

---

**FACILITATING TEACHER CRITICAL AUTHENTICITY  
THROUGH POETIC INQUIRY**

---

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL  
FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS  
FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF  
PHILOSOPHY

**Victoria Inyang Ekpo**

Student ID: 24794023



**Edge Hill University**

---

Supervisors: Prof. Amanda Fulford and Dr. Jo Albin-Clark  
FACULTY OF EDUCATION  
JANUARY 16, 2024

## Abstract

### Author:

Victoria Inyang Ekpo – PhD

### Title:

Facilitating Teacher Critical Authenticity Through Poetic Inquiry

### Keywords:

*Poetic inquiry, philosophy in education, authenticity, critical authenticity, teacher self, poetry, teacher identity, teacher development.*

Can a critical process and poetic inquiry support the reassessment, redefinition, resistance to, and/or dismantling of the notion of teacher authenticity? Responding to Bialystok's (2015) call for a more rigorous examination into what defines teacher authenticity, this project invited teachers to reflect and present expressive action on the dominant interpretive framework of the notion of teacher authenticity.

Critical authenticity is introduced as a conceptual framework that engages with the ongoing narrative construction of the self. Using Foucault's discussions on the ancient Greek ideas of *epimeleia heautou* (care of the self and others) and *parrhesia* (speaking truth to power), the idea of critical authenticity repositions individual exploratory self-journeys as well as their articulations within the discourses on authenticity. The project called for teachers to engage in a critical process of exploring themselves, articulating themselves – resisting/refusing the dominant narrative, to 'alter power relations' (Foucault, 1984:6).

Poetry is positioned here as the technique and articulatory tool for teachers to speak about their authenticities and challenge the dominant narrative on teacher authenticity. Poetic inquiry, the use of poetry in/as/for research (Faulkner, 2020), was used as a methodology and data collection method for its potential as a form that gives space for self-expression and a form that can 'expose, highlight and undermine power' (Leavy, 2010:240), and an 'effective way to talk back to power' (Prendergast, 2009: xxxviii).

The notion of critical authenticity is presented in the thesis as an original contribution to knowledge. Another original contribution is empirical research that questions the plausibility and applicability of the idea of teacher authenticity, thus also contributing to discourses on the effects of neo-liberal education reforms on teacher identity. The thesis also contributes to research using poetic inquiry in teacher self and identity studies, the use of poetry in teacher professional development, as well as a pedagogy for using poetry in teacher professional development.

## Dedication

To Delia, my mother

and to this universe:

both

whose energies continue to sustain me.

## Acknowledgements

The birth of this thesis, like all births, was not straightforward. I owe the realisation of this project to the graduate teaching assistantship, without which, I would not have considered returning to full-time study and would not have been able to afford to sustain the process.

As I write this acknowledgement, I feel a deep sense of having travelled a long way, from that initial interview through the project registration, ethics application, progress examinations and countless supervisory meetings. My supervisory team, Professor Amanda Fulford and Dr Jo Albin-Clark have been my closest companion on this journey. Witnessing that transformation and advising its process and progress. I am grateful to the expert direction of Professor Fulford, for both the philosophical course of this thesis and its technical structuring. Dr Albin-Clark's nurturing support kept me grounded in my values, reminding me always to make myself visible through the voices of the data represented by the project – to suture my authenticity into the fabric of the work itself. Their trust in my thinking, their faith in the idea of the project, and their persistent efforts to ensure my success motivated me and gave me the energy to complete this thesis.

I want to also thank my colleagues, Helena Knapton, Carole Derbyshire, Dave Allan, and Clare Woolhouse for their support. It is not always that colleagues have the time or interest to listen to the work of others. They asked consistently about my project, listened to its progress, encouraged me, and shared their faith openly. I imagine they underestimated these efforts, thinking them politeness. But they made me feel like I was not alone with my project at work and reminded me of its relevance in our work.

I want to also extend a particular appreciation to the community of poetic inquirers who are members of the International Symposium of Poetic Inquiry (ISPI). They are the tribe I was looking for when I decided to specialise in research using poetry. In this community, I learnt how to hone my craft as a poetic inquirer, navigate questions that come up and how to grow confidence in sharing my work. I reference many of them throughout my thesis and look forward to our biennial meetings.

A special thank you to #FootstepsNW, a hiking group for black women and their friends which I helped to found in 2020, just before starting the PhD. The joy, exuberance and positivity of the group sustained me through the Covid pandemic, and our frequent walks in the countryside renewed my energies, fed my soul, and gave me a renewed sense of purpose through difficult times. The companionship of the group supported and supports me still. Walking companions who have become fast friends; they share equally in the joy of the completion of this work.

