

The Impact of Curriculum Changes and Covid 19 Amendments on History Teachers' Professional Identity

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Article Info	Abstract
<p>Article History</p> <p>Received: February 14, 2022</p> <p>Accepted: September 15, 2022</p> <hr/> <p>Keywords : Teachers' professional identity; Curriculum Recovery plan; Covid-19; Curriculum Changes; Adjustment And Modification Of Education</p> <p>DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.7079970</p>	<p><i>The paper examined the impacts of education transformation and curriculum changes and amendments that were brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic on teachers and their professional identity. The paper uses the constructivist theory, which states how history teachers construct knowledge and make meaning, and how this meaning influenced their professional identity. The qualitative research design was employed, and face to face interviews, document analysis, and observations were used to collect data and examined how four Grades 10-12 History teachers administered lessons or coped during this pandemic in the classroom. Content analysis and thematic analysis were used to analyze data. The findings of the paper indicated that the adjusted and modified Covid-19 regulations impacted history teachers' professional identity and teaching negatively. Amongst others, the following major findings emerged: the changes and amendments in curriculum were confusing to teachers; the classroom demotivated history teachers; and teachers had an unstable and shifting identity. Considering the findings, the study argues that constant curriculum modification or revision creates confusion in the classroom. Hence the recommendation that teachers should be considered when curriculum is changed or modified.</i></p>

Introduction

This article focuses on the history of educational transformation that has taken place in South Africa and the amendments as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. It shares how history teachers experienced the three changes that have taken place in South Africa to replace the apartheid education and the unprecedented Covid-19 pandemic curriculum amendments that changed their roles and professional identity. It explores the education transformation and curriculum amendments in history Grades 10-12, with more focus on the Covid-19 amendments and how these impacted the history teachers' professional identity. The article also highlights how the unprecedented Covid-19 amendments changed history teachers' everyday operations and pedagogic content knowledge (PCK) – how they understood themselves as history teachers and how history has to be taught (Harley & Wedekind, 2004).

South Africa went through a process of change in 1994 to reverse the past actions of the apartheid regime that segregated the people of South Africa according to race, sex, education, and opportunities to mention a few. The changes were prompted by the pre-1994 South Africa which was divided and governed along racial segregation, discrimination, and separation socioeconomically along racial lines; education was one of the areas that were affected by this segregation. The Black education Bantu Education Act of 1953 was the most inferior compared to that of the other three racially (Whites, Indians, and Coloureds) segregated departments resulting in different curricula being taught in one country (Harley & Wedekind, 2004; Jansen, 1997). A transformation and change in education was needed to redress the imbalances of the past and to create one unified education system (Tarvvinga & Cross, 2012).

The Coronavirus pandemic experienced globally brought changes and challenges to how people lived and how governments operated (World Health Organisation, 2019). The unprecedented era affected people's health, finances and social life – and education was not spared in this regard. Different countries adopted varied modes of teaching and learning, amongst them South Africa's Department of Basic Education (DBE), to augment and make up for lost time. Education departments changed all operations and moved to a completely unfamiliar context (Jansen, 1997). Teachers' roles were modified through the curriculum.

The paper will first briefly look at a background of changes in South African education history since Outcomes Based Education (OBE) was introduced by looking at Curriculum 2005 (C2005), Revised National Curriculum Statement (R/NCS), Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS), the adjusted Covid-19 curriculum, and then teachers' professional identity in general – looking at the definition and how it is negotiated specifically during the time of curriculum changes. The second section is the theoretical framework which will give

structure to the study; it will further give perspective or a lens through constructivism theory and a constructivism paradigm. Then the third section looks at the methodology which will focus on the research design, data collection and analysis, ethical considerations, and measures to ensure trustworthiness as well as the study's contributions or significance. Lastly, the findings and a conclusion with more attention on the summary of research findings, as derived from the observations and interviews will be explored.

Literature Review

Professional Identity

There are a number of researchers that have focused on the early professional life of teachers and how they became professional educators (Cattley, 2007; Timoštšuk & Ugaste 2010; White & Moss, 2003). These researchers explored the different aspects that make up the teachers' professional identity, starting from how professional identity is conceptualised, or the progression from their initial education to experienced teachers. Professional identity can be defined in various ways. Research on teachers' identity, according to Beijaard et al. (2004), can be divided into three categories: studies in which the focus was on teachers' professional identity formation; studies in which the focus was on the identification of characteristics of teachers' professional identity; and studies in which professional identity was (re)presented by teachers' *stories*. These authors concluded that professional identity is a continuous and on-going process of interpretation and re-interpretation of experiences and it corresponds with teacher development, which is continuous and entails lifelong learning.

Clarifying, interpreting, and explaining the concept of identity poses various challenges for a critical discussion on the current debates around identity. The conceptualisation of identity is not an entirely solid attempt, but a discussion of this will unvaryingly highlight sides and traits of it that are important to this study. Identity is essentially a subjective construction that is always in flux or in fluctuation (Gee, 2001). Scholars have defined it differently according to how they experience it, for example as the unfixed and relational aspect of the self. Thus, most scholars do not totally agree on what identity is and it is difficult for this reason to forward a specific conceptualisation that can be considered definitive (Mabalane, 2014). Even so, there are several commonalities that are found in the pivotal works of authors like Mead (1934), Moya (2001), Stout (2001), Lewellen (2002), Beijaard et al. (2004), and Standbu (2005) to name a few. Their definitions of identity highlight the following: identity as an aspect of the self that is subjective and systematically constituted; identity entails the construction of meaning from social interaction – it is the basis for creating meaning of interactions with others; and identity formation is a continual process that persists in time and is defined by context – this gives rise to the argument that identity is not a stable construct, but that it is a shifting, symbolic construction (Mabalane, 2014). This then makes it difficult to define professional identity without first delineating the term itself.

