Being a Teacher
Professional Challenges and Choices

Section Seven | Making a difference

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SECTION SEVEN

Making a difference

Introduction

We have almost come to the end of our exploration of teaching. We began by introducing teaching as a profession facing numerous challenges. We considered the competences and attitudes required for teachers to (re)build their professional self-esteem and concluded that there was more to being a teacher than bureaucratic accountability. We argued that teachers who wish to become part of the solution in South African education need to see themselves as professionally accountable, and we suggested that this involved taking on the role of the extended professional.

Many years ago, Eric Hoyle introduced a distinction between the ordinary or restricted professional and the extended professional. We have adapted this distinction in the light of today's concerns for teachers. In addition to the basic responsibilities we described in Sections Three to Six, we would suggest that the extended professional would:

- remain a lifelong student;
- show concern for learners not only as a group but as individuals;
- see how teaching fits into the bigger socio-economic picture;
- participate in community concerns;
- engage in self-reflection and self-evaluation;
- experiment and take calculated risks in the interests of more vital learning; and
- identify himself or herself as an agent, someone able to make a difference rather than just a civil servant bound by bureaucratic requirements.

These principles may look impressive, but what **benefits** might they hold for teachers, learners and the community? How realistic is it to identify oneself as an agent for improvement when teachers face so many difficulties? What exactly *is* reflective practice?

Perhaps the best way to answer these questions is to return to Artis Secondary to observe some teachers becoming extended professionals, without even being aware of the fact! We will focus only on the last three principles of the teacher as extended professional: reflective practice, an experimental, risk-taking approach and a sense of agency.

Learning outcomes

When you have completed this section, you should be able to:

- demonstrate a significantly richer understanding of the term professionalism in relation to teaching;
- recognize the value of adopting a reflective approach to your teaching in collaboration with colleagues;
- practise systematic reflective practice in your teaching; and
- appreciate the significance of agency and the scope that it creates for teachers in education.

7.2   Reflective practitioners

The unfixed and evolving nature of human knowledge is just one of many reasons why professional teachers *remain learners themselves*, learning not only from books and journals, but reflecting regularly on their own teaching situation. In this sub-section, we see teachers who remain learners in both of these ways.

In Section Two, we saw Peter Adonis beginning a process of reflection when he came across a note passed between his students. He and his colleagues at Artis Secondary explored the issue of professionalism in teaching, and when we last heard of them, they were grappling with questions of authority, democracy and control in the classroom.

Let's return to Artis Secondary to look in on Peter again to see how he is doing in his quest to become 'part of the solution', as his wife Rachel put it.

Three teachers combine forces

Peter and his colleagues have begun to explore their problems and solutions together, at first by means of breaktime chats and the exchange of articles on teaching methods. Lately they have begun to collaborate on planning learning units aimed at integrated learning, since they all teach different subjects.

Concerned that his learners are often disengaged from lessons and misinterpret what he teaches them – even though he works hard to motivate them – Peter is drawing inspiration from a book he has found on a trip to the education library. The book is edited by Garth Boomer and entitled: Negotiating the Curriculum: Educating for the Twenty-first Century.

What catches Peter's attention is a passage in which Boomer compares motivated learning with negotiated learning. It addresses so clearly how differently and incorrectly his own learners interpret the work he tries to teach them. It also provides alternative methods for motivating learners.

THE PROBLEM WITH MOTIVATED LEARNING

[Traditionally, before] teaching can proceed, the students must be motivated in some way. If the topic is 'Weather and Climate', this may be achieved by a trip to the local weather station, or by a lesson in which the ceiling fans are turned off to draw attention to the topic in hand. If this works, the [children's interests and intentions more or less match the intentions of the teacher. But at best the children's learnings only come close to] the teacher's goals, so the curriculum may touch only a little of the child's key interests. This leaves a good deal of what has actually been learnt unexamined and unevaluated, because the teacher tests only what is set in the curriculum. Of course, the overlapping [of the teacher's intentions and children's interests] may not occur at all, and the child is failed or subjected to remediation, which requires more intense motivation. In either case the child appears to have learnt much less than is actually the case. Irrespective of the teaching style of the teacher, there will be great wastage if this model [of teaching] is applied [...]

The key to negotiated learning [...] lies in the ownership principle: people tend to strive hardest for things they wish to own, or to keep and enhance things they already own. The inverse is just as true, and observable, all around us: people find it difficult to give commitment to the property and ideas of others [...] Students who are passive or acquiescent, unwilling, or even motivated externally, do not make the best learners. Equally, laissez faire has proved generally inoperable and indefensible in the classroom. Freedom without discipline is aimlessness at best, and chaos at worst. Owners recognize the constraints of ownership, just as they do its freedoms.

Out of negotiation comes a sense of ownership in learners for the work they are to do, and therefore a commitment to it. Learning is an active process. Teachers can't do it for learners. Information may be imposed, but understanding cannot be, for it must come from within. Students learn best when they want to (of their own accord). They want to when they are doing it for themselves, as a result of their own needs. Active involvement in classroom decision-making, and in the enactment of the decisions, results in more effective learning [...]

When people are **acquiescent** they agree without question.

When something is **inoperable**, it cannot work.

So closely did this writing match Peter's experience that he decided to share his excitement with two of his colleagues.

'It sort of makes sense,' says Shahieda, when she and the others have read the brief account, 'but I don't quite get it. I would have thought taking the kids to a real weather station would be a very good thing to do. And turning off the fans for a while on a hot day, if one had such luxuries, would be an excellent way to focus the learners' minds on weather. It's all about bringing reality into one's teaching.'

'I don't think Boomer is saying these are wrong,' Peter responds. 'Only committed teachers would take the trouble to come up with stimulating lessons like this. But he seems to be saying that, as good as such approaches may be, they are still only attempts to motivate the learners to give the teacher their attention.'

'Isn't that the best we can do?' asks Fana. 'We have to teach towards the outcomes in the syllabus after all. And a good teacher surely tries to make the work as interesting as possible, and thinks of ways to motivate the learners.'

'That's just the problem,' Peter breaks in. 'We can't "ensure" that the learners are motivated. We can try, and we may partly succeed in getting the learners to move in our direction. But their written work often shows just where their direction doesn't overlap with ours.'

'I hear what you're saying,' says Fana, 'but surely we can't just go with learners' interests. We have a syllabus to teach, and unit standards to reach; and what if half the learners are only interested in soccer, or the opposite sex?'

'I think that's exactly what the writer means when he mentions that laissez faire is a disaster,' says Shahieda, who has been thinking hard. 'Whatever "negotiating the curriculum" means, it clearly doesn't mean just letting the class talk about whatever may happen to interest them. Teachers usually have to take a lead, and we often have to introduce things the learners have never heard of. I think the writer is saying that the crucial thing is for the learners to have a stake in what's being learnt. As the writer puts it, they'll find it difficult to commit to the ideas of others if none of the decision-making has been theirs.'

'All right, but I still don't understand how this will work in practice,' says Fana. 'If the learners are not deciding what they should learn or do in class, and if teachers have to teach knowledge and skills that are laid down in specific outcomes, where does the learners' "ownership" come in? And what do they negotiate?'

'Yes, that is a problem,' says Shahieda. 'What about OBE? Curriculum 2005 puts the emphasis on achieving outcomes, and the outcomes need to be laid out by the teacher from the beginning, so that the learners know what they're working towards. How much room does that allow for learners to negotiate the work to be done and to have a stake in the decision-making?'

Peter is no longer feeling quite so sure about his new enthusiasm, but he still senses that the writer's arguments are right. 'Perhaps there's an answer in the book's next chapter, by Cynthia Onore,' he suggests. 'Its called "Negotiation, language, and inquiry: building knowledge collaboratively in the classroom" – sounds promising.'

ACTIVITY 40: NEGOTIATING THE CURRICULUM

Read Cynthia Onore's essay 'Negotiation, language, and inquiry: building knowledge collaboratively in the classroom' (Reading 19 on page 127 of your Reader) carefully. Although edited, this is still quite a long reading. However, as an actual account of a lesson that intelligently and successfully steers its way between a child-centred approach, and the content-knowledge and skills requirements of a syllabus, it is well worth reading. In addition, Onore's account serves to draw a number of threads from the rest of the module together. When you have read the article, do the following:

1 Imagine that a colleague hears that you are interested in the idea of negotiating the curriculum with learners, but thinks that this would not be practical because it would mean letting the learners have an equal say in what gets taught and studied in class. In just a few sentences, how would you describe the concept of negotiating the curriculum, based on what you have read in this article, in order to allay his or her fears?

