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

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Concluding and theoretical reflections: Bolivian future teachers between decolonisation and demonstration

'Pachakuti, or hegemony, always takes hard work by creative actors in every era' (Postero, 2007: 22)[152]

10.1 Bolivian teacher education: continuity, change, discourses & practices

The present Bolivian attempts to attain a counter-hegemonic state ideal, and a continuing 'organic crisis' in which this new hegemony is not yet institutionalised, indeed needs the 'hard work' of 'creative actors' in order to become a sustainable alternative to the more exclusionary forms of state that Bolivia has experienced previously. It is however, as this thesis shows, questionable whether Morales' ambitious vision of Bolivia's teachers as the '*soldiers for liberation and decolonisation*' is a helpful utopia in this quest for an alternative and decolonised society. The answer to this question is two-fold: on one hand, the new and 'extended' policy image of teachers as change agents, their continuously increasing wage, a discursive policy commitment to social justice oriented goals and a prioritisation of (pre-service) teacher education are exceptional developments for Bolivia's teaching profession and education system, considering a global education policy move in the opposite direction. On the other hand, empirical findings question the degree to which Bolivian teachers can effectively design their strategies as 'liberating teachers' in a context of continuous structural impediments; and whether they are socio-politically motivated – or even informed and involved enough – in policy design and implementation to adopt such strategies for change as envisioned by the government. Ramiro, the 'Aymara almost-teacher' introduced at the start of this book, reflected on his views of the future in a recent email exchange (May 2011), which I have summarised in Box 8.

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

Box 8: Ramiro's future

I think that, at first, I was not alone in my excitement with the famous process of change Evo Morales promised. But today I do not know if that illusion remains in place, since the latest decisions of our government have stunted the quality of life, particularly of the lower classes that have always supported him. Currently, the future is incertain. One is never happy with the government. But the good news is that with the election of Evo Morales, Bolivia became known to the world for its indigenous and former coca-producing president, which caused curiosity, interest and admiration of journalists, presidents, writers and even film directors.

When referring to teachers, Evo Morales uses the term 'soldiers' with the aim of instilling enthusiasm, encouragement, and something that really moves people to what the MAS calls 'the process of change'. Thus, my role is to be a change agent. As teachers our main objective is always to educate people well, and to create female and male students with values and principles that contribute to their country. Personally I think that being a teacher means more than just giving mere theoretical knowledge to students, but to provide them with enough 'arms' to cope with life in the best way possible. Whether you like it or not, being a teacher means engaging with students as their guides, as their 'second parent'. Our work is directed at shaping students' personalities, towards activities and attitudes that are based on values and principles that in the course of their life will make our students agents of change, for the benefit of our country. Education is thus very much part of the social changes in my country.

Ramiro's and other similar stories inspired the exploration presented in this research of Bolivia's future teachers (enabling and restricting) pre-service education. These stories encouraged me to explore future teachers' (continuous and changing) identity constructions and motivations, and subsequently their potential space for manouevre to develop (continuing or changed) strategies in a context of demanding and changing policy reform and socio-political tension and transformation. Consequently, this thesis took the case of Bolivian pre-service teacher education – including its *institutes* and its *actors* – in an urban and a rural context to explore:

How do Bolivian pre-service teacher education institutes and actors develop strategies for or against socio-educational transformation that is envisaged by the new Plurinational constitutional regime?

Building from the answers to the five guiding questions (see introduction) in the five respective book parts, in this chapter I aim to respond to this main research question. Drawing from the data and analysis of this research, and a range of theoretical insights presented in chapter 2 and the introductions to Book Parts III, IV and V, in this chapter I aim to respond, and perhaps contribute modestly, to the development of these theoretical understandings. In an attempt to give an overview of the two main lines of argumentation used throughout this thesis, Table 7 illustrates the nexus between continuity-change and discourse-practice. The following section relates the issues presented in Table 7 back to the earlier theoretical discussions.

	CONTINUITY	&	CHANGE
DISCOURSES & PRACTICES	❖ Education for All ❖ Intercultural education ❖ Gender equity ❖ (Quasi-)decentralisation ➢ Professionalisation agenda for Teacher Education		❖ Plurinational Constitution ❖ ASEP law ❖ *Vivir bien* ❖ Decolonisation ❖ Intracultural education ❖ Productive & communitarian education ➢ Social Justice agenda for Teacher Education
	Structural institutional 'obstacles' ❖ insufficient institutional infrastructure ❖ Normales as islands ❖ closed/fixed teaching profession ❖ corruption and political favours ❖ discrimination ❖ traditional teaching styles ❖ inertia ❖ failure to enhance critical thinking and reflexivity through the PDI course		**Structural niches for change** ❖ national democratic representation of indigenous majority ❖ former social movement/union leaders now staff in MoE ❖ increasing teacher salaries ❖ prioritisation of teacher education ❖ institutionalisation process: attempt to bring transparency in staff appointment and training initiatives for teacher trainers – creating a potential link to cooperation with Universities ❖ PDI as a *potential* transformative & reflexive space (action-research)
	Agential factors of continuity ❖ majority teachers female and lower class ❖ majority mother tongue is Spanish ❖ economic motivations prevale ❖ low levels of trust ❖ negative and conservative societal image of teachers and Normales ❖ educators' rather professional idea of the ideal teacher		**Agential change factors** ❖ new policy image of a professional, socio-politically engaged and emotionally/ethically prepared ideal teacher ❖ increasing age and experience of student teachers ❖ amplified ethno-cultural awareness and identity construction ❖ future teachers' latent vocational and socio-political motivations
	Continuing strategies ❖ teaching as a way out of poverty ❖ routine teaching manners ❖ urban union's resistance ❖ urban Normal's hesitant adaptability to reform		**Changing strategies** ❖ opening dialogue rural union/CEPOs/Government ❖ rural Normal's open attitude to ASEP ❖ heterogeneity of trainers' individual responses to reform plans, not necessarily in line with the inertia of the urban institute or resistance of teacher unions ❖ ASEP potentially opening up new space for transformative strategies