Thus, to look at the way in which teachers negotiate educational reform during transformation, it is necessary to explore the way professional identity is constructed over time. Doing so will elucidate a feeling of what happens to teachers when change is forced on them. Most research that focused on professional identity has emphasised how professional identities are formed but few have focused on the different reforms and transformation. Given what is discussed above, I therefore maintain that the professional identity of teachers is not an unstable and an unfixed element; it is forever shifting from when they train as teachers, and is a recurrently negotiated, unclear and personal phenomenon. Teachers come to see themselves as professionals by negotiating the demands of teaching and reconciling their training as pre-service teachers with the realities of daily practice (Beijaard et al., 2004). Teachers construct their professional identity through negotiating the demands of the workplace, which can be seen as a process of 'becoming someone in the workplace'. In times of educational reform, the shaky and weak basics of professional identity become more pronounced.

Professional identity is also negotiated, shifting, and ambiguous; the result of culturally available meaning and the open-ended power-laden enactment of those meanings in everyday situations (Sachs, 2001). There is no single definition of what teacher professional identity is. Different authors have conceptualised and defined it differently according to how they experienced it at a particular place in time. This is supported by Olson (2008) who asserted that the reason for the struggle and complexity in defining teacher identity is because of many and multifarious ways the concept identity has been defined by scholars. This means then that teacher professional identity should consider the issues pertinent to teaching as a profession. Furthermore, authors have agreed that what forms professionalism or teacher's identity has been contested by different groups, resulting in academic and ideological disagreement between union leaders, policy makers, academics, and teachers themselves. This makes it difficult to have a singular version of what constitutes professionalism or teaching as a profession (Canninus et al., 2011).

The following researchers explored the different aspects that make up the teachers' professional identity, starting from how professional identity is conceptualised, or the progression from their initial education to experienced teachers. For example, Sachs (2001, p. 150) argued that "what counts as teacher professionalism has come to be a site of struggle between various interest groups concerned with the broader enterprise of

education.”To define teacher professional identity some authors argued that one has to first define identity which is also made up of different experiences dependent on varied contexts of experience (Beijaard et al., 2004). Kelchtermans (2009) said that teachers’ professional identity relates to how teachers see themselves as teachers in accordance with their interpretations as they interact with people and their context, which manifest itself in their “job satisfaction, occupational commitment, self-efficacy, and change in level of motivation” (Canrinus et al., 2011, p. 593). This is also evidenced in the study conducted by Beijaard et al. (2004) between 1990 and 2000 where they reviewed 22 studies and came to a conclusion that the concept of professional identity is used in different ways or not defined at all by those who researched it. They also found that in certain studies, the concept of professional identity was associated with teachers’ notions or pictures of self (see Knowles, 1992; Nias, 1989), whereas in others the emphasis was placed on teachers’ roles.

Consequently, these notions or pictures of self will define teachers’ teaching philosophy, development, and how they perceive educational changes, in this case history teachers (see Goodson & Cole, 1994; Volkmann & Anderson, 1998). “Most of the teachers experience identity as a constant course of incorporation of the personal and the professional side of becoming and being a teacher for example” (Beijaard et al., 2004, p. 108). In other words, the personality and profession of teachers cannot be separated from the formation of their professional identities. Beijaard et al. (2004) is supported by Furlong et al. (2000) who asserted that there are three ideas that are fundamental and essential to traditional professionalism which would develop the construction of teachers’ identities: knowledge, independence, and responsibility. Like Goodson and Cole (1994), Furlong et al. (2000, p. 5) argued that “teachers’ identities are intertwined with various contexts and collaborative partnerships they encounter as practitioners. While their primary engagement may be with a specific enterprise, they are constantly challenged to unpack how this configures within a broader scheme of things.”

The discussion thus far suggests that although the authors vary in their conceptualisation of the professional identity of teachers, there are significant common and overlapping components that constitute teachers’ identity. The implication here as stated in Mabalane (2014), is that history teachers’ characteristics, beliefs, relationships, family and other aspects of life have an influence on their professional identity, meaning that their professional life will influence personal matters. Teachers will construct their personal and professional identities drawing from who they are as individuals and as professionals. In other words, teachers’ professional identity comprises both personal and professional aspects of the nature of the teaching profession; it is both socially (externally) and personally (internally) constructed and directed (Canrinus et al., 2011; Olson, 2008). The implication here is that the teachers’ professional identity is shaped by the interface between the context of the school, policy, the community’s role, and the practical daily reality of the profession as it comes alive in the classroom, to name a few; it also includes the person, the *self* of the teacher, which must remain in balance to effect teacher professional identity.

