Metaphoric Meanderings: Metaphors of Teachers' Emotional Labour[5]

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Abstract

This article addresses teachers' emotional responses to educational reforms and changes as identified in their metaphoric narratives. Therefore, it reflects the policy impacts on teachers' practice and professional well-being. An analysis of narratives extracted from semi-structured interviews, observations, and document analysis (Badal, 2018) sought to reveal the representations of teachers' emotions as expressed through their use of metaphors in their discussions of the educational reform known as CAPS. Although that 2018 study did not investigate the teachers' metaphor usage, noticing their prevalence provided an opportunity to advance the research by analysing the metaphors used by the participants. Drawing on the framework of conceptual metaphors in research on educational change, this study generates insights into how teachers' metaphors can serve as windows into their emotional responses amidst the backdrop of structural and systemic oppression. It further recommends that teachers reclaim their voices amidst the tumultuous torrents of educational reform. The findings also contribute to the scholarly discourse on educational practice and policy.

Keywords: conceptual metaphors, metaphors in education, metaphors of teachers' emotions, metaphors of teachers' thinking, teacher vulnerabilities

Introduction

The apartheid government in South Africa pre 1994 ensured an unequal educational terrain, which created

disparate school systems that were characterised by regulation. In that era, township schools, which are

the context of this article, were created to sustain inequality and the domination of Black, Coloured, and

Indian learners. In 1994, after dismantling apartheid, the fledging government immediately sought to

incorporate the ideals of democracy and liberation to improve educational policy reform efforts.

Unfortunately, the country's material and symbolic resources were ill prepared for such drastic change;

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South Africa followed the path of nations like England, Australia, and the United States and adopted a national curriculum called the Curriculum and Assessment Policy (CAPS), which does not account for diversity among learners, teachers, and contexts. Furthermore, the persistent issue of marginalising teachers' voices during the inception and execution phases of the reform played out in the South Africa educational terrain (Badal, 2023), replicating global educational contexts (Apple, 1987; Ball, 2003).

CAPS is known for its specifications relating to pace, sequence, content, and alignment with assessment tasks. This type of curriculum has been criticised by Western scholars such as Michael Apple (1987) and Stephen Ball (2003), with Cuban (2004, p. 60) calling them bureaucratic models, "back to basics" and "business-minded prescriptions." It is not surprising that scholars have argued that CAPS expects teachers to become technicians who merely implement the curriculum without any cognitive process (Chetty, 2015). Such metaphorical depictions reflect the policy's impacts on teachers' practice and often precipitate catalytic emotional connections to their professional well-being. Reform spaces that do not leave room for teachers' voices demotivate teachers because they feel powerless and alienated from influencing their practice.

Reforms characterised by top-down imposition and lack of consultation, impose more than just physical changes on teachers' work (Han et al., 2023). Such reforms are categorised by a focus on assessments and performativity, which disempowers teachers because their worth is aligned with learner performance regardless of context and capacity. Shalem and Hoadley argued that "a regulatory framework of teacher accountability has reshaped teachers' work and weakened their control over the pedagogical process and thus deskilled them" (2009, p. 120). In this context, teachers are viewed as mere implementers without a voice, subject to external control, and lacking teacher autonomy (Badal, 2018). Moreover, CAPS fails to accommodate the diversity among learners, teacher capacity, and contexts in a country where the legacy of apartheid has created issues of equity. The persistent practice of marginalising teachers' voices during the inception and execution phases of the reform was also highlighted in scholarship because policy discourses frequently confine teachers solely to the realm of implementation (Badal, 2023). The preceding discussions on the nature of reforms and their effects on teachers' power and status have produced a range of metaphors about teachers and teaching, discourses of power, and suppression of teacher authority through top-down commands. There seems to be a gap in knowledge about teachers' use of metaphors and their link to teacher emotions in the contexts of reforms. Hence, the metaphors used in education and teaching, especially in the contexts of reforms, need to be explored further.

Hargreaves (2005, p. 837) argued that teachers' emotions are only acknowledged when it comes to helping "administrators and reformers to manage and offset teachers' resistance to change." More recently,

scholars have noted that "empirical research on teachers' engagement with curriculum reform from the emotional perspective is rare in the existing literature" (Yang et al., 2022, p. 1). Therefore, more studies are needed to advance the understanding of the role of teachers' emotions in curriculum reform. The definition of teacher emotion used in this study is aligned with that of Benesch (2020), who argued that teachers' navigation of conflicts and tensions arising from reform policies can be conceptualised as emotional labour. Moreover, teachers' emotional labour is underpinned by the process of managing their feelings toward the reform by either complying or resisting. Zembylas (2005) argued that emotions are rooted in individual sensemaking, are constructed by contextual uniqueness, and relate to power and discourses of dominance. Thus, emotions, notions of power, and metaphors work as mutually integrated constructs interwoven with the intricate teaching and learning landscape, conjoining teachers' cognition and emotion (Han et al., 2023, p. 31).