Table 7, overview of main outcomes of the research

10.2 Relating empirical findings and theory

Bolivia's new regime under the presidency of Evo Morales is seeking to create a new social, political and economic composition of Bolivian society, with education being a core instrument for that transformation. As part of a wider regional Latin American shift to the political left, through a new Plurinational constitution, the government adopts a radical discourse-for-change, which is exemplified by the recent approval of the new decolonising education reform ASEP. As detailed in chapter 5, the ASEP reform is both unique and contested. It is unique in the sense that in contrast to wider global developments of market-driven education reforms, Bolivia seeks an endogenous path to educational and social development, based on a revolutionary ideological discourse of decolonisation and *'vivir bien*'. Rather than shortening teacher training, reducing teachers' salaries and downgrading teachers' societal roles, as we see in many countries around the globe, Bolivia is instead increasing teachers' training programme from three and a half to five years, the government is pushed by teachers' unions to increase wages and president Morales has declared teachers to be '*the soldiers of liberation and decolonisation*'. This new revolutionary reform is, however, not uncontested either, as challenges for its implementation linger and various oppositional groups openly question its legitimacy and relevance. Structural socio-economic and educational inequalities (urban-rural, lowland-highland) persist despite a rhetoric of change, perpetuating ongoing tensions in Bolivian society.

This thesis explores how the current government's 'politics of change' are played out in the 'socio-political battle field' of pre-service teacher education institutes, where several structural obstacles to transformation remain in existence. It argues how the new hegemonic project of decolonisation of the current government is not fully institutionalised; as with regards to the education sector, internal struggles still exist within the MoE and various groups of stakeholders (including for instance teachers, parents and the Catholic Church) remain actively opposed to parts of the new reform. However, this thesis also highlights the various potential spaces for transformation, as designers and proponents of the ASEP reforms finally see a turn around of deep historical injustices for the majority indigenous population. The research thus contrasts strong instances of continuity with niches for change, as illustrated in Table 7 above.

Continuity and change in Bolivian discourses around teacher education

While present day reality in the two Normales included in this research continue to be characterised by rather traditional practices – in terms of their organisation, teaching methods and materials (further elaborated below) – at a discursive level a radical shift has taken place. Through the decolonisation of the teacher education system as one of the key reform goals, a revolutionary transformation of the entire education sector is envisaged, along the lines of an inter-/intracultural, plurilingual, communitarian and productive education approach. The key role for teacher education was emphasised by a MoE official as follows: '*Social justice, inclusion and decolonisation are all pillars of the new teacher training programme, and the whole new education reform of Bolivia. Teacher education institutes need to incorporate the new curriculum for teacher education, so they can materialise these philosophical and theoretical underpinnings of the ASEP law*' (44:4). While many social justice oriented political approaches in the US context are focused around economic redistribution (North, 2008: 1198), the current education reform plans in Bolivia are exceptional because of a clear emphasis on recognition and representation issues related to the claims of the indigenous movement struggles. Based on interviews and documentation analysis, I argue that the notion of

'*vivir bien*' is crucial to a Bolivian understanding of a social justice oriented (teacher) education system (Article 3.1 ASEP Law, Ministerio de Educacion de Bolivia, 2010b), that aims to work towards a society based on solidarity, equal rights and opportunities for all citizens.

The *rationale* of Bolivia's education reform can be considered 'revolutionary', as it seeks not only to produce genuine improvements in people's lives, but also to build popular political capacity (Rodriguez-Garavito et al, 2008: 24). Its discursive aims are also 'transformative', as it strives for a restructuring or deconstruction of the educational status quo (Fraser, 1995). During these processes of transformative remedies, disrespect – particularly for the indigenous population – is redressed by transforming the underlying 'cultural-valuational' structures. Through transformatory remedies to social injustice, existing group identities and differentiations can be destabilised and the self-esteem of currently disrespected groups is often raised, while '*everyone's* sense of belonging, affiliation and self' would change (original italics Fraser 1995: 82-83, 87). This is at least partly the case in Bolivia, where my research shows how tensions rise between indigenous and non-indigenous citizens from the different low-land, high-land or central regions of the country, while indigenous identities are more openly 'adopted' by Bolivia's future teachers, reclaiming their cultural and linguistic heritage, including surnames and ways of dressing in formal settings. The outcomes of this thesis, however, question the degree to which the rethoric of a 'revolutionary transformation', that is envisaged to start in Bolivia's Normales, will actually be implemented considering a range of structural and agential obstacles (see Table 7).

Drawing from Frasers' feminist theory of a three-dimensional conceptualisation of social justice (chapter 2), I argue how at the *discursive level* the new ASEP Reform, as embedded within a broader politics of change and Plurinational constitution, indeed strives for more justice in terms of economic redistribution, cultural recognition – and a revaluation of the heterogenous indigenous heritage – and political representation. Current policy discourses emphasise a broad interpretation of justice, including for instance environmental justice and gender justice, both in wider society as well as in education spaces. As a consequence of these changing political discourses, the policy approach to teacher education similarly shifted towards a social justice orientation. The discourse of the ASEP policy and (available versions of the) curriculum-in-design relate to the more critical interpretations in the literature on SJTE, both in its socio-political goals of redistribution, recognition and representation, and in its methodological and pedagogical approaches that emphasise critical reflection and action research.