Education Changes and Transformation Curriculum 2005 (C2005) – Covid Modified and Recovery Programme

Outcomes Based Education (OBE) - Curriculum 2005

During 1994 to 1997 the South African government worked on changing and transforming the curriculum from the segregated curriculum to an all-inclusive one referred to as Outcomes Based Education (OBE) as a means of redressing the imbalances of the past (Chisholm, 2003). The introduction of OBE meant the inception of C2005. According to Tucker (2004, p. 5), “Outcomes based education (OBE) is a process that involves the restructuring of curriculum, assessment and reporting practices in education to reflect the achievement of high order learning and mastery rather than the accumulation of course credits.” C2005 was launched in 1997 by the new South African national Department of Education (DoE) to replace apartheid education curricula.

C2005 brought about challenges in implementation in curriculum delivery in most spheres of education transformation. However, it contributed in bringing democratic changes and introduced equal education amongst the South African schools. It is during this time that all subjects were changed to learning areas, history included. All learning areas including history revealed their lack of content; an integrated knowledge structure with eight learning areas resulting in history and geography being combined as Historical Social Sciences (HSS) in all grades and the skills that needed to be prominent in history were neglected and more focus was placed on outcomes rather than content (Harley & Wedekind, 2004; Jansen, 1997). Before HSS, study of history was supposed to promote responsible citizenship and critical thinking; history was meant to focus on the “enquiry, interpretation, knowledge and understanding” (Chisholm, 2004, p. 5), but it now had to focus on the end results and what the learners could do, minimising the importance of content.

Manyane (1999) questioned the convergence idea of the HSS which was visible in the limitation of knowledge and how humans function and interact with each other in the real world. The other challenge found by Manyane (1999) was the linear usage of concepts such as change, cause and effect, and time and chronology by learners. Accordingly, history as a subject was seen as having lost its essence (Chisolm, 2003; Kallaway, 2012). It was a challenge to justify its relevance within the learning area. The idea that the subject provides “lessons for the present” is a passionately disputed matter. History’s status was changed as argued by Manyane (1999), in that it led to the loss of its independence and identity. C2005 often left teachers trapped in a struggle about whether history should deal with modern-day issues and problems, or whether it should reject and abandon its responsibility and concern for these matters. It did not have enough space and academic authority to challenge the past racial disputes of the apartheid era ideas. Furthermore, history was not clear about the significance of teaching about the contribution of Africa to world civilisation (Chisolm, 2004).

(Revised) National Curriculum Statement

As stated above, C2005 brought about challenges in implementation in curriculum delivery in most spheres of education transformation. The R/NCS argued that history as a subject would be taught in class in an inclusive way that included experiences of South African citizens from rural areas to urban workers, with different genders. It further made reference to human rights such as prejudice, persecution, oppression, exploitation, sexism and racism, xenophobia, genocide and other forms of discrimination (Chisolm, 2004). Thus, unlike C2005 it provided learners with knowledge and skills that could be drawn from their everyday lives which contextualised the curriculum (DoE, 2002; Kallaway, 2012). Thus, the intention of the revision was to streamline and strengthen C2005; it offered an expression of the knowledge, skills, and values worth learning in South African schools (DoE, 2002). This revised curriculum embodied the vision of history promoted in the Report of the History/Archaeology Panel (Chisolm, 2004). The R/NCS rescued history as a discipline and provided a foundation for its future development and returned its identity. It became a subject that was taught alone as a discipline.

Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS)

The Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) curriculum recognised the importance of the history curriculum and the evaluation of key features of history that are supposed to be offered in school (Kallaway, 2012). The CAPS curriculum is a national and assessment policy that is all inclusive and it summarises the policy document which replaced the subject and learning area statements which were used during the C2005 and R/NCS era, including the replacement of all the learning programme guidelines (Du Plessis, 2013). As mentioned above, the curriculum further needed to be revised and strengthened with regard to the history content delivery and other limitations like the assessment. According to Kallaway (2012, p. 8), “the main aspect of the revision was to return the key concepts of history curriculum in the secondary school in CAPS Grades 10-12.” These changes marked the return to the pre-1997 C2005 curriculum and the focus was more on the content than outcomes, thus benefiting the experienced history teachers who were used to that form of knowledge.

As CAPS focuses more on content and the key concepts to be promoted when teaching history throughout the discipline it emphasises the balance between substantive concepts – which are first order history concepts based on content and procedural concepts – referred to as second order concepts and more skills oriented – it encourages higher order thinking and critical thinking skills. Regarding the second order concepts, learners are required to learn for transference of knowledge and skills gained into authentic or real contexts (Chisolm, 2017). This more inclusive curriculum and content focuses mainly on specific skills and specific aims, thus, the CAPS Grades 10-12 history curriculum document is viewed as a process of enquiry and meaning, in that learners must study history in order to be patriotic and be supportive citizens within a democracy (Kallaway, 2012).

Adjusted and Modified Education and History Curriculum due to the Coronavirus/Covid-19

According to the Standard Operating Procedures Covid-19 document (2020) the means of adhering to health protocols at schools was attended to in a staggered rotational form. The classes operated on an alternating time tabling model, meaning that every grade did not come to school every day, and different grades attended on different days. Social distancing in classes put more strain on teachers because they had to work with extra classes. History Grades 10 and 11 were divided into smaller groups who attended once a week minimising teaching and learning time. For example, the Grade 12 learners came every day and Grade 11 learners attended twice a week on certain days (DBE, 2021). As there was a large number of Grade 10 learners, they had to attend three times a week fortnightly because there was a shortage of classes to accommodate them all. This type of arrangement affected teachers because they lost track of learners’ work. Furthermore, the rotation had an impact on the completion of the curriculum and the teachers’ roles. For example, instead of four Grade 12 classes that were originally allocated to the history teacher, these doubled in number from eight to 12 classes overloading history teachers with work (DBE, 2021).

