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Future teachers and social change in Bolivia: between decolonisation and demonstration

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Marches or maths:
Bolivia's future teachers as soldiers of change?

'We should be the change we wish to see in the world'
(Mahatma Gandhi, in Grant, 2009: 655)

9.1 Introduction

After weeks of unrest, road blocks and protests, Bolivia's social tensions reached a peak on 11 September 2008. A privately hired militia, funded by the local opposition, opened fire on MAS supporters in the rural regions of the department of Pando (Dangl, 2010). This violent encounter left eleven dead, and numerous supporters wounded (La Razon, 09-09-13). The following day, the horrific stories were on the tips of the tongues of students and trainers in the Simón Bolívar. Through cell phone contact with relatives and friends in the region, students heard that their fellow students at the Normal 'Puerto Rico' in Filadelfia, Pando, were among the victims of the conflict. A few days later, the newspaper La Razon reported that the director of this Normal, presumably a MAS supporter, had obliged all students and trainers to take part in the demonstration, obviously without foreseeing these tragic consequences (La Razon, 09-09-17).[143]

Photos 14 and 15, students and trainers protesting against violence in Pando, 16 September 2008

About a week after that day, on Tuesday 16 September, three Normales located in the cities of La Paz and El Alto suspended all classes while they organised a mass demonstration in support of

[143] The newspaper quoted a mother of one of the victims who lost their life, the mother stated the Director had pressured his students and staff with a fine of 1.500 Bolivianos (or about a month of salary for a senior teacher) if they did not show up during the march.

their fallen colleagues. Students and trainers of the Simón Bolívar gathered along with urban unionsts (e.g the COB, CONMERB, and the Retired Teachers organisation). One of the students I got to know in Simón Bolívar told me '*we are here to support our 'compañeros' from Pando. But you know'*, he continued, *'the Santa Cruz owned newspapers will tell you we are here to support the MAS, but I am not voting for Evo's MAS. I am here to demand justice for those in Pando*'. The student and his colleagues assured me that they were not obliged to come. The trainers, in contrast, were taking it in turns to sign an attendence list that was brought by the director.

Whilst most banners and slogans demanded 'justice' and 'solidarity', some of the participants also shared other motivations for marching in the streets. While an active union member recalled the necessity for a just retirement system, one of the trainers of Aymara language argued that the march was organised '*also because, as indigenous teacher trainers, we want to be respected, we want equality*'.[144] Apart from these different motives, and despite the felt obligations of trainers and perhaps students alike to be present that afternoon, they shared a common concern; being a teacher in Bolivia means being caught up in a context of social and political conflicts. These events, the violent encounter in Pando and the following peaceful demontration in La Paz, illustrate how Bolivia's teachers find themselves located in, and influenced by, a tense and multifaceted 'strategically selective context', in which they (un)intendedly design their strategies that, in turn, have an effect on this context. The fact that, in both Pando and La Paz, trainers and students were pressured to take part in the collective action on the street illustrates how the choice between 'marches' or 'maths' is not a totally free choice, but rather a strongly politicised one.

These and other types of demonstrations are occuring on a weekly basis all over the country, showing a continuous dissatisfaction with Bolivia's politics. It is in this context, that Bolivian teachers develop their professional and political strategies for, or against, Evo's politics of change. For Bolivia's teachers there is the rural/urban divide of the system, the unions' positions that teachers do or do not agree with, their personal socio-economic situation and opportunities to climb the social ladder, family pressures, the desire to remain faithful to political affiliations (either pro- or contra-Morales) and a lack of democratic alternatives; Evo is perhaps not the best, but for many certainly the only option. Based on the work of Gramsci, Baud and Rutten rightly emphasise the important role of individuals in processes of social change: *'The history of the Zapatistas or al-Qaeda would have been different without Sub-comandante Marcos or Osama bin Laden'* (Baud and Rutten 2004:6). Similarly, Bolivia's recent historical developments would have probably looked different without Evo Morales. On a lower scale, the classrooms and streets of Bolivia would look differently without the strategies of Elisa, Benardo and Dilma, three Bolivian educators who are introduced in Textbox 6. Their respective (absence of) strategies with regard to the current socio-political state of affairs are inherently interrelated to the strategic selective context.

[144] All quotes are derived from transcription no. 45, a collection of recorded conversations before and during the march of 16 September 2008.

Box 6. Three Bolivian educators and their strategies

Elisa* – is a 32 year old female student teacher at the Simón Bolívar studying to become an English teacher, because on the one hand she '*wants to teach children to become good and useful citizens for the country*', while on the other hand she perceives learning English as an opportunity *'to travel and communicate in other countries*'. She was born and raised in the city, has Spanish as her mother tongue and identifies herself with the Aymara culture. She was formerly trained in linguistics and has worked as a management assistant. She is also a mother of a daughter (6) and a son (4), and she currently works as a private English language teacher after her busy schedule of classes in the Normal. She struggles to combine her family with her study and work, and depends on her mother for child care, as her husband works long days as well. She is not well informed about the new ASEP law, but she thinks it is crucial that teachers '*do not discriminate on the basis of colour or culture*'. Because she has little knowledge on the ins and outs of ASEP, she feels concerned about the implications of the new policies for her future job, but she has no clear stance for or against it.

Benardo* – is a 60 year old teacher trainer in Pedagogy at Simón Bolívar. He was born in a rural village where he learned to speak both Quechua and Aymara. As a strong supporter of Morales' new policy lines, he identifies himself with the ´Plurinational culture´. He graduated from the René Barrientos Normal in Oruro in 1968 and has served as an educator for more than 40 years, in different parts of the country. He formerly also worked as a consultant for international organisations such as UNICEF, and he currently is lecturing both in the Simón Bolívar, at a University in El Alto and at the UMSSA in La Paz. Guided by the ideology of the new ASEP law, in the Normal he follows an individual strategy to change and improve teacher education '*ideally into a scientific community of teacher education'*. He feels restricted by the institutional environment, which only partly supports the new policy ideals. Also, he has a critical attitude towards the unions' position of resistance. He explained: '*Education does not belong to God, nor to Aristotle or Karl Marx. Education belongs to the population, it is a social issue, an issue of social change, against discrimination and racism. Education is like oxygen. It allows me to live well (vivir bien)* '.