When applying the typology of the 'three agenda's for teacher education' (elaborated in chapter 2, see for instance Cochran-Smith, 2004; Sleeter, 2009; Zeichner, 2009) to the situation in Bolivia, it can be argued that the 1994 Reform primarily fitted the professionalisation agenda, with an emphasis on teachers' professional pedagogical base. Bolivia's new policy still follows the professionalisation agenda, while at the same time it attempts to pursue a social justice and critical inter-/intracultural rationale, as illustrated in Table 7. The new law is clearly not following the deregulation agenda; for instance the government has increased the length of teacher training instead of reducing it. In this sense, Bolivia is a clear exception to the 'global rule' of neoliberal marketisation of teacher education, that leads to shorter training programmes that prepare teachers as '*technicians to raise students' test scores while moving away from teachers' professional knowledge and quality'* (Sleeter, 2009: 612). In a recent publication a MoE official makes Bolivia's alternative revolutionary orientation more explicit:

'*The main priority of the new teacher will be to critically understand social reality and their new social contexts. From the point of view of liberation and construction of historical consciousness, a teacher should go beyond the usual simple thematic content, the repetition and memorisation of meaningless dates and events, the eternal blackboard, chalk and pads, but rather incorporate appropriate new technologies in the educational context. Teacher education should establish an epistemological break with the prevailing pedagogical tradition, reaffirming a strong ideological and political training, with a clear position on the role and functions of the teacher as a protagonist in transforming Bolivian communities and a keeper of personal ethics and professional integrity'* (Del Granado, 2011).

In this new state vision for teacher education, Normales are seen as 'research institutes'. In order to reach this goal not only the curriculum is revised, but also the educational management is transformed, since '*the curriculum itself is not synonymous with transformation*' (Del Granado, 2011). Here, it is relevant to return to the main dilemma of teacher education (Tatto 2007) as discussed in chapter 2, namely whether teacher training is required to bring about critical reflection and extensive professional autonomy or whether teaching is seen as a more procedural, scripted activity that asks teachers to only deliver the standards of a prescribed curriculum. The current ideological discourse of the ASEP law and its proponents are visibly commanding a more extensive role for teachers than merely following a prescribed curriculum. In line with the SJTE criteria (chapter 2), the ASEP law (2010) underlines the importance of critical reflection of teachers and the importance of research within the teacher education programme. Two MoE officials responsible for the new teacher education programme under ASEP confirmed the view that research and critical reflexive thinking, particularly through the practical and research 'PDI-course', are core elements of the five-year training cycle (101:3 and 102:4).

In addition, according to new legislation, teachers are expected to engage in community life and actively undertake (action) research to '*solve productive and social problems*, *to promote scientific, cultural and linguistic diversity, and to participate side by side with the local population in all processes of social liberation, in order to create a society with more equity and social justice*' (Article 91 of the new constitution, 2008: 20). This discursive and policy shift to a 'research methodology', particularly in Bolivia's PDI course, aims therefore to apply the SJTE criteria of critical thinking and reflexivity through action research methodologies (Liston and Zeichner, 1990; Price, 2001; Zeichner, 2009). Though these types of action research ideally enable (future) teachers to produce and control knowledge in order to act upon educational and societal changes, it depends on the quality of the practical experience and the level of support the teacher students receive, during 'guided enquiry' in schools, as to whether these actually help to build a social justice awareness and understanding, or whether it will function as a reproduction of the status quo, merely reinforcing rather than challenging negative stereotypes (McDonald and Zeichner, 2009: 604; Sleeter, 2009: 619-620). The analysis of the implementation of the PDI course in chapter 6 illustrated a limited system of guidance and support for student teachers during their internships and research periods, resulting in an untapped potential for critical reflection and socio-political critical awareness, and consequent strategies to act upon them, even though this is part of the official ASEP policy discourse.

Continuity and change in Bolivian teacher education practices

Regardless of the apparent discursive shift towards a more social justice oriented teacher education system, there is still a large gap between ASEP's social justice oriented ideology and the reality in Bolivian Normales and schools. This was confirmed in one of the feedback discussions with teacher trainers and students in the rural institute, where it was argued that having a good

new law is one thing, but changing it into a reality is another (121). Thus, the various structural and agential factors produce a somewhat complicated reality for these justice ideals to materialise and for SJTE to shift from an idelogical discourse into teacher education practice (as illustrated in Table 7).

Structural factors of continuity and change

As became clear from chapter 5, there is an impasse in the whole education sector because of the recent approval of the ASEP law and a lack of clear conceptualisations, guidelines and curricula to accompany the new plans. In line with the challenges of ASEPs implementation discussed in chapter 5, there is a genuine danger that the critiques on the former reform of 1994 – an overemphasis on the theoretical and ideational and too little on the practical implementation – will be repeated again now ASEP has started to be implemented in the teacher education sector. The big shift in comparison to the reform process of the 1990s, is that teacher education is now seen as the first step towards reforming the whole education system. Yet, while ASEP prioritises teacher education, it has difficulties in accomplishing full information sharing, participation and 'ownership' of the changes in all Normales.

