Media representation of teachers across five countries

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This paper reports on an investigation into the representation of teachers in newspapers in five countries. An innovative methodology was used to develop a method of inquiry that supports a deeper understanding of media representations of teachers which can also be used by other researchers in comparative education. The paper explores relevant literature on teachers' work and media studies, and describes the decisions made about the selection of newspapers from the five countries and the analytical framework. Central to the project was the development of an analytic framework which we applied to our analysis of the media data collected from the five countries. The process revealed the construction of four categories of teacher identity: the caring practitioner; the transparent (un)professional; the moral and social role model; and the transformative intellectual. The aim was not to generalise categories but to offer them as they were found in newspapers during this time frame. The data analysis demonstrates the applicability of the innovative methodology while the project also contributes to locally translated understandings of teacher representations. The paper concludes with a reflection on the effectiveness of the methodology for comparative research.

Introduction

In a climate of increased corporatisation of education, teachers are the object of media attention (Cohen 2010; Hanushek 2011). Research suggests that newspapers all over the world publish articles about teachers that are 'frequently unfair' and 'partially substantiated' (Pettigrew and MacLure 1997, 392). They often blame teachers for poor student performance and poor educational outcomes (Ball 2008) and present a negative image of teachers (Keogh and Garrick 2011), creating a 'crisis mentality towards education' and teachers (Thomas 2006). This paper reports on an investigation to compare this media scrutiny of teachers across five different countries.

Aldridge and Christensen (2008) emphasise how the constant process of change causes education policies to travel worldwide with a major influence on local traditions and expectations that teachers act on in the classroom. Our aim in the paper is not to make generalisations about the media representations of teachers within or across the five countries. However, there are some remarkable similarities across the five countries and across quite diverse newspapers, in the constructs of teachers and teaching, that could reflect the influence of global processes and policies.

Although it could be argued that the social expectations of teachers and teaching are culture-specific, varying across countries depending on the beliefs, values, customs and

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ideas about what is important for education, similarities in their actual images were found in our newspaper data. This could be associated with the postcolonial spread of Western education into other parts of the world (Ball 1998), the increased flow of students from the South to educational institutions in the North (Rizvi 2011), the spread of homogenising education policies through different world bodies including the World Bank, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) (Jones 2007) and/or the dominance of Western media in the rest of the world (Cottle 2009). In other words, the local and culture-specific views of teachers might be increasingly replaced by universalising tendencies. However, very little is known about the similarities and differences of the emergent themes contributing to the images of teachers (Cole and Barsalou 2006). In our study, we examined the local media perceptions of the different societal expectations of teachers to highlight similarities and differences between them while also attempting to understand the impact of these global homogenising trends on teachers and the teaching profession.

In terms of the organisation of the paper, we begin with a brief overview of the relationship between the media and teachers' work. We then introduce our theoretical framework followed by a description of our methodology processes. Our data analyses identified constructs of teachers and teaching that are discussed in the literature that we present in this paper to show the inductive and deductive connections made.

Media representations of teachers' work

The media representation of teachers and their work is increasingly impacting upon the actions of policy makers and the public perceptions of the success of education initiatives (Lingard and Rawolle 2004). The media play a significant role in shaping the perceptions of their readers while shaping society, its concerns and expectations about public matters such as teachers and quality education (Cohen 2010; Hall 1997; Mills and Keddie 2010; Threadgold 2006). Whitty (2000) argues that the development of a low-trust relationship between society and its teachers is often exacerbated by government and media attacks on teachers.

There is a large body of work on media representations of different aspects of life and society in various fields including media and cultural studies (Gentz and Kramer 2006; Talbot 2007). Within the education field, discourse analysts have reported on teachers represented in various types of media; for example, the construction of teachers in popular culture (Weber and Mitchell 1995), schools and classrooms in newspaper advertisements (Janks 2010). Some of this work is informed by the work of Gunter Kress on the 'grammar' of images (Kress and van Leeuwen 1995). The representation of teachers in newspapers has received modest attention (Goldstein 2011; Keogh and Garrick 2011; Pettigrew and MacLure 1997) and there has been little work that focuses on the language of the texts rather than the images. While there has been considerable work on comparing media accounts of the implementation of education policies across different countries (see for example, a special issue of the *Journal of Education Policy* 2004, 19:3) comparative studies that identify similarities and differences of media representations of teachers are rare. As well, Downey and Stanyer (2010, 332) point out that generally

> much existing comparative media analysis is ethnocentric, taking North American or Western European media as either normative models of what media systems ought to

be like or making invalid generalizations about the character of media systems beyond the USA and Western Europe.

