & M. Huberman (Eds.), *Professional development in education. New paradigms & perspectives* (pp. 9–34). New York: Teachers College Press.

Hargreaves, A., & Fullan, M. (1998). *What's worth fighting for in education?*. Buckingham, Philadelphia: Open University Press-Ontario Public School Teachers' Federation.

Huberman, M. (1993). *The lives of teachers*. London, New York: Cassell and Teachers College Press.

Huberman, M., Thompson, C., & Weiland, S. (1997). Perspectives on the teaching career. In B. J. Biddle, et al. (Eds.), *International handbook of teachers and teaching* (pp. 11–77). Dordrecht, Boston, London: Kluwer Academic Publishers.

Jeffrey, B. (2002). Performativity and primary teacher relations. *Journal of Education Policy*, *17*(5), 531–546.

Kelchtermans, G. (1993). Getting the story, understanding the lives. From career stories to teachers' professional development. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, *9*, 443–456.

Kelchtermans, G. (1994). Biographical methods in the study of teachers' professional development. In I. Carlgren, G. Handal, & S. Vaage (Eds.), *Teacher thinking and action in varied contexts. Research on teachers' thinking and practice* (pp. 93–108). London: Falmer Press.

Kelchtermans, G. (1996). Teacher vulnerability: Understanding its moral and political roots. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, *26*(3), 307–323.

Kelchtermans, G. (1999). The teaching career: between burnout and fading away? Reflections from a narrative and biographical perspective. In R. Vandenberghe, & M. Huberman (Eds.), *Understanding and preventing teacher burnout: A sourcebook of international research and practice* (pp. 176–191). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Kelchtermans, G., & Ballet, K. (2002a). The micropolitics of teacher induction: A narrative-biographical study on teacher socialisation. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, *18*(1), 105–120.

Kelchtermans, G., & Ballet, K. (2002b). Micropolitical literacy: Reconstructing a neglected dimension in teacher development. *International Journal of Educational Research*, *37*, 755–767.

Kelchtermans, G., & Hamilton, M. L. (2004). The dialects of passion and theory: Exploring the relation between self-study and emotion. In J. Loughran, M. L. Hamilton, V. Kubler LaBoskey, & T. Russell (Eds.), *International handbook of self-study of teaching and teacher education practices* (pp. 785–810). Dordrecht, Boston, London: Kluwer Academic Publishers.

Kelchtermans, G., & Vandenberghe, R. (1998). *Internal use of external control and support for quality improvement. The response to a national policy by primary schools.* Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Diego (ERIC-Document ED425 495/EA 029271).

Little, J. W. (1996). The emotional contours and career trajectories of (disappointed) reform enthusiasts. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, *26*(3), 345–359.

Loewenberg-Ball, D., & Wilson, S. M. (1996). Integrity in teaching: Recognizing the fusion of the moral and the intellectual. *American Educational Research Journal*, *33*, 155–192.

Masschelein, J., & Simons, M. (2002). An adequate education for the globalized world? A note on the immunization of being-together. *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, *36*(4), 565–584.

Measor, L. (1985). Critical incidents in the classroom. Identities, choices and careers. In S. Ball, & I. Goodson (Eds.), *Teachers' lives and careers* (pp. 61–77). London: Falmer Press.

Nias, J. (1989). *Primary teachers talking: A study of teaching as work*. London: Routledge.

Nias, J. (1996). Thinking about feeling: The emotions in teaching. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, *26*(3), 293–306.

Nias, J. (1999). Teachers' moral purposes: Stress, vulnerability, and strength. In R. Vandenberghe, & M. Huberman (Eds.), *Understanding and preventing teacher burnout: A sourcebook of international research and practice* (pp. 223–237). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Richardson, V., & Placier, P. (2001). Teacher change. In V. Richardson (Ed.), *Handbook of research on teaching* (pp. 905–947). Washington: AERA.

Sikes, P., Measor, L., & Woods, P. (1985). *Teacher careers: Crises and continuities*. London, Philadelphia: Falmer.

Smylie, M. (1995). Teacher learning in the workplace. Implications for school reform. In T. Guskey, & M. Huberman (Eds.), *Professional development in education: New paradigms and practices* (pp. 92–113). London: Teachers College Press.

Staessens, K. (1993). Identification and description of professional culture in innovating schools. *International Journal for Qualitative Studies in Education*, *6*, 111–128.

Troman, G. (2000). Teacher stress in the low-trust society. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, *21*(3), 331–353.

Van den Berg, R. (2002). Teachers' meanings regarding educational practice. *Review of Educational Research*, *72*(4), 577–625.