Dictated by continuing economic insecurity and poverty, youngsters and unemployed professionals alike claim their right to enter the Normales, as they continue to perceive the teacher profession as a useful path to upward social and economic development. The MoE, however, predicts high unemployment rates of graduates as too many teachers have recently graduated from Normales and there are not enough jobs. Furthermore, though Bolivian teachers might not be challenged by the same problems and limitations inherent in the global and market-driven 'crisis in the teaching profession' discussed in the introduction of the thesis, we can nevertheless still speak of a crisis in the Bolivian teacher profession. While teachers' salaries have increased and welfare arrangements have been assured, their status remains low and teacher training institutes are still considered conservative islands in wider society. In addition, for many of Bolivia's pre-service and in-service teachers, the current situation of an 'impasse' or 'crisis' understandably frustrates them, as they remain in a state of limbo, unsure of what the future reform and curricula will bring. Still, this uncertain situation, together with an intensification of entrance procedures and a longer duration of the teacher education programme, does not deter many Bolivians from pursuing a (first or second) career in education, taking a range of measures to ensure their successful entrance to one of the Normales.

Supportive and oppositional actors of the new ASEP reform perform their power plays at different (institutional, local and national) levels of the teacher education system. Drawing from 'actor maps' that were visualised by various respondents, the Normales come out as complex socio-political battle fields – or strategic selective contexts (Hay 2002a; Robertson forthcoming) – where different power relations are played out. The MoE plays a central role in that it primarily finances, guides and (only to some extent) controls the Normales. Both interviews and actor maps revealed how the MoE and (primarily the urban) union are caught up in a trial of strength with regards to their influence in the Normales, positioning the Normales at the frontline of socio-political struggles. Tensions continue to augment, for instance over the monopoly of the teaching profession for *normalistas* – those trained in the Normal – thus exluding University graduates. As already highlighted in chapter 4, Tatto et al (2007b) similarly discuss how in the

case of Mexico, the Normal Schools have not changed nor lost their position due to the support of the teachers' union (Tatto, 2007: 16). The power of the Bolivian MoE in the Normales is being limited, negotiated and mediated by the supportive, or resistant, influence of unions and social movements such as the CEPOs. At the same time, the relative power of the unions is also being 'attacked' through the processes of institutionalisation mentioned above. The Normales, as '*complex and emergent sites of struggle and contestation*' (Jessop, 2005: 28), mediate between these sometimes opposing power relations, as the institutes are positioned on the verge of ASEP's transformation from an ideological policy into an educational reality.

The historically embedded institutional cultures and political strategies of the different stakeholders involved are not necessarily creating an enabling environment for governments' policies, which aim for a radical restructuring of teacher education in terms of the governance mechanisms, as well as a socio-political redirection of its curriculum. Continuing structural institutional obstacles to change include: insufficient institutional infrastructure; traditional teaching techniques; discrimination; corruption; strong hierarchies; a lack of democratic institutional governance; and engagement with the wider community (chapter 6). The breach between ASEP's social justice oriented ideology and the reality in Bolivian Normales is further illustrated in the application of Sleeters SJTE framework to Bolivian teacher education 'actions' at the end of chapter 7. Firstly, while recruitment measures have been revised in order to recruit better and more motivated future teachers, regardless of their background, the entrance exam still tests memorisation skills and interviews are still limited in both time and scope. Secondly, while the new policy discourse encourages inter-/intracultural and multilingual (teacher) educational approaches as well as socio-political awareness raising, in reality these ideas have (yet) barely reached the classrooms of the Normales. Thirdly, the impact of the promising PDI course, and the continuing attention to these types of research methodologies in Bolivian teacher education, is limited due to a lack of guidance and critical reflection.

Building on the insights of former studies (Concha et al, 2002; Lozada Pereire, 2004) as well as several interviews with Bolivian academics, I argue that new directions should be sought for different forms of collaboration between Universities and Normales in order to build Normales as 'research oriented institutes', as is envisioned by the current government. Currently, there is little trust or willingness for such a collaboration from the side of the Normales, as the enforced external administration by Universities is still fresh in their memories. If the various actors involved could take seriously the idea of critical and reflexive teachers-as-researchers that is supported in the SJTE literature, new forms of cooperation between Normales and Universities, or other research institutes, would be indispensable. In this area there is a need for future research. In developing such new forms of collaboration, the *normalista* arguments against too heavily theoretical University influence should be acknowledged, while at the same time Universities' comparative strength deserves recognition. Finally, the ongoing institutionalisation process provides another potential space for improvement as it aims to enhance the transparency of teacher placements and at the same time to ensure a better qualified teacher trainer force. Yet, according to the critical views of both students, trainers and MoE officials, this process so far has not been fully succesful in terms of its actual transparency, while it has also resulted in a loss of effective instruction time in both Normales. There is, in my view, a need for a selection process

based on trainers' demonstrable qualifications, rather than political affiliations or the 'automatic' gained qualification points according to trainers' years in the profession.

Agential factors of continuity and change

Part IV of the book analysed the continuities of a number of 'agential factors' (see Table 7). First, the majority of teachers are still female, speak Spanish as their mother tongue and come from lower classes. Consequently they see the teaching profession as an important way out of poverty. In contrast to the general negative view in Bolivia, of students *only* entering the Normales because of financial reasons, the interviews and survey results revealed a more nuanced picture of how both urban and rural students expressed various kinds of pedagogical-vocational and socio-political related reasons for entering the teaching profession. Moreover, while Yogev and Michaeli (2011: 315) claim that teacher education programmes need to focus on developing these vocational and political commitments, this is not so much the case in the two Normales examined so far, thus forming an under-utilised potential. Besides, there are generally low levels of trust between the various educational actors at different scales and both teacher students and their trainers have rather negative and narrow views of each others' motivations to be(come) educators. In contrast, at the national level, the policy discourse embeds a new policy image of a professional, socio-politically engaged and emotionally/ethically prepared ideal teacher, as was discussed above.