This study emanates from an interrogation of narratives in educational change studies (Badal, 2018), which revealed that metaphors found in teachers' narratives usually go unnoticed by scholars. That omission encouraged an analysis of the data from that 2018 study and gave rise to this article. As "critical levers for change" (Ehren et al., 2022, p. 2) and for the success of reforms, how teachers' emotions translate into practice is imperative for policy development. Given the close relationship between teacher feelings, emotions, and practice, examining the metaphors teachers use to describe their professional image and teaching roles within a reform is crucial. An examination through the lens of the conceptual metaphor aimed to obtain deeper insights into the nuances of teachers' expressions and perceptions, particularly about their roles, status, and narratives of knowledge within the context of their emotional experience of the CAPS reform. These experiences are embedded in their metaphoric expressions, which were analysed through the lens of conceptual metaphor theory initiated by Lakoff and Johnson (1980) and other scholars who followed that tradition. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) pointed out that conceptual metaphors are communicational-conceptual mechanisms that provide a source for understanding how people think and act, and can reveal information that normal descriptions cannot. Hence, the range of metaphors that teachers select to describe their perspectives reveals their responses to the reforms, and how they construct the teachers' roles in their practice.

Previous studies in this tradition have focused on identifying how teachers conceptualised and formulated metaphors; on the link between teacher metaphors, beliefs, and practice; and on the relationship between teachers' metaphors and their practices (Ungar, 2016). This study considers the sociocultural and political dimensions of teachers' perspectives on the CAPS in order to explore their experiences and the role of emotion in their narratives of engagement. This approach provided a space to interact with teachers' emotional labour in situated contexts. Teacher emotion is believed to be related to issues of power and is complicated by the role of the professional or contextual knowledge that teachers possess. The study was

informed by a substantial body of work on organisational metaphors, and sought to understand how various metaphorical images used in their narratives revealed the teachers' emotional responses to the reform. Accordingly, the study asked the research question: "How do teachers' use of metaphors reveal their emotional reactions to the CAPS reform?"

Conceptual Metaphor Framework

The theoretical frame informing this study is a sociocognitive linguistic frame that enables an investigation of "deeply held conceptualisations about a topic and language used as the means for coordinating our perception of, and participation in, everyday experiences" (Tait-McCutcheon & Drake, 2016, p. 4). Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) cognitive theory of metaphor pointed out that metaphors are more than aesthetic ornaments that adorn language or a direct comparison. As features of figurative language, metaphors function as representations of "mental models through which people understand their world by relating complex phenomena to something previously experienced and concrete" (Saban et al., 2007, p. 123). From this, we draw the meaning that metaphors allow individuals opportunity to understand the complexities of their worlds through figurative language, which appears to amplify their emotions and feelings related to the experiences. Saban et al. (2007, pp. 123–124) argued that the "metaphor invites researchers to explore comparisons" to observe similarities and use contexts as images of others. In this way, metaphors provide a lens through which a person, system, or practice can be viewed in response to the curriculum, artefacts, processes, and mandates in contexts of high control.

Educational Change and Metaphors

Educational change is a complex and comprehensive term involving revisions of policies, curricula, the type of learner and teacher envisaged, teaching and learning, theories, and policies that govern/mandate teachers' actions. The journey of educational change has been fraught with tension, conflict, and contestation with emergent metaphors such as "teacher-proof curricula" (Winter, 2017, p. 64), teacher resistance, and teacher compliance. In this context, teacher knowledge is often disregarded; they "have histories and emotions and entanglements with their previous knowledge and experiences and feel undervalued when asked to disregard it and start anew" (Badal, 2018, p. 48). The literature on teachers' emotions in contexts of reform, focuses on how "teachers correlate favoured teaching behaviors with emotions and assess the degree to which teachers can manage their emotions" (Benesh, 2020, p. 2). However, it is time to move away from this binary focus and shift the research lens beyond the dichotomy to consider how cultural artefacts and reform approaches influence teachers' emotions and reconstruct their responses to reforms.