2 Shift your focus from the issue of negotiating the curriculum and think for a minute or two about how Peter and his colleagues are acting. It seems to us that their behaviour here is part of what we are talking about when we use the term extended professionalism. List three things they are doing that illustrate aspects of this concept.

'Onore writes an interesting article,' says Shahieda. 'She shows how a teacher can run a class and teach according to the syllabus, but still let the learners be part of the lesson planning.'

'Yes, asking them how much the class already knew and what they needed to find out made a lot of sense,' adds Elmarie. 'I liked the way the children who knew more became temporary "teachers" for the ones who

You will need 40 minutes to an hour for the reading, and 20 to 30 minutes to answer the questions. The activity should take between 60 and 90 minutes in total.

didn't know.'

'Each one teach one, hey?' says Peter.

'Yes. And that bit about the learners referring to their non-negotiating peers in other classes as "spoonies" – that was the best! The writer explains very well what may be wrong about relying on the teacher to motivate the class – I'd never questioned that before,' says Fana. 'But to get back to OBE – do you think that the "core common knowledge" that the writer mentions might cover the sort of learning outcomes laid down in our new syllabuses?'

'I don't know,' says Peter, 'but there's only one way to find out.'

'Yes, it would be interesting to try it out,' agrees Fana.

'Theory into practice?' Shahieda teases.

'Ja, but we'll be testing the theory, not the other way around,' replies Peter.

'I like this article, but not only because it answered our questions,' says Shahieda. 'What I really liked was that last part where the other teacher talks about having been afraid of her own questions, and then she learns instead to pose questions, and to look at life and teaching from more than one perspective. And to judge from the way she speaks, she actually gains more confidence.'

'Yes,' replies Peter, 'she rejects the idea that adults should have all the answers … and that actually seems to make her a better teacher.'

Peter and Shahieda have noticed how this teacher, by putting aside an assumed authority, in which she imagines she has all the answers, learns to trust herself and the children – as learners. To produce active learners who are able to think and learn from their own experiences of a changing world, teachers surely need to model this sort of behaviour themselves. And this clearly requires a spirit of enquiry and reflection with respect to our own teaching, as well as to the world around us.

> '**Each one teach one**' is a slogan that has been in popular use since the 1980s. It refers to the sharing of knowledge and teaching to build education and make up for the gaps from an inferior Bantu education.

> " *By putting aside an assumed authority, the teacher learns to trust herself and the children – as learners.* "

GETTING DOWN TO REFLECTING SYSTEMATICALLY ON PRACTICE

Peter and Shahieda agree to try out the negotiation approach with their own classes, attempting to combine it with outcomes-based teaching. Peter and Shahieda manage to organize things so that once a week they can visit each other's classes, keep an eye on how well they are managing to reconcile the idea of 'negotiating the curriculum' with OBE, and to act as teaching partners.

Shahieda has learnt a certain amount about classroom practitioner research from a teacher-development NGO, so she is able to organize and direct their experiment so that it doesn't just fizzle out. They plan together, trying to foresee some of the problems they are likely to encounter. Then, when they enact these plans in class, they each keep notes of any changes that they observe in their own and the pupils' responses, and of any problems or successes.

Every week they try to get together for an hour after school to reflect on what's been happening in each class. These discussions are quite frank, and although at first it feels a bit strange analysing their own teaching with others, they begin to trust one another more, and they find that their confidence grows in proportion to a self-awareness of their own practice.

Based on their observations and reflections, they often find themselves revising their approach slightly in order to solve problems that they had not foreseen, introducing a refinement that one of them has

> **NGO** stands for Non-governmental organization.

The process described here is based on a well-documented approach to improving one's own teaching that is sometimes called 'classroom action research' or 'practitioner research'. These approaches have been so extensively tried and successfully refined that they have achieved widespread acceptance as models of professional practice.

The essentials of reflective practitioner research are quite simple, and anyone wanting to read a little further can read the brief handbook by Kemmis and McTaggart (see Further Reading at the end of this Learning Guide on page 188).

An **articulate** explanation is one that is expressed well.

suggested. And because they try to meet as regularly as the school term and activities allow (sometimes only briefly during break), these revised plans and innovations usually form the first topic of conversation for their next discussion, and lead to further refinements and explorations in subsequent lessons. So the reflection sessions become reflection/planning sessions (see the diagram below).

It seems to make a big difference that they are thinking critically about their own practice as a matter of choice: no one is evaluating them in order to rate them for promotion or to judge them. They gain confidence because they **are in charge – of their own improvement, and of the educational theories that they are trying out. In their discussions together, various teaching approaches, methods and official policies become tools that provide real support. They no longer seem to be impersonal directives from the Education Department, or theories against which their practice will be judged.**

They are taking their professionalism into their own hands and their colleagues begin to notice this. Sometimes other staff join their enthusiastic discussions. When a subject adviser calls on Shahieda, he is impressed by her experimental approach, the articulate explanations of her goals, and the positive manner with which she grapples with difficulties. He mentions this to the Principal, who is pleased to be able to point out that Shahieda is not the only one on his staff who exhibits these qualities.

Systematic Reflective Practice: Learning from experience
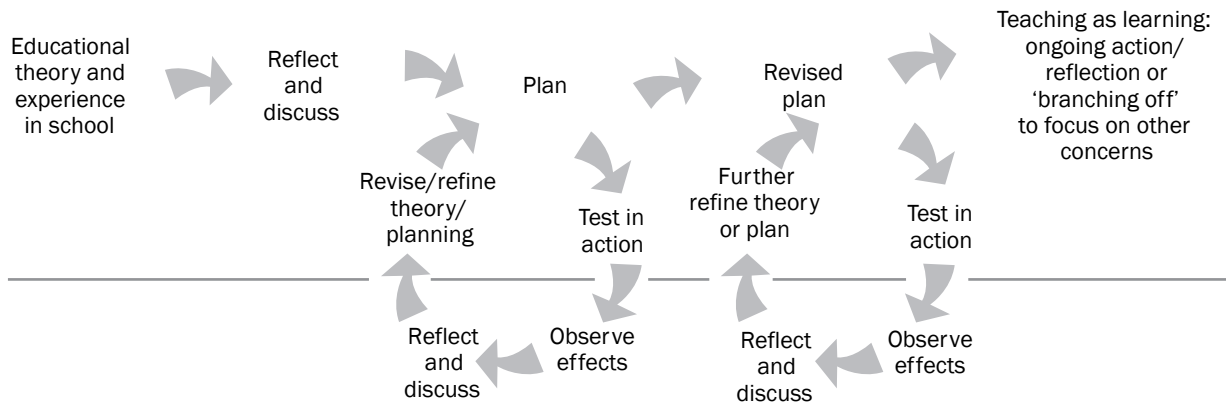
This model incorporates the ideas of Steven Kemmis, Shirley Grandy and Jean McNiff.

Learning from experience

In Activity 40 we asked you to write down some aspects of extended professionalism that are demonstrated by Peter and his colleagues. The three we listed were that they are discussing aspects of their work together; reading about teaching approaches together; and weighing up theories and policies in the light of their experience. Now we can add to this list that they are conducting systematic, collaborative research on their own teaching.

Not everyone on the staff, of course, is enthusiastic about these developments. Abel Abrahams, who has been on the staff for 14 years, and in teaching for longer,

is sceptical. He is the Deputy Principal at Artis Secondary, and often prefaces his remarks with references to his 20 years of teaching experience. He regards what

He *hasn't* had twenty years experience – he's had *one*, repeated twenty times over.

Peter and the others are doing as flashy, unnecessary, and unlikely to last as the school year wears on. But Abel is also known for his resistance to change – he has taught exactly the same material in exactly the same way ever since anyone can remember. As one of his colleagues said when he wasn't in earshot, 'He hasn't had twenty years experience – he's had **one**, repeated twenty times over'.Benefiting from our experience in the sense of learning, growing and being enriched by failures and successes, does not automatically follow on experience. The complex experiences that we find in professional life don't always yield clear lessons. Our egos may get in the way or there may be too many distracting experiences happening at the same time. Without making some effort to stand back from such experience and reflect on its significance, we may learn nothing that will contribute to our growth.

Reflective action versus routine action

One important factor that tends to prevent our learning from experience is the *routine nature* of many of our experiences. This is especially true of teaching ,which is bound by the bureaucratic routines of the school calendar. The influential American educational philosopher John Dewey, writing in the early 1900s, drew a key distinction between routine action and reflective action.