While in the literature the need for reflexive processes of identity construction is emphasised as a key element of transformative teacher education programmes (e.g. Clarke, 2009; Price, 2001; Beauchamp and Thomas, 2009; McDonald and Zeichner, 2009), this receives a lack of attention and understanding in Bolivian teacher education practices and policy. While Bolivia's teachers' at all levels of experience are faced with a rapidly changing context of a Latin American 'indigenous awakening', a continuous unequal society and economy and an upcoming new education reform, they demand 'flexible' identities in order to deal with these changing landscapes (Clandinin et al, 2009: 142; Welmond, 2002: 24-26), yet in reality they receive little support in terms of pre-service and in-service training. This study found that there is a changing teacher student profile marked by two of these 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. Teacher education institutions – as well as national level policy-makers – seem to miss and misunderstand the opportunity behind these developments. I argue that on the one hand, there lies a potential benefit with regards to training a group of older, highly skilled and more experienced students. On the other hand, due to processes of 're-ethnisation' and 're-identification' students develop a greater awareness, acceptation and self esteem in relation to their formerly often discriminated cultural-ethnic background. While, in the literature, pre-service training is described as an ideal starting point to create awareness of the need to develop and reflect on the ongoing shifts in identities of future teachers' complex identities (Beauchamp and Thomas, 2009: 176, 186), this is rarely taken up by Bolivian teacher education practices.

Continuing and changing strategies

With the aim to take into consideration both the structural (Part III) and agential factors (Part IV), Part V aims to shows 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. Chapter 9 analyses the possibilities and challenges Bolivian teachers face in their work within Bolivia's challenging context of continuing tensions, discrimination and instability. Being a teacher in Bolivia, thus, means being caught up in a context of social and political conflicts, since the choice between 'marches' or 'maths' is often not really a free, but rather a strongly politicised choice, as was illustrated in the case of teacher students' and trainers' 'forced' participation in demonstrations (chapter 9).

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 (Hay, 2002a). As argued in chapter 8, we need to rethink the homogenising, reproducing and passive idea of the Bolivian teacher. 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 (chapter 9). These discourses are possibly strengthened by the current government's talk of change, particularly for those trainers who are supportive of the ASEP reform and who are presumably also better informed about it's content. Even though quotes from teacher students do not directly appear to align with the current government's ASEP discourse, and many still have very little knowledge of the ins and outs of the ASEP reform, in their idealistic and hopeful 'illusions of grandeur' (Moore 2008) they do express a wish for bringing change, reflecting the under-utilised vocational and socio-political motivations mentioned above. As illustrated in chapter 5, the new outline of the ASEP teacher education curriculum includes subject matters such as political ideology, which could potentially become a space for critical reflection to help future students to make sense of their potential roles as change agents, but further research would have to highlight if and how this results in practice. Some respondents spoke of how permanent teacher formation for in-service teachers could improve the chances for teachers to be actors for change, as it was recognised by various actors that changing existing practices in schools remains a huge challenge. Notwithstanding Morales' 'politics of change', many Bolivian schools tend to be more conservative rather than open to new ideas and change; as a large group of in-service teachers choose a 'routine' path, rather than a more conflictive and difficult path of innovation and/or resistance. Considering that many of these in-service teachers at some point also function as 'guiding-teachers' in the internship and research trajectories of future teachers (the PDI programme), it is thus questionable whether these internship experiences of guided teaching and fieldwork will actually help to build a social justice awareness and understanding, or if it will function as a reproduction of the status quo, merely reinforcing, rather than challenging, negative stereotypes (McDonald and Zeichner, 2009: 604; Sleeter, 2009: 619-620).

In terms of (future) teachers individual strategies, I found that in many cases students' voice in the classrooms of Normales was limited to individual or group presentations, often literally reproducing the content that was provided on photocopied texts or the blackboard. While in many classrooms these 'banking education' teaching techniques continue to exist and evidently do little to engage critical thinking and expression of students' voice, I also observed classes in which some forms of dialogue and interaction were stimulated, often still naturally

limited due to the relatively large class sizes. Nevertheless, during two feedback discussions with first and second year students in the urban Normal during the last fieldwork visit, I did see more open forms of 'voice', as the critical reactions to both my findings and the intentions of my research made it clear that these students had already become used to posing these types of critical questions. Though these examples are limited and perhaps do not represent a wider trend (yet), they do indicate how the discourse of critical and engaged teachers is starting to be reflected in some spaces within Bolivia's Normales.

Drawing from an interdisciplinary body of literature, as well as interviews and observations of this study, chapter 9 discussed possible strategies for Bolivia's (future) teachers as 'agents of change', to counter the different dimensions of the Bolivian socio-political conflict (defined in chapter 3). By taking on a critical and reflexive stance towards 'difference' and by helping themselves, and their students, to adopt hybrid identities (Davies, 2006a; Davies, 2008), teachers can ideally provide a counteracting force to forms of exclusionary 'identity politics'. Another strategy for teachers to enhance educational (and hence societal) changes in the Bolivian tense context is to increase levels of trust and dialogue in the strategic selective environments of the schools and other education institutes (including Normales), where there is often a lack of confidence between the various actors involved, including teachers, parental commissions, unions, (indigenous) educational organisations and lower or national level government institutions. However, in order to do so teachers themselves need to believe in their own capacities and skills, as regardless of the efforts of intercultural and bilingual teacher training programmes in the EIB Normales a large number of future teachers are, for instance, not prepared enough to teach in a non-Spanish and rural context, diminishing the chances for teachers to potentially convince parents and the community of the benefits of inter-/intracultural and bilingual education, or a decolonised, communitarian and productive curriculum. Their training, both pre-service and in-service, is crucial for a solid preparation, to stimulate an innovative and reflexive attitude and to foster latent motivations into active forms of agency for transformation.