I am grateful to my family, my brothers, sisters, their partners and children and my close friends, whose faith has continued to sustain me. To my mother, I owe my sense of purpose, her faith and strength alone, have inspired my whole life, not only this project. This thesis, like many of my work, is dedicated to her, the greatest and most determined woman I have ever known.

And finally, a big thank you to the teachers who gave their time and voices to the empirical pursuit of this project.

## Table of Contents

<b>Abstract .....</b>	<b>i</b>
Author: .....	i
Title:.....	i
Keywords:.....	i
<b>Dedication.....</b>	<b>iii</b>
<b>Acknowledgements .....</b>	<b>iv</b>
<b>List of tables.....</b>	<b>viii</b>
<b>List of figures .....</b>	<b>viii</b>
<b>Chapter 1: Introduction .....</b>	<b>1</b>
Overview.....	1
A Landscape of Attrition .....	6
Teachers' Narratives Matter .....	9
Positionality .....	11
Purpose of the study .....	12
Project Aims and Research Questions .....	15
Structure of the thesis.....	16
Significance of the Study .....	18
<b>Chapter 2: Literature Review .....</b>	<b>20</b>
Overview.....	20
Introduction .....	20
A Tale of Many Standards .....	22
Evidence-Informed.....	26
Teacher Authenticity .....	28
Performativity and the Teacher Self .....	42
Authenticity: An attempt at a definition.....	46
A Brief History of Authenticity.....	49
Chapter Summary .....	57
<b>Chapter 3 – Methodology .....</b>	<b>58</b>
Preface .....	58
Session 1: An Introduction.....	60
Session 2: A Lover's Gifts: Philosophical Framework .....	63
Session 3: My Heart is a Bird: Ontology and Epistemology .....	72
Session 4: A rock and a soft place: Between art and methodology .....	76
Session 5: Poetic Inquiry: A Definition .....	80
Session 6: A Parliament of Owls: Participant Recruitment .....	85
Session 7: Don't you like children? Poetic Inquiry as Method.....	89
Session 8: We were all just scaffolding: Project Design .....	93
Session 9: Gathered Up: Reflexive Thematic Analysis .....	99
Session 10: Tread Softly: Ethics and other considerations .....	110
Chapter summary: No ends, only middles .....	115

<b>Chapter 4: Poetry Collection.....</b>	<b>117</b>
Overview.....	117
A Critical Authenticity: Teacher Self in Verse .....	121
Contents .....	123
Foreword: .....	125
Dedication .....	129
Acknowledgements.....	169
Chapter summary.....	171
<b>Chapter 5: Data Analysis: A Critical Teacher Self.....</b>	<b>172</b>
Overview.....	172
Introduction .....	172
Becoming: Context and Process .....	176
Individuality and Uniqueness.....	180
A Multi-faceted Self.....	186
Care and Connectedness .....	192
Resistance to and critique of power .....	200
Chapter Summary.....	208
<b>Chapter 6: Reflections 1: The significance of the ordinary (teacher) self</b>	
<b>.....</b>	<b>210</b>
Overview.....	210
The Magician-teacher-self .....	212
The nurturer/caretaker-teacher-self.....	215
The cheerleader-teacher self .....	218
The guide-teacher-self .....	220
The mediator-teacher-self.....	223
Chapter summary.....	226
<b>Chapter 7: Reflections 2: Can we facilitate courage?.....</b>	<b>227</b>
Overview.....	227
A critical authenticity .....	228
A whole new game.....	230
Courage as craftsmanship.....	232
Implications for teacher professional development.....	238
The Critical Authenticity Toolkit.....	242
<b>Conclusion .....</b>	<b>253</b>
Contribution to Knowledge.....	253
My Critical Authenticity: A Summary in Verse .....	256
<b>References.....</b>	<b>261</b>
<b>Appendixes.....</b>	<b>284</b>
Appendix A: Participant Information Sheets .....	284
Appendix B: Consent Form .....	289
Appendix C: Withdrawal Form .....	290
Appendix D: Invitation Letter and Workshop Schedule .....	290
Appendix E: Scheme of Work .....	292
Appendix F: Workshop Poems.....	294



## List of tables

TABLE 1: INTERSECTION OF DISCOURSES .....	5
TABLE 2: TEACHER STANDARDS .....	22
TABLE 3: TEACHERS' STANDARDS VS TEACHER AUTHENTICITY.....	35
TABLE 4: TEACHER AUTHENTICITY AND PHILOSOPHY (KREBER <i>ET AL.</i> , 2007:39) .....	37
TABLE 5: TYPES OF POETIC INQUIRY, FUNCTIONS, AND EXAMPLES.....	82
TABLE 6: TEACHER DEMOGRAPHIC.....	87

## List of figures

FIGURE 1 : TEACHERS' GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATIONS.....	88
FIGURE 2: PROJECT DESIGN STAGES.....	95
FIGURE 3: WORKSHOP REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS .....	96
FIGURE 4: POETIC FORMS PER WORKSHOP .....	97
FIGURE 5: ANALYTICAL MODEL FOR CRITICAL AUTHENTICITY .....	108

# Chapter 1: Introduction

## Overview

For all men live by truth and stand in need of expression. In love, in art, in avarice, in politics, in labor, in games, we study to utter our painful secret. The man is only half himself; the other half is his expression (Emerson, 1950:320).