Dewey saw routine action as action guided by traditional ways of doing things, as action that we have become accustomed to, and that requires little weighing up or conscious choice. Dewey held that people generally undertake most of their lives in a routine, almost thought*less* way, giving little consideration to the reasons for their actions.

This is not necessarily a bad thing for much of our everyday lives, but the inherent danger of getting caught in routines is that we become more like technicians or bureaucrats than professionals. We miss vital opportunities to learn and develop as human beings, and risk becoming dull.

By contrast, reflective action involves standing back from the flow of experience, and weighing up beliefs that we take for granted in the light of evidence in practice.

According to Dewey, we are only spurred on to this type of action when we encounter a problem to be solved, or an experience that jolts us out of a half-conscious state. This suggests that some of our difficulties may have hidden advantages!

ACTIVITY 41

Can you think of any advantages there might be for teachers in the difficulties we summarized in Section 2.8? One or two will do.

This activity should not require more than 5 minutes.

This is not such a strange question. For a start, some teaching difficulties prevent us from becoming bound by routine, they remind us that we are not simply in the bureaucratic business of 'processing' learners. Another advantage would be interaction aiming at professional mastery, as we have just seen between Peter and his colleagues. Other uncertainties, theoretical conflicts, and unpredictable occurrences could provide the stimuli for similar insights and professional growth.

An enquiring approach

> *Back in the Artis staffroom, another teacher has raised an objection to the activities of Peter and his colleagues:*
>
> *'What's so professional about observing and discussing each others' lessons?' asks another colleague, Melanie Bright. 'Surely a professional is one who knows what he or she is doing, who "knows the ropes" and has been trained to deal with the situations that are likely to arise in classrooms, who knows which are the best methods and materials to use in teaching?'*

What Melanie Bright says about professionals is right, up to a point. We saw in Section Four that a teacher's authority is based on her pedagogical and academic knowledge, and in Section Three that society's 'contract' with professions is based on the expectation that professionals will have that sort of knowledge.

But we also saw, in Section Five, that human knowledge is always provisional and situated. And if we want to develop active learners who are able to question and learn from their experiences of a changing world, then teachers must model an enquiring behaviour themselves, testing their knowledge situationally in the laboratory of real classrooms. This means trying ideas out, confirming that they do or don't work, modifying them, combining them with new knowledge, or rejecting them.

Let's look at what happens in most classrooms. While it's true that routines can swallow up one's vision as an educator, there also exists an opposite tendency of relative *un*certainty within that routine. Routines may tend to encourage an impersonal view of our large classes, but it is very often the energy of so many individual personalities engaging with one another that works against routine and predictability in schools. For most teachers, this is one of the best things about teaching. But because each of these individuals has his or her own needs, and his or her own personalities to express, it's this factor that also places specifically professional demands on the teacher.

Philip Jackson (1964: 166) estimated that teachers typically engage in something like 1 000 interpersonal interactions on any given school day. Many of these interactions involve decision-making in situations of uncertainty, conflicting principles and complexity. As happens in so many other occupations that require professional judgement, theories do not always fit the complexity and uniqueness of the dynamic classroom situation. Consider this true story:

THENJIWE'S STORY

Thenjiwe is a young teacher with a strong sense of caring for the individual learners in her Grade 4 class. She is very concerned about Nosisa, who is extremely withdrawn, to the extent that Nosisa never talks to anyone at school, even her peers. Attempts to talk to her in order to find out what may be contributing to this behaviour fail, there are no psychological services at hand, and Nosisa's mother can shed no light on the problem.

Reflecting on this problem, Thenjiwe realizes that since she is not a psychotherapist, she cannot attempt to cure the child; however, she senses that if she can put Nosisa in a situation where she is encouraged to communicate at the same time as she is challenged (without any hint of threat), she may yet be able to help her. She thinks of a plan that might just work.

The next day she counts the learners in her class, notes with satisfaction that there is an odd number present, and sets the class to work in pairs on a task that requires interaction. Since the other learners have given up trying to talk to Nosisa, she is the one left without a partner. Thenjiwe quickly goes to sit with her and starts on the task. The first two minutes feel like twenty, as Nosisa responds only by shaking or nodding her head, or in monosyllables. Then Thenjiwe slips in a story about herself, one which makes her sound very stupid. She laughs at herself and is relieved when she sees a smile cross Nosisa's face.

Two days later, Thenji again sets a task for pairs. After a slow beginning, Nosisa warms to the task, an exciting game in which the partners have to find the differences between two similar pictures while each can only see his or her own picture, not the partner's. The game is part of a second-language lesson, and the learners have to use the second language to ask each other which features might be different. By the end, Nosisa is not only using full sentences, but Thenji is amazed to find that the child is able to use the second language quite well.

Progress is slow but definite, and the fourth time Thenji sets a paired activity, she discreetly gets a child whom she has chosen carefully – though she makes it look as though it's a casual choice – to be Nosisa's partner. Again Thenji is relieved when the pairing works.

Before many days have passed, Thenji sees Nosisa playing happily and chatting with two girls in a corner of the school grounds during break. At the end of a month, Thenji receives a visit from Nosisa's mother, who is very grateful for the difference in her daughter's behaviour – it seems that at home too, Nosisa has become much more relaxed and communicative than anyone can remember her being. It is a triumph Thenji will never forget.

However, she finds that she has another problem on her hands. The other children in the class have been quick to observe the amount of time and attention Thenji has devoted to Nosisa, even though she has tried to give everyone some attention. She finds that the attention-seekers in the class are playing up more aggressively than ever, and overhears one child saying that Nosisa is the teacher's pet. Armed with this knowledge, she now has to work out a way to restore her relationship and authority with the rest of the class, while hopefully steering them towards some valuable moral learnings as well …

Should Thenjiwe have suspended her careful work with Nosisa when she became aware of the jealousy building up in the other children? Not many would say 'Yes', but exactly how to deal with the complexity of this situation is something that no textbook on teaching methods would be likely to tell Thenjiwe.

Teaching is clearly not simply a matter of applying methodologies as techniques; it requires us to understand the complex effects of our own particular practice on learners. This is especially true in situations where it is not a matter of choosing between right and wrong approaches, so much as steering a way among several approaches, which may *all* be right up to a point. Unquestionably, when the stakes are high, such small decisions are the stuff of professional choice – and the challenge of professional teaching.

The need to make decisions in situations of indeterminacy and uncertainty is widely recognized as an essential aspect of professional practice. What has been called the professional's 'strategic knowledge' comes into play when a practitioner confronts particular situations or problems where principles collide and no simple solution is possible, in which each of the alternative choices appears *equally* principled (Shulman in Pollard and Bourne, 1994: 87). Strategic professional knowledge is what Thenji uses when she cannot discover the source of Nosisa's problem but wants to do something to help her anyway. And we can be sure she will be using it when she tries to win the rest of the class back without making Nosisa feel uncomfortable.

> *Theory and practice turn out to be two sides of the same coin, and professional teachers combine the two constantly.*

We have now come full circle. We saw a group of teachers confronting a problem. Armed only with contradictory theories, their experience and their enthusiasm, they worked together to combine practice and reflection. We asked questions about their reflective practice to help you understand thoroughly (and theoretically) what they were doing. And this is not for the sake of passing an exam in theory, but to make theory a very practical tool for use in understanding and assessing *your own practice*. Theory and practice turn out to be two sides of the same coin, and professional teachers combine the two constantly.

Teaching as a project

One area where a purely technical approach lets teachers down badly is the area of self-motivation and attitude. In Section Two, we argued that for many teachers, teaching is more than just a job, and that regarding it as a vocation is more likely to lead a teacher to see difficulties as challenges.

An important aspect of teaching-as-a vocation is, as we saw, that teachers need to see themselves as able to make a difference, whether by opening up the riches of some subject, by supporting learners in their growth and development, or by having some impact on the society of tomorrow. One of the wonderful things about teaching as a vocation is how many teachers do manage to make a difference in these and other ways.

As you saw in Section Two when you read the articles by Maja, Jacklin, and Fataar and Patterson, there are powerful forces that work against teachers making any difference in individual learners' lives, or in society, which is why the mere intention or desire to make a difference is not usually enough.

But if people's actions are partly shaped by their image of themselves, as Jacklin argued, then teachers need to see themselves as energetic doers, as agents – they cannot allow themselves to become passive *conduits* for an education system, or to wait for the Education Department to intervene and solve all the problems.