Theoretical framework

The extent to which media representations of teachers are 'true' or just is an empirical question. However, a prior question is related to epistemology. For instance, a positivist view would suggest that the 'reality' of teachers and teaching as portrayed in the media has an objective existence outside the realm of language and representation. On the other hand, a constructionist (e.g. poststructuralist) view would deny this reality outside discourse and claim that how teachers are portrayed in the media is actually an act of discursive construction resulting from a power–knowledge nexus. While these epistemological differences surrounding the media representation of teachers may not be reconciled, whether newspapers *reproduce* the reality of teachers or *construct* it, there is no denying that the media coverage of teachers is offered against the background of socio-political representation (Luke 2004).

We draw on socio-cultural accounts of teacher identity that guide our view of the representations of teachers in the media as social constructs rather than a fixed reality (Goldstein 2011; McLure 2003). In our examination of the media representations of teachers across the five nations in three different continents (Africa, Asia and Australia), we found more similarities than differences about social expectations of teachers and the roles they fulfil in the learning and teaching environment. A Vygotskian (1978) socio-cultural understanding of teachers is employed to view teachers as the knowledgeable other who operate within specific socio-cultural contexts to perform socially sanctioned roles in the light of prevailing social expectations. However, our data reflected a great diversity in terms of teacher roles, activities, attributes and their levels of commitment to teaching practice and the profession.

Methodological processes

A five step analytic process was employed to investigate the construction of 'good' teachers within five national contexts: Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Oman, Bangladesh and Australia. We were particularly interested in popular perceptions of teachers, and decided that newspaper accounts of teachers and teaching practices could provide us with some insight into these public perceptions. The first three steps of the process were completed by individual researchers on their own data sets while steps four and five were undertaken collaboratively on combined data. During the process the group met regularly and therefore each step was discussed, clarified and refined throughout.

Selection of newspapers

Before the process of data collection could begin we made certain methodological decisions about the focus of our attention, through constructing a set of criteria that would guide our newspaper selection in each country. We are cognisant that these selections themselves contribute to the constructed nature of our data set, in that a choice made about using one particular newspaper could mean particular versions of 'good' teaching are identified. For example, the Australian newspaper selected, *The Australian*, is owned by News Limited, a company that is often associated with conservative views and neoliberalism (McKnight 2003).

We also understand that the time frame in which the newspaper selection was done across the five countries influences what is and what is not included in these representations. For example, during this time an increase in cases of reported fraud in Bangladesh might have influenced the focus on teacher misconduct as represented in the media. Rather than making a case that our findings are generalisable to a whole national context or to the international global context, we are more interested in the local representation of discourses about professionalism of teachers and teacher identity. The criteria used to select newspapers were that they had national representation, a broad focus, a wide readership and were available in a searchable online database. Questions of ownership also influenced our selections. One newspaper was selected from Australia (*The Australian*, TA), Saudi Arabia (*Al Riyadh*, AR) and South Africa (*The Mail and Guardian*, M&G) while two newspapers were selected from Bangladesh (*The New Nation*, NN and the *Financial Express*, FE) and Oman (*The Oman Daily*, OD and the *Al-Zaman*, AZ).[1] TA is owned by a multinational corporation, News Limited while AR, NN, FE and M&G are all privately owned. In Oman, the OD is government-owned so a second, privately-owned paper (AZ) was included to offer another perspective. All of the newspapers are available nationally rather than being focused on one particular state or province of the country in which it is distributed.

The second requirement was that the selected newspapers should have a broad focus and cover a wide variety of topics such as politics, government, business, the environment, society, education and sport. For example, the *Australian Financial Review* was not included as its focus was predominantly on business, finance and investment news while the FE (Bangladesh) was included because it significantly covers politics, society and education in addition to business and finance news. The third requirement was that each of the selected newspapers should have high sales and distribution rates and was popular with the readership. For example, the TA has a stable weekday newspaper circulation of 129,985 in the last quarter (The Newspaper Works 2011) while the M&G (South Africa) had a weekly circulation of 50,000 newspapers (M&G Reports Strong Circulation Figures 2011). We did not collect information about the nature of the readership of each newspaper but are aware that the perceived attitudes of readers can influence the construction of teachers and teaching within any selected newspaper.