Research on educational change has produced metaphors describing changes in epistemologies, theories, methodologies, approaches, and practices. Gray (2007, p. 194) described teaching as an "occupational culture," asserting that this culture has shifted due to the rise of managerialism. Citing examples such as routine planning, assessment, and reporting practices commonly found in English schools, she further noted that teachers' work in England has been increasingly subjected to surveillance and evaluation driven by commercial management mechanisms. The United States, which pioneered the trend toward managerialism and the marketisation of education, was described by Apple (1987) as embracing a new approach to teaching—describing teaching as a technical implementation of reforms. This approach has led to increased labour and the implementation of externally determined plans by teachers in a robotic manner. Thus, the marketisation and economic focus of reforms have witnessed the emergence of new metaphors like teaching as a market, with the reform being the goods and the teachers providing service to their students—the consumers (Botha, 2009).

In South Africa, one would expect to find similar metaphors given the distinctly hierarchical nature of the system in which the national government sets the service conditions and education policy for educators, provincial departments employ teachers, and districts and circuits set and control standards for schools. Within this scenario, some teachers are still dedicated to developing deep learning and to protecting their professional integrity, which is waning under the weight of crushing bureaucracy (Badal, 2023). Teachers are required to teach the national curriculum, which defines the instructional activities and assessments to be implemented (Ehren et al., 2022), and comply with its specifications in the interest of national homogeneity. Thus, teachers feel that they have been deskilled, deprofessionalised, and compelled to adhere to curriculum and assessment processes that they feel are in straitjackets (Tait-McCutcheon & Drake, 2016). These controversies continue to exist and contribute to teachers' emotional labour.

Teacher Emotions and Metaphors

Scholars have acknowledged that metaphors function in areas beyond literature, especially in education where they contribute to meaning making beyond playing ornamental, aesthetic, and pedagogical functions. Metaphor "forges vital links between the known and the unknown and the one holding and expressing knowledge and those desiring to come to know" (Craig, 2005, p. 196). Scholars such as Clandinin (1986), Clandinin and Connelly (1988), and Munby (1988) among others, have made compelling cases for metaphor research in education. As a discursive tool, metaphors are closely linked to teachers' emotions (in contexts of reforms) in terms of their perceptions and responses. As stated by Zembylas (2005, p. 936), "power, agency and resistance are at the centre of exploring the role of emotion," making teachers' use of metaphor corridors to understanding their emotions. Studies that examine teachers' emotions and responses to reforms neglect the hidden meanings in teacher narratives hence, cognitive and affective

dimensions should not only be seen as private emotions in response to external events. Teachers' emotional states in this context do not connote degrees of emotional intelligence, lack of self-control, or other affective states but echo their perceptions of hegemonic constructions of teachers' professional authority in response to bureaucratic influences that impact their work lives (Benesch, 2020, p. 28).

Metaphors act as a bridge between the personal and the systemic, encapsulating teachers' feelings, frustrations, hopes, and challenges within the broader context of educational change. The choice of metaphors often reflects the depth and complexity of their emotional engagement with the reform process. For example, a teacher describing the reform as a challenging uphill climb might convey a sense of struggle and difficulty, whereas another describing it as a journey of discovery may express optimism. Through systematic analysis of such metaphors, researchers can discern not only individual teachers' emotional responses but also collective sentiments within the teaching community. This process facilitates a deeper understanding of how emotions are woven into the fabric of educational reform, shedding light on the subjective experiences of educators in the broader sociocultural context in which these emotions unfold.

This study aligns with scholars such as Zembylas (2005) and Benesch (2020) who expressed concerns about cognitive approaches to emotions that exclude the influence of power relations. Consequently, it argues that "power, agency, and resistance are at the centre of exploring the role of emotion" (Zembylas, 2005, p. 936). This study also finds congruence with Zembylas' proposition that teacher emotions are socially constructed discursive processes that emerge from cultural conventions, regulations, norms, and standards. Thus, emotions viewed from this lens are regarded as "discursive practices" (Zembylas, 2005, p. 936), constructed by culture, ideology, and power. Moreover, Korean theorists such as Song (2018, p. 454) have pointed out that teachers' emotions go beyond affective states to reflect challenges of prejudicial regulations and control in school contexts and demonstrate more negative emotions than positive ones (Chen, 2019).

Cascading power constructions flow in a downward spiral to the school space as the pressure from above creates a line of command and control. Hence, in the ecology of schooling, institutionalised hierarchy plays a big role in power dynamics. Management and teachers have structured responsibilities that determine who can speak or is allowed to contribute to decisions that influence teachers' roles and responsibilities. Reitzug et al.'s study involving school principals' conceptions of their leadership in a performative environment found that management styles are linear, "grounded in structural-functionalist assumptions of rationality, linearity, and straight-line cause and effect" (2008, p. 699) with a focus on performativity. Therefore, school-as-a-factory has emerged as a conceptual metaphor, measuring the product against a set outcome as teaching is aligned to achieve these targets. Power and accountability are transmitted by top-down bureaucratic communication, and teachers are aware of the limits of their influence. This chain

of command filtering from the top and trickling down to the teacher who is at the bottom of the pyramid of influence suggests that the image of the factory is replicated in the school context where it has now become a production line without concern for the broad goals of learning.