Policy makers, not excluding those in Bolivia, rather avoid teachers' collective forms of action and resistance (Vongalis-Macrow, 2007: 428-433). Collective forms of teacher resistance towards state initiatives can, however, also be a productive and necessary counter-voice in the political arena. As we should avoid simplistic black-and-white accounts of teachers' resistance as being either negative and un-principled versus positive or emancipatory, this study acknowledges both the conservative as well as the more transformative outcomes of Bolivian teachers' collective actions. Research also shows how teachers' individual strategies of resistance can often not be sustained alone and the need for a strong community that reinforces alternative perspectives and the joint questioning of dominant messages (Achinstein and Ogawa, 2006). This was exemplified by the story of Benardo, a senior urban teacher trainer who 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 felt, however, limited to an individual strategy 'within the four walls of the classroom' only. Although Benardo does not stand alone on a national level, within the institute he is clearly an exception and his individual agency is therefore limited. Similarly, the idea that '*Individually, we have no power and together, we can do anything*' has

convincingly proved its strength in the city of El Alto, sometimes also referred to as the birthplace of Bolivian popular resistance (Dangl 2007: 140).

Collective action is therefore not uncommon for Bolivian teachers. A decent salary is a common collective point of struggle for teachers all around the globe and – as proclaimed particularly by the urban Bolivian teachers' union – Bolivian teachers' salaries are too low in relation to the responsibility and demands of the job, forcing them to take on extra jobs. This study contrasts these views with the observation that teachers' salaries have continuously been increased since Morales entered into government. Together with ex-union and indigenous movement members taking up relatively high positions in the MoE, and a changing strategy of dialogue of the rural teachers' unions, these developments might indicate a potential opening of more dialogue between the parties involved over the systematic issues of conflict in the education sector (e.g. salary issues, pension arrangements, reform implementation and so forth).

It is thus for Bolivian teachers not an easy, nor a straightforward choice to develop their strategies in the various arrays of tensions and pressures between decolonisation and demonstration. As long as in the majority of practices, observed in the two Normales included in this research, continue in a routine manner of banking education, teacher students will continue to experience that instead of actually *learning* their new profession; they instead *attend* classes (Bonal, 2007) in order to get their certificate and thus a life long assurance of a salary. Also, as long as teachers' pre-service education does not radically transform in itself, and an in-service system of training and support continues to fail to stimulates teachers to engage in innovative and transformative ways of teaching, we can hardly blame Bolivia's educators for sticking to their strategies of survival and routine, in the absence of clear, supported and awarded alternatives.

In summary, amidst long historical processes of continuity, the current socio-political transformations in Bolivia have meant an opening up of potential niches for change both inside and around the socio-political 'battle-field' of the Normales. The continuing and routine strategies exist alongside the limited, but existing, individual (in the case of the urban Normal) and rural collective support initiatives for the ASEP reform of trainers and management staff. Illustrated in Table 7, these 'niches for change' for instance consist of: the rural unions' new strategy of dialogue with the MoE and the CEPOs; increased (national level) democratic representation of the indigenous majority; an increased ethno-cultural awareness and identity building among those that identity with being indigenous; former social movement staff now working in the MoE; and last, but not least, the PDI-course as a potential transformative and reflexive space for future teachers. Hence, we already see the first shifts in policy prioritisation of teacher education, and new and emerging individual and collective strategies that in some cases resist, and in some cases enhance the project of transformation of the government under Evo Morales.

10.3 Contributions to the field & suggestions for future research

In this final section, I intend to abstract six important issues that this thesis hopes to contribute to transdisciplinary debates on the politics of education in situations of social transformation and conflict, and in particular the dialectical relationship between teachers and socio-educational transformation. Building from these insights, I also recommend several areas for future investigation.

Firstly, this study recognises the value of Latin American coloniality debates in their aim to understand and at the same time deconstruct historical structures of injustices. Yet it urges for closer engagement with various, not to be ignored, counter-voices from the Latin American ground. As argued throughout the book, the Bolivian government pursues these ideals through a politics of change and decolonisation of the education system, to create a socially just society in which all citizens can 'live well' (*vivir bien*). The empirical outcomes of this study, however, illustrate how the 'decolonial ideal' is not embraced by various groups of social actors in Bolivia, among which: groups of parents who would rather see their children being taught in Spanish; urban teachers who perceive the communitarian and productive aspects of the ASEP law to be irrelevant to their contexts; and Catholic education organisations who fear being excluded from a non-religious oriented education system. Bearing in mind these forms of resistance and counter-strategies, it is debatable whether the government's attempts to reform education through decolonisation is a legitimate strategy, or perhaps a new form of imposition as some respondents expressed. Future exploration is needed to investigate whether and how the actual implementation of ASEP's discourse for SJTE – in terms of critical and reflective thinking and a meaningful intercultural dialogue – are indeed realised in teacher education practices, or whether the government's political ideology of decolonisation turns out to become another form of dogmatism in the classrooms of Bolivia's Normales. In the process of further developing these valuable and necessary debates on '*alternatives of knowledge and alternatives of action*' (Sousa Santos 1998: 130), a sincere engagement with these actual counter-voices 'against decolonisation' becomes a crucial field for future inquiry and theory building.