The final criterion was that each had to be readily available in an online, searchable database or archive. It should also be noted here that three newspapers selected were not published in English. Individual authors from these countries translated the relevant news articles into English to add to our data set.

Step one: selection of articles

A publication timeframe of seven months between 1 January and 31 July 2011 was set and used as a search limit for the selection of newspaper articles. For each of the selected newspapers, we used the search term 'teacher' when investigating the online databases. This, being a broad term, yielded a large number of articles. For example, the NN and FE search generated 642 news and opinion pieces; TA yielded a list of 486 articles while the AR search resulted in 418 related news items, articles and opinion pieces over the same period of time.

Step two: reading and culling

During this phase, each investigator read articles from his or her own country, applying four statements: 'A teacher **is** … ', 'A teacher **is not** … ', based around teacher identity

situated in the context of socio-cultural expectations. This process was based on our growing sense of a binary being constructed within the data, based on a dichotomy between 'actual' and 'ideal' images of teachers. If an article explicitly rather than implicitly drew attention to the construction of these actual and ideal images of teachers, then it was retained in the data set. For example, in TA, 38 out of the 486 articles were retained or approximately 8% of the articles were found to be relevant. For the Bangladeshi newspapers, 88 items were retained from the 642 items (14%), while from the AR, 150 items (35%) were selected.

Step three: sorting and refining

The data were then organised into a template which was used to record key statements using a notation system to identify the newspaper and the date of publication.[2] Where possible, statements that were transcribed into the templates were used verbatim from the newspaper article and, if necessary, translated by members of the group from the relevant country. We refined again to highlight the emerging binary and identified data that provided information about the 'actual image' of the teacher identified in the newspaper articles and identifying the 'ideal image' of a teacher. For example, actual images of teachers suggested a teacher was incompetent (M&G25/3; AR9/1), irresponsible and lazy (AZ26/3; 13/2) while ideal images of teachers suggest teachers should be more competent (AR18/1; 1/1) and more knowledgeable (OD20/7).

Step four: development of themes

The challenging task of categorising the diverse themes emerging from the newspaper data from the five countries was performed by combining inductive and deductive processes to discover recurrent themes and thematic patterns (Kamberelis and Dimitriadis 2005). The categories of 'actual images' and 'ideal images' were examined to identify themes and sub-themes. Once the themes were identified, we read and discussed them in the group and tried to understand the social expectations that formed the various constructions of teachers that were expressed in newspapers. Here we turned to the literature to examine the various constructs of teacher and teaching available and whether these constructs were useful in organising and identifying categories.

Step five: review and re-develop

In seeking to address the challenge of categorising these diverse teacher representations, we identified four categories of 'teacher' based on our visualisation of teachers in various social and discursive spaces: as practitioners (in the classroom); professionals (as members of the profession); role models (in the moral universe); and members of the community and society. We again turned to the literature to understand how these constructs are elaborated, both theoretically and empirically, within the education field. Below we provide an overview of the literature in terms of the four categories of teacher identity.

Teacher identities: practitioners, professionals, role models and transformative intellectuals

Noddings (1997) argues that the conceptualisation of teaching as a practice places responsibility on teachers to discover motivating factors behind learning practices

and to encourage students' interests. Central to this construct is the view that a teacher should develop a positive caring relationship close to friendship with students (Goldstein 2004; Noddings 2003). Noddings (2003) believes that teaching practice is constructed as a process that involves attending to students, being responsive and acting with care in different teaching activities and practices regardless of whether this set of activities is relevant to the practice itself. One personal quality that resounds throughout the literature is 'caring' for students (Dunne 2003). A teacher's job is not simply to 'secure demonstrable learning on a pre-specified set of objectives'; it extends well beyond introducing the content of the subject to include everyday life issues (Noddings 2003, 243). This is called 'responsiveness to others' (Blair 2009; Dunne 2003; Hansen 2001; Higgins 2003; Noddings 2003) and entails the exchange of synchronous and diachronous goods of teaching practice (Blair 2009). Teachers are expected to improve and advance students' competence in a specific subject while developing students' disciplinary competence (Dunne 2003; MacIntyre 1998, 1999) and develop them as 'whole persons' (Noddings 2003).