Dilma* – is a female primary school teacher, union activist and ex-leader of the La Paz federation, and a University student in her fifties. She clearly supports a collective strategy of resistance to the government policies, including ASEP, and continuingly battles in defense of teachers' rights to '*increase teachers' salaries and their retirement conditions*'. From a Trotskyist perspective, she believes that until radical structural socio-economic transformation has taken place, changes in the classroom will only be of a very minor significance, as it needs to be part of a 'total transformation'. '*Change*', Dilma said, '*needs to start at the basis, and we, as a union, need to guide this popular basis*'. I observed, however, an interesting divergence between Dilma-as-union-leader and Dilma-as-school-teacher: one afternoon she loudly escorted a massive crowd of teachers through the city centre, resisting tear gas attacks as she continued to shout slogans in the megaphone; the next morning I saw her rubbing hand cream into the hands of the children in her classroom, while gently stimulating them to present their work in front of the class. Reflecting herself on her role as a teacher, she said '*in this chaotic situation we find ourselves in, which also affects the children and their families, we as teachers have to be the first soldiers in the process of social transformation*'. Unintendedly, she used the same terminology to talk about teachers as 'soldiers of change' that Evo Morales would use a few years later, during the inauguration of the new ASEP law.

* The names of these respondents have been changed to ensure their anonymity.

This chapter is dedicated to Bolivia's (future) teachers' agency – their space to manoeuvre – and the consequent strategies they adopt. Teachers are key actors when it comes to social transformation, as they constitute a group of actors that can work to enhance educational innovation and affect socio-political change, or resist against such processes. Drawing on insights from the SRA (Hay, 2002a) and critical education theories, the chapter analyses the possibilities and challenges Bolivian teachers face in their work in Bolivia's challenging context of continuing tensions, discrimination and instability. While bearing in mind the obstacles and possibilities for institutional change (described in part III of the book) and the misunderstood, and largely ignored, agential potential among student teachers (Part IV), this chapter aims to show what space for manoeuvre – or agency – is left for (future) teachers in order to adopt strategies that work for or against educational *and* societal change. The chapter starts by analysing Bolivian discourses around Bolivian (future) teachers as actors of change. I then provide an analysis of teachers' individual and collective strategies for change or continuity in the Bolivian context, and conclude with a discussion of possible steps to be taken in the area of teacher training.

9.2 Teachers' agency – Bolivian discourses on teachers as actors of change

According to Article 33.1 of the new ASEP law (2010, 'Objectives of Teacher Education'), within the state's new vision teachers are essential actors in transforming Bolivian society. The law stipulates how teachers should be trained to become '*critical, auto-critical, reflexive, proactive, innovative professionals and researchers, who are dedicated to democracy, social transformation and the integral inclusion of all Bolivians'*. The data of this study indeed confirms that many actors in the education field, including policy makers, teacher trainers, student teachers and teachers themselves, *perceive* educators to be potential or actual agents of change. These perceptions, however, also show that not all teachers are able or willing to be(come) change agents. The ideas of what a Bolivian 'teacher-for-change' looks like are discussed in this section.

Benardo, the senior trainer at Simón Bolívar, explains how current forms of teacher education have to change drastically: '*Currently teachers are prepared to become conservative actors, they are prepared only for their work within the four walls of the classroom*' (9:32). Benardo also sees the low level of education of those students that enter the Normal as a result of the reproduction of a '*system that has represented a certain model of the state for a long time. But now, reality is different. A wound is bleeding now, and we need a different type of teachers, and different trainers*' (108:10). Another pro-ASEP teacher trainer, working in the rural institute, also sees a momentum for change in the Normales, as there is '*a dire need to train new societal leaders. Teacher education needs to become closer aligned with the political process of change, so that our new teachers will be able to guide new societal leaders, through education they will get to know urgent social problematic situations of conflict, regional separatism and discrimination, and this requires teachers' participation*' (33:4). These comments align closely with the SJTE ideal of teachers as active and engaged intellectuals.

The above mentioned quotes accurately reflect on the present 'momentum for change' in the Normales. But, how do trainers see their own roles as agents of change? Benardo explains: '*as a trainer in pedagogy I try to train the new teachers with a capacity to read their reality, the socio-cultural reality, so that they can engage in a dialectical relation with it. Now it is time to reflect, to change, and to search for new politics and new pedagogies'* (108:3). According to an urban colleague of Benardo, '*we talk with our students about values, about the role of education in our society, and about their role as permanent actors in change*

processes. We are training future teachers, so that they can make a change in society. If not, they have no reason to be here in the Normal' (48:25). In the rural institute, a senior trainer reflected how, in order to become an agent of change himself, he would start with '*critically analysing my own reality, to think about what kind of citizens this country will need, how we can make use of our human and natural resources. In order to do this, we as educators, we have to be committed to the new movement, the new political changes. I will think about how to train our new teachers in such a way they construct a reflexive educational praxis themselves, so that education can become the engine of change of this society*'(43:20). Clearly in support of the new government plans, this trainer also stated how '*for me, the biggest satisfaction of being a teacher trainer is when your students after some years are able to engage in the same reflexive processes, and have become active subjects, people who can innovate, who can make a change*' (43:14). During the course of my four years of fieldwork, the director of this same rural institute exchanged the countryside surroundings for the concrete blocks of the MoE in La Paz. Here, we met again: '*Do you remember when I was still director of the Normal, we had sent some texts elaborated by trainers and students to the Ministry?*', he asked as I nodded in confirmation. '*We are now recollecting this information, these experiences of changing our mentalities, and this is essential. For a long time, teachers have been trained to fulfil the goals of the neoliberal project. What we need is a cultural-intellectual 'Pachakuti', a return to the older times, and we need a radical change of attitudes and commitment, a decolonial attitude*' (107:5).[145] These quotes follow the new governments' ideological discourse of a decolonised and communitarian education system, and while some of them portray trainers' *ideas* on *future* strategies, or recently started tactics, they still provide some evidence of the willingness of a small part of trainers to bring the ASEP reform about.

In contrast, an urban trainer sees less hope for Normales to become institutes that train future agents of change. He reflects on the current situation as follows: '*You see Mieke, in Bolivia we continue with a state of egoism. We have not opened our eyes to the rest of the world*'. Referring to the earlier criticised 'fixed profession' (chapter 6), he continued to state that '*here you can just become a teacher, a trainer, and that is that, no further obligations* (47:19). Then he talked about an inspirational speech given by an older Japanese professor during a conference on the reconstruction of Japan after the bombing of Hiroshima. '*He said, in Japan we cannot live without a crisis. When there is a crisis, they [the Japanese] see this as a new opportunity for change, as this allows them to remain in a constant state of alertness. I am impressed by this, as here in Bolivia, it seems the people are sleeping if there is no crisis, and we only wake up to react when there is a crisis*' (47: 39). Complementing this rather negative view of educators' apathy in the Normales, a former socialist politician, Normal director during the University administration and academic sees '*teachers as the most conservative force in Bolivia*'. Based on his long-term experience in the education sector, he is sceptical about the possibilities for future and current teachers to be(come) agents of change: '*for decades, teachers have struggled for their secure job positions, their welfare arrangements. They have a lot of priviliges to defend*' (23). Teachers therefore have, in his view, resisted political processes of change since their unions '*have made their institutes untouchable to changes. Change cannot enter the Normales, change cannot be implemented, because there is no evaluation system for teachers, there is no in-service training programme. This way, change is not possible*' (23). This links back to the analysis in chapter 6 of a sense of institutional inertia, the 'fixed profession' that automatically promotes teachers according to years of experience without an adequate evaluation and support system, as well as the relatively powerful position of the unions when it

[145] *Pachakuti* was introduced in chapter 1 as a traditional Andean ritual and phase of change.

comes to transforming the Normales and wider education system. From this data, we can conclude how the ideological state discourse and its proponents define teachers as active 'soldiers for liberation and decolonisation', while the reality in and beyond the Normales is less favourable to bring these changes about.