All teachers including history teachers were given the additional role of pastoral care. Pastoral care is the provision a school makes to ensure the physical and emotional welfare of pupils. Resultantly, some of the topics were excluded from the actual Annual Teaching Plan (ATP) to accommodate the pandemic. The department of education sent a circular that teachers could only start to teach 2021 content when the 2020 content (previous grade) had been completely covered. Furthermore, the teachers were required to begin 2021 with a compulsory baseline assessment which had been set by the district to check the level of understanding of learners – the baseline assessment was based on the previous grade’s curriculum. Thus, the introduction of the Curriculum Recovery Plan during Covid-19 impacted the roles and work of teachers negatively as their workload increased (DBE, 2021).

Curriculum Recovery Plan During Covid-19

The department pronounced that the education system needed a 3-year recovery plan which stipulates that Annual Teaching Plans (ATPs) from 2021-2023 have to be revised to accommodate changes made due to the pandemic. Thus, the recovery plan was needed to make up for the lost time which also places enormous strain on teachers (DoE, 2021). The 3-year curriculum recovery guideline outlines the development of the 3-year recovery ATPs to manage learning losses over a period of three years (Recovery ATPs as stipulated in Circular S11 of 2020) (DBE, 2021).

To mediate the impact and support teachers in managing teaching, assessment, and learning within the reduced time, the Department of Basic Education in 2020 (DBE) implemented Circular S3 of 2020 in the distribution of the teacher guidelines for implementation of the ATPs and the minimum core content. The Circular E11 (2020) outlines the principles and the procedure to be followed in the administration and quality assurance of School Based Assessment for Grades 10-12 in light of the reviewed ATPs to accommodate the shortened academic year (DoE, 2021). There are nine principles mentioned by the DBE (2021) – in line with the paper, amongst others are: to create opportunities through adjusted ATPs to strengthen pre-knowledge, consolidation, revision, and deeper learning; entrench Assessment for Learning as a pedagogical approach to address the learning losses; and guide and support effective teaching and learning. In Grades 10 and 11 some topics have been trimmed or reorganised. Then in Grade 12, topics are reorganised only; for example, some topics which were in Term 3 are now in Term 1, or some topics that were treated as source-based questions are now used as essay questions. These changes affected teachers’ roles, operation, and teaching.

Theoretical Framework

The aim of this paper is to examine how the education transformation and curriculum changes and amendments brought by the Covid-19 pandemic impacted on teachers and their professional identity. Thus, the study tapped into history teachers’ experiences, especially those who have been through the three curriculum changes to see how they interpret, construct their professional identity, and make sense of the amendments brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic. Since interpretation is personal, socially constructed, and has an element of meaning making, the researcher found the appropriate theoretical framework to be constructivism. Constructivism is founded on an interpretive approach and is employed as a basis to see how history teachers construe the introduced changes and amendments. The theory of constructivism can be defined as “a theory about knowledge and learning the theory defines knowledge as temporary, developmental, socially and culturally mediated, and thus, non-objective” (Brooks & Brooks, 1993, p. 10). Constructivism can be traced back to educational psychology in the work of Jean Piaget (1896-1980) – the father of constructivism – who was an educational psychologist. Piaget’s theory is based on cognitive development (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999). Piaget’s theory of constructivism argued that people produce knowledge and form meaning based upon their experiences. Piaget’s theory covered learning theories, teaching methods, and education reform. Two of the key components which create the construction of an individual’s new knowledge are accommodation and assimilation.

Accordingly, assimilation makes people to combine or integrate new experiences into their old experiences. This result in an individual developing new viewpoints, reconsider what was once misunderstandings, and thus assessing what is significant, finally altering their perceptions (Trope & Liberman, 2010). For example, History teachers come to class with prior experience of teaching they want to see accommodated. On the other hand, accommodation, refers to reframing of the world and new experiences into the mental capacity already present. Individuals consider a specific way the world functions – The inference that can be made is that during Covid-19 History teachers, had to accommodate a new way of teaching (world) in which they had to observe all the Covid-19 protocols and regulations. Their knowledge and beliefs about teaching had to be adapted to the rotational classroom basis as prescribed by the employer. This meant an identity shift on what they believed about themselves and teaching (Trope & Liberman, 2010). Again, Piaget’s theory of constructivism impacts on the learning curriculum because all teachers have to make a curriculum plan which enhances their students’ logical and conceptual growth. History teachers had to design new lesson plans for their learners and

accommodate resulting in change on their teaching approach. History teachers had to assimilate and accommodate approaches that were imposed on them by the employer which do not cater for learners' different learning styles and teaching strategies.