Let's see how the teachers at Artis Secondary and Mountain View Primary are measuring up to this idea.

> A **conduit** is a pipe or channel used to carry something from one place to another.

A polite takeover

> *Prem, our secretary, announces, 'There are a number of people at reception who say they're from the* Being a Teacher *Teachers' Collective. I asked them if they had an appointment, and they said they didn't, but they were quite insistent on seeing one of the writers now.'*
>
> *'Okay, show them in,' I say.*
>
> *A few moments later, I look up from my desk to see three women and two men being shown in by Prem. I introduce myself and they do too; they are Shahieda, Lerato, Fana, Gillian and Peter Adonis. A little shocked, I ask Prem to bring us tea. When we are all seated, the group loses no time in telling me why they've come.*
>
> *Shahieda is the first to speak: 'It's like this. You and your fellow-writers brought us into this learning guide, presumably to prevent it from becoming too abstract …'*
>
> *'That's right,' I respond. 'It would have been wrong to write a module on "Being a Teacher" without introducing teachers into the text to have their say about the world of teaching as they see it.'*
>
> *'That's exactly our point,' Peter says. 'Shahieda showed us an article about teaching as a vocation, in which the writer, Dwayne Huebner, wrote about the importance of teachers' stories, and we realized that we've sat by for five sections while* you *told* our *stories …'*
>
> *'Including what you've just said about teachers needing to see themselves as able to make a difference,' interrupts Gillian.*
>
> *Fana takes their argument further: 'And I remember reading somewhere that true empowerment is not giving power or freedom or skills or knowledge to others. It's more a case of their "taking" power, acquiring freedom and knowledge for themselves …'*
>
> *'So you're telling me that you've come far enough along the road of*

> Throughout the rest of this section, your learning text will be largely in the form of a dialogue – something that you will have become used to by now. This is a form used in some of the oldest teaching texts we have – the best known are probably Plato's dialogues, which feature the (real-life) philosopher Socrates engaged in discussion with various citizens of Athens in the fourth century BC.
>
> You will need to look carefully for ideas about professionalism in the words of the various characters and to take note of these.

empowerment to take over the text of this learning guide?' I say.

'Yes, but we'd be happy to include you in our discussion,' says Lerato.

'And if I don't agree?' I ask.

'Well, after this, try convincing the readers about teachers as "agents" and "energetic doers" without us,' replies Peter.

'I'm glad to hear you say that,' I say as Prem brings in the tea, 'because if a teacher wants to make a difference as an agent, the energy and passion he or she needs don't just arise "out of the blue", especially if they are not part of the individual teacher's personality. They need to be sustained by a strong sense of purpose. And this points to the need for teachers to have worthwhile goals or sets of goals towards which they can strive.'

'That sounds noble,' says Gillian. 'You sound a bit like somebody making a speech at the diploma ceremony at our college.'

'Perhaps I do', I explain, 'but I'm not trying to sound "noble". What I am saying is really very practical. It is surprising how many teachers, by the time they have been through two, three or even four years of pre-service training, have only very vague educational goals, and few strategies for achieving them. This makes it very difficult for them to meet the kind of challenges we have been considering in this module.'

'Just a minute,' says Lerato. 'Are you implying that if a teacher isn't striving for a definite educational goal, or set of goals, he or she is not going to make a difference through his or her teaching – say, through simply being a reasonably good teacher?'

'Well,' I reply, 'from what we've seen in some schools, just turning up for all your lessons, preparing for all your lessons (trying to think from the learners' point of view when doing so) and assessing learners' work promptly would make a very big difference!'

'And making sure, if you're the principal, that the school timetable is drawn up at the end of the year so that weeks aren't wasted at the begin-ning of the next year, when learners are most receptive!' chips in Fana.

'But,' I add, 'remember that in a school that is really struggling, even pretty basic changes like these may require a big effort from the teacher or principal, and hence the need for a goal or vision.'

ACTIVITY 42: MAKING A DIFFERENCE

If you are working through this module with fellow students, answer the following questions on your own first. When everyone has answered them, compare your answers and try to reach an agreement.

1 The question that Lerato asks in the dialogue above has probably not been answered as fully as she would like. Are goals really necessary, or are things like mission statements just fashionable these days? Isn't hard work enough? How would you answer her question?

2 Turn back to the reading on effective schools by Christie and Potterton (Reading 10 on page 64 in your Reader), and quickly remind yourself of what they say in the section headed 'Sense of responsibility'. What do you think these researchers mean when they write that acting, rather than reacting, is itself an impetus towards resilience?

3 Now watch the parts of the videotape indicated in the margin. You will see a teacher injecting new life into her school by combining traditional song and dance with her teaching. You will also see a teacher conduct-ing community classes after hours in addition to her school teaching. And you will see a teacher organizing learning groups among her peers, helping them to further their qualifications. What particular educational goals would you say each of these three teachers might be working towards?

If you debated these questions in a group, we hope you had an interesting discussion. This is what happened in discussion with Peter's group:

> *'Well, there's no mention of goals in the Christie and Potterton reading,' says Fana.*
>
> *'That's true,' I reply. 'But in the next section of their research report (not in the reading), which deals with leadership in the schools they found to be "resilient", they note that, no matter how different the management styles and abilities of the principals they encountered, "all the principals could articulate a vision for their schools". Remember that these schools were selected for the study after a survey found that they were all flourishing when the schools around them were in crisis. What about Christie and Potterton's suggestion that acting rather than reacting helps make a school resilient?'*
>
> *'I think the way they use the word "reacting" here means that your actions are a response to things that happen as a result of forces beyond your control,' says Shahieda.*
>
> *'Yes, and "acting" here means taking the initiative, setting processes in motion yourself, rather than responding to things that have already happened,' adds Peter.*
>
> *'And the "impetus towards resilience" part?' I ask.*
>
> *'That means,' replies Peter, 'that even if you don't succeed completely when you strive to do something, you'll at least feel good that you set things in motion. It's a bit like "taking the game to the opposition" in some ball sports, rather than just playing a defensive game. Even small amounts of self-esteem can accumulate to build up your confidence.'*
>
> *'I like what you said about "taking the game to the opposition",' said Gillian. 'There's a strong risk that your move may not be successful, but you can't play a game, let alone win one, without taking risks.'*
>
> *'And taking risks, and succeeding sometimes, becomes a bit like a habit,' says Shahieda, getting warmed up. 'Just as Christie and Potterton say that being passive can easily lead to more passivity, a fatalistic attitude – just going through the motions.'*
>
> *'So vision, goals and a sense of purpose are necessary for "making a difference",' says Lerato. 'But where do I get these from if I'm a teacher who hasn't got them to start with? And by the way, what do we mean by "making a difference"?'*
>
> *'Yes, and I've just thought of something else: aren't we being a little naïve here? What about all those structured constraints and inequalities that Heather Jacklin described in Reading 3?' asked Fana.*
>
> *'Whoa, that's three questions we need to answer,' I say. 'But you're right to raise them, because I have a feeling that the answers to all of them are closely related.'*

> To **articulate** an idea is to put it into words.

> **Fatalistic** people accept whatever happens to them because they believe that events are decided by fate or by forces beyond their control.

Goals and a sense of purpose or vision are necessary for 'making a difference', as Lerato realizes. The questions that she and Fana raise are important for our study of 'extended professionalism', and will occupy us for the remainder of this section:

- How does one acquire an educational goal?
- What does it mean to 'make a difference'? How can an individual teacher contribute to educational transformation?
- How can teachers 'make a difference' when many obstacles and social inequalities are embedded in the very language we use to think, and in the organization and practice of education?