Zhao et al. found that analysing metaphors used by teachers in a specific context allowed for a reflection of "the way they view their roles and purposes in teaching and learning" (2010, p. 388). Their research examined the interpretation of metaphors in the context of life histories and found that "teachers' perceptions of their professional roles are closely linked to their self-images and their impact on the ways that students are taught and their subsequent achievement" (Zhao et al., 2010, p. 382) A veteran teacher from Zhao et al.'s study referred to herself as "teacher cubed" (2010, p. 388), providing images of a veteran who has been teaching for several decades, and showcasing the power of the metaphor to capture lifelong experiences in one potent image. Another image that came through vividly in that study was that of a robot, indicating that their job is technical and without creativity. However, the most common metaphor found in the study was teachers' reference to their job as labouring workers. The revelation presented using the words "robot" (a recurring motif) and "labouring workers" speaks to the change in teachers' work, in terms of the lack of intellectual engagement and intensification of their labour. The scholars concluded that teaching and learning are reduced to the pursuit of outputs and products, which "eliminates learning as a process" (Zhao et al., 2010, p. 390).

There have been many arguments put forth by scholars for the use of conceptual metaphors as tools to understand teachers' responses to reforms but most importantly, it has become an entry point for discourses that involve "gaining new insights into education practice and theory" (Jensen, 2006, p. 49). Consequently, addressing teachers' emotional response to educational reforms and changes reflects the policy impacts on teachers' practice and professional well-being.

Methodology

As mentioned previously, this bounded qualitative case study emerged from a doctoral study that explored teachers' perspectives on the CAPS reform a few years after it was introduced (Badal, 2018). The impetus for this study was generated by observing a substantial use of metaphorical language by three of the nine participants in the earlier study. The teachers had not been deliberately guided toward the use of metaphorical expressions of their emotions. Citing Yin (2009), Rule et al., (2011, p. 302) argued that "educational case studies typically focus on one instance, which could be a classroom, an educational project, a curriculum, or an individual learner or teacher." Thus, the phenomenon under analysis was in a bounded system as well as interrelated within a wider context that supports the small sample size (Yin, 2009). A case study characterises a bounded unit of analysis that can involve an individual, groups, institutions, and policies (Yin, 2012).

School Settings and Participants

The context of this study is township schools, which are public schools found in previously Black, Indian, and Coloured areas (as designated by the apartheid government) and linked to underfunding and poor resources. Despite great efforts by the current government to improve funding and provisions of resources, these schools remain inequitable because of the legacy left by apartheid, among other socio-economic factors of which teacher quality remains a big challenge.

Participants for the study were purposively sampled because that allowed the researcher to select "individuals and sites for study because they can purposefully inform an understanding of the research question and central phenomenon in the study" (Creswell, 2013, p. 156). The three participants were all Black women who had been teaching for more than 10 years, and were products of the apartheid schooling system, which was characterised by segregation of the races. They also held similar qualifications. The schools they taught in had mainly Black students and the staff component was also largely Black. Survivor and Empty Box (pseudonyms) taught in poor township schools, and Dynamite (pseudonym) in a better-resourced school that provided many advantages to teachers and learners. The diversity in contexts suggests that powerlessness and compliance rendered by the CAPS syllabus are experienced regardless of context.

Data Collection Methodology

The data collected for this study emerged from interviews that were recorded and transcribed exactly as the conversation flowed, and confirmed through document analysis (analysis of learners' books) and classroom observations as methods of triangulation. Two interviews and one follow-up interview were conducted, allowing the teachers to reflect on their responses and clarify the meanings behind their linguistic expressions, and the inherent features of their language use within this highly restrictive paradigm of reform. Subsequently, all notes, interpretations, and observations were shared with the participants for member checking (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). The selected metaphors were analysed in terms of their embedded meanings and "impacts on individuals and the group" (Tait-McCutcheon & Drake, 2016, p. 6). Researcher reflexivity was applied throughout crucial decisions of the research process as a means for critically inspecting the entire research process (Schwandt, 2001), and validity was ensured through "faithful reconstruction of the participant's multiple perceptions" (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001, p. 415).