One of the founders of constructivism is Vygotsky, a psychologist who is known for the sociocultural theory. He conceptualised constructivism as a learning theory founded in psychology which explains how people acquire knowledge and learn and see learning as a social activity requiring interaction between the school, teacher, parents, and learners rather than an intangible idea. In other words, society as a whole (Dewey, 1938). For example, Vygotsky (1978) believed that the community plays a central role in the process of helping an individual to "make meaning." Furthermore, Vygotsky (1978) believed that the environment in which children – in this case history teachers – grow up will influence how they think, what they think about, and what they do. Additionally, he argued that people make meaning through engagement and grappling with knowledge rather than innate or passive absorption. Thus, we can infer that history teachers construct their knowledge, PCK and professional identity as they interact with their contexts, environments (school and classrooms), policies and others, as they build on the knowledge that they previously learnt. Consequently, the knowledge is actively constructed because teachers have agency and act on every situation in their environment. The history teachers' prior knowledge with regard to educational changes and curriculum transformation influences their perceptions of the modified Covid-19 and recovery curriculum. This means that teachers come with or have PCK and previous knowledge of the curriculum and they need to be active when learning or implementing the changes that come with Covid-19 under the CAPS curriculum.

The constructivist stance maintains that learning is a process of constructing meaning; it is how people make sense of their experiences (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999). In this case, the history teachers created knowledge and professional identity through engagement and experimentation with the different education changes and curriculum transformation curriculum. These then constructed meanings – understandings that are personal and cannot be found in one's environment until one constructs them – only then do they become subjectively constructed from the individual's personal experiences. Interference with the subjective meaning might cause a shift in meaning making and thus result in confusion of roles or identity. The researchers concur with Melucci (1996), who argued that teachers inhabit multiple professional identities. Accordingly, clashes may occur between the defined identities of teachers as projected by past education systems, political beliefs, personal factors, and needs (Melucci, 1996). This view is also held by Jansen (2002), who said that teacher identities can be conceptualised as the way teachers perceive themselves in their work professionally, emotionally, and politically, depending on their working conditions.

Professional identity formation is constructed throughout time and in various professional contexts. Teachers construct their identity as they interact with their context, others, content and their experiences. Timosutsuk & Ugaste (2010:1563), see the "development of teacher identity as a continuous learning process where not only behaviour, but also the creation of related meaning and social context in a wider perspective should be a focus". The professional identity of teachers is an important facet of this theory, as it is constructed by individual teachers as they go through their profession. The professional identity is also used to access the effect that educational reform has on the professional lives of teachers. This theory was chosen because it addressed the meaning and understanding as constructed by the history teachers as they made meaning of the changes in the curriculum and construction of their identity. Constructivism helps in indicating that professional identity is a product and process that is constructed and impacted by different aspects in this case, History teachers as impacted by curriculum changes and amendments (Karaolis & Philippou, 2019). The implication here is that the teachers' professional identity is constructed by the interface between the context (school) and the practical demands of the profession as prescribed by the policy and as it is applied in the classroom; notwithstanding the person and the self of the teacher and the PCK, which must remain in balance to effect teacher professional identity (Kelchtermans, 2005; Karaolis & Philippou, 2019). Teachers have agency and are presented as active social beings who construct their identity as they go along in their profession. Meaning that History teachers have to be active in the process of constructing their professional identity and developing Pedagogic Content Knowledge (Condignly, Crisp, Johns, Perry, Campbell, Bell and Bradbury, 2019). History FET teachers had to grapple with their different contexts, the changes and amendments made to the history curriculum within a short space of time due to the Covid-19 pandemic to create their new professional identity and adapt their PCK.

Methodology

This study adopted the qualitative research approach which focuses on the behaviours, contexts experiences of people, meaning making and their feelings to study how teachers' professional identity is impacted upon by continuous changes and the modified curriculum and to see how they understand and interpret these changes (Creswell, 2008, 2014, 2015). This approach assisted the researchers in seeing how the participants make

meaning within natural environments with minimal disruptions (Hesse-Biber and Leavy 2011; Kvale 2007). The study followed a Phenomenological research design (Richards and Morse 2013; Creswell, 2014). This design was adopted because the researchers wanted to explore the impact of the three curriculum changes and the covid-19 modified curriculum on teachers' professional identity. According to Leedy and Ormrod (2014), a phenomenological study serves to understand participants' perceptions, viewpoints and conceptions of a situation. The interpretative paradigm was employed to address how history teachers view the curriculum changes and Covid-19 amendments and to explore how it impacted their professional identity. This paradigm assisted the researchers to access the History teachers understanding of the phenomenon being studied through their own words and how each one of them constructed meaning out of their experiences and conceptualisation of the curriculum changes (Creswell, 2014).

Purposive sampling was employed as the most significant type of non-probability sampling to pinpoint key participants (Harding, 2013). Thus, it afforded the researchers an opportunity to select participants who were information rich cases and likely to generate useful data for the study. It allowed the researchers to highlight issues of interest about the History teachers under study, thus providing the researchers with the information needed to answer my research question. Thus, history subject teachers who taught the subject across the FET phase Grades 10-12 were selected (Kumar, 2014). Again, all history teachers who taught during all three changes and during the Covid-19 pandemic and had comprehensive knowledge participated in the study (Creswell, 2008; Patton, 1990). These teachers were also chosen because they had extensive experience and were qualified history teachers who had been teaching for more than five years. The sample was made up of four history teachers from different FET grades, different races, genders, experiences, and training.

