

Reflections on Gender Identity in a Safe Space for Transforming Classroom Praxis

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Abstract

Why, nearly two decades into a new political democratic dispensation, with a well-established constitution and legal system, is gender inequality still perpetuated? The education of learners in this regard has been identified as critical. Teaching-learning of gender equality could be challenging for teachers who have not reflected on their own gender identity. This article focuses on the findings of a recent empirical study which explored the lived experiences of patriarchy of selected female teachers situated in four provinces in South Africa. The findings show that the participating teachers' gender identity is shaped by their religious and cultural discourses. Working within a feminist paradigm, narrative inquiry was employed as the research methodology. Creating a safe space, the opportunity was provided to hear the teachers' voices in response to the master narrative of patriarchy. Sharing their self-narrative both with an internal audience (in their 'society-of-mind') and with an external audience allowed them to reclaim themselves as they discovered the extent to which it is possible to become disentangled from their 'other' (men). This process initiated self-empowerment of the teachers and contributed to building 'identity capital' as they reflected on their gender identity, adopting a 'counter-position' to patriarchy. Increased extent and strength of 'gender identity capital', enabling the articulation of gender identity transformation in every domain of their lives, personal, social and professional, holds the possibility of developing teachers' classroom practice into classroom praxis. Effective teaching-learning about gender equality has

the potential of informing the development of female and male learners and to be transformative for South African society.

Keywords: gender equality, classroom praxis, teacher identity, ‘identity capital’, self-narrative, self-dialogue

Introduction

The contribution made by ‘Roux-volutionary’ research in the areas of Religion in Education, Human Rights Values, Human Rights Education and Curriculum Development has been significant. Conscious of changes in political and social paradigms, Roux’s research has focused on the need for paradigm shifts for the effective teaching-learning¹ of Religion in Education and Human Rights Education in diverse religious and cultural educational contexts. Roux draws attention to the role of the teacher as facilitator/mediator of learning and the need for appropriate pedagogies for diversity and learning. Not only does she concentrate on classroom praxis, but also on collaborative research and research as praxis.

This article makes a further contribution by arguing that teachers need to reflect on the intersectionality (Crenshaw 2003; Shields 2008; Wetherell 1996) of their cultural and religious discourses and their gender identity². Furthermore they need to consider the extent and strength of their ‘gender identity capital’ with a view to transformative classroom praxis³.

Given the continuing gender inequality and crisis with regard to gender-based violence in South Africa (Bhana, de Lange & Mitchell 2009), the education of learners with regard to gender-based issues has been identified as critical. In South Africa, human rights issues are introduced across the school curriculum. This means that in every subject issues related

¹ This widely accepted concept suggests that successful teaching requires successful learning and vice versa (Jacobs, Vakalisa & Gawe 2011).

² *Gender identity* as used in this article does not refer to *sexual orientation*. It refers to the way in which, and to what extent, the female teacher conceptualizes her role as a woman and as a female teacher.

³ Classroom practice refers to a technical skill, whereas classroom praxis refers to a teacher’s ability to engage in reflection and to internalise new knowledge so as to inform new action (Roux & Du Preez 2006).

to human rights should be addressed. However, there is a disjuncture between policy and the implementation thereof. While official education policy documents promote gender equality in accordance with South Africa's Constitution and Bill of Rights (Republic of South Africa 1996a; 1996b), the teaching-learning thereof is not adequately articulated in classroom practice. Recently, an international project, *Human Rights Education in Diversity: Empowering Girls in Rural and Metropolitan School Environments* (Roux 2009), focused on the necessity of embarking on a gendered perspective towards Human Rights Education (De Wet, Roux, Simmonds & Ter Avest 2012). This project attempts to address how to generate, through professional pedagogy, a just society with gender equality⁴ as underpinned by the Manifesto of Values, Education and Democracy (Department of Education 2001), policy documents on Religion in Education (Department of Education 2003a), Human Rights Education (Department of Education 2003b) and other curriculum initiatives.