The data selected for analysis included metaphors and figurative expressions that emerged from the semi-structured interviews. As a method, metaphor analysis is "particularly suited to study the meanings people invest in their actions and the interpretations they make out of them" (Kram et al., 2012, p. 310). This

methodological approach is emblematic of a systematic approach that unpacks the meanings of a context (Kram et al., 2012). However, a common limitation of metaphor analysis is that the reliability of the findings is in question in terms of the accurate identification of participants' conceptual metaphors through the analysis of linguistic metaphors. This has been recognised as a methodological challenge due to the inherent subjectivity in interpretation (Armstrong et al., 2011). This was suppressed by researcher reflexivity and member checking as explained above.

Analysis began through the process of careful reading for identification of metaphoric expressions, which were coded for further analysis. Here, the metaphors identified included linguistic expressions and imagery that the teachers used to describe their perceptions, positions, and roles in the educational change process that shaped their meanings and practices. In the next step, key categories were generated from the metaphors identified and grouped according to the meanings they illustrated. The final step of the qualitative process was to cluster the metaphoric expressions into themes and categories according to the implications for revealing teachers' emotions in order to explain "the way that metaphors are interrelated and become coherent regarding the situation in which they occur" (Charteris-Black, 2004, p. 35). Subjectivity and bias were suppressed through concentration on the linguistic aspects of the metaphor, literal versus figurative meanings, overall syntactical structure, cultural and situated, and historical context of use.

Findings

The analysis reveals that South African teachers are experiencing the emotional backlash of top-down educational change. This is demonstrated in the metaphors they used to describe the shifting sands of change, sifted through reflections that document their feelings from the onset of the reform to their current practices. The pseudonyms used for each participant (Empty Box, Survivor, and Dynamite) were selected from self-descriptions and are telling in the metaphoric potency of their emotional states. As mentioned earlier, this analysis like others in qualitative research has elements of subjectivity, however, this was limited through a focus on the application of formal analysis techniques from literary theory and metaphoric analysis, as suggested by Armstrong et al. (2011). All three participants' narratives were emotionally charged with metaphors describing the conscriptions, oppression, and commands that reconstruct their practices, roles, and status, but the overarching theme relates to teacher autonomy. Like a fountain, their metaphorical narratives flow in the direction of compliance, conformity, and silenced voices. These responses emanate from experiences of diminished control over curriculum decisions they deem appropriate to their learners' needs and goals for learning. Thus, the emotionally rich data filtered into three root metaphors, namely, forever changing, audit culture, and snoopervision, which describe the emotional recoil of fatigue, fury, and frenzy.

Forever Changing

As mentioned previously, South Africa has been through a series of curriculum changes and revisions since 1994—to the point that teachers have reported reform fatigue because of the constant need for learning new ways of working that involve drastic changes to classroom methodologies and practices. The teachers did not see the need for change therefore their metaphorical descriptions encompass a range of emotions including anger, frustration, senselessness, and emotional and physical exhaustion related to the intensification of labour and destabilisation. These reforms are believed to emanate from seats of power underscored by political ambition without consideration for the casualties who suffer reform burnout. Survivor cynically stated:

> Education is forever changing. I see some politician sitting in front of a dartboard and asking himself how he can change education. . . . Each change has left us mentally and physically exhausted.

Teacher exhaustion stems from work intensification, which became a recurring motif with emergent images representing teachers as beasts of burden that carry out the aims of others without consideration of teachers' professional needs of their contexts:

> They think teachers are donkeys with limitless energy to keep up with all the changes. We are not asked if the change is needed. . . . We are just whipped until we drop. (Empty Box)

An image of powerlessness is generated by the implication that teaching has become donkey work. "We are not asked" reveals the dissatisfaction with being excluded from contributing to the origination of the reform, confirming the argument by Elmore (1996) that teachers are seldom asked to assess whether the new curriculum effectively translates into practical actions in the classroom, and aligns with the findings of Singh (2015), which demonstrated the lack of space for teacher agency in reform contexts. The image of a donkey has many negative cultural references mostly viewed as beasts of burden. The words "whipped until we drop" introduce a sense of uncaring and reveal that teachers believe that those in power care only about their expectations for education, which are for teachers to uncritically transmit knowledge to the learners. Consequently, teachers were exhausted with the demands of the new reform and its attendant mechanisms that changed their work and destroyed their confidence.

Thus, reflections on the onset of the reform brought back memories of destabilisation and knowledge instability. Survivor's metaphors in this instance cast teachers in the mould of learners who began in the preschool phase and gradually reached the senior phase of schooling:

> When I started teaching CAPS, I felt like a Grade R learner then I was a primary school
> learner but now I guess I am a high school learner. We survive, I am a survivor.