Taking constraints seriously

> 'Maybe we should start with your point about constraints and inequalities, Fana,' I suggest. 'Christie and Potterton also ask this question, because they point out that social patterns or structures should not be thought of as having determinist powers. The whole force of their argument is that "some schools at least [are] able to retain or develop the power to act for themselves, in small as well as big ways".'
>
> 'Okay,' said Fana, 'but those schools are exceptions that really just prove the rule. The rule is that schools in South Africa are very unequal, and that in heavily disadvantaged schools, changes are going to be pretty small, and won't affect the majority of learners.'
>
> 'Small they may be, but it doesn't follow as a logical necessity that such changes are doomed to have no effect on the majority,' I argue. 'Think of how the world's major religions started – most of them with a single figure and a few followers. Even when the Education Department wants to introduce something new into the curriculum, if it is sensible it chooses a small number of pilot schools where it hopes the innovation may succeed.'
>
> 'Maybe,' Fana acknowledges, 'but a sense of vision would have come easily to the followers of a Buddha, Christ or Mohammed. But the influences that many teachers experience today leave them feeling that they have little scope for making choices that will "make a difference".'
>
> 'Look at it this way,' I try. 'Teachers aren't robots, programmed to act in just one way. Even when schools lack resources or when an authoritarian principal makes it difficult to make any changes – teachers still have options. There is a range of choices that includes:
> - giving up in the face of difficulties, and taking on whatever identity is forced on one by authorities or circumstances;
> - resisting a fatalistic attitude, and gradually winning space to act in ways that are not in conflict with one's values; or sometimes even
> - choosing to work elsewhere if there seems to be no chance of resisting.'

> If social structures *did* have **determinist** powers, this would mean that our actions and thinking would be shaped by the underlying patterns and values that are dominant in society.

From constraints to goals

> 'Earlier you implied that a lack of teaching goals and a vague understanding of what "making a difference" means was related to the notion of constraints. What did you mean?' asks Gillian.
>
> 'I mean that we are surrounded by challenges in teaching: the demands of a new curriculum; the inequality of school provision; the lack of "a culture of learning" in some schools and so on. But most of these constraints in fact provide us with ready-made goals to strive for – what Christie and Potterton call "a move from passivity and victimhood to active agency".
>
> For every teacher there is the goal of mastering outcomes-based education, and using it to devise more exciting and professionally accountable forms of teaching and learning. For teachers who have larger classes than they are used to, there is the goal of providing a stimulating and democratic yet orderly learning environment.
>
> There are goals implicit in the constraints of inadequate provision and the slack attitudes that are the legacy of apartheid in many schools. There are goals in the attitudes of racism and sexism that permeate our society and manifest themselves in our classrooms. There are goals of teaching learners to think critically, to question the values of consumer culture. And there are goals like simply training oneself to listen more attentively to what learners are trying to say in class instead of lapsing

into teacher-talk.

*To achieve successes in any of these goals would be to make a significant difference, in one's professional practice, in the lives of the learners, and in the impact they will make in society. Pursuing any one of these goals involves a struggle with constraints from our past. But it's because these constraints are **not** totally determining, that teaching is a vocation and a profession.'*

ACTIVITY 43: GOALS FROM CONSTRAINTS

Divide a page in your workbook into two columns, and head the left-hand one 'Constraints', and the other one 'Goals'. Now list three or four constraints such as the ones we have discussed above (or any others you might have on your mind) on the left. Next to each, in the right-hand column, try to formulate an appropriate goal (or goals) towards which a concerned teacher might strive. The first item in your list may look something like this, for example:

You will need about 20 minutes for this activity..

Constraints	Goals
1. Twice a week my Grade 12 English class is timetabled for 12.30. This means that I see most of my class only three times a week (if there are no disruptions) and their final exams are approaching!	1. My goals are: a) to ensure that my 12.30 lessons are incredibly interesting, and involve as much learner participation and discovery as possible; b) to structure the classwork so that learners cannot make progress on the other days unless they are present on the 12.30 days; and c) to work towards the learners consciously taking on the responsibility for their own learning and success.
2.	2.

'Now we're getting somewhere,' says Lerato, 'but there's something I've been wanting to ask ever since you brought up the Christie and Potterton reading. Towards the end of their article they link a lack of agency on the part of many schools to apartheid and apartheid education. That set me thinking: does "agency" – making a difference – always mean fighting an enemy? If it does, then who are the enemies? Under apartheid, that question was easier to answer.'

Does agency always involve a struggle?

'Well,' I say, 'under the apartheid government, some teachers clearly saw "agency" as a struggle against apartheid and its effects – in education, daily life and the political sphere. For other teachers, who didn't see themselves as part of the "struggle business", it probably meant something like doing their jobs as well as they could, even if this meant becoming a tool of apartheid education.

'I rather think that being an "agent" unavoidably involves a teacher in some sort of opposition or struggle, often with impersonal forces like bureaucracy or a lack of financial resources – which usually turn out to be human in origin, even if it's inappropriate to call those responsible "the enemy",' I add.

'Someone has written about this. I'll try and find the article I'm thinking of,' says Shahieda.

You will need about 45 minutes for the reading and about 10 minutes to answer the question.

ACTIVITY 44: THE VOCATION OF TEACHING REVISITED

Shahieda is referring to 'The vocation of teaching' (Reading 20 on page 138 of the Reader) by American educationist Dwayne Huebner, which touches on many of the key points we have made in different parts of this module. Read the extract from this essay and then answer the following question.

Huebner discusses the struggle of teachers to maintain the life-enhancing qualities of traditional knowledge which they teach to young learners. From your reading of the essay, what would you say are the 'enemies' in this struggle?

Gillian finds the key sentences in the Huebner extract and reads them aloud:

We become bored and tired, dull and unresponsive when we are not part of the struggle to maintain the life-enhancing qualities of [the] traditions [we teach]. If teaching becomes routinized and we do not participate in the ongoing struggle to maintain these sources of beauty, truth and freedom, then we no longer constructively take part in the unfolding and making of human history … The vocation of teaching does not permit fixed meanings or values. If a teacher becomes fixed and stereotypical, the struggle for meaning and living has ended. In all probability, someone else is then "using" the teacher to shape and control the living of others.

If a teacher gets caught in dull routines, the struggle for meaning and purpose is over.

'That last sentence says a lot,' says Peter. 'If we're content to stay as we are and not risk change, or if we try to remain neutral, we'll just end up making way for the most powerful forces and prejudices in society to prevail.'

'Yes, so the teacher has *to have a sense of purpose,' I agree. 'If we allow what we teach to become routine, or if we get used to accepting the unacceptable, we become passive "accomplices" – of everything from consumer culture to racism. Listen to what Jean McNiff says about the reflective teacher (1988: 50):'*

Being committed suggests a thinking awareness. If I am committed, then I am acutely aware and I question. If I do not question, I accept the *status quo*, and I go along with established […] attitudes without interfering. I am a servant of the status quo, and I service it through my passivity.

[But the reflective teacher is] tenacious, and above all curious. He (sic) will not be satisfied with a given system if he sees elements of the system as unsatisfactory. He will seek to change it. In so doing, he refuses to be a servant, but becomes an acting agent. He rises above the role of skilled technician and becomes an educator. And *this* qualifies him to [...] make autonomous and independent judgements within his own professional sphere.

> The **status quo** is the existing state of affairs.

Peter takes the argument further: 'It seems to me that the challenge of being a professional teacher may not involve an external human "enemy", but "making a difference" must involve the teacher in change*, and therefore a teacher's efforts to meet such a challenge will almost inevitably involve obstacles. If this doesn't happen, the teacher is probably avoiding the crucial issues.'*

'That may sound harsh,' I say, 'but I think you are right. The French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre, who fought the Nazis as a member of the French underground during World War II, wrote that one can achieve freedom only in a resistant world. Listen carefully to what Maxine Greene has to say about this (Greene in Bolin and Falk, 1987: 185):

For [Sartre] the human being is characterized by a need to go *beyond* a situation – and by what that person succeeds in making of (himself or herself). He knew as well as anyone that we are indeed determined, conditioned in a multiplicity of ways, and that what determines and conditions [us] must in some way be *transcended* if we are to achieve ourselves and be able to act on our freedom. The determinate, the given, the objectness of the world are what stand in our way and require resistance, if we ourselves are not to be made into *acquiescent* beings, mere things.

One way of resisting is by means of a *project*, identifying something we want to bring into being; the practice we undertake in order to achieve it involves a flight and a leap ahead, a refusal and a realization. This means a recognition that there is some lack or deficiency that must be identified and refused, a lack that becomes visible only when we imagine what is possible. But it must be a lack that is subjectively experienced as a personal deprivation or loss, and that can then be transformed into an objective problem [one that can be dealt with].

In these times, teachers are likely to create their teaching as a project only if they can first reject the apparent *inexorability* of the system.

> To **transcend** something is to rise above it.

> **Acquiescent** simply means 'ready to agree', but here Greene uses it to mean 'compliant, puppet-like, not having the courage to match our beliefs'.

> If something is **inexorable**, it cannot be prevented.