How do the student teachers themselves see their roles as agents of change? From the survey data, it became clear that around one-third of both urban and rural students, when talking about their motivations, mentioned the words 'change', 'progress', 'improvement' and 'development'. Bearing in mind the discussion in chapter 8 about how particularly these 'written-down' answers tend to be rather 'politically correct', they still reflect an interesting discourse adopted by these students, about both societal and educational changes and improvements, as illustrated in Textbox 7.

Textbox 7. Student teachers' motivations as agents of change

- '*I want to teach the children and youngsters, who form the future of Bolivia, I want to awaken them from their sleepiness, that was caused by colonialism and capitalism*'
  (24-year old male urban student)
- '*I want a different, equal and unified Bolivia, because I have the opportunity to incentivate changes. I want to develop critical and reflexive persons. It makes me feel happy to see a child with (realistic) dreams'*
  (26-year old female urban student)
- '*Education in Bolivia is subordinated, and society reflects this education system. I want to contribute to this educational change, to improve our society*'
  (21 year old male rural student)
- '*Unfortunately, the bad ecomomic situation in our country has created a more economic interest in the teaching profession, rather than a vocational one. I need to be part of an improvement of education, for changing this nation*'
  (21-year old male urban student)
- '*I want to share knowledge that is helpful for our society, in an equal way, without discrimination, to help to unify my country on the basis of my ideology*'
  (25 year old female rural student)
- '*This country needs people who can make a difference, who can change this colonising education system that has been oriented at only a few'*
  (22 year old male urban student)
- '*I feel that the changes in our lives come with a revolution in my country, not with arms, but with a change in attitude of the new generations. This can only be reached through study. So, yes, as a teacher I can help in this process*'
  (26 year old male urban student)

Source: survey data Simon Bolivar and Paracaya, first and third year students, August-September 2008, responses to the open question: 'Why do you want to become a teacher?'

Interestingly, these quotes do not so much have a direct resonance with the current government's discourse, most probably because many of the teacher students, including for instance Elisa, had very little knowledge of the details of the ASEP reform. Still, in their idealistic and hopeful comments they do express a wish for bringing change, reflecting the unused vocational and socio-political motivations as defined in chapter 8. This idealism was also clearly expressed by a female teacher student at the urban institute, who was determined that she could make a difference as a teacher, '*We will be able to change things. It only takes one to make a change, is what I tell my students. Like Mahatma Gandhi, he made a big change, and John Lennon, with his music he had his way to change, and in Bolivia there are so many men who did a lot as well*' (18:13). Moore (2008), in this regard, wrote how pre-service teachers in her study in New York would sometimes have 'illusions of grandeur' to the effects they will have beyond their classrooms, as they have no clear idea (yet) of what types of opposition they might face and they are unsure how to go about achieving this. Moore therefore argues that teacher education programmes need to provide a better informed definition of social justice understandings in their subject teaching, as well as a better understanding of the ideological nature of schooling and science, and the role of teachers within them (Moore 2008:206). As illustrated in chapter 5, the new outline of the Bolivian ASEP teacher education curriculum includes subject matters such as political ideology, which could potentially include these types of discussions, but further research would have to highlight how, and in what ways, this results in practice.

Not all students have these 'illusions of grandeur', as they also reflected on the challenges of becoming an agent of change. Elisa, for instance, in a group interview with two other female students, talked about the difficulties young, female teachers face in order to really make significant changes in schools. *'Making a difference is difficult. Just because we are young, and female, they think we don't know. Because of the colonial times, the Aymara parents are very closed, they are not open to any type of innovation, they won't let us*' (16:71). Hence, when new teachers start their teaching career in schools, the 'illusions of grandeur' often quickly disappears. '*With a lot of enthusiasm, we see new teachers arriving in the schools in the provinces*', an ex-trainer now working in a donor organisation explains, '*it is very rewarding to work with this group of people. But the bad thing is that after a while they become tired, and their work quality diminishes. That is why a good school director is so crucial, when she/he provides good opportunities to develop, these young teachers normally continue to function very well, they have the highest possibility to make a change*' (77:11). A 28 year old female teacher, and a graduate from Simón Bolívar (specialising in literature teaching), verifies the idea that a good and cooperative relationship between beginning teachers and the principal is very important. She experienced a '*clash of ideas*' with the director of the rural school she first started to work in, and had a difficult time in those first years to implement her innovative ideas. Nevertheless, she felt that she had made a change in the lives of her students, as she tried to make them think critically about the 'obvious' choice to also wanting to become a teacher: '*When I started teaching there in 2007, about 70% of all last year students said they wanted to become a teacher. In the class of 2008, in the end around 60% wanted to become a teacher, and in 2009, [this was the case for] only 30% of the students. This was the case because I started to ask them why. They responded: 'because it is a secure job, because my parents are also teachers, and because we like the way you teach us'. I realised we are really a point of reference for these youngsters. So I was very satisfied with this last generation of the 2009 students, because they had a different view on the world. I studied the newspapers with them, and we always discussed the different types of professions we would find. Now, they also wanted to study medicine, become psychologists and airplane designers*' (100:19). In 2010, she

returned to work in a secondary school in El Alto, after almost four years of teaching in the rural community. Here, she experienced another difficulty, as she was assigned a teaching post outside of her specialisation and was expected to work more hours than she would get paid for (100: 7).

This situation unfortunately reflects a reality for many teachers. Another graduate from Simón Bolívar had worked for two years in a rural school, '*where I really learned how to teach*' (111:1). On her return to work in a school in El Alto, she experienced the same situation as her colleague, in that she was appointed a position for a subject matter that she had not been trained for. When asked if she felt that the Normal had prepared her well for the job, she responded: '*They give you the content knowledge, in an isolated way. When we were leaving the Normal to go and work, me and my colleagues found out we were missing many things. Only in the first years in the province did we really start to develop*' (111:8). This teacher was not alone in feeling unprepared when leaving the Normal. In accordance with views of other in-service teachers, she reflected how this situation obviously does not contribute to improve the low quality of education in remote areas, let alone her confidence in acting as a 'soldier of change'.