Secondly, based on the findings of Parts III and IV, and in line with a critical realist point of view, I argue that discourse and policy, such as the new ASEP law, do more than just '*leaving a trace in practice*', as Jansen suggests in his work on 'political symbolism' and its effect of non-reform (2001b: 212-213). The data of this study partly speaks against Jansen's analysis. While for the case of South Africa Jansen found a lack of integration of national policy statements, and a lack of coherence between a wide range of policy documents (2001b: 203), this study shows more coherence between Bolivia's constitution, the National Development Plan and the ASEP education reform. In addition, while Jansen's observation of heavy international influence in policy design was still true for Bolivia's 1994 Reform, its current ASEP policy is said to be of pure Bolivian-owned design. In resemblance to the case of post-Apartheid South Africa, the first period of the Morales government's attempts to reform and decolonise Bolivian education can indeed largely be characterised as 'political symbolism', however it does not mean this discourse only created 'non-reform'. I argue that we can take this analysis a step further, by applying Dale's multiscalar 'politics of education' approach, and that, by analysing that, what happens in the (teacher) education sector is inherently embedded in broader socio-political and economic processes of transformation. This way, we can see how the broader socio-political discourse and

actual changing societal arrangements impact future teachers' new ways of self-identification and a cultural-linguistic re-recognition of their indigenous roots (chapter 7) and how an enduring economic situation of insecurity fuels an even larger influx to the entrance exams for Normales (chapter 6). Besides, a changing political arena with ever more flexible and fading boundaries between the current government and social movements such as the CEPOs, and even the rural branch of Bolivia's teacher union, impact the different approaches and readiness for adaptability to the new envisaged decolonial education system in the rural and the more resistant urban Normales included in this research. The fact that Bolivia's rural and urban institutes respond differently to the 'political symbolism' of the government, and express different levels of engagement and ownership of the ASEP project, leads me to conclude that Jansen's 'political symbolism' explanation of non-reform could be nuanced or advanced by including a more holistic and multilevel analysis of the complexities of power plays, interests and actors involved in (teacher) education in similar situations in transformation.

Thirdly, the case of Bolivian Normales illustrates how teacher education institutes should be considered as sites of embedded social and political struggle and as spaces where various actors both inside and outside of the institute play out their socio-political and educational conflicts. Or, as Robertson argues, we could view teacher education institutes '*as a complex terrain and outcome of discursive, material and institutionalised struggles over the role of education in the social contract*' (Robertson forthcoming). Teacher education institutes are characterised in the literature as somewhat paradoxical spaces, where instances of conservatism and transformation meet (see for instance Tatto, 1999 & 2007b on Mexico, Jansen, 2001a on South Africa and Yogev and Michaeli, 2011 on Israel). This contradictory position is also reflected in Bolivia's Normales. To a certain degree, this study thus confirms the existing conservative societal image of Bolivia's Normales. This is in line with Yogev and Michaeli's claim that in turbulent social and political contexts teacher education institutes frequently stick to relatively conservative models – providing '*an illusion of security*' – hampering innovative and transformative forms of teacher preparation (2011: 315). However, the picture is more complex. Drawing from a critical realist approach (Jessop, 2005: 41), the study has attempted to uncover the visible *empirical domain of reality,* the *actual* (in)visible events and processes as well as the invisible, yet *real* structures, mechanisms and powers inside and around Bolivia's Normales. Based on a multiscalar analysis of the present Bolivian socio-political and educational context, and drawing from the Cultural Political Economy perspective on education (CPE/E, Robertson forthcoming), this research brings forward a more nuanced picture of teacher training institutes as heterogeneous spaces (Tatto 2007) of struggle and contestation, in which potential new spaces for transformation do appear. The study confirms the importance of semiosis in processes of social transformation, as the niches for change occur at the verge of the new ASEP policy discourse and the slowly opening and changing strategies of individual trainers, the rural union and the indigenous education councils (CEPOs).

Fourthly, while in its policy design and social justice oriented discourse the new Bolivian government seems to respond to a transformative approach to teacher education (Yogev and Michaeli 2011: 317-318), Bolivia's current teacher education practices largely fail to implement a transformative model that stimulates teachers to become 'transformative intellectuals' (Giroux 2003b). Following Gramscian thinking on the potential transformative role of 'organic

intellectuals' in the education field, Michaeli and Yogev argue for such a transformative teacher education model, that '*is intended to train teachers as "involved intellectuals" whose professional identity is based on strong intellectual self-image, awareness of social activism, and commitment to public activity*' (2011: 313). The theoretical chapter 2 highlighted several key 'indicators' of a SJTE programme, including an enhancement of teachers' agency through an action research programme for critical thinking, reflexivity and fostering meaningful intercultural dialogue. These 'indicators' correspond with Bolivia's new vision of a longer, more intensive and academically qualified teacher education system that trains future teachers to become '*critical, reflective, innovative and 'research-oriented professionals*' (Article 33.1, ASEP law). Through its action research methodology, the PDI course provides a potential space to enhance critical thinking, reflexivity and consequently teachers' active agency for change, but for the most part its current implementation fails to do so. Part IV illustrated how regardless of the potentials of a changing, more experienced and culturally more aware future teacher generation, with latent vocational and socio-political motivations, there is little evidence of actual practices that stimulate an engaged and committed ideal Bolivian teacher. Yogey and Michaeli continue to argue that in order to do so, teacher training institutes need to reconceptualise their roles and responsibilities beyond the field of education, challenging the reproducing hegemonic conservative educational ideologies and practices (2011: 322). Part III of this study shows how – in contrast to the new policy guidelines – Bolivian Normales are still very closed institutes, or 'islands', with limited connection to, or engagement with, its surrounding environment. In addition, interviews with young in-service teachers revealed how, in many schools, teachers are faced with a similar conservative environment. Thus, the new 'revolutionary' ASEP curriculum and other reform documents as products of the governments' 'political symbolism' (Jansen 2001b) do not necessarily translate directly into changed practices. The developing nature and early stage of the recently designed and approved ASEP Reform did not allow this research to make statements about the *effects of strategic actions* of actors in the field of teacher education and therefore these boxes and arrows were included in the conceptual scheme with dotted lines (see chapter 2).