What is teacher authenticity? In what ways can we come to an understanding of what values, beliefs, and truths inform teachers' motivations and work? How do teachers' self-knowledge underpin their sense of self in their work as teachers? The main preoccupation of this project is to question the idea of teacher authenticity – a self that is particularly, persistently, teacherly; a self that is oriented towards what the literature on teacher authenticity implies as teacherhood. This project takes an issue with the terminology of teacher authenticity and argues that what the literature calls teacher authenticity, aligns more closely with government policies on teacher standards and teacher professionalism (for example DfE, 2011; 2019a/b). The thesis demonstrates that the idea of teacher authenticity represents more a directive that complies with institutional expectations of teachers than the philosophical understanding of authenticity as being a notion that is oriented towards the individual. I present the idea of teacher authenticity as existing within teachers' self-articulations, and as a notion that is varied in its actualisation, as the individuality of teachers that exists.

Within this thesis, I approach the idea of authenticity as an embryonic process – a dynamic development of a self, a self that is oriented to others and the non-human world, instead of an unchanging, list of qualities that one may or may not possess. For now, I define authenticity in terms of one's understanding of themselves, and their articulation thereof. I argue, following Emerson (1950:320), that the self is what has been articulated, that we know of the innermost truths and values of others (their 'painful secret'), in their articulations of themselves, not what we (or others) think they should or might be.

In this project, I contribute the philosophical notion of critical authenticity, to use as a framework for engaging in discourses on the self and to support a creative process where we might also engage with others to explore our authenticities, express them, and give space for others to do the same. For teachers whose work selves are continually narrativised by various apparatuses of power (Rose, 1996b), the opportunity to speak their truths becomes an act of justice. In the literature review, I present the dominant rhetoric on teacher authenticity and discuss the context in which these are presented in detail. I also provide a review of the philosophical views on authenticity, concluding that it is not for researchers to say what constitutes teachers' authenticity but for teachers themselves to say. Self-exploration has often been seen as necessary for teacher identity formation (Hamachek, 1999). This notion of a teacher self that supports teacher identity formation is reiterated by Freese (2006) and Day *et al.*, (2006). It is obvious that these teacher self-formations are not without conflicts, and it is within the conflicting expectations of teacher authenticity (as elaborated in the literature review) and the personal ideals that underpin teachers and their work, that this project inserts itself.

My own experience and my observations of other teachers struggling with these contradictions between who we are, who we are expected to be, and who we can be at work, informed my motivations to explore the notion of teacher authenticity. I found the definitions around teacher authenticity problematic and found that there is no empirical study that either confirms or contradicts the pervading notion that teachers somewhat have a professional homogenous authenticity. The works of van Lier, 1996; Brookfield, 1990; Ray and Anderson, 2000; Mezirow, 2000; Cranton, and Carusetta, 2004, 2005a/b; Kreber, 2009; Kreber *et al.*, 2010; Kreber and Klampfleitner, 2013 (to mention a few), all take for granted that this homogeneity exists. As the literature review will illustrate, the idea of a teacher authenticity is pervasive. Current empirical research continues to reinforce the notion through research questions that seek to determine how authentic teachers may or may not be (Johnson and Labelle, 2016/2017; Ramezanzadeh *et al.*, 2016; Ramezanzadeh 2017). They present a framework for measuring teacher authenticity that is a list of

professional attributes, which in practice, may not apply to all teaching situations or personal capabilities. This is a framework that, in turn, informs teacher evaluation apparatuses, feeding an atmosphere of stress and pushing for incomprehensible conformity (Bialystok, 2015; Ball, 2016). These pressures to conform to a picture of the perfect teacher can be seen throughout the education sector and they are often understood to be the cause of much stress and conflict in teacher self-identity and self-articulation (Larrivee, 2002). For this reason, it was important to conduct my study as empirical research and to invite teachers to examine the concept of teacher authenticity and to contribute their responses to these discourses. Through critical self-reflection and the use of poetry writing to articulate their understanding, teachers' poems formed the basis for this thesis to respond to the main research question of this project, which is to examine the plausibility of the idea of teacher authenticity. The full list of research questions, as well as the aims of the project, are stated later on in this section.