Union leader and primary school teacher Dilma, while drawing an 'actor map' in my notebook (see also chapters 4 and 6), explained: '*If society were a house, then we would need to radically transform its foundation, which is the economic structure of the country. The upper part of the house is breaking down, and they [the government] try to fix it with a bit of paint, you see? But in reality, what needs to be changed is the foundation. The actors in this foundation are the motors of transformation; it's the people. But we have to work hard to 'ideologise' them, to 'conscientisise' and to prepare them for our struggle*' (49).[146] One of the directors of the urban Normal, uses a similar argumentation to explain why changing the Normal is such a difficult undertaking: '*They say the young generation will bring about changes, but in reality many of them do not want to change anything. Therefore, the dedication to pedagogical innovation, the creativity, should not only be incorporated by the management levels, they also have to engage with the basis [las bases] of the institute. Because if there is no will at the basis to change, if the people do not want to change, we cannot change the Normal, they will resist*' (17:20). This comment stands in stark contrast to the group of students who were quoted above, as showing a commitment to change. Drawing from the discussion of the institutional obstacles for change discussed in chapter 6, the idea that the Normales are difficult to change because students (and trainers) are simply not willing to do so, is therefore a little nuanced and lacks a comprehensive analysis of both structural and agential factors.

Thus, several trainers see an important role for Bolivian teachers to be(come) actors of change, a discourse which is potentially strengthened by the current governments' talk of change. There is, nevertheless, also a shared concern for the obstacles to future teachers' change-agent role, both consisting of institutional obstacles, as well as agential unwillingness or apathy. Many students had a rather idealistic view of themselves as future 'actors for change' in an educational, as well as a social sense. Still, a number of students and young teachers also reflected critically on the often limited space that they (will) really have in their future job to 'change things' and it was mentioned how permanent teacher formation throughout teachers' careers could improve the opportunities for teachers to be actors for change. In line with the new government policies, both trainers and students referred to 'changing attitudes' as an important step towards a new

[146] An academic researcher in La Paz reflected how Dilma's 'hard work' to convince the teachers has to do with the fact that '*Evo increased their salaries, which is why they do not come to demonstrate*' (78:24).

(decolonised) society, showing the importance of the discursive level of social change. Hence, perceptions vary on what a Bolivian teacher as agent of change should look like and also what her/his space for manoeuvre is to bring about both educational innovations and societal changes.

9.3 Obstacles and niches for teachers' individual and collective strategies

Teachers' choices and agency should be understood within the limits or opportunities of the specific strategic selective context. To some extent, teachers have the freedom to either uncritically follow a prescribed routine that might contribute to various processes of conflict (chapter 3) to actively challenge injustices or to follow a 'middle way'. When making such decisions, both identities and motivations play a crucial role. Building from the SRA, an analytical distinction can be made between intuitive and explicit strategic action; in reality, most strategies combine both intuitive and explicit strategic actions (Hay, 2002a: 132-133).[147] Hay's (2002a) case that actors face an uneven distribution of opportunities and constraints – resulting in a strategic selective context – might help to understand the differences in opportunities for rural and urban teachers in Bolivia. Several rural students, for example, expressed their concern for limited career options, as training programmes are often exclusively provided in urban areas. Besides, constrained by unequal power relations, empowered individuals and groups can only disrupt oppressive policies, practices and perspectives as far as their position in the social order allows them (North, 2008: 1192). Considering the fairly low social status of Bolivian teachers, and the complex and changing socio-political reality, the data of this study shows how being an agent of change – or, perhaps, against change – in the teacher education field of Bolivian is a rather complex issue.

In the literature that deals with Bolivian education 'before Morales', there seems to be a shared opinion about the paradoxical and ambiguous roles of educators in reproducing the structures of a hidden curriculum; strengthening instead of withstanding the ongoing 'castellanisation' of education (see for instance Regalsky and Laurie, 2007: 232). In other words, '*those that have been forced to memorise the world are not likely to change it*'; rather, they are more likely to reproduce reality (Cochran-Smith 2004: 206). Gamboa Rocabado writes how even under the new Bolivian regime, *'for many public policy specialists and reformers, it is nowadays still unthinkable that indigenous groups and farmers can actually be historical actors of change*' (2009: 70). As argued in chapter 8, we need to rethink this homogenising, reproducing and passive idea of the Bolivian teacher. From a Gramscian perspective, we should consider that education is *not* a mere aparatus of the state and that educators are strategic subjects (Talavera Simoni, 2011). Hence, we should rethink Bolivian teachers' roles in relation to their agency – either for or against the current governmental policies. For the purpose of this study, when analysing possibilities and obstacles to the teachers' role as agents for or against change, Giroux's (2003b) idea of rethinking teachers' roles as transformative intellectuals, instead of mere 'messengers' of a system, is interesting. Often, policy-makers display little confidence in teachers' intellectual and moral abilities, and they tend to ignore teachers' roles in preparing active and critical citizens. Giroux therefore argues that teachers should join public debates, engage in self-critique and collectively organise to struggle

[147] 'Intuitive strategies' are related to a 'practical consciousness' of routines, habits, rituals or other forms of un-reflexive action, and 'explicitly strategic actions' imply more conscious attempts to bring about individual and collective intentions and objectives (Hay, 2002a: 132-133).

for their rights and status in society. In Bolivia, we can see a history of resistance among teachers – either through individual efforts or collective organised unions. Here, historically embedded attitudes of resistance, as well as critical and reflexive attitudes and socio-political aspirations, become important incentives for a teacher to act or to remain passive; to support, passively follow or resist Morales' new ASEP education policy lines, sometimes regardless of their more general political support to the MAS.

The Normales and future teachers' individual strategies

In what ways are student teachers' 'voice' or active agency stimulated in their training? In line with the outcomes of Delany-Barmann's research in 2005 (2010: 197), during my fieldwork I found that in many cases students' voice in the classrooms of Normales was limited to individual or group presentations, that often literally reproduced the content that was provided on photocopied texts. In the absence of textbook material in most of the classrooms, the photocopied material forms the textual basis for many of the classes in both Normales, this way supporting one or several independent and well-earning photocopy-shops on the institutes' premises. The texts included documents prepared by the trainers (such as an observation check-list for the PDI course) and photocopies made of (parts of) books on educational content, pedagogy, didactics etc. Besides these photocopies, the blackboard is used to transfer content into students' notebooks. These rather traditional and reproducing teaching techniques – also known as 'banking education' – obviously do little to engage critical thinking and expression of the voice of these student teachers.