'Greene goes on to say that rejecting the seeming "unchangeability" of things we encounter in schools means questioning the assumptions people share so readily, especially the assumption that nothing can be done to change the situation. It means coming to a critical understanding of how these 'realities' originate with human beings and tend to

> serve particular interests (as we saw in Section 5.4). And it means refus-ing the "givenness" of things and seeing things as if they could be other-wise. If the taken-for-granted "school culture" in a particular school stifles the creative approaches of teachers or learners, it needs to be questioned. If the disorder that prevails at some schools has come to be accepted as "the way things are", this needs to be questioned.'

We now have a clearer understanding of what is required to 'make a difference' in our schools. It is likely to pit us against obstacles opposed to change. But resisting such forces 'as a project' makes us participants in the building of history. For McNiff, the professional educator is not just a skilled technician, but someone curious and tena-cious, someone dissatisfied to see elements of the system that are unacceptable, someone bent on making a difference. For Greene, this requires a vision of things as they **could** be. As we will see below, turning teaching into a 'project' also builds us up as persons.

Achieving ourselves

> 'These philosophers have some challenging things to say,' broke in Lerato, 'and it's all the more interesting if they've done things like Sartre did during the war. What else do you know about Maxine Greene?'
>
> 'Maxine Greene is an American philosopher of education who's had a wide influence over the past couple of decades,' I answer. 'Her ideas about agency, freedom and teaching as a "project" are central to our debate.'
>
> 'I'd like to hear more about her idea of teaching as a project, but some of what she says is a bit difficult to understand. What do you think she means by "achieving ourselves"?' asks Fana.
>
> 'I think I can help you with that. It raises an important issue. Elsewhere in her article, Greene quotes another American philosopher, John Dewey: "The self is not something ready-made, but something in continuous formation through choice of action." Greene explains this as follows: "To speak of action is to have the taking of initiatives in mind; it is to think in terms of futuring, of reaching forward toward what is not yet." Dewey's notion of the self is formed in constant interaction with others (very much like Ubuntu). It's in constant formation. In fact, human beings can seldom say, "I am *this, or that*", but should rather say, "I am becoming this or that".'
>
> 'So by "achieving ourselves", Greene means just that – we don't just happen; we actually "construct" ourselves as we go?' says Lerato.
>
> 'That's right. But as Dewey implies, the way to develop the self as an "agent" is through "choice of action", not through passively accepting everything just as it is. If you think about it, "choice" and "action" are key ideas underlying much of our discussion in this module, from the reasons that people choose to become teachers, to the reasons they choose to become "part of the solution".
>
> 'It's interesting how all these ideas are starting to connect up,' says Fana. 'Dewey seems to imply that "forming ourselves continuously through choice of action" is very open-ended, quite a risky business. Remember what Dwayne Huebner says about risk?'

> **"** *The self is not something ready-made, but something in continuous formation through choice of action.* **"**

Greene is quoting from Dewey, 1966: 408.

ACTIVITY 45: TAKING RISKS: KNOWING THINGS CAN GO WRONG

The second half of the Huebner article (Reading 20 on page 141 of the Reader) deals not only with teaching and learning as journeys and as stories in the making, but also with the 'vulnerability' and risk attached to these journeys. You may need to refer to the reading again, but spend five minutes just thinking about the role of *risk* in teaching. Try jotting your ideas down in your workbook, and see what ideas and connections the idea of risk leads you to.

You should spend about 15 minutes on this activity.

Risk in teaching

A lot of our efforts in modern life are geared towards reducing risk. Security measures, and the standard procedures, rules, and regulations in bureaucratic organizations – all of these are risk-avoidance strategies. Not surprisingly, we find risk-avoidance in teaching, where it may take on many different appearances. For instance, the technical approach to teaching (see pages 45 to 47) is a risk-avoidance strategy.

Fortunately, there is a side of human beings that **needs** to take risks – in many of today's sports, in business, and so on. It's almost as if we have to test ourselves. Putting yourself 'at risk' by exposing what happens in your classroom to questioning and reflection (your own and others'), often leads to improvement in your teaching.

When you reflected on risk, you probably thought about your own teaching situation. The situations in which students teach do vary, but in South Africa today, there is a need to make choices that involve risk and an opportunity, to accept risk as one of the challenges that make up our vocation.

> *'I'm still a bit mystified,' says Gillian. 'Nothing in our training as teachers supported risk-taking; in fact, one of the unspoken principles underlying almost everything we learnt about teaching was, "Don't take risks". We were warned about the teacher being "in loco parentis", and all that implied. We quickly learnt, at least in some schools, that to take risks in how one dressed was to court disaster. And in the time of the old "panel inspections", taking risks in one's teaching methods was usually frowned on. Even if it wasn't, it seemed better to "play it safe" if one knew that the inspector or subject adviser was due for a visit. But I notice you don't even add a word like "cautious" or "calculated" before you speak of risks, so you must be serious about this idea.'*
>
> *'Risk-taking is a serious business,' I reply. 'I did think about using a word like "cautious" or "informed" before "risks". But it seemed that, in order to make the teaching point I wanted, I had to risk appearing incautious, or even mistaken. I don't mean that one should be reckless – taking risks for the sake of taking risks. That would be unprofessional, because we are accountable as professionals for the decisions we make, and "reckless" means "taking no heed" or "not caring about consequences" – the very opposite of being a professional.'*
>
> *'So in leaving out words like "cautious", you were in fact taking a calculated risk yourself?' asks Peter.*
>
> *'Exactly, it was just a small example of the kind of risk-taking we're talking about. But let's get back to the opportunities and needs for risk in South Africa. Rather than get into a generalized discussion about this, I'll take two examples from the same copy of a teacher's newspaper that make the point better. One is from a review of a book about outcomes-based teaching (The Teacher, March 1998: 16):*

> This sudden autonomy is a cause of anxiety about OBE. For so many years teachers have been told what to do. Now they are allowed to

> *The insecurity of teaching is what makes teaching a vocation. We cannot take on a calling without risk. We cannot respond to the calls of the young, or to tradition unless we accept our vulnerability and fallibility.*

use independent judgement and do not know where to start.

> *More venturesome teachers are finding that good, vital teaching involves not just coping with uncertainty and the unexpected, but making the unexpected happen.*

'I think this expresses quite vividly the "space" created by OBE and the new curriculum, which set up desired outcomes, and suggest, but do not prescribe how the teacher should help learners to achieve those outcomes. This can produce the anxiety the bookreviewer mentions. But teachers are beginning to experiment, to make active choices. It's often a slow process, because, as the writer of this review says, we've been told what to do for so long that we're not used to this amount of choosing.

However, the more venturesome teachers are finding that good, vital teaching involves not just coping with uncertainty and the unexpected, but making the unexpected happen – *taking risks. To make this point even more vividly, let's read a story in "The Teacher", about a school and a principal on the Cape Flats, who, in order to cope with a severe gangster problem, have "taken the game to the opposition".'*

Going places despite the odds

It is located in the heart of one of the most brutal battle zones of the Cape Flats. Yet Excelsior High School in Belhar has somehow managed to remain an island of calm in the sea of gangster violence engulfing the Cape Flats. It has also succeeded in setting academic and sporting examples for the rest of the province. And this has been an inside job, often under appalling circumstances, with little more than a team of committed teachers, and without reliance on government largesse. It wasn't always like this. During the early 1990s Excelsior was virtually under siege from gangs who appropriated the school grounds, threatening and assaulting teachers who questioned their presence. So terrified were staff that they refused to remain at school after 2 p.m. and often had to be escorted out of the premises by armed security officers. But a few years ago, principal Graham Jenneker decided to confront the gang leaders on their own turf, if not terms.

'I told them a few truths and let them know that Excelsior was not a gang hang-out but a place of activity and a haven. I spoke to them as people and let them know that if they wanted to see someone at the school, they should inform me. And maybe they'd get a cup of tea in the process. They gave me their word.'

But although the gangs have kept it, Jenneker knew that Excelsior had to be mobilized from within. Teachers willingly patrolled the grounds, checking for drugs in co-operation with student leaders and often doubling up as counsellors for problem pupils. Jenneker also held meetings with the Belhar community to get them involved in the school activities. The problems in education in the Cape Flats go beyond gangsterism. It is essential to instil in our pupils a sense of achievement in the face of often dismal circumstances and to provide them with positive role models. We have many ex-pupils who are now doctors and lawyers. We tell our pupils: 'You can also be'. Excelsior also focuses on extramural outlets, nurturing sporting and communication skills. Resources that white schools might take for granted, like computer facilities, are some of the luxuries Excelsior can boast due to donations from parents, and fundraising initiatives and small business incentives.