Teachers as professionals are often described in opposition to practitioners. For example, Hoyle (2008, 288) believes that the professional is identified when 'the knowledge, skill and commitment of practitioners is continuously enhanced in the interests of clients'. Englund (1996) characterises teacher professionalism as a pedagogical concept concerned with the quality of teaching. Teachers are expected to 'be professional' referring to the 'quality of what [teachers] do' including conduct, demeanour and standards (Hargreaves 2000, 87). Teachers as professionals are expected to take responsibility for their actions and conduct, often linked to teacher behaviour (Phelps 2006). This aspect of professionalism focuses on teacher accountability (Day and Smethem 2009) and transparency. The rise of the public accountability movement and the lack of trust in the teaching profession are attributed to the presumed need to reduce the power of professionals (Day and Smethem 2009; Hoyle 2008) with associated reduction in teacher autonomy and an increase in self-regulation.

Teachers' moral and social roles are often associated with characteristics of the ideal, superhuman teacher. Teachers are often viewed as moral citizens (Watson et al. 2010), although there is no consensus as to what 'role model' teachers provide or what exactly is meant by a 'moral character' (Schwartz 2007, 1). Nevertheless, there are prevailing expectations in communities about teachers' moral conduct, referring to teachers' actions and dispositions (Campbell 2008). Johnston, Juhasz, and Marken (1998, 162) indicate that morality is 'the relationship between what people do in social settings and the inner values, beliefs and standards that lead them to particular courses of action'. Teachers can be considered moral agents when their values, behaviours and attitudes are associated with socially desirable actions (Norberg and Johansson 2007) while they significantly contribute to students' moral development (Osguthorpe 2008; Revell and Arthur 2007). In addition, when teachers attend to the moral dispositions desired by their societies, they are likely to influence the development of their students' moral conduct in the future (Osguthorpe 2008). Consequently, such influence may also play a positive role in students' achievement. This is consistent with the views of Strong (2007), Stronge et al. (2007) and Watson et al. (2010) indicating a direct relationship between teachers' behaviours and their students' academic performance. In this sense, morality includes characteristics and virtues that encourage good actions.

There are several interrelated perspectives that construct teaching as a political enterprise, requiring social and political activism both inside and outside the classroom.

Social reconstructionism invited teachers to take up social and political roles to reconstruct society in a period of economic and socio-political crises (Murrow 2011). Some variations of social reconstructionism are social justice teacher education, anti-racist teacher education and critical teacher education (Cochran-Smith 1999; McDonald and Zeichner 2009; Zeichner 2011). Under the influence of Critical Theory, these perspectives have been underpinned by a concern for social equity and justice (Bronner 2011). Almost all critical perspectives including critical pedagogy (Freire 1974) construct teachers as transformative intellectuals, as opposed to passive technicians, in line with a view of teaching as a vocation or calling (Kumaravadivelu 2003).

The conceptualisation of teachers as social and political agents supports the construction of teachers as transformative intellectuals. Some studies (e.g. Baladi 2007; Davari, Iranmehr, and Erfani 2012; Goldstein 2004; Lin 2004; Picower 2011) have highlighted the critical role of teachers in raising students' socio-political awareness about oppressive conditions surrounding their lives and raising their voices against such conditions with the hope of empowerment and change. At the same time, other studies have shown that teachers may not necessarily believe in the transformative goals of education (e.g. Cox and Assis-Peterson 1999) or that there is little that teachers can do, despite their awareness, in the face of curricular and institutional constraints (Hamid 2007). A characteristic of these studies is the focus on developing critical awareness seen as a prerequisite for social change in favour of the marginalised groups. Dove (1995) argues that teachers in the 'developing world' were practically engaged in socio-political actions to reconstruct societies in the postcolonial era but that these roles declined towards the end of the twentieth century in the wake of the bureaucratisation of mass school systems.

In the next section we present our analyses of the media representations of teachers using these four categories of teachers. The analyses do not aim to generalise but to connect locally translated media representations of teachers to these constructs of the caring practitioner; the transparent (un)professional; the moral and social role model; and the transformative intellectual.