While the project itself focuses specifically on female learners between the ages of 11 and 16, empirical research (Jarvis 2013) emanating from the project focuses on selected female teachers and their understanding of gender equality. More specifically, the impact of teachers' cultural and religious discourses on their normative professionalism is explored. The findings of this research respond to the question asked by Roux (2012) as to why, nearly two decades into a new political democratic dispensation in South Africa, with a well-established constitution and legal system, gender inequality is still perpetuated.

Much gender discrimination has been concealed under the guise of cultural and religious tradition with political, religious and cultural leaders defending the origin of specific ritual and practices. Research has shown that women are being invisibilised, their needs ignored and their voices silenced (hooks 1992; Jarvis 2013; Khau 2012; Molapo 2005; Morojele 2009; Subrahmanian 2005; UNESCO 2002). Gender oppression takes place as the result of a direct power relationship between men and women in which men dominate women. Men and women need to contest or conform to various gender positionings every time they engage in social discourse. Patriarchy is

⁴ Meaning that men and women are equal in quality and identical in value or worth, enjoying a shared humanity, with male and female having the same rights and opportunities (Subrahmanian 2005).

the most important structure supporting male domination (Measor & Sikes 1992).

This article argues that the individual female teacher needs to exercise agency by challenging male hegemony in her personal, social and professional domains. The extent and strength of her ‘gender identity capital’ will determine her efficacy in addressing gender related issues, transforming her classroom practice into classroom praxis.

Curriculum and Classroom Practice/ Praxis

Children spend a substantial part of their lives in schools. Classrooms can serve as meeting places which provide safe spaces in which to reflect on and challenge social norms such as that of gender inequality. Apart from the family and community, formal schooling is a key place where children develop a frame of reference through which they mediate gender (Gosselin 2007; Maccoby 2000).

The South African school curriculum includes the compulsory subjects, Life Skills (LS) (Grades R – 6) and Life Orientation (LO) (Grades 7 – 12), which explicitly incorporate human rights issues such as gender equality. Religion Education, as included within the LS/ LO curriculum, provides the opportunity for both teachers and their learners to explore religious discourses pertaining to issues of gender equality.

The report of the Commission for Gender Equality (2007) quotes the Curriculum Directorate (South African National Department of Education), stating that the compulsory subject LS/ LO⁵ is the ‘mother body’ for considering gender equality as a learning aim covering as it does, all issues of gender stereotyping. A review of available literature reveals, however, that the majority of teachers involved in the teaching-learning of LS/ LO have received no formal preparation to engage with the complex and multi-faceted LS/ LO curriculum (Jarvis 2008; 2013; Prinsloo 2007; Rooth 2005; Van Deventer 2007) and this is a concern both among researchers as well as stakeholders (Du Preez 2008; Roux 2012).

⁵ The rationale being that LS/ LO underpins the whole of preparation for life, namely the learner’s personal, social and physical development.

Teacher Identities

Teacher identities play a significant role in the teaching-learning context (De Wet *et al.* 2012; Jarvis 2008; 2009; 2013; Samuel & Stephens 2000; White 2012). Roux (2012:41) contends that ‘teachers cannot mediate or facilitate knowledge and skills pertaining to human rights without understanding their own position, identity and beliefs’. Research in multicultural societies (Jarvis 2008; 2009; 2013; Roux 2007; 2012) has shown that a teacher’s religious and cultural identities can substantially influence the meeting space (classroom) and can determine the outcome of teaching-learning.

Female teachers facilitating LS/ LO do not necessarily have a common understanding of the cultural challenges and diversities they face when teaching-learning about gender issues and they could be uncomfortable doing so. The discussion of human rights and more specifically, the right to gender equality could well conflict with certain religious and traditional community values and this could result in resistance to the implementation of particular sections of the LS/ LO curriculum. There are teachers who could well be uncomfortable teaching-learning about gender equality. If a teacher feels that the LS/ LO curriculum’s content contradicts her religious and cultural discourses, then invariably that part of the curriculum is disregarded or considerably altered (Jarvis 2008; 2009; 2013).

The findings of various research projects have shown that in practice, teachers interact differently and often inequitably with their female and male learners (Renzetti, Curran & Maier 2012). The gendered expectations teachers have of their learners have a great impact on their learners (Korkmaz 2007; Lindley & Keithley 1991). To this can be added a hidden curriculum⁶ of gender differentiation which is provided by stereotypes. Roux (2012:36) maintains that the

[c]ultural and religious practices and the experiences of its recipients will impact on how the curriculum is interpreted and the hidden curriculum is portrayed.