Excelsior is also renowned as one of the top sporting schools in the Cape Flats and also achieved an 87% matric pass rate in 1997. In addition, it provides one of the more successful examples of racial integration in an area characterized by racial tension. Presently, 450 children from Khayelitsha are bussed into Excelsior on a daily basis. We were expecting fireworks, but there has been little racial conflict and the students are steadily learning about cultural integration. The inter-racial experiment might soon be stopped, however. The government's cutbacks in public service will mean the curtailing of public transport expenditure. And Jenneker also admits that if the gangs so desired, they could create chaos in the classrooms. Excelsior falls into the turf of the Sexy Boys, one of the less belligerent gangs, which specializes in soft core activities like protection money for taxis and mandrax merchandising. Young siblings of the Sexy Boys attend Excelsior High. It is, therefore, protected turf. But that didn't prevent the gang-related murder of two Excelsior pupils in December.

The Teacher, March 1998, p. 8

'Gangsterism is a serious threat to many of our schools, but the problems in schools demand initiatives that are equally bold. They call for people like the teachers at Excelsior, who are well aware of the constraints, the dangers of things going wrong, the probability of negative criticism, but who nevertheless make the unexpected happen,' says Fana.

'I want to emphasize something that isn't mentioned in that report, says Gillian. 'It's the effect that the teachers' efforts must have on the learners. It's understandable that teachers are intimidated by armed gangsters, but there are many other reasons that have prompted teachers to "give up" and adopt some form of escape mechanism in order to cope. What example does that provide for their learners? Whereas the example of teachers who have taken a leap beyond their difficulties may in the end be of greater value than good exam results and sporting achievements.'

'Maxine Greene would certainly agree with you,' I say. 'This is a good example of teachers experiencing some rather frightening constraints, but combining to express their freedom to create a safe and effective environment for their learners. Greene has said that teachers cannot expect to stir others to define themselves as persons, as subjects in the world, if they themselves are content to be defined by others.'

What do you think Maxine Greene means by learners being stirred to 'define themselves', and teachers being content to 'be defined' by others?

7.4   Conclusion

We have come to the end of this exploration of what teachers require if they are to teach in South Africa today, especially if they want to gain the sense of satisfaction that comes from performing a worthy task well.

In each step of this exploration, we have asked you to examine:

- what choices you have as a teacher;
- why some of those choices make more sense than others; and
- what practical challenges these choices present.

The first step in Section Two was to examine the reasons why people choose teaching as a career. We saw that intrinsic or extrinsic rewards that motivate teachers are likely to affect their whole approach to teaching, and to the challenges that they will face in South African schools. In particular, we argued that the intrinsic rewards associated with a 'calling' or vocation are likely to carry teachers further 'when the going gets tough'. We also examined the various contexts in which we teach today, and suggested that each of these contexts provides a challenge for you to make a difference and become part of the solution rather than adopt a victim position.

The next step in Section Three was to ask whether the practice of professionalism in teaching could help teachers to become part of the solution. We argued that there are good reasons for teachers collectively to pursue some of the aims of professionalization such as building professional accountability and self-regulation. But we also argued that teachers (collectively and as individuals) should prioritize professional development ahead of the status-building aspects of professionalization in the interests of the learners and learning. We examined various forms of accountability, and found that formal measures such as a professional code of conduct, minimum qualification and appraisal need to be accompanied by responsibility, a more internal and individual commitment to the interests of learners.

In Sections Four to Six we examined what professionalism demands of the teacher in the roles of managing the learning environment, teaching knowledge and skills, and influencing the learners' values.

Section Four we explored the question of how teachers can regain, or establish, their professional authority in the learning environment. But we argued that this authority has to be earned, not assumed as a traditional source of power. We explored the 'in authority' role of teachers with respect to managing the learning environment in a democratic way, and saw that discipline and control are indeed compatible with democracy.

In Section Five, we turned our attention to the other key source of a teacher's professional authority: the role of the teacher as 'an authority'. We saw that a number of factors had contributed to teachers' confusion about their role as 'knowledge-workers'. We re-examined the human need for teaching, and the specialized nature of teachers' work and school knowledge. We then identified three key 'knowledge-worker' sub-roles: imparter of knowledge, facilitator of active learning and learner self-development, and developer of skills. Pointing out the limitations of each of these roles, we showed that teachers need to integrate all three into a wide repertoire of teaching strategies and to draw from these according to the circumstances.

In the process we demonstrated that human knowing is provisional, situated, and linked closely to questions of power, and we identified the implications of these characteristics for teaching. We also argued that the three forms of knowing (knowing that, knowing how, and knowing to), like the three roles of teachers as knowledge-workers, need to be integrated in the teaching process. Finally, we explored a fourth role for teachers: mediators of learning, which to a large extent combines and integrates the strengths of the other three roles.

Section Six attempted to provide some 'tools' with which to meet the moral and value-related challenges in today's schools. We explored what we might mean by the terms 'values' and 'moral values' and we demonstrated that the arguments of subjectivism and cultural relativism can be misleading. We also explored the argument that moral values have an absolute claim on us, and the contrasting argument that in making moral decisions, we should weigh up the consequences. We realized that these positions can in practice complement rather than contradict each other. We concluded that moral values indeed have a place in teaching, and provided guidelines for identifying sound values for the learning environment.

Finally, in Section Seven we explored how you can *extend* your professionalism by becoming a reflective practitioner, by seeing yourself as a goal-orientated agent, and by adopting an experimental approach in which you take risks in the interests of improved teaching and learning.

Throughout the module, the focus has been on teachers achieving the competence needed to 'make a difference' to education in South Africa. We have presented the choices and challenges teachers face and we have identified opportunities and strategies for meeting these challenges. We hope you have enjoyed the process, and that it will help you to teach with added confidence and vigour.

Key learning points

1. Various writers have distinguished between what might be called 'basic professionalism' and 'extended professionalism' in teaching. We focus on three of the characteristics associated with extended professionalism:
    *   engaging in self-reflection;
    *   experimenting and risk-taking; and
    *   identifying oneself as an agent.
2. Learning, growing and being enriched by our experience (including our mistakes) does not automatically follow on experience. What enables us to learn from experience is our ability to stand back and reflect on that experience.
3. The routine nature of much of our teaching experience tends to prevent us from learning from experience. We easily become habituated to routine and risk becoming dull.
4. By contrast, reflective action involves standing back from the flow of experience, and weighing up beliefs and taken-for-granted knowledge in the light of practice.
5. Classroom practitioner research means:
    *   collaborating with colleagues who share some of your goals in professional development;
    *   planning together, and trying to foresee likely problems;
    *   enacting these plans in class, keeping notes of any observed changes in your own and the pupils' responses, of any problems or successes;
    *   getting together regularly to discuss frankly and reflect on what has been happening in class;
    *   attempting to modify your approach based on these observations and discussions; and
    *   taking your professionalism into your own hands: thinking critically about your own practice as a matter of choice and not waiting for others to evaluate you.
6. An important aspect of teaching as a vocation is that teachers need to see themselves as agents – as able to make a difference, either by opening up the riches of some subject to a new generation of learners and supporting them in their growth and development, or by having some impact on the society of the future.
7. Social patterns or structures should therefore not be thought of as being finally determining. Some schools and teachers, even in adverse circum-

stances, manage to develop a power to find options.

8. In the field of teaching in a democratic South Africa, this effort perhaps requires less of a battle against an enemy than a concerted, energetic and passionate effort to transform our schooling into a system that will deliver a vibrant culture of teaching and learning.

9. This effort at transformation will need to be sustained by a strong sense of purpose. Many teachers and schools have only vague educational goals, and few strategies for achieving them, yet research has shown the importance of having a clear vision for schools.

10. There are challenges all around us in the context of our teaching. To achieve successes in any of these goals would be to make a significant difference. Meeting these challenges as an agent is bound to involve a teacher in some sort of opposition. However, if we are not part of such a struggle, we are likely to become servants of the status quo.

11. One way to be part of this struggle is to make teaching a project – not accept things as they are but imagine how they might be, and in striving to achieve such goals, form ourselves by our choice of action.

12. Teaching as a project involves being prepared to take risks both by exposing your teaching to questioning and reflection and by making full use of the opportunities presented by the new curriculum for experimentation and new approaches.

Tutor-marked assignment 5

As a teacher, what would you wish to have achieved in three years' time?