We believe that the combination of inductive and deductive approaches as well as our discussion around the constructs within the collegial environment of the dialogic space resulted in a theoretically sound and robust framework comprising these four categories of teachers. Nevertheless, we need to point out some limitations in the way we framed the study. For instance, although we describe four distinct categories, we are actually talking about the same individual and therefore an overlap of these different constructions is unavoidable. For example, one pervasive theme across the data was teachers being involved in sexual offences. This could be identified as part of the construction of teachers as practitioners, professionals, moral citizens or socially active citizens. Therefore, instead of treating the four constructions as theoretically distinct, the framework should be seen as a convenient heuristic that allows us to examine and make sense of the data.

Data and analysis

The caring practitioner

The construct of the 'caring practitioner' was ubiquitous across the data collected from the newspapers from Bangladesh, Oman, South Africa and Saudi Arabia, but received minimal coverage in the Australian newspaper. The expectations of teachers as

practitioners are very similar suggesting that the constructed version of the caring prac-
titioner teacher is to some extent universal. The data highlighted two important qualities
of a teacher as a practitioner, namely being responsive to students and acting with care.
In the Bangladesh newspaper, teaching is seen as a caring profession (FE4/5; 8/4)
where teachers are expected to be attentive to students without any bias (FE30/1). In
South Africa, newspapers reported that teachers are expected to focus on students
(M&G15/7), and to prioritise their needs (M&G22/6) and concerns (M&G10/6). In
the two Gulf countries, Oman and Saudi Arabia, the news articles reflected a view
that teachers are held responsible for addressing students' needs (AZ26/3; AR19/7;
18/4; 3/4; 28/3).

In newspapers from South Africa and Saudi Arabia, teachers are perceived as sig-
nificant adults in learners' lives (M&G11/3; AR21/7; 4/5) where they play a role in
shaping students' future plans and aspirations (AR24/7; 18/1). In the Bangladesh and
South African articles, teachers are expected to build the minds of their students
(FE2/1; M&G8/4) and in the Oman data, they are required to develop students who
can hone their own intellectual and social capacities (AZ26/3).

In the Bangladesh newspaper it was suggested that teachers should conduct classes
smoothly and effectively (FE30/1) through the creation of conducive learning environ-
ments (FE2/1) using understandable and simple language and giving extra time to stu-
dents who need help (FE30/1). In Saudi Arabian articles, teachers are expected to
enhance students' motivation to learn (AR7/5; 4/5; 31/1) and to discover the specific
skills and talents of their students (AR26/7; 4/5). The Saudi data suggest that teachers
should consider student differences, needs, interests and ambitions (AR19/7; 18/4; 3/4;
28/3); the use of new teaching methods, including student-centred methods and group
work (AR7/5; 4/5; 13/4; 28/3); and extracurricular activities to fulfil other non-
curricular goals (AR19/7; 24/1). In the South Africa news, teachers play a pastoral
role and notice signs of children in distress (M&G11/3). Similarly, in the data from
Oman, teachers need to encourage students to make connections between real world
experiences and what they study in the classroom (OD23/2).

Developing a positive relationship with students is another characteristic of the
caring teacher which circulates in Bangladeshi (FE2/1; 2/1; NN21/7) and South
African (M&G10/6) newspapers. In the Saudi data, teachers were expected to
respect their students and treat them with dignity (AR8/7; 27/4; 25/4) and in the
Oman newspaper, they were expected to treat them in a way that could inspire them
to work harder and become better students (OD23/2).

What is evident in newspaper reportage of this construct is that the representations
of teachers as practitioners were all about the ideal image of teachers rather than the
actual. Furthermore, these expectations of teachers to act as caring practitioners
seemed to describe a 'superhuman teacher' who should have a particular set of qual-
ities: one who attends to students responsively, acts with care, focuses on students,
prioritises students' needs, plays a role in shaping students' future, considers students'
individual differences, enhances students' motivation, and develops a positive caring
relationship with students.

The transparent (un)professional

The newspaper constructs of teachers as professionals predominantly focused on nega-
tive aspects of teachers' conduct, demeanour and standards. The Saudi newspaper fre-
quently commented on the significant role teachers have in the quality of education in

that country (AR9/7; 7/7; 3/5; 25/4; 11/4; 14/2; 21/1; 12/1; 2/1). The South African and Bangladeshi newspapers also mentioned quality teaching. However, this was in the context of striving for an ideal of quality education that was characterised by an environment of student achievement and excellence (M&G25/3; FE3/6). This was presented as the opposite of what was actually happening in schools.