Data was collected by means of observation, document analysis, and individual unstructured open-ended one-on-one interviews (Mathers et al., 2002). Teachers were observed during class to see how they interacted with the content and applied their PCK during lessons and how it impacted their professional identity. Four Grades 10-12 history teachers were observed to maintain Covid-19 regulations (Henning et al., 2004) for 60 minutes per period. Observations and interviews were conducted interchangeably as the Covid-19 regulations did not allow the researcher to have more sessions with the participants. In most cases, the observation was done first so that what was observed could be clarified during interviews for issues of reliability. The researcher conducted observations between August - October 2020. Each teacher was observed once to gather first-hand information on all their teaching and classroom practices, to see how they implemented the policy changes and amendments (Silverman, 2000).

The individual unstructured interviews using open-ended questions were used to get the opinions of the participants and to allow them to express their views freely on the phenomenon (Patton, 1990; Silverman, 2000). This type of interview afforded the teachers an opportunity to express themselves freely on how they experienced the curriculum changes during Covid-19 and how it impacted their professional identity. They were first interviewed for 45 minutes and then met again once for follow up and clarification if more information was necessary.

Document analysis was also used to compare the interviews, observation and what was in the teachers' lesson plans, year plan, modified curriculum and the policy document. In the process circulars, book lesson plans, and different policy documents were analysed to double check practice and theory. Lesson plans from all four History- grade 10, 11 and 12 - were analysed to see how they have assimilated, accommodated and integrated the curriculum changes and modification in their lessons and how they interpreted these changes. All the lesson plans were then compared to the CAPS document and modified curriculum.

The history teachers voluntarily participated in the research after being approached by the researcher using a detailed letter outlining the background, context, purpose, intention, and importance of the study (De Vos et al., 2017). The researcher ensured that there was no dishonesty, deception, and manipulated facts by being detailed and transparent about their role in the study (Nieuwenhuis, 2016). The FET Grades 10-12 history teachers assented by voluntarily completing consent forms. The researcher ensured teachers' confidentiality and that no information was divulged. The researcher assured the anonymity of the teachers, in that their identities were concealed, and pseudonyms were used (Macmillan & Schumacher, 2010). Permission was sought from the department of education to conduct a research project. The following criteria were employed to ensure trustworthiness namely, transferability, credibility, dependability, and conformability which is apparent in this research (De Vos et al., 2017). Teachers were granted the opportunity to view and assess the research findings of this study and member checking was done to ensure credibility (Babbie & Mouton, 2012).

Data Analysis

Content analysis and thematic analysis were used to sift through the collected data (Henning et al. 2004; Harding 2013; Babbie & Mouton, 2012). The data collected from interviews, observations and documents was transcribed and put in a table in preparation for analysis using open coding. The researchers used open coding to write memos and notes, highlight information that related to the question, labels and codes were also appended

(Babbie & Mouton, 2012). Then, read through the codes and those that were similar or same were grouped together and developed into categories. Again, the researchers read through the categories grouping those that were similar and eliminating the irrelevant from the study. The themes from the teacher interview data emerged from the questions that were used during the interviews, and these were compared to the observation codes and the analysed documents. These were developed into themes which were later refined to form the final themes (Merriam 1998; Nieuwenhuis, 2016). The following themes emerged from the Unstable and Shifting Identity – Damage Controllers, The Adjusted and Modified Covid-19 Classroom Demotivates History Teachers: Lost ‘Self’, Teachers are Confused and Displaced by the Covid-19 Classrooms and Exclusion from Curriculum Changes and Amendments.

Results and Discussion

The findings that emerged from this study showed that the changes and amendments that took place regarding the curriculum affected teachers’ professional identity both positively and negatively. But what came out more from the findings was the negative impact on the roles and identity of history teachers. Throughout the process of change and amendments, teachers’ experiences, roles, and identity were impacted. Their professional identity shifted according to the demands of each phase of change. Thus, the following five themes emerged and are discussed in no particular order.

Unstable and Shifting Identity – Damage Controllers

The study found that the teachers had to continuously shift how they saw themselves as professionals qualified to teach the subject of history. Their perspective of who they were, how they taught, and how they believed teaching was impacted by the changes, thus becoming fluid (Mabalane, 2014).

Teacher 3 lamented the following:

“I really no longer understand what is required of us as history teachers, I am not sure if my teacher’s role is to catch-up what was not done last year during covid and the completion of the previous year’s content that was not finished or to ensure that learners of master the content ... what about skills acquisition and the key history concepts.”

Teacher 4:

“My teaching strategies have changed ... I am not teaching as I always do but according to their recovery programme ... this is really not good for us as teachers as this leads to too much work as it changes and dictates how we teach in our classrooms. I also don’t like this introduced pastoral role at all.”

Teacher 1:

“We are no longer teachers but damage controllers. We have to fix that which was damaged by apartheid and Covid. First it was OBE, then CAPS and now it is Covid. I wonder what we will do next year if the Covid doesn’t go.”