⁶ The hidden curriculum ‘... refers to student learning that is not described by curriculum planners or teachers as an explicit aim of instruction even though it results from deliberate practices and organizational structures’ (Boostrom 2010:439).

Teachers have to consider their personal behaviour with regard to gender equality, because gender issues touch not only their classroom practice but how they live gender equality in their own lives. There is a need for them to reflect on their personal, social and professional situatednesses and how these inform their classroom practice. Teaching-learning of gender equality could be challenging for teachers who have not reflected on the construction of their own gender identity. This article argues that a safe space (Roux 2012) needs to be created in which teachers can explore the intersectionality between their cultural and religious discourses and their gender identity. Only when teachers have explored their own religious and cultural identities with regard to gender equality, can they create safe spaces for meaningful teaching-learning to take place with regard to gender issues. By doing so they would not be teaching about the human right to gender equality in a reductionist way (classroom practice), but rather meaningfully, creating a safe space for their learners to explore their own gender identities (classroom praxis). This has the potential to be transformative for the learners.

Research Methodology: Feminist, Narrative Inquiry

Jarvis's (2013) research is located within a feminist paradigm. The aim is to challenge gender inequalities in society, raise women's consciousness about their position in a male dominated society and contribute to the transformation of the lives of women (Merrill & West 2009). This was achieved by recognizing the primacy of the participants' personal, subjective experiences and the diversity thereof, and engaging with their self-narratives. Drawing on some aspects of Noddings' (1984) ethics of care, a 'safe space' was created for each participant to share her self-narrative 'in a moment in time and space' (Roux 2012:33), not just physically, but also figuratively (Du Preez 2012; Redmond 2010; Stengel & Weems 2010). It was the place where they could feel sufficiently secure to unburden themselves (Jansen 2009).

Narrative inquiry was the preferred research methodology. In telling their stories, the self-narrative was transforming the story tellers, offering an authentic voice (Nothling 2001) and elaborating on their situated knowledges (Haraway 1991; Haraway & Schneider 2005) in which their self-narratives were produced. Methods for collecting these self-narratives included self-administered questionnaires, written narratives and semi-structured,

individual, face-to-face interviews. Permission to engage in the research was sought from, and granted by, the relevant provincial Departments of Education as well as the participating teachers themselves.

Nine female teachers situated in six schools in four of the nine provinces in South Africa voluntarily participated in this study. The schools were government schools representative of both peri-urban and metropolitan contexts and diverse in terms of cultural, religious and socio-economic circumstances. In each school the teachers who participated were female teachers of LS/ LO, teaching in either the General Education and Training, Intermediate phase (Grades 4 – 9) or Further Education and Training phase (Grades 10 -12). Not one of the teachers who participated in this research had received any formal training in the teaching-learning of LS/ LO. They had simply been assigned to teach the subject.

The questionnaires comprised both closed- and open-ended questions. The closed questions elicited appropriate biographical information from each participant. The open-ended questions allowed participants to respond freely. The focus of these questions included their understanding of human rights and gender equality and their approach to the teaching-learning of gender equality in their classroom practice. In their written narrative the participants described their religious and cultural identities and the position of women in these religious and cultural traditions. They commented on how they think their religious and cultural discourses could inform their teaching-learning of gender equality in their classroom practice. Issues were identified to probe for further clarification in individual interviews.

The responses to the questionnaires, written narratives and interviews were crystallized to lend authenticity (Luttrell 2010; Maree 2007; Newman 2011). Employing narrative analysis, the crystallised data were analysed and discussed using the theoretical framework presented below as the lens for analysis. Each individual teacher's self-narrative was analysed using the Dialogical Self Theory as the theoretical lens for analysis and then the 'narrative linkages' (Perumal 2012), drawn from across all nine self-narratives, were interpreted. The data analysis provided insight into the selected teachers' understanding of gender equality and the position in general of women in their religious and cultural discourses. An understanding was also provided of the participants' own gender identity in their personal, social and professional domains, and the articulation thereof in their classroom practice.