The Australian (TA26/3) and Saudi (AR2/4) newspapers specifically identified transparency in teacher behaviour as an essential component of teacher accountability. There was a need for education authorities to set targets for teachers to meet and enforce these through student testing and other mechanisms to control and regulate teachers.

What became apparent was the repeated focus of the newspapers on the negative unprofessional behaviour of teachers and teacher misconduct. The most prevalent problems referred to teacher interaction with students, in particular regarding behaviour management. The Saudi (AR24/7; 29/6), South African (M&G10/6) and Omani (OD17/2) newspapers made specific reference to the power that teachers hold over students. In the data from Saudi Arabia, the suggestion was made that some teachers are unable to manage and discipline students in their classes (AR11/7) and in Oman newspapers, that they should not misuse their power to beat, insult or verbally abuse their students (OD17/2).

Other negative behaviour reported by Bangladeshi newspapers was a lack of dedication to the profession (FE22/5), inefficient functioning at school (FE12/7) and irresponsibly taking leave (NN25/6). This was echoed to a certain extent in a South African newspaper report that suggested some teachers were not proud of the teaching profession (M&G15/7) and a Saudi newspaper that suggested that teachers lack sincerity and willingness to make sacrifices (AR6/7). Reference to negative teacher behaviour was also made in an Australian newspaper that suggested that teachers were helping students cheat in the annual national standardised test (TA30/4) and the Omani reports on teachers who were acting immaturely (AZ26/3), and were irresponsible, lazy and known to skip classes (AZ13/2; 26/3). Teacher misconduct was also reported in the newspapers, including a call to sack poorly performing teachers in Australia (TA26/4) and a concern that teachers were involved in corruption and the violation of rules in Bangladesh (NN2/6) or committing a crime that violated society's trust in teachers (FE12/7). One aspect of teacher misconduct reported in newspapers was related to sexual misconduct which appeared in Bangladesh (FE12/7; 22/7; 20/5; 11/5; 21/1; NN12/7; 20/7; 20/7; 19/7) and Australia (TA9/7; 15/6; 7/6), with one newspaper report in Saudi Arabia making reference to this topic (AR17/6).

It was evident that teachers were being constructed as (un)professionals while at the same time an ideal 'superhuman' teacher was being described. The Omani (OD27/4) and South African (M&G10/6) newspapers described moral and responsible behaviour as central and important to the profession. Ideal representations of teachers were seen in Saudi Arabian newspapers, where it was considered necessary for teachers to fulfil their professional responsibilities (AR15/6; 27/1), to be hardworking (AR19/7; 27/1) and to have a strong zest for teaching (AR26/7; 19/7), while in the Oman news, this related to teachers being responsible for responding to the classroom needs of their students (AZ26/3). In the South African data the ideal teachers were described as those who would behave honestly, compassionately and with self-discipline (M&G10/6), confidence (M&G15/7) and a high level of commitment (M&G25/3; 8/4; 22/6), demonstrate a concern for others as well as themselves (M&G10/6) or to put the needs of their learners first (M&G22/6) and be punctual (M&G15/7).

The Australian newspaper limited the conceptualisation of teacher quality to honesty (TA12/5). Honesty was also considered an ideal quality in teachers by the Omani (OD17/4) and Bangladeshi (NN21/7) newspapers. As well, the Bangladeshi newspaper considered that teacher characteristics should include being neutral, kind-hearted, friendly, knowledgeable, brave, sincere, dynamic (NN21/7), cordial, selfless and a motivator of children (FE2/1), attentive to students and unbiased (FE30/1), sincere, punctual and respectful (FE3/6). These data provide the strongest example of the 'hero' teacher narrative (Blackmore and Thomson 2004) with superhuman qualities.

Moral and social role models

The newspaper data contained four categories of morality based on society's perceptions of teachers as moral citizens: a caring and friendly nature, respect, motivation, trust and honesty. These are characteristics that teachers as moral citizens display (Calabrese, Goodvin, and Niles 2005; Campbell 2008; Eisenhauer and Pratt 2010; Helterbran 2008; Osguthorpe 2008; Stronge 2007; Watson et al. 2010). The moral teacher is constructed as a carer, encompassing social and emotional connections and 'promot[ing] students' positive interpersonal experiences' (Narvaez and Lapsley 2008, 159). Caring teachers listen and pay attention to their students' concerns (Stronge 2007) with implications for classroom achievement (Calabrese, Goodvin, and Niles, 2005).