The teacher commented about the pastoral roles that they needed to play in accommodating learners that were not coming to school due to distance learning. Teacher 3 said: *“We have to make sure that no learner is left behind, we have to send work to the learners who are sick or learners with comorbidity and sometimes risk our lives to go and send work to those learners.”*

This is confirmed by Wolcott (1994) who asserted that the new adaptation to an unusual “way of life”, or cultural practice as practitioners, demands much from them. They have also had to adapt to a different classroom lifestyle and a social environment for which they had not been prepared, and in which many do not feel at home (Cochran-Smith & Fries, 2002). Bullough and Gitlin (2001) added to the argument about shifting identity: education changes with teachers’ contexts and reshapes their work intensely. They argued that the tension between what a particular context demands of teachers and who they are or want to become, results in teachers’ confusion and loss of their identity. They asked: “Can I be who I am in the classroom?” (Bullough & Gitlin, 2001, p. 45). Consequently, they answered the question by stating that it is important for teachers to know who they are and where they stand – making “self” central to teachers’ pre-service teacher education. They also believed that who one is, and what one learns in teacher education shapes what one will be as a teacher, what and how one will teach, and how one will respond to the changing context of teaching (Bullough & Gitlin, 2001). By the time a teacher is employed in a school they may have a firm sense of self-worth, but radical educational change may make it hard to retain a strong sense of self. Teacher 2 stated:

“Covid 19 has changed our identity as teachers and how we interact with learners, for example when I go to class I make sure that I give learners a lot of work and that affects my professionalism because learners have to work harder and under pressure to cover with limited resources like textbooks and gadgets, in order to cover the time lost and the possibility the schools country might go back to lockdown.”

The Adjusted and Modified Covid-19 Classroom Demotivates History Teachers: Lost ‘Self’

The data also revealed that teachers were negatively affected by the adjusted, modified recovery plan. Teachers used figures of speech to show their demotivation and despair. They indicated hopelessness and fatigue caused by these changes which displaced them. Teacher 2 had this to say:

“We were just thrown under the bus with this recovery plan. ... How do I teach Grade 11 the Grade 10 work at the same time with Grade 11 content? It is too much for us as teachers and it just makes me to teach because I have to do so... If I had to do it my way I would quit.”

Teacher 4 explained: *“I go along and feel empty and drained by all this overloading of work ... it is all about finishing what was not done last year to prove a point and not the real content or history skill.”* Accordingly, this adaptation to an alternative “way of life”, or cultural practice both as practitioners and as citizens, demanded much: an adaptation to a lifestyle that does not have the necessary material and other support structures, the infrastructure, or the discourse of the interventions (Cochran-Smith & Fries, 2002). They also have had to adapt to classroom routines and a social environment for which they have not been equipped.

This is argued by Mattson and Harley (2003), that during the curriculum changes and transformation, especially C2005, teachers had to mimic the policy because they did not understand what was needed. Soudien (2001) also supported them by indicating that teachers were stripped of their professionalism as they moved from apartheid to OBE.

Teacher 1:

“I really feel that the state president can declare the lockdown and school closure so that I can stay home. I’m just bored by this recovery plan ... it doesn’t make sense and is demotivating to teachers and learners alike.”

As evidenced by the data of the study, teachers’ morale and motivation and some of the practices that I observed at the time of the inquiry were a result of not having taken this into account: the identity shifts of teachers who were used to being instructors who planned lessons with aims in mind, had become facilitators who had (abstractions of) outcomes of learning in mind (Jansen, 2001). Policy makers and reformists overlooked the emotional costs of affecting widespread modifications, amendments, and changes to daily teachers’ classroom practices, which has left many teachers vulnerable in the workplace.

Teachers are Confused and Displaced by the Covid-19 Classrooms

Different conceptualisations and feelings emerged in the above theme. There were varied responses both positive and negative. Three teachers and the facilitator expressed the inability to adjust to continuous changes and transformation as this impacted on their stability and they found themselves displaced. The teachers also highlighted that they failed to adapt to the changes due to their pre-service training which is different from the curriculum expectations and thus found a clash. The words of Teacher 1:

“My training is far more different and advance than what is expected. I find difficulty implementing the creative ideas I have because they are not considered in the curriculum ... I just swing along. ... It frustrates me and confuses a lot. Most of the time I feel like a lost sheep of untrained teacher.”

Teacher 4 added by stating the following on the issue of impact of the curriculum changes: *“There is lack of time to do the formal tasks were learnt, flexibility of resource and implementation of the skills we acquired from training as teacher or to become good teachers.”*

Thus, the identity of teachers is articulated before they start teaching at a school, and is characterised by a complex, multi-dimensional process that starts before and when they prepare to enter the profession; it is developed in the process of training as teachers (Flores & Day, 2006) and it continues throughout the duration of their career.

The facilitator stated that, “It is difficult for teachers to adjust to those curriculum changes, and they become overwhelmed with paperwork that is not relevant to the content delivery.” Three participants indicated that changes are time consuming, frustrating, and inconsiderate. According to Teacher 2: *“There is frustration in changing what you are used to and it is time consuming for educators to attend the trainings every time there is a curriculum change.”* Mabalane (2014) showed the opposite to be true. In turbulent times, teachers demonstrated a restricted view of professionalism and skills as they protected their comfort zone, which is where they felt secure.