1 Your assignment essay should focus mainly on your own professional development and the improvement of your practice as a teacher, or on the improvement of the learning environment in which you teach or plan to teach (classroom, school or other institution). It may be that your personal goals include obtaining a further diploma or degree. If this is the case, include this in your essay, but write about how you would see this contributing to the improvement of your professional practice as a teacher.

2 Write sections on:
   • your vision and goals (try to be as specific as possible);
   • constraints and difficulties that you are likely to face in achieving your goals;
   • steps you could take to overcome these (if possible, draw on ideas you have encountered in this or other modules, including systematic reflection on your practice); and
   • whatever is on your side? (what advantages/allies/strengths will you be able to call on to help you overcome difficulties in achieving your goals?)

Further reading

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Being a teacher in South Africa

Bolin, F. and Falk, J. 1987. *Teacher Renewal: Professional Issues, Personal Choices*. New York: Teachers College Press.
    An excellent and unusual collection of essays and articles to get you thinking about teaching as a vocation and profession.

Bullough, R., Knowles, J., and Crow, N. 1991. *Emerging as a Teacher*. London: Routledge.
    For teachers entering the profession, this book, based on six actual case studies of newly-qualified teachers, is one of the best introductions to the experience of the first years on the job.

Kohl, H. 1967. *36 Children*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Education.
    The story of how Kohl gained the confidence of a class of unteachable 12-year-olds in New York's Harlem ghetto, and in the process gained a new sense of himself as a teacher and as a person.

Kohl, H. 1986. *On Becoming a Teacher*. London: Methuen.
    An inspiring and easy-to-read account of Kohl's own teaching experiences and wisdom

Lortie, D. 1975. *Schoolteacher: A Sociological Study*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
    This classic was probably the first serious study of teaching as a career.

Teaching as a profession

Hoyle, E. and John, P. 1995. *Professional Knowledge and Professional Practice*. London: Cassell.
    A useful study of teaching as a profession, constructed around the concepts of professional knowledge, professional autonomy, and professional responsibility.

Reeves, C. 1994. *The Struggle to Teach*. Cape Town: SACHED/Maskew Miller Longman.
    An easy-to-read account of the history of teachers' struggles in South Africa, which draws on scores of interviews conducted throughout the country.

Stones, E. 1994. *Quality Teaching: A Sample of Cases*. London: Routledge.
    A practical guide to developing professional competence, with case studies of teachers using the approaches advocated in the text. This book also contains some refreshing ideas on professionalism in teaching, although it does refer to the British education system.

On fundamental pedagogics:

Beard, T. and Morrow, W. (eds). 1981. *Problems of Pedagogics: Pedagogics and the Study of Education in South Africa*. Durban; Woburn, Mass: Butterworth.

Enslin, P. 1984. 'The role of fundamental pedagogics in the foundation of education policy in South Africa', in P. Kallaway (ed.) *Apartheid and Education*. Johannesburg: Raven.

Morrow, W. 1989. *Chains of Thought*. Johannesburg: Southern. Chapters 3–6.

The teacher's authority: sustaining an effective learning environment

Morrow, W. 1989. 'Education for Democratic Participation' in W. Morrow, *Chains of Thought*. Johannesburg: Southern.

    A discussion of the two positions, education *for* democracy and education *through* democratic participation, this essay ends by arguing against the notion that the roles of teachers and learners should be equal.

Many books on general teaching methodology include good chapters on how to achieve good classroom organization and order, one being:

Kyriacou, C. 1991. *Essential Teaching Skills*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

In addition, a number of books focus specifically on such issues. One that has stood the test of time is:

Dreikurs, R. and Cassel P. 1990. *Discipline without Tears.* New York: Plume.

Teachers as knowledge-workers

Gardner, H. 1993. *The Unschooled Mind: How Children Think and How Schools Should Teach*. London: Fontana.

    One of the most thought-provoking books of the nineties on teaching and learning.

Janks, H. (Series Editor) 1993. *Critical Language Awareness Series*. Johannesburg: Hodder & Stoughton and University of Witwatersrand Press.

    An excellent series of short teachers' books filled with practical ideas, many of which are based on popular media, for teaching critical thinking.

Mercer, N. 1995. *The Guided Construction of Knowledge: Talk Amongst Teachers and Learners*. Philadelphia: Multilingual Matters.

    An easy-to-read introduction to the Vygotskean view of learning.

North, R. 1986. *The Real Cost*. London: Chatto and Windus.

    A guide to the damage caused by what has come to be called 'consumer culture', this carefully researched book presents the *real* price that is paid, in terms of the exploitation of human beings, animals, and the environment, to produce the everyday objects we use or consume without thinking (for instance, a packet of coffee, a hamburger, or a pair of jeans.)

Shor, I. 1980. *Critical Teaching and Everyday Life*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

    An excellent introduction to the practice of teaching towards critical thinking.

Shor, I. and Freire, P. 1987. *A Pedagogy for Liberation: Dialogues on Transforming Education*. Basingstoke: MacMillan.

    Recorded discussions between two key figures in the field of educational transformation. Deals frankly with some very fundamental issues in the lives of teachers.

Taylor, N. and Vinjevold, P. (eds). 1999. *Getting Learning Right: Report of the President's Education Initiative Research Project*. Johannesburg: Joint Education Trust.

    A wide-ranging research project on the state of teaching and learning in South Africa. The project involved scores of researchers visiting classrooms throughout the country. All teachers should read Chapters 5 to 9.

Teachers, values and society

Beck, C. 1990. *Better Schools: A Values Perspective.* London: The Falmer Press.
   Argues that there is an important place for values in all schooling. Interesting chapters on race, class, gender, religious and ethnic bias in schools.

Jarrett, J. 1991. *The Teaching of Values.* London: Routledge.
   Another good general discussion of values education.

Rachels, J. 1995. *The Elements of Moral Philosophy.* New York: McGraw-Hill.
   A very readable general introduction to the field of moral values.

Shutte, A. 1995. *Philosophy for Africa*. Milwaukee: Marquette University Press.
   Not very many books on African philosophy are readily available. This book provides a brief, readable account of the key principles of *seriti* and *ubuntu*.

Strike, R. and Soltis, J. 1985. *The Ethics of Teaching.* New York: Teachers College Press.
   Another very good introduction to this field, this book makes use of many useful dilemma situations and case studies.

Making a difference

Kemmis, S. and McTaggart, R. 1981. *The Action-research Planner*. Victoria: Deakin University Press.
   A brief, practical handbook on how to go about researching your own classroom practice.

McNiff, J. 1988. *Action Research: Principles and Practice*. Basingstoke: MacMillan.
   An easy-to-read general introduction to the field of reflective classroom practice.

Winter, R. 1989. *Learning from Experience: Principles and Practice in Action Research*. London: The Falmer Press.
   Includes an interesting short section on risk in teaching.

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Boomer, G. 1992. *Negotiating the Curriculum: Educating for the Twenty-first Century.* Washington, DC: Falmer Press.

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Giddens, A. 1989. *Sociology*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Gultig, J. 1988. 'There is nothing so practical as a good theory'. Unpublished paper from *Conference on International Trends in Teacher Education*, University of Durban-Westville.

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Humphreys, T. 1993. *A different Kind of Teacher*. London: Cassell.

Jackson, P. 1964. *Life in Classrooms*. Eastbourne: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

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Kyriacou, C. 1991. *Essential Teaching Skills*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Lieberman, A. and Miller, L. 1984. *Teachers, Their World and Their Work*. Washington D.C.: The Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Maxine Greene in Bolin, F. and Falk, J. 1987. *Teacher Renewal: Professional Issues, Personal Choices*. New York: Teachers' College Press.

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Moll, I. 1995. 'The Culture of the School'. Paper presented at the First International Conference on L.S. Vygotsky and the School, Moscow.

Molteno, F. 1987. *1980: Students Struggle for their Schools*. Cape Town: University of Cape Town, Centre for African Studies.

Morrow, W. 1989. *Chains of Thought*. Johannesburg: Southern.

Peters, R.S. 1965. 'Education as Initiation' in Archambault, R. *Philosphical Analysis and Education*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Reeves, Cheryl. 1994. *The Struggle to Teach*. Cape Town: Maskew Miller Longman; Johannesburg: SACHED.

Shulman, L. 1994. 'Those Who Understand: Knowledge Growth in Teaching', in Pollard, A. and Bourne, J, eds. *Teaching and Learning in the Primary School*. London: Open University.

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