Fifthly, without ignoring the continuity of traditional and non-transformative practices in Bolivia's Normales, we should stay away from the simplistic conclusion that Bolivia's educators are therefore a conservative crowd. Building from insights on the importance and interrelatedness of structures, agents and agency, I aim to open up debates that place the blame for a low quality education and a low-committed teaching force on teachers, by arguing that we need to understand the causes of these developments in the wider structural context of (pre- and in-service) teacher training and support, as well as the broader socio-political and economic environment. This claim not only holds for Bolivian teacher education, but has relevance to other education levels and other countries as well. It is unfair to solely hold these educators responsible for not being prepared and equipped to provide quality teaching and/or training. In the case of Bolivia, yet also in many contexts elsewhere, teachers lack a permanent source of support to ensure that they remain motivated and updated, while they face low social status, miss out on a proper pre-service training and often combine multiple jobs to support their families.

Sixthly, following from the conclusions presented in this thesis, it is fair to state that the ideals and foundations embedded in the critical, and often US-based, literature on SJTE are certainly closely linked to Bolivia's discursive policy turn as I have argued above. Yet, its actual

implications for the transformation of Bolivian teacher education practices is limited due to a range of continuing structural and agential challenges (Table 7). The application as an analytical instrument for discourse analysis has proven useful in this thesis, even though the Bolivian context is very distinct from the US context, for instance, where most of the literature is developed, or other contexts where a market driven approach aims to (de)professionalise the teaching profession instead of Bolivia's (discursive) attempts to extend teachers' socio-political roles. The actual level of implementation of the ASEP reform is still in its premature phase, and future and further critical ethnographic study is needed in order to further develop a SJTE framework that is particularly applicable to highly unequal, diverse and socio-politically tense contexts in the global South, such as Bolivia.

A follow up on the implementation phase of the ASEP curriculum in the Normales would be an interesting area for future research, as the field of teacher education in Bolivia remains under-studied and deserves broader attention. Due to the limitations of this study in terms of the inclusion of only two out of the 27 Normales (let alone the new 'Academic Units') for pre-service teacher education, it would be interesting to conduct similar qualitative and critical ethnographic research in other Normales. In addition, more research is needed in order to better understand the precise funding mechanisms of the Normales, as precise financial data was hard to locate and this might bring more insight into issues of power and negotiation between institutes and other (non-)governmental actors.

In addition to the need for more research in the field of Bolivian teacher education, I think an exploration of the further developments of the implementation phase of the ASEP project in the education sector as a whole – including its institutional governance and implications, continuing power-plays, and educators' perceptions, motivations and strategies – naturally forms a new area for future research. Investigation is also required in order to analyse and understand how the various socio-political tensions and dimensions of conflicts are played out at different education levels, including the early phases of (pre)primary education up to the higher levels of vocational and university education. As a follow up of this study, it would be particularly interesting to explore teachers' early transition from pre-service to in-service teaching and the clashes between new teachers coming from the Normales and those already working in school settings. Considering the warning signs of growing unemployment among trained teachers, future research could also explore the effects of this situation, as well as to explore the continuing struggles between the MoE and youngsters, and their parents, over 'the right to enter the Normal'. In light of Morales' 'politics of change', and various sources of literature (including this study) suggesting that in-service teachers prefer to follow a routine manner of 'traditional teaching', prospective studies could potentially shed more light on in-service teachers' points of view and strategies with regard to the new Reform, and the broader socio-political goals of their government towards 'decolonisation and liberation'. Similarly, there is a need to better understand the changing and developing identities, motivations and strategies of Bolivia's in-service teachers located across the countries' nine departments and across the different scales of the education arena.

Finally, I end by sharing the following quote from Benardo, one of the most engaged and experienced urban teacher trainers I had the honour to get to know. After a series of interviews and conversations with this trainer over the course of the fieldwork visits, in May 2010 we sat down at the kitchen table, reflecting on the preliminary findings I had just told him about:

> *'Bolivia's context today has totally changed. It means that at present, what we called the 'Normalista' teacher, with their own theoretical frame, their own paradigm, with the passage of time this [type of teacher] does not respond anymore to the necessities of this country... we now see this [educational] structure did not solve the major problems of this country, the fundamental social, economic, cultural and educational problems. That is why we need studies, we need a diagnostic to understand where we find ourselves now, what state teacher education – which lies at the core – is in. And from those understandings, we need to formulate new policies that will help to remedy these major problems, towards a quality education. Such [studies] help me to reflect, to solve [issues], not only with the mind but also with the heart. Therefore, I think your research, let's say, could be a perfectly fitting glove*' (108:1).

I can, of course, only wish that I have, perhaps partly, lived up to these reflections.