In the newspaper data, the ideal teacher begins to take shape, as the caring practitioner is conflated with the moral citizen who acts as a role model for her/his students as well as society as a whole, in contrast to the transparent (un)professional who is not to be trusted. Ideal teachers, in data from all five countries, are described with different attributes that demonstrate their caring behaviours. In the Bangladeshi news articles, they are perceived as polite (FE2/1), friendly and kind-hearted (NN21/7) whereas in South African news, ideal teachers are required to be compassionate with self-discipline (M&G10/6). In the Oman data, the caring teacher is described as respectable (AZ26/1) who has dignity and exemplifies a good model (OD17/2), and in Saudi Arabian articles, ideal caring teachers are those who are willing to engage in dialogue with students in the classroom (AR31/7; 24/7; 8/7; 4/5; 2/4; 28/3).

Respect appears to be an essential state of morality for teachers, guiding them in conducting themselves in the classroom, school and society (Campbell 2008). LePage et al. (2011) add that respect is a fundamental value of what constitutes a moral teacher. In our data, 'ideal teachers' are perceived as highly respected members of society whose work deserves appreciation (OD20/7; AR22/7; 23/6; 3/5; 1/5; 27/4; NN1/6). However, Saudi Arabian newspapers describe teachers as not receiving justified respect (AR23/6; 27/4; 6/4). Similarly, teachers appear to have a modest social status in Oman newspapers where students respond to them inappropriately and even threaten them (OD20/5).

Arnon and Reichel (2007) explain that students recognise their 'ideal teachers' as moral agents who motivate and inspire them to achieve their ultimate goals. Engaged interaction between teachers and students unlock self-motivation and encouragement (Campbell 2008). In news articles collected from Australia, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Bangladesh and South Africa it is expected that teachers will act enthusiastically, encourage and motivate students (NN21/7; M&G8/4). Additionally, the newspapers expect 'ideal teachers' to act as a continuous source of inspiration for students

(M&G8/4; FE2/1) enhancing their motivation to accumulate knowledge and to be studious (AR7/5; 4/5; 31/1). Importantly, teachers are regarded as important role models in the expansion of students' interests and improvements of life chances in the Saudi Arabian newspaper (AR21/7; 4/5), while those who are unwilling to make sacrifices (AR6/7) are criticised.

Honest teaching (Campbell 2008) implies teaching 'controversial issues in an impartial way, be[ing] truthful in giving feedback to students, and refrain[ing] from cheating students out of worthwhile learning experiences' (Osguthorpe 2008, 296). Honesty as a moral characteristic requires teachers to act responsibly in the way they treat their students and build relationships with them. Teacher/student relationships are based on trust corresponding with 'societal values, norms, and laws that are also in line with most parents' reasonable expectations of public education' (Campbell 2008, 612).

The newspaper data construct different views of teachers in relation to trust across the five countries. For example, in South African news, teachers appear to be losing social trust (M&G10/6) and in Saudi reports, they lack sincerity (AR6/7). Similarly, they are labelled as 'cheaters' in the Australian press (TA30/4) and, in Omani articles, are represented as lacking in dignity or initiative (OD17/2; 20/7). Additionally, in the Oman newspaper, teachers are looked down on and cannot be trusted because they act immaturely and irresponsibly (AZ26/3).

Transformative intellectuals

In our newspaper data, teachers are constructed as transformative intellectuals who are expected to complete socio-political work through building the minds of students as well as contributing to the building of the nation as a whole. Newspapers in Oman (OD20/5; 20/7) portray the expectations that teachers should be actively involved in developing the education process and building the new generation. The ideal images of teachers, in particular in Bangladeshi and Saudi Arabian newspapers, suggest that teachers are expected to play a crucial role in students' life and future. As a 'continuous source of inspiration' (FE2/1), they are expected to build 'minds of students' (FE2/1) shaping 'students' future plans and aspirations' (AR24/7; 18/1) and 'groom future citizens, leaders and workers with appropriate skills, knowledge and values' (FE4/5; OD20/5). This is comparable to what Gainey and Winn (1996, 52) describe as teachers 'sowing seeds' in students, helping them develop new visions of the world and acquire the necessary skills to implement those visions.