Dynamite introduced the image of being suffocated by the quick changes and new reforms as the embrace of change choked her creativity and passion for teaching. She described teaching as being mundane and technical and gripping them in a vicious cycle of "do, do and don't." The lyrical quality of her words belies the numbing routine:

> I don't embrace change; change embraces me tight. I cannot breathe with all the
> instructions . . . you know it is like a disease . . . teach, mark, and do prep, fill in forms.
> . . . But they bring more and more changes. It is a vicious cycle of do, do and don't.

Teacher vulnerability thus far has been demonstrated by the intensification of reforms, destabilisation and emotional labour, and disillusionment at being treated as interlopers with limited autonomy in what they considered their domain—inspiring images of objectification. Thus, Empty Box reported that policymakers see her as empty, without any knowledge, experience, or capacity to offer; hence, she is a container for the deposit of new knowledge. The transmission of knowledge comes from the height of hierarchy to the hollow of teachers' core:

> I am a teacher. I should know . . . but reforms have turned me into an empty box. They
> come and put new information, new approaches, and new policies in the empty box.

The image of an empty box represents an item that once housed something of worth but when removed is worthless. This vision reveals the intimate connection of teachers with the knowledge of what their learners need. Learners are best served with expert knowledge and the experiential knowledge acquired by teachers in the unique trenches of each context. Thus, the emotions of worthlessness erode the original purpose of teaching, which is to guide learners and facilitate learning.

Audit Culture

The culture of accountability and performativity is encapsulated in the presentation of accounts and accounting for learner performance. Consequently, schools pressure teachers to "maintain their school's status and achieve these results on behalf of their customers" (Zhao et al., 2010, p. 383). These findings are confirmed by Survivor who stated:

> I must account for everything I do; I think it's diluting the teaching process. It's like we
> just adding too much water to the Oros drink. . . . It gives you an aftertaste in your mouth
> about being a teacher. I guess we all comply because when paperwork must go in it has
> to go in . . . robbing us of time from our students. . . . We don't think, we just tell ourselves

> this is what we were told to do, and I am a good teacher. I'm following . . . I don't question
>
> it.

Oros is a concentrated juice that needs to be diluted before it is consumed and is popular among the middle to lower-income classes in South Africa. Survivor's use of this metaphor reveals that the imposed reform measures are not congruent with teachers' deeply held beliefs about good teaching and weakens the teaching process. This narrative reflects the experience of "vulnerability and emotional disturbance" (Kelchtermans, 2005, p. 997). The words, "I don't think, don't question, and I'm following" indicate resignation and compliance through passive dependence on external dictates. In this context of fidelity and conformity, participants abandon their pursuit of transformative teaching which is crucial for teacher satisfaction. These responses indicate that they are disillusioned by the expectations placed on teachers, which "gives you an aftertaste in your mouth about being a teacher."

Kelchtermans (2005, p. 999) found that in conditions of imposed reforms, control accountability, and measurement these mechanisms are used to create and sustain teacher guilt for failing students as a replacement for most teachers' goals which are associated with making a difference in learners' lives. Thus, under the new regime, teachers' relationships with learners are affected by the rush to complete the syllabus. As English teachers, they do not have the time to delve into the nuances of culture and language if they merely cover content. Caught in the vortex of completing the syllabus, which is expected, and teaching holistically, teachers succumb to pleasing their superiors, which generates professional vulnerability:

> CAPS is too teacher-centred; they ask us to drill content. But learners write the exams
>
> and forget it all. It's all about the marks. So, we give the content. If students fail, I will
>
> be on the carpet explaining. (Dynamite)

This teacher expresses dissatisfaction with the current transmission approach and believes that delivering content in this manner does not support learners' retention or understanding. "It's all about the marks" reflects concern about the emphasis on exam results rather than genuine learning and understanding. This concern may stem from a belief that education should prioritise deeper understanding and retention rather than just achieving high marks.