Theoretical Framework: Postmodern Identity Theories and the Dialogical Self Theory

The theoretical framework underpinning the research is applied specifically to understand⁷ the self-narratives of the selected female teachers who participated in the research. Postmodern identity theories are drawn on, considering as they do, the on-going, subjective, collective and interactive construction of identity. Individuals' identities are not fixed but rather in a state of flux (Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner & Cain 2001; White 2012). Individuals are created by systems and networks of power in society and in this sense are 'made' to varying degrees by the dominant relationships and structures of society (Foucault 1980). However, they also have the capacity to 'make' themselves according to the way in which they respond to the intersectionality of, in this case, gender, religion and culture. Identity needs to be considered in terms of a balance between structural factors and agency or subjectivity (Alcoff & Mendieta 2003; Foucault 1980; Hall 1996; Mendieta 2003; Wetherell 1996; White 2012). Women are 'targets' of gender discrimination on the one hand but simultaneously, as they internalise the roles and attitudes that maintain oppression they become brokers of their own oppression by not challenging male hegemony, and thereby perpetuating it (Bell, Washington, Weinstein & Love 1997; Khau 2012).

Gender identity is not something an individual is or has but something continually created and recreated, reinforced and re-empowered through everyday social and cultural practices (Butler 1990), self-narrative and self-dialogue. While a social pattern may decide on an individual's gender identity, it is never the social pattern alone that makes this classification and nor does it do so once and for all. Female teachers would need to deconstruct and reshuffle the collective identity of patriarchy in order to establish their own gender identity as professional females who promote gender equality in their classroom practice/ praxis.

The dialogical self provides a link between self and society (Hermans & Hermans-Konopka 2008). Hermans's (2001; 2002; 2003; 2008; 2011) Dialogical Self Theory advocates that individuals live not only in external spaces, but also in the internal space of their 'society-of-mind'. Possible gender identity re-creation can result from the 'dialogical self in action'

⁷ *Verstehen* (Schwandt 2000).

(Hermans & Dimaggio 2007). This occurs when the individual moves from one position to another in the self as a way ‘of gaining understanding about the self in relation to the world’ (Hermans & Hermans-Konopka 2010:8). She does so, for example, by adopting a ‘counter-position’ to voices representing male hegemony.

Self-dialogue (to an internal audience, her ‘society-of-mind’) and self-narration (to an external audience, in this case, the researcher) add to the valuation of a female teacher’s positioning in response to the situated knowledges of her life.

The Role of the Self-narrative

There is a link between self-narrative and agency. When individuals tell their story they reclaim themselves (Paul, Christensen & Frank 2000; Spry 2001). Self-narrative has a role to play in enabling individuals to discover the degree to which they are entangled with each other and, furthermore, the extent to which it might be possible to become disentangled from each other and thus be freed to build new identities (Nuttall 2009). Telling their stories can help individuals to make sense of their lives, past and present, thereby also enabling them to resist the possible manipulation and exploitation by the powerful (Gonçalves & Ribeiro 2012; Nuttall 2009; White 2012). While self-narratives may not change the master narrative of patriarchy they can undermine it by fragmenting it and re-interpreting it (Lawler 2008). In this sense the self-narrative can be emancipatory and empowering in addressing male hegemony. The articulation of this agency however, depends greatly on the extent and strength of a teacher’s ‘identity capital’.

Significance of ‘Identity Capital’

The basic assumption in the concept of ‘identity capital’ (Côté 1996; 2005) is that every person has it to some extent. ‘Identity capital’ refers to the stock of resources, or ‘set of strengths’ individuals have when constructing, framing and presenting their identity in social circumstances (Côté & Levine 2002:164). ‘Identity capital’ comprises two assets, namely tangible resources such as social group membership and intangible resources which could include the ability to reflect, and negotiate self-identity. The accumulation of

successful ‘identity exchanges’, namely the social interaction of an individual with others, increases an individual’s ‘identity capital’. Hermans (2001; 2002; 2003; 2008; 2011), in his Dialogical Self Theory, contends that it is in her mind that the female teacher possibly finds agentic power by voicing implicitly or explicitly, and/ or practising, a ‘counter-position’ to gender discrimination in her personal, social and professional domains. It is the extent and the strength of ‘identity capital’ that is at stake in concrete situations. It can be argued that as a teacher’s ‘gender identity capital’ increases, she will be able to voice and practise in increasing measure and with increasing confidence, ‘counter-positions’ to male dominance in her ‘society-of-mind’ and in the larger society, thereby transforming her gender identity from that of less than, to that of equal to. Increased ‘gender identity capital’ can constructively inform her classroom practice/ praxis.