The Oman, Bangladeshi and Saudi newspapers highlight the ideal construction of teachers as 'nation builders'. While the Bangladeshi newspaper's expectations appear to be more rhetorical (NN20/7; 21/7), not detailing the what and how of this nation-building work, the Saudi data are more explicit about how teachers can perform this work. Teachers should display 'Saudi' identity and 'teaching should be Saudized' (AR19/7) and they will 'play a role in the establishment of the Saudi national unity' (AR29/6; 9/6; 28/4; 27/4; 7/4; 4/4; 4/1; 2/1), while in the Oman data teachers are expected to take the initiative (OD28/5) and productively build the nation. Moreover, while the Bangladeshi data vaguely mention teachers' professionalism, sincerity, punctuality and dutifulness in giving quality education to turn students into worthy citizens (FE3/6), the Saudi data point out specific, although non-curricular, tasks. Teachers should teach 'tolerance, equality and acceptance of others' (AR 21/7; 22/6; 9/6); and educate students about 'drugs' (AR25/3; 18/3; 11/3; 4/1), 'traffic safety' (AR4/1),

'sex' (AR2/3) and 'terrorism' (AR4/4). In the Australian news articles teachers are expected to advance students' fundamental values (TA30/7), while in Oman newspapers they are expected to display more authority within classrooms (OD20/5) as they focus on socio-political consciousness and commitment to understand those values and inculcate them in their students. This socio-political consciousness is realised within the Australian and South African data through the construction of teachers as unionists (M&G15/7; TA25/5; 11/4) and in the Saudi Arabian newspaper through the accentuated focus on the socio-political views of the government which teachers are expected to uphold (AR27/7).

Conclusions and implications

This study was undertaken to investigate a comparison of the representation of teachers in the localised press. We did this by devising a framework embedded in media representation and teacher identity situated in contexts of socio-cultural constructivist theory (Vygotsky 1978). The framework consisted of four constructs of teachers: as caring practitioners, transparent (un)professionals, moral and social role models and transformative intellectuals.

Our aim was not to generalise the teacher representations in media across the five nations or to make universalising or essentialising claims about the nature of teachers and teaching in these five countries. Nevertheless, it appears that within the specific time frame in which the investigation was completed, the newspaper summaries reflect societal expectations of teachers being role models who represent these societies' aspirations, for example, being honest, caring and accountable for the preparation of students in a holistic way for their future. Teachers are expected to lead by example as the knowledgeable adult. This relative emphasis on what teachers do in the classroom could be due to the increasing bureaucratisation and corporatisation of education all over the world that holds teachers primarily accountable for how well they perform their job in their immediate work environment (Ball 2003; Webb 2005).

The methodology took us on a challenging journey while providing us with a clear road map to make sense of vast amounts of data. The challenges were embedded in working as a group while following comparable processes across the five nations. The methodology provided us with a reliable approach to manage the data and open the research field for further investigation. Plausibly, media representations of teachers in each of the countries were influenced by prevailing socio-economic and politico-historical situations, social problems and needs as well as the culture of the society. For example, the countries under investigation had diverse human development index numbers (HDI), with Australia ranking second, Bangladesh 146th and Oman, Saudi Arabia and South Africa ranking 89th, 56th and 123rd, respectively. The innovative methodology provided us with the opportunity to discuss and explore the variable representations of teachers in the newspapers, understood through the lens of selective data sources, the time-frame, the degree of state control over media and the ideological interests of media owners. For instance, although our selection of the newspapers for each country was guided by, among other criteria, their coverage and importance, we cannot presume that the data collected during a short period of time gave us a general picture of media representation of teachers in the society. With this caveat, we could argue that the disparate emphases on teachers' moral, social and political roles may be understood from a range of prevailing socio-economic, political, educational and cultural factors in the respective countries. For instance, social expectations of teachers in Saudi

Arabia to educate students about terrorism and other issues can be related to the recent global socio-political developments, and Bangladeshi teachers' engagement in private tutoring to its recent popularity all over the country (Hamid, Sussex, and Khan 2009).

We encourage researchers in this field to explore the possibilities opened by our methodology as it brings comparative research to your door step. We believe that further research is needed on media representation of teachers nationally and transnationally to validate the insights that the present work has generated and further investigate the teacher role framework that we devised to guide our investigation.

Notes

1. These abbreviations for newspaper titles will be used throughout.
2. This citation system is used throughout this article.

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