Snoopervision

Teacher professionalism has now become entrenched in issues of power. Accordingly, the teachers' metaphors were expanded through discourses of marginalisation and fear of negative reprisals. The cascading flow of power starts at curriculum making and gathers momentum until it floods teachers' spaces, thus, ensuring that teachers who experience certain vulnerabilities are forced to develop

protective strategies (Kelchtermans, 2005) aimed at protecting the self and surviving the game. This phenomenon was displayed in teachers' preparations before the district facilitator's visit because all actions revolved around appeasing her. Empty Box described the visits as "fault-finding missions" instead of offers of support, indicating that their teacher professional selves are reduced and diminished by power structures. Here, images of good performance are equated to being seen as a naughty child who would rather be hiding under the desk in avoidance of the encounter. This emotional disturbance is mediated by the structural constructs in their context linked directly to the imposed policy context and climate of the reform:

> Our facilitator. . . . Whenever she comes there will be something that you do not know or did not do. After checking, she would list the things I did not do. We fear the negative report we even want to hide under the desk when we know she's coming. I am a naughty child now . . . it's a fault-finding mission. I ensure that I am prepared. It's not that they are here to help us. They are here to find faults. It is . . . snoopervision! (Empty Box)

A fundamental principle of the teachers' vulnerability is the reconstruction of the image of a good teacher as moral integrity becomes undermined by tick lists and window dressing. Thus, the ocular metaphor establishes the relationship and limits teachers' horizons of how they see themselves and others in crucial relationships in the educational change arena. Their construction of teacher selves embedded in their chosen metaphors ushers teaching into a contested terrain of rebuke and a disdain for decisions and actions unsanctioned by external entities. Thus, accountability and measurement dominate hierarchical relationships with teachers who often experience uncertainty and ambivalence:

> The file cannot determine whether I'm working or not . . . it is just a piece of paper to show what I'm doing. The list does not see all the extra things I am doing. I cannot keep asking whether I should do something outside of what they ask. (Empty Box)

The findings reveal that teachers integrate their understandings or sense-making of their acquired knowledge of the reform expectations into the cultural context of the reform to present socially acceptable versions of themselves to significant others. They therefore choose to work for the socially acceptable image that gives them status even if it is contrary to their expressed beliefs. The images are prevalent in metaphors presented as swimming, surviving the gauntlet, and not drowning under the mounting complexities of their job.

The data foregrounded teachers' perceptions of the dominance of monitoring and technical compliance that overshadowed the teachers' need to prioritise learners' understanding and educational experiences. The teachers' metaphors revealed that monitoring the pace and coverage of the curriculum impeded their

capacity to deliver lessons that were creative and enriching for their learners. Their actions were always moderated by the facilitator's specifications and fear of not meeting her standards. Teachers' autonomy and agency are mediated by the professional vulnerabilities in their cultural contexts with their emotions revealing what the changes mean for their practices. In the excerpt below, Dynamite reports that she does not feel like a teacher anymore but like a drill sergeant who teaches to the test. Drilling in this instance implies rote learning and a lack of inspiration:

> I don't think that our education system is helping our learners. There is no deep learning, and the facilitator and senior management make sure we are all on the same page. I don't feel I am a teacher. . . . I am a drill sergeant . . . I drill for the test . . . learners are not the same.

Building on this image, the metaphor used by Survivor below reduces a whole gamut of emotions to an image of maintaining the status quo. Accordingly, Lee et al. (2022, p. 1) stated that new reforms "accrue emotional capital, embodied emotions developed over time through power structures" and relationships with figures of authority. These arguments are captured in the narrative below.

> I find that not upsetting the applecart helps a lot to remain sane.

Dynamite admitted that she had learned how to switch from more creative teaching to pedagogical content knowledge transmission, which kept her from trouble. The sustained monitoring has taught her to not veer off too much for fear of the consequences. She introduced another metaphor signifying teachers today: handler, which connotes supervisor of tasks created by others:

> Some days I feel like a handler, I am just there to give what is expected of the learners. But I mix it up a bit and introduce debates and discussions as I teach to ensure that learners don't fall asleep while I am giving the content. . . . I am dynamite in the classroom but if I keep exploding then I will not be able to cover the content and that would land me in hot water.

Essentially, teachers have learned that riding the waves of change in the direction they are crashing helps them to survive the onslaught of the tempests of curriculum change. Accordingly, compliance and conformity push them to ride the crests in their protection of the self even though this is in stark contrast with their beliefs. Such decisions are a death knell for teachers' proactive agency and professional growth. The emergent metaphors and images in these teachers' narratives have offered insights into teachers' evolving perceptions of their redefined roles in curriculum reform, especially given that they struggle with change (Craig & Ross, 2008) constructed without their input. Moreover, these narratives have deepened

understanding of the role of teacher emotions and affective states for teaching and learning, in general and teacher satisfaction, in particular.