In complete contrast to these traditional techniques, I also observed classes in which some forms of dialogue and interaction were stimulated. Particularly in social science classes, discussions on Bolivia's colonial history and its current global role were topics of debate, often based on the readings of Eduardo Galeano's classic work of 'Open Veins of Latin America' (1971). Due to the relatively large classes (usually between 20 and 40 students), the number of students that were actively engaged in these types of debates and discussions was naturally limited and often the same students spoke up, as most trainers showed little engagement in general to involve the rest. Possibly, my presence as an observer might have influenced these situations, perhaps leading some trainers to adopt interactive techniques they do not normally use, or possibly choosing a strategy of letting the 'good' students talk. In one instance during my last visit in May 2010, a first year urban male student was clearly used to speaking up in class. Clearly in favour of the current governments' 21st Century socialist orientation, he commented on the role of teachers in Bolivia's current '*Boom*', that '*led to the current immersion in socialism, for which we as teachers are going to fight.'* With a strong voice, he carried on: '*we are already doing so in our 'practicas' [internships]. [We work] for the construction of 'the new man', as Che Guevarra called it, to break down the deprivations caused by the capitalist man. With a high moral, we as teachers are bringing forward the socialisation and revaluation of <u>all</u> of our knowledges'* (105:4). In contrast to most of the students I met in 2007 and 2008, this student was evidently aware (and supportive) of the ASEP discourse.

I found it especially interesting that during this last fieldwork visit (May 2010), in which I shared my preliminary findings in order to discuss them and receive feedback, I encountered several examples of open forms of 'voice' in two feedback discussions with first and second year students in the urban Normal. In their open and critical reactions to both my findings, as well as the intentions of my research, it was obvious that they had become used to posing these types of

critical questions. The same first year male student quoted above, whom I did not meet in my earlier visits as he was not yet enrolled, for instance commented how he was bothered by '*foreigners coming here to look at us*'. He continued to state that many of 'the foreigners' come to Bolivia only during very brief and isolated visits, to disappear without leaving any type of feedback behind (105:7). He thus wondered about the rationale behind my research. He continued by reflecting how *'we are all sons of the working class. Part of the problem now, apart from that our cultural and ideological roots have been taken away, is that we have been educated with a very low quality. What we know, is perhaps more because of our own efforts. Without wanting to offend you, we just learned from the book Open Veins of Latin America, how Holland was one of those colonisers. I sometimes get very angry with those outsiders coming to look at us as if we were animals in a zoo. And then they are astonished about our culture, about our Pachamama, without even understanding what is the Pachamama*' (105:6). While being a challenging and insightful experience for myself, I also realised that this openly critical attitude of a few of the students in particular showed their desire for active engagement and critical reflection. I had a similar experience with a rural trainer, who was well aware of how the results of a (foreign) study could be used at the central level of the MoE, with potential funding consequences. Delany-Barmann describes a similar experience of students' suspicion towards external researchers, as students were aware that such research observations '*might come back to them in the form of policy*' (2010: 197).

During my engagement with final year students during their PDI final project, I encountered some examples of how future educators attempted to improve existing structures that trigger forms of violence and conflict in educational settings. Drawing from the critical pedagogical literature on action research (see for instance Greenman and Dieckmann, 2004; Kane, 2002; Noffke, 1997; Price, 2001), it can be argued that the internship period and the related pedagogical innovation project (PIP) could help teacher-students to understand and reflect not only on their 'educational role' (Torres del Castillo, 2007), but also on their broader socio-cultural and political roles as future agents for change. A final year student at the urban teacher training institute, for instance, passionately defended his final 'innovation' project, aiming at improvement of 'human relationships' at the primary education level.[148] He explained how '*I have seen how children are afraid of their teachers. I have seen that traditional and hierarchical relations still exist. I want to explore how these relations between teachers and students can improve, in order for children to develop and learn in an environment of trust and peace. I want to use this final research project for my future work*' (66). A female colleague of his explained to me that she aims to develop methods to strengthen young childrens' abilities to protect themselves from sexual abuse. Based on her experience as a volunteer for a local education oriented NGO, one afternoon she invited me to come and see how she and her colleagues use story telling and a theatre approach to teach young students about the dangers of sexual harassment.

Unfortunately, these newly trained teachers, with a commitment to innovate and improve education after graduation, are confronted with a rather restrictive strategically selective context, as highligted in the former section. It seems like a majority group of 'older' teachers choose the 'routine' path, or an intuitive strategy of 'practical consciousness', instead of the more 'explicitly strategic actions' and a conflictive and difficult path of innovation and/or resistance. With an eye on the future of these newly trained teachers as potential actors of change in *and beyond* the

148 The student also joined the photo-workshop, see chapter 7.

classroom, in the next section I turn to discuss some of the possible strategies in-service teachers can adopt in countering the five dimensions of conflict defined in chapter 3.[149]

Discussing in-service teachers' individual strategies

Linked to the first and second dimensions of conflict, observations and conversations in different schools revealed structures of discrimination and exclusion of indigenous, darker coloured children with different mother tongues. Since discrimination in Bolivia is not only directed towards indigenous people, but extends to gender and class issues and regional prejudices, it is necessary for teachers to adopt a 'multiple consciousness of difference', meaning differences among indigenous peoples and differences within the (non-) indigenous individuals (D'Emilio, 1996: 22, 59). In the context of the ASEP project, one of the main challenges for Bolivian teachers is to promote a multiple perception of diversity, focused on commonalities, rather than following '*more inward-looking and potentially segregationist*' (Howard, 2009) or '*paralysing and exclusionary*' (Van Dam and Salman, 2009) forms of intraculturalism. Speiser argued that educators should work towards 'unity in diversity': '*within the framework of a segregationist society one can claim success if the educators have developed interest, readiness and a capacity to dialogue with those whom they consider to be different*' (2000: 235-236). Ten years later, 'unity in diversity' is a fundamental part of the new education law (Article 3.1, ASEP law 2010). The catchphrase of bringing 'unity in diversity', nonetheless, often sounds better than how it materialises in educational reality. Based on insights from critical race theories, with a 'unity over difference approach' there is a danger of promoting essentialism and static identities (North, 2006), or in the case of the current politics in Bolivia, a danger of an essentialised notion of 'indigenous-ness' or 'Andean-centrism' (Postero, 2007).[150]