To become professionals, pre-service teachers are equipped both pedagogically and with adequate skills that will help them with specialisation in a particular subject. Thus, they develop a strong professional identity that filters through their teaching styles and that “adequately” prepares them for the school and classroom context

(Turbill & Kervin, 2007), making this training shape their identity and informing whatever they do. This idea concurs with Timoštšuk and Ugaste's (2010, p. 1563) explanation that teachers "considered that initial training was an important time for students to begin to create a solid teacher identity that would support and sustain them in their future profession." It therefore can be inferred that disregard of their training can lead to despair and displacement as evidenced from the teachers' data. They continued to assert that pre-service teaching has an impact on the student teachers' professional identity and that they would like their knowledge taken into consideration when they enter the teaching field (Timoštšuk & Ugaste, 2010).

Only one teacher, Teacher 3, saw the changes as necessary even though they indicated that not everything or every change was beneficial to the teachers. This was also confirmed during observation, that the teacher has adapted their teaching strategies and was implementing the curriculum as expected, even though there were gaps in some instances. These were seen in the examples given during the lesson, the contextualisation of the content to the learners' environment and comparison of current events to past history, for example, the Land Act of 1913 to the current parliamentary discussion on land redistribution. The teacher stated the following during the interview following the classroom observation:

"I have conditioned myself to do what must be done whether I understand or not ... I try my level best to read what is required by each topic and then interpret and implement. You can't teach without examples and illustrations if you want to achieve the aim of the policy."

Exclusion from Curriculum Changes and Amendments

Teachers felt that they were not included in the process of education transformation and curriculum change. It came out strongly that they are expected to shift their identity and transform to a professional identity that would fit the policy mould as prescribed by the employer. They felt that the department of education makes curriculum changes without their input, as Teacher 3 lamented:

"The sad part is that we are just objects to be tossed around. We are more of the ineffective objects that are placed anywhere and at any time. The needs and expertise of teachers are disregarded by the government ... we just there to teach what was planned and decided by other people."

The district facilitator agreed with that:

"Changes in history curriculum demands more work in teacher development, training workshops, on-site support for teachers to capacitate the teachers on content knowledge and assessment. ... I feel that teachers should be included in decision making ... especially with regard to issues pertaining to teaching. Leaving them out is just the same as perceiving them as ineffective."

However, the facilitator did not state that educators need to be consulted when curriculum change is formulated. Reynolds (1996) emphasised that what surrounds a person, what others expect from the person, and what the person allows to impact on them, greatly affects their identity as a teacher. She noted that a teacher's workplace is a landscape which can be very persuasive, very demanding, and in most cases, very restrictive. The emphasis should not be on the personal only, but also on the contextual side that plays an important part in the construction of professional identity. Teachers' landscapes are linked and connected to teachers' identities by cultural scripts which structure their thoughts and actions. The inference here is that, policy makers should endeavour to harmonise the teachers' personal and professional identities by prioritising their needs and context.

Teachers argued that teacher training and regular teacher workshops are much needed to involve or equip teachers so that they can avoid transmitting or producing wrong information and gain knowledge on the structure and skills needed to teach history which are important.

Teacher 4 stated that:

"It is important that if there is curriculum revision or curriculum change teachers need to be part of it for example there should be surveys, research should be conducted to get the point of view or perspective of teachers."

Teacher 1 also added:

"To answer your question, I don't think that the department cares about us. The changes are meant for them to look good that they did finish the curriculum and not us. If we were important and value we would be asked questions ... maybe use a questionnaire during cluster meetings ... but now we are seen as ineffective beings who must do as they are told."

Teachers are usually not passive in the process of identity articulation. They are active agents who act towards becoming someone in the workplace. This issue of agency in the workplace is also highlighted by Schmidt and Datnow (2005) who argued that teachers become active agents in making sense of educational reforms. They posited the overarching belief that human beings act towards things on the basis of the meaning they derive from them. In other words, teachers do not only become active agents in their professional development, but they must also be active agents interpreting and making sense of the reforms in the school and classroom. This

part of professional identity creation is in line with a constructivist view of meaning making as teachers make meaning individually as well as in cooperation with others

Conclusion

In conclusion, modification of the curriculum and curriculum change has impacted on how teachers view themselves as there has been an identity shift; even to construct new knowledge has been difficult for them. As the theory of constructivism (Vygotsky, 1978) states, people learn through their previous knowledge and are not empty vessels. If the curriculum keeps changing it creates confusion even in their personal and professional identities because they end up losing confidence in what they know and what they do not know. Resultantly, teachers have had to continuously change how they teach, how they assess learners, and how they interact with learners. This is supported by Hargreaves (cited in Blignaut, 2009) that emotional conditions in schooling reduce teachers' sense of efficiency and their ability to provide quality education for students.

The identity and professionalism of history teachers were affected because teachers had to play roles that were not in their scope of work and which affected them emotionally, even in their personal lives. The DBE provided the Covid-19 guidelines but did not provide support and resources for remote learning, and no training for blended learning. Teachers were being asked to teach subjects they had never taught before and were not qualified for because of overcrowding; hence their professional and personal identities were compromised.

Teachers need to be part of the planning of the modification of curriculum planning because they are the ones who understand the main challenges that happen on the ground. The resources should be disseminated equally in all schools to make education progressive for all. Lastly, the workload of the teachers should be distributed evenly to make sure that teachers are not overwhelmed and are able to be productive. Teachers need to be identified as key players in education transformation, therefore, their personal and professional identities should not be compromised when changes in curriculum are implemented (Canrinus et al., 2011).

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