Discussion and Conclusions

This article attempted to answer the research question: "How do teachers' use of metaphors depict their emotional responses to the CAPS reform?" The purpose was to demonstrate how powerfully metaphors can shape teachers' thinking and responses to reforms. The findings offer some insights into the emotional labour of teachers working on the sharp edge of educational change, and produced some novel metaphors that are "site-specific idiosyncratic metaphorical utterances that intuitively emerge in educators' sense-making of their lived reform experiences and their storying and restorying of them" (Craig, 2005, p. 196). The findings generated the notion that alienation from the conceptualisation of the reform, development, and mandated stipulations created emotions related to powerlessness, meaninglessness, and an overwhelming sense of estrangement from their teaching beliefs and values. These emotions created internal contradictions between what was required and their contextual understandings, which were filtered through their ambivalence and accountability to self and to external dictates. Decisions to adopt policy mandates that emphasised content and learner throughput were based on the preferred image of a good teacher because examination results are used as an indicator of competence and teacher effectiveness. Accordingly, this decision destroys the fabric of teachers' emotions—particularly their understanding of their learners' needs and ideas about broader educational goals. In these teaching contexts, teaching by rote becomes the norm, where covering the curriculum in the same way, order, and sequence denies teachers the opportunities to support deep learning or attend to the nitty-gritty of schooling. These consequences led to self-disenfranchisement because personal initiatives could have stabilised their feelings of negative mastery that which the teachers identified in their utterances and observed behaviour. Being imprisoned within a system of checks and balances did not fulfil their need for job satisfaction and neither did it serve the learners.

Thus, the central issues ignited by the education reform centred on teachers' need to feel efficacious in their work lives and respected as contextual experts aware of their professional obligations as well as those relating to the needs of their charges. Hence, a dissonance is highlighted between the stipulations of the reform and their acquired methods of directing learners' learning, which creates anxiety and vulnerabilities in terms of accounting to superiors. Reforms that strive to reduce teacher authority through the imposition of new forms of efficacy often fail because teachers resort to complying, which involves swimming with the flow of the current and surviving. Teacher knowledge is diminished in value as emphasis is placed on appeasing the facilitator who monitors them strictly. Teachers view reforms as embodying changes that conflict with their ways of knowing, leaving them uncertain and vulnerable, lacking control, and subordinated. These

understandings and emotions act as filters and frames of reference resulting in emotional decisions for their constructed images of teaching. As a double-edged sword, reforms often cut both ways as is evident in the teachers' decisions to comply uncritically with external dictates, suppressing their knowledge and intuition to create favourable images resulting in feeling unfulfilled and demeaned.

The unique metaphors used by teachers helped to identify their critiques and the limitations of the transmission of information regarding the reforms, and should feed back to reform constructors for better collaboration between the stakeholders. Interrogation of these issues calls for more engagement, and a developmental focus that targets a rebuilding of teacher well-being focused on scaffolding knowledge already there instead of treating teachers as empty boxes for depositing reform knowledge into. On the other hand, teachers should not be focused on becoming survivors of the challenges posed, but on developing resilience and finding ways to manoeuvre. In this way, they can be dynamite in classrooms—exploding and integrating old and new knowledge for the greater goals of education.

Reform development should encourage teachers to critically reflect on their practices and find connections with the new approach to empower them instead of demoralising teacher knowledge and subverting their moral consciousness. This can be achieved by developing critical consciousness in the teacher to see both the local and global aims of education in a relatable manner through the accommodation of new ideas and meaningful integration instead of seeing compliance as a comfortable stance. Thus, "critical understanding of these processes of discipline and domination in teaching is crucial if we are to promote the possibility of creating new forms of teacher-selves'' (Kelchtermans, 2005, p. 997).

More studies on teachers' emotional well-being related to their ability to maintain an emotionally neutral or stable practice within contexts of control are recommended. The metaphors that emerged in this study presented teachers who have opted to suppress their intuitions by appearing obedient and compliant but there is a high possibility of finding rich metaphors from agentic or resistant teachers through further research. Not all contexts have ideal conditions but how teachers negotiate these contexts is fundamental to their emotional well-being and capacity to do their jobs well. While the study has shown glimmers of hope in the participants who expressed passion and enthusiasm for teaching and rapport with their learners, it also highlights a need for more transformative teacher agency and reclamation of their teacher power in their practices. Finding space to overcome the suppression of their intuition and knowledge has considerable significance for teacher power. Thus, teachers should display adequate belief in their curricular authority, expertise, and confidence to find space between external dictates and evaluations of their students and contexts to dispel any emotions of deprofessionalisation and discourses of derision. The study concludes that comprehensive insight is needed through researchers' adoption of a qualitative

interest in teachers' use of metaphors that encompass teacher emotions and reactions because they could contribute new insights about teachers' emotions in curriculum change contexts.

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