From the literature on 'education and conflict' we can learn how teachers can actively resist against discrimination, stereotyping and the polarising discourses of identity politics – relating to the third dimension of conflict. Moreover, teachers should help students to adopt a 'hybrid identity' (Davies, 2006a), in order to deal respectfully with one's own and others 'differences' (in language, ethnicity, culture, sexuality, religion and so forth). Davies' work on 'interruptive democracies' and her pedagogical 'XvX model', demonstrate the importance of such an open and critical discussion on hybrid identities, emphasising the need for humour, creativity and play 'to interrupt dogma' (Davies, 2008; Davies, 2005a). Creativity in many of the Bolivian schools, for instance during music, dance and arts classes, is sometimes adopted in a somewhat folkloristic manner. Following the insights of critical pedagogy on SJTE, dialogue, critical thinking and reflexivity need to be included more seriously, especially with regards to the development of critical and reflexive citizens (Giroux, 2003b; Burns, 1996; Bush, 2000; Apple in Scott, 2008). In this line of argument, Davies writes about the importance of the stimulation of free speech, and critical media and satire analysis in schools, to open up critical discussions about extremist points of view without avoiding offence – yet evading humiliation (2008: 124, 149).

149 These dimensions included: 1) poverty and inequality of opportunities; 2) discrimination and exclusion; 3) separatist discourses and identity politics; 4) mistrust in the state & between societal groups; and 5) popular protests and violent clashes between the state & social movements.

150 While seeking 'sameness' or 'unity' in the name of equality, often harmful group stereotypes remain unchallenged and the complex, political and developing nature of individual's identities are overlooked (North, 2006: 517) in uncritical forms of education. Bartlett rightly warns for the danger of uncritically accepting 'indigenous knowledge' as something static, which could reinforce forms of cultural relativism by teachers (2005: 363).

In relation to the fourth dimension of conflict, another strategy for teachers to enhance educational (and hence societal) changes in the Bolivian tense context would be to increase levels of trust (at different scales). Mistrust often leads to difficult processes of dialogue and cooperation between educational actors at the school/community level, as shown in chapter 1. For instance, Bolivian (indigenous) parents complain about non-traditional and time consuming 'innovative' teaching methods that stimulate creativity or play, and towards the strengthening of indigenous languages next to Spanish. This is often explained by parents' '*cultural and pragmatic perceptions*' and preferences for traditional/modernising forms of education (Yapu 1999 in Howard, 2009). In her study of three EIB Normales in Bolivia in 2005, Delany-Barmann (2010: 196) further discusses the difficult and even contradictory role of teachers in trying to bring forward a bilingual and inter(intra-)cultural type of schooling, while parents and teachers themselves often have serious doubts about the rationale and usefulness of these innovations. Teachers often feel frustrated and ambivalent towards their new roles as placed on them through reforms, both because they might disagree with the policy's rationale, or because they feel unprepared or not proficient enough in indigenous languages to fullfil these tasks, a situation that continues to raise concerns for the implementation of ASEP. Hence, there also lies an important task for the MoE and Normales in supporting teachers in being prepared for this task. As shown in chapter 8, while future teachers are trained differently in urban and rural teacher training centres, all teachers are obliged to teach at least two years in 'province'. Considering that the first few years of teaching are the hardest, these two years in a rural school must be a huge challenge for students trained in an urban context, without adequate tools to communicate and adapt to a local context unknown to them. Thus, regardless of the efforts of intercultural and bilingual teacher training programmes in the EIB Normales, a large part of the future teachers are not prepared enough to teach in a non-Spanish and rural context, diminishing the chances for teachers to potentially convince parents of the benefits of inter-/intracultural and bilingual education.

With regards to the strategic selective environment of the schools in which (future) teachers work, there is often a lack of trust between teachers and parents, organised in the '*juntas escolares*' or parental commissions. Due to the relative power of these parents associations over teachers, instead of working together conflicts are prone to occur. On the positive side, these parents associations provide an instrument for a larger control on teachers' work, and on what happens inside the school walls. Although problematic, such an institutionalised control measure is a democratic necessity. For example, violence in the form of physical punishment has been – and in some cases still is – common in schools to punish low-performing or disobedient students. These castigations became illegal in the 1994 reforms, in line with the goal to increase the number of girls attending school. Teachers have been reported to be expelled by the parents associations because of – true or false – accusations of maltreatment of students. Teacher unions argue that they feel constrained by the increasing levels of power of the parental commissions. In contrast, a Bolivian political scientist believes teachers should be confronted with an even tighter control system: *'when a rural teacher – and this happens quite often – abuses a girl, the only thing that happens is he will be changed to another school, as he is protected by his union*' (23). Chapter 3 also described how mistrust between different groups of users of school buildings can lead to increasing tensions. When teachers show how to share or respect others' belongings, they could provide a better model for children on how to 'learn to live together' (Sinclair, 2004). Thus, dialogue between the

different actors involved could help to ensure a culture of trust and understanding, instead of (pedagogical) misunderstandings and unbalanced power plays.

This section reveals how, on the individual level, it is a huge challenge for future teachers to become a critical and reflexive generation that will inspire students, parents and the older generation of in-service teachers to improve classroom practices and to resist, instead of reproduce, historical discriminatory educational practices. In response to the first four dimensions of conflict defined in chapter 3, teachers would ideally adopt and stimulate others to have hybrid identities and foster a critical and open dialogue about differences and respect for diversity in an atmosphere of trust. Their training is crucial for a solid preparation, to stimulate an innovative and reflexive attitude and to foster latent motivations into active forms of agency.

Teachers' collective strategies

'*Individually, we have no power. Together, we can do anything*', is an often used phrase in the city of El Alto, a birthplace of Bolivian popular resistance (Dangl 2007: 140). Similarly, research shows how teachers' individual strategies of resistance often cannot be sustained alone and need a strong community that reinforces alternative perspectives and the joint questioning of dominant messages (Achinstein and Ogawa, 2006). Coming back to Benardo's story, in a feedback discussion with eight other urban trainers in May 2010, it became clear how he was isolated in his critique of the urban unions' demand for another salary increase of 12% (instead of the 5% that was promised). His criticism of the union is rare, since these critiques are often not openly expressed out of fear to be 'voted out' of the system. In individual conversations, Benardo showed a strong commitment to changing the current teaching practices in the Normal along the decolonising and inter-intracultural lines of the ASEP law. He also thought of himself as someone who could, and had to, make changes. However, this was not easy and was mostly limited to working with the students in his classroom. Although Benardo does not stand alone on a national level, within the institute he is clearly an exception and his agency is therefore limited. This section consequently explores the more collective strategies adopted by Bolivian teachers.