Research Findings⁸: The Significance of having ‘Gender Identity Capital’

The research findings show that the selected female teachers disapprove of gender discrimination, rejecting the culturally dominant meanings ascribed to gender to a greater or lesser extent, in their personal, social and professional domains. However, they had become accustomed to a gendered lived experience. While they were reflective, the majority ceased to reflect about gender inequality at a certain level because they did not know how to respond to the complexity of the situation. The participants voiced their disapproval of patriarchal structures and practices in the society in which they live. Nevertheless, the majority of the participants do not, in practice, substantially challenge patriarchy in their religious and cultural discourses. The intangible attitudes of male superiority are internalised by the majority of the participants and they assimilate what is expected of them and they comply in their social and professional domains. In this way both the females and males keep these attitudes alive.

The participants’ ‘gender identity capital’ is strongest in their personal domain and they were able to voice explicitly and practise a

⁸ Pseudonyms are used to protect the anonymity of the participants and their actual words are reflected in italics.

‘counter-position’ to patriarchy in their personal domain. However, as they moved through their social and professional domains their ‘gender identity capital’ became weaker. In both their social and professional domains their ‘counter-position’ to patriarchy was primarily voiced implicitly to an internal audience in their self-dialogue. Their ‘counter-position’ was also voiced explicitly to an external audience, more so in the religious and cultural arena than in the professional domain. However, with the exception of one participant, Thabi, in neither their social, nor professional domain was their ‘counter-position’ practised substantially. By remaining silent in their professional domain, both in word and action, these female teachers perpetuated the *status quo* of male hegemony.

Sharing their self-narratives provided an intervention for the participants as they considered the position of women in general in their religion and culture. The participants appeared to have a similar understanding of gender equality and a desire for this to be their lived experience. This intangible resource was the main strength in their ‘gender identity capital’. As they negotiated their various internal and external positions, the extent and strength (or lack of strength) of their ‘gender identity capital’ became evident as they voiced implicitly (self-dialogue), explicitly, or not at all, and/ or practised or did not practise a ‘counter-position’ to patriarchy. To varying degrees, the participants exhibited the potential of re-positioning the collective voice of patriarchy in their personal, social and professional domains.

Professional Context

The research findings show that in their professional domain the female teachers are subjected to male hegemony. In some school contexts, the way in which the school is spatially organised (for example, separate staff rooms for males and females) and managed (the male members of staff having all the power in the school), reflects and perpetuates gender inequality thereby actively maintaining and reproducing structures and relationships of male dominance. The men are viewed as authority figures by the male learners especially, and command more respect from their learners than that afforded to the female teachers. Purity says that as a female colleague,

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you just keep quiet ... because you are a woman.

By *keeping quiet* the status quo is reinforced and Purity and female teachers who adopt the same position become brokers of their own subjugation in their professional domain. In Thabi's school the men on the staff undermine the two women who are on the School Management Team as the men do not want to take orders from a female. Thabi says that,

the men don't feel it is suitable for women to control them.

However, drawing on her 'gender identity capital', Thabi, as a member of the school management team, does not accept these male dominant attitudes and she challenges any form of gender discrimination. She reports to her school Principal that she ends up carrying a heavier load than that of her male counterparts,

... because if you ask them they don't want to do it ... they don't like to see you just taking a position and doing what you can do.

By confronting these attitudes, and every other time she takes a stand, Thabi draws on her 'gender identity capital' and when she is successful in doing so, the extent and strength of her 'gender identity capital' increases and so does her agentic power.

Jabu expresses her disillusion in the Department of Education's ability to substantially address gender inequality. She refers to the male Deputy Principal at her school who, despite having attended transformation forums organised by the Department of Education, continues to *talk down to women* and he treats them as having less value than their male colleagues. Jabu challenges this patriarchal attitude in her self-dialogue, to an internal audience, only.