Bolivian teachers are a very 'visible' social group. Not only because of their very important and responsible job, but also because they make themselves heard through demonstrations and strikes. Chapter 6, for example, showed how in 2005 unsatisfied students and staff from some of the teacher training institutes effectively used pressure mechanisms (strikes, demonstrations) to enforce an end to the administrative role of Universities in their institutes. Similar to many other countries worldwide, Bolivian teachers are often viewed quite negatively by society as being resistant and under-qualified professionals. This is especially the case when classes are suspended because of 'unionised' activities. Policy makers, not excluding those in Bolivia, rather avoid these types of teachers' resistance and consequently teachers' individual agency is advanced to the detriment of collective teacher action and voice, hence downplaying the power of teacher unions (Vongalis-Macrow, 2007: 428-433). We should, however, also consider how these collective forms of teacher resistance towards state initiatives can be a productive and necessary counter-voice in the political arena, since collective interest might be used to overcome powerlessness of certain social groups '*by pooling their resources and thereby constituting themselves as strategic actors*' (Hay, 2002b).

Relating to the education field, Giroux passionately argues how '*educators should work to form alliances with parents, community organizers, labor organizations, and civil rights groups at local, national, and international levels to understand better how to translate private troubles into public actions, arouse public interest in pressing social problems, and use collective means to democratize more fully the commanding institutional economic, cultural, and social structures that dominate our societies*' (Giroux, 2003a: 13). In this line of thought, Sleeter (1996) stresses how the role of social movements should be recognised in the definition of critical pedagogical approaches, while Yogev and Michaeli argue that teacher training needs to include both community involvement in training programmes, as well as students' engagement in civic projects in communities (2011: 318). These approaches to a collective form of agency are particularly relevant to the Bolivian case. On the one hand because social movements – from radical to moderate indigenous organisations and from women's organisations to radical right-wing movements – have an active role in Bolivian politics and social life; and on the other hand, because of the recent shift of focus towards respecting and including indigenous rights and knowledge into educational policies. Based on the authors refered to above, possibilties for strengthening teachers' collective agency would probably lie in overcoming the lack of dialogue between teachers – and particularly the urban union – and different actors involved in the Bolivian education field.

We should avoid simplistic black-and-white accounts of teachers' resistance being either positive or emancipatory, versus negative and un-principled. There exists a growing body of literature that calls for a more nuanced view on the tensions between teachers' 'good sense' and their 'principled resistance' (see chapter 2). Rather than putting aside teachers' resistance as a psychological deficit or basic reluctance, teachers' *can* also respond from their professional principles (Achinstein and Ogawa, 2006). The students of the rural Normal, for instance, in 2005 took serious measures to demand better teachers, as they organised demonstrations and a roadblock at the main highway to insist on an institutionalisation process (41:13) to get teachers that would respond to their learning expectations (32:7). However, according to a student who was involved in the protests, the current processes of institutionalisation (chapter 6) did not deliver good teachers: *'the changes they did made it worse, but we will demonstrate again if necessary. Here we created the blockade [pointing in the direction of the highway], we stayed until we got into a battle with the police, all this we have suffered for what? To end up in a similar situation*' (41:13). The fact that students and teachers alike have continued to adopt these 'popular pressure methods' (such as strikes, demonstrations, road blocks and hunger strikes), regardless of the outcomes of their struggle, reflects a strong historical culture of popular resistance.

In contrast to these examples of 'principled collective action', on the more negative side teachers can also resist promising policy initiatives, as happened in both Mexico and Japan, where teacher unions have successfully obstructed reforms that were intended to improve educational quality (Tatto, 2007: 269-270). In addition, union struggles can also directly affect the education system negatively, resulting for instance in high numbers of cancelled school days because of strikes and demonstrations in Bolivia: 37 days in 1995; 24 in 1996; 15 in 1997 and 22 in 1998 (Talavera Simoni, 1999). Talavera's recent work (2011) shows that Bolivian teacher resistance from the urban union resembles the situations in Mexico and Japan, as their strategies focus on improving working conditions and salary issues, rather than that they are rooted in professional

principles for improving educational quality.[151] Jansen (2001a) explains how teachers' professional and political identities can be completely different and yet exist alongside each other. In the case of South Africa, '*conservative professional behaviour (e.g. teacher dominated classrooms, test-driven instruction, corporal punishment) co-existed neatly with radical political behaviour (e.g. mass activism of teachers on conditions of service, salaries and political change)*' (2001a: 243). This divide, between the professional and the political, was reinforced by the ways in which progressive teacher unions defined the terrain of activism for teachers: curriculum matters were not, until recently – both in South Africa and in Bolivia – regarded as grounds for political contestation by teachers as professionals (Jansen 2001a).

A decent salary is a common collective point of struggle for teachers all around the globe. As proclaimed particularly by the urban Bolivian teachers' union, teachers' salaries are too low in relation to the responsibility and heaviness of the job, forcing them into extra jobs. Considering the immensely responsible job for teachers as Bolivia's 'soldiers of change', even a government supporting rural trainer feels '*considering the importance of teachers vocation and social commitment, this vocation is still very badly paid, we sacrifice ourselves for this job, without hopes for compensation*'(43:10). However, it could also be argued that amidst other societal problems (unemployment and severe poverty) the new government is at least providing a better level of working conditions when compared to other sectors. Moreover, in the past years (under Morales), teachers' salaries have increased significantly by 37%: with 7% in 2006; 6% in 2007; 10% in 2008; and 14% in 2009. This data was published by the Bolivian MoE (2009), also stating that former governments in the past two decades only increased salaries by 3-3.5% after strikes and demonstrations. About a decade ago, Talavera (1999: xiii, 127-129) argued how the public debate about salary scales needed to open up to overcome the persistent struggle between the government and the teacher unions, and that the (urban) union leaders had to learn how to debate and negotiate, and not only think about 'the survival of the union'. The recent raise in salaries, together with some ex-union members appearing in a relatively high positions within the MoE, might indicate a potential opening towards dialogue between parties involved. Some first steps towards more open dialogue between the rural union and the MoE have been taken in the past years. The strategy of dialogue of Bolivia's rural union to some extent reflects what Weiner (2008) describes as unions' 'holistic social justice campaigns', working towards educational improvements benefitting the life opportunities of children and working against injustices in society as a whole, rather than focusing on material conditions only.

Looking at the collective level of teachers' strategies, this section shows how Bolivia's teachers unions form a crucial political counter-voice. Improving teachers' collective strength could be realised through forming alliances with other stakeholders (parents, community organisations, labour organisations and civil rights groups at local, national, and international levels) and creating a constructive dialogue with authorities. Based on insights from the SJTE literature, Bolivia's rural union's strategy of dialogue illustrates a shift from a sole focus on mostly 'practical concerns' (including salaries and retirement) to working towards educational improvements that work against injustices in society as a whole.