Several schools pay lip-service to gender equality, more often than not, confusing this with gender parity which refers to ensuring an equal number of males and females serve on the school management team, for example. However, the voice of female colleagues is not heeded or taken seriously. In most cases, female teachers who lack 'gender identity capital' and who are subjected to male hegemony in their workplace, perpetuate attitudes of male supremacy in their classroom practice by either ignoring

gender issues or only superficially explicitly voicing some resistance. With the exception of one teacher, they did not engage in classroom praxis.

Classroom Practice

The participants in this study were in agreement that their religious and cultural identities informed their teaching-learning about gender equality in their classroom practice. Kate says,

... what I teach will lean more to what I believe and what my religion is and how I have been brought up.

In Merlot's opinion,

if you have been brought up to be submissive ... never standing up for [yourself] to men, then that is what you are going to teach.

The research findings showed that teachers found it difficult to teach human rights and in particular, gender equality, without having negotiated their own gender identity as shaped by their religious and cultural discourses. Annie contends that teachers' lived experience of gender inequality *becomes such a part of them*. Bongi's response validates this observation when she says that when she teaches about gender equality, *it makes [her] feel like [she is] a liar* because what she teaches about gender equality is the antithesis of the position held by women in her religion and culture. She contends further that by teaching about gender equality the female learners become confused,

because we say that women are equal to the man, but in their culture and homes the man is the boss.

The majority of the participants, lacking 'gender identity capital' in their professional domain, implicitly voiced (to an internal audience) and superficially practised their 'counter-position' to patriarchy. Human rights education and specifically gender related issues were infused minimally (Carrim & Keet 2005; Du Preez 2008) in their classroom practice as they touched upon the first layer of inquiry or investigation with regard to gender

equality. They practised gender equality by, in most instances, treating their female and male learners equally, but they did not substantially engage with why they did so, nor did they use the opportunity to reflect, together with their learners, on gender equality. For example, Amy expects,

exactly the same standard, quality and abilities ... from boys and girls.

Jabu gives out *jobs and* [does not] *make them gender specific*, saying there is *no gender bias*. Purity arranges her classroom so that girls and boys sit together and, she gives girls and boys the same tasks. She focuses on getting the genders to work co-operatively. However, there is little or no reflection with regard to why female and male learners should work co-operatively and no explicit voicing and practising of gender equality that confronts patriarchal attitudes.

The research shows that a teacher's gender identity informs her perspective on certain gender related issues such as the use of contraception, for example. Aware of social gender discourses Bongi, Jabu and Purity, concerned for girls who fall pregnant and then drop out of school, warn the girls about sexual promiscuity. Purity teaches the girls that they,

must look after themselves because they are the one who are more vulnerable than men.

She also tells them that the onus is on them to *be careful about your future* and to make sure that they use contraception, but to do so, without the males knowing. Her cultural discourse has informed her that men do not like females using contraception and taking control of their bodies. Informed by their religious and social discourses, these three participants impress upon their female learners their own convictions with regard to female dress, suggesting that the way in which girls dress will determine the level of respect boys have for them. The message that these participants are passing on to the female learners is that they are responsible for male behaviour towards them. This message reinforces the superiority of males.

Teachers who address gender equality marginally in their classroom practice miss the opportunities of engaging critically with religious and cultural practices which promote gender discrimination. Their teaching-

learning lacks a transformative edge. Purity, for example, did not critically discuss with her class, the virginity testing celebration *uNomkhubulwano*⁹. This celebration does not create a safe space for the female learners who become targets for arranged marriage or abduction. Nor did she critically engage them with regard to the cultural practice, *uKuoqoma*. This practice sets the female learners up for potential failure in terms of completing their education. If they fall pregnant they have to leave school. It would seem that these cultural practices are accepted as a given and not substantially questioned in a forum, such as the Life Orientation lesson, which provides the opportunity to do so.