[151] As argued in chapter 5, a more nuanced view on the position of both the urban and the rural union is more valid nowadays. Especially the rural union has shown an interest in negotiating the new educational policy plans of the Morales government.

9.4 To conclude – Bolivian teachers' limited agency in a potentially enabling context: soldiers of liberation or guards of continuation?

'Recognizing teachers as engaged and public intellectuals means that educators should never be reduced to technicians just as education should never be reduced to training' (Giroux, 2003b: 48)

In this section I connected the outcomes of the different book parts to the analysis of teachers' agency presented in this chapter. Throughout the book, it becomes clear how Bolivian teachers see themselves confronted with processes of change and continuity. Their life and work is embedded in, and dialectically related to, the tense and discriminatory 'strategically selective context'. In addition, unclear policy lines, a persistently changing MoE staff and continuing mistrust in the state and its institutions (including the teacher training institutes) make it difficult to forecast whether teachers can really become actors for – or against – change. Based on the outcomes of Part III of the book, Bolivia's Normales are perceived as islands and are difficult to transform. The conservative attitude of teacher training institutes is a more general phenomena, as both within and beyond Bolivia they are considered 'untouched monopolies' (Tatto, 2007: 14). Continuing structures of corruption, discrimination and traditional teaching styles in the two Normales studied here add up to this situation.

Moreover, Part III showed how power plays at different levels and between a range of education actors contribute to the complexity of the strategic selective context that Bolivian (future) teachers are positioned in. While the MoE tries to maintain its central position in the education sector, it also struggles with internal and external forms of opposition to its radically new policy lines for decolonisation. Debates continue on how to interpret and deal with the (more and more divergent) positions of the two teachers' unions and even the right to the existence of the division between an urban and a rural confederation. What is clear, is the considerable level of influence in the governance of the Normales, particularly with regard to the relationship between the La Paz federation and the Normal Simón Bolívar. This structural context elaborated in Part III obviously affects the strategies of Bolivia's trainers, teacher students and teachers. Therefore, I argue that it is unfair to exclusively hold these educators responsible for the failures of polictical reform initiatives, let alone the successes of a social transformation project, as they face numerous structural constraints. Often, they face low social status while they work long hours in multiple jobs to support their families, while they miss(ed) out on a proper pre-service training and a permanent source of support to help them stay motivated and updated. Especially now – in the highly tense and conflictive Bolivian context – we need an understanding of the space available to Bolivian (future) teachers and factors underlying the choices teachers make, in order to develop their strategies that either intendedly or unintendedly support or resist current policies. This way, the study endeavours to respond to the need for research on the effects of changing and heterogenous policy environments with varying degrees of control on teachers' agency (Achinstein and Ogawa, 2006).

In contrast to these continuing structural constraints, this research shows how Bolivia's new socio-political situation also opens up new possibilities for processes of transformation; in the Normales, in schools and eventually in wider society. These emerging possibilities for change particularly become clear from the discussion of the (potential) agential factors for change, discussed in Part IV of the book. Chapter 6 has shown a changing profile of Bolivia's teacher

students, influenced by two contextual developments: firstly a lack of job opportunities leads to an increased age and in many cases wider experiences of students who enter the Normal; and secondly, a growing societal and political recognition of indigenous culture and languages stimulates students to develop a growing awareness and acceptance of their own ethno-cultural and linguistic background. Nevertheless, the Normales seem to miss and misunderstand the opportunity behind these developments. On the one hand there lies a potential benefit with regards to training a group of older, higher skilled and more experienced students, which is largely ignored or rejected. On the other hand, students' development of a greater socio-cultural awareness, acceptance and self esteem in relation to their formerly often discriminated cultural-ethnic background, opens a niche for critical reflection and awareness, yet the Normales do not sufficiently reflect on and work with these changing profile and identities of students. In other words, teachers' changing profiles and identities are an unused opportunity for change.

Following Hay's (2002a) SRA, actors' motivations are crucial in their passive or active strategies and these motivations are influenced by the ideologies and discourses around them, and vice versa. This chapter illustrated how the new government's discourse on 'teachers as agents of change' was primarily reflected in the narratives of those trainers that are supportive of the ASEP reform, who are presumably also better informed about it. Interestingly, while students' sometimes idealistic accounts also reflected the need for them to become change agents, perhaps because of their lack of familarity of the ASEP law, there was less of a clear link with the decolonisation discourse of the government. This links to the fact that a substantial group of interviewed student teachers, besides economic motivations, also showed a pedagogical-vocational and socio-political commitment, constituting a potential yet unused aspiration among a group of students at the Normales (chapter 7). Teacher education programmes need to focus on developing these vocational and political commitments (see for instance Yogev and Michaeli, 2011: 315). Thus, instead of simply blaming this majority of (future) teachers for a lack of commitment and vocation to the teaching profession and socio-political transformation, I argue that the structural constraints of the (pre-service and in-service) teacher training system largely fails to address and stimulate teachers' motivations to provide good education and become actors of change.

In response to why some teachers are not 'acting as change agents', we should critically look at who is designing educational policies and curricula, and the rationales behind these policies. We cannot expect teachers to implement academically constructed programmes for change that do not relate to the daily struggles and reality in schools (North, 2008: 1200). Nor can we expect educators to become partners in the governments' politics of change and hence to live up to their educational *and* societal responsibility, when they do not receive high quality training, a higher social status and a reasonable compensation. Considering the amount of incertainty and resistance among a considerable part of Bolivia's teachers, the Bolivian government needs to take Fraser's third dimension of social justice (representation) more seriously, in its attempts to engage Bolivia's teaching force in the new reform process.

Inherent to the ongoing developments in the Bolivian context, we are left with some imperative questions. Is the new decolonising political approach indeed relevant to *all* of Bolivia's citizens, as the law proclaims, or should we consider it as a new imposition for a part of the population? Will the present 'discursive turn' in the Bolivian political arena indeed promote a

more enabling context for teachers and students to openly announce and discuss their hybrid identities, or will exclusionary forms of 'identity politics' be reinforced? Is Morales' 'politics of change' indeed a positive environment for changes to happen, for teachers to take centre stage in processes, and a dialogue working against negative forms of conflict and towards social justice? There is some hope. We should not forget the potential among future teachers, about those that have a changing identity and (latent) motivation to become an actor of change; one student-teacher told me how his own negative educational experience – of non-motivating and uninspiring teachers – became his main reason to become a teacher himself, in order to *change*. This future teacher embodies a larger agential potential, of future teachers with good aspirations to become 'soldiers of liberation', rather than reproducing reality as guards of continuation.