Four participants explicitly voiced ‘counter-positions’ to gender inequality in their classroom practice, seeking to transform attitudes, not just in the classroom, but also so as to impact the broader community. Ruby did so by focusing her lessons on empowering girls for the workplace, teaching them to recognise *violation against women in all spheres*, including sexual harassment and gender discrimination. She explicitly encourages her learners,

to respect each other, to encourage each other and to support each other across genders.

Amy addressed gender stereotyping specifically in the area of sport, while Annie considered together with her learners, the position of women in different religions and cultures. Annie teaches the girls,

to stand up for themselves.

She also impresses upon her female and male learners that

things are right or wrong [whether] you are a girl or a boy.

These participants dis-identify with culturally dominant meanings of gender.

⁹ In traditional Zulu culture, there is a sequence of events which unfold before a traditional wedding. First there is *uNomkhubulwano* (the opportunity to select a partner), then the pre *lobola* payment followed by *uKuoqoma* which is sleeping together without penetration, followed by *lobola*, the full bride price, then *ummabo*, the giving of wedding gifts, and then the traditional wedding.

Classroom Praxis

Thabi is an example of a female teacher who voices explicitly and practises her 'counter-position' to patriarchy in every domain of her life. The extent and strength of her 'gender identity capital', drawing on the intangible resources which include her ability to reflect, and negotiate her self-identity, is such that she is able to translate her personal gender identity transformation from her personal domain into her social and professional domains. This informs her classroom practice, where she challenges her female and male learners to engage critically with issues of gender equality, not only within the classroom but also in their personal and social domains. She not only voices explicitly her 'counter-position' to gender inequality, but also practises her 'counter-position' to gender discrimination by treating the female and male learners in her school equally and by addressing any form of gender abuse be it verbal or physical. She says that,

the girls whose rights are violated know that they are free to report to me.

She then administers appropriate punishment *depending on the type of offence.*

Thabi emphasises that

what they [the learners] see in their homes/ families is not right ... all individuals are equal.

She advises her female and male learners not to challenge their parents when they see gender abuse at home as she is aware of the retribution that her learners will encounter. Nevertheless, she encourages them to listen to what she teaches them so that when they are *a grown up woman or a grown up man* they will know how they should behave, and *what is expected and not expected*. Thabi's gender identity transformation empowers her to conscientise her learners about their right to gender equality so as to enable them to agitate for gender equality. Her classroom praxis is transformative for her learners.

The research findings signal that the deeper female teachers reflect on their personal lives and their lived experience of gender (in)equality, and

the gendered expectations they have of their learners, the more transformative their teaching-learning will be, moving from classroom practice to praxis.

Conclusion

It can be concluded that while female teachers are ‘made’ to varying degrees by the patriarchal structures of society, they have the capacity, to varying degrees, to ‘make’ themselves. While they are shaped by their religious and cultural discourses, female teachers can exercise agency by dis-identifying with, and adopting a ‘counter-position’ to the master narrative of patriarchy. Their gender identity transformation needs to be articulated in their personal, social and professional domains by their resistance to, and challenging of, male domination. Their ability to do so depends on the extent and strength of their ‘gender identity capital’. As a female teacher’s ‘gender identity capital’ strengthens, she will be able to voice, both implicitly (in her self-dialogue to an internal audience), and explicitly (in her classroom praxis), and practise in increasing measure and with increasing confidence, ‘counter-positions’ to male dominance and gender inequality.

In addressing the question posed in the introduction to this article as to why gender inequality is still perpetuated, research findings (Jarvis 2013) indicate that part of the answer lies in the exploration of teacher gender identity. Providers of Initial Teacher Education programmes are duty bound to provide intervention strategies in their tertiary programmes to enable female and male pre-service teachers to engage with their personal and professional teacher identity development. Interventions could be designed for pre-service teachers to reflectively consider and explore their self-narratives pertaining to their gender identity. Such an opportunity should provide a safe space in which they can begin to deconstruct religious and cultural discourses and build both tangible and intangible ‘gender identity capital’ before they move into the professional domain and more specifically classroom practice. Self-dialogue, providing the dynamic flexibility for continued internal dialogue and the re-positioning of internal and external positions in the ‘society-of-mind’, can lead to external gender identity stability. Teacher gender identity transformation could lead to classroom praxis which has the potential of informing the development of their female and male learners and to be transformative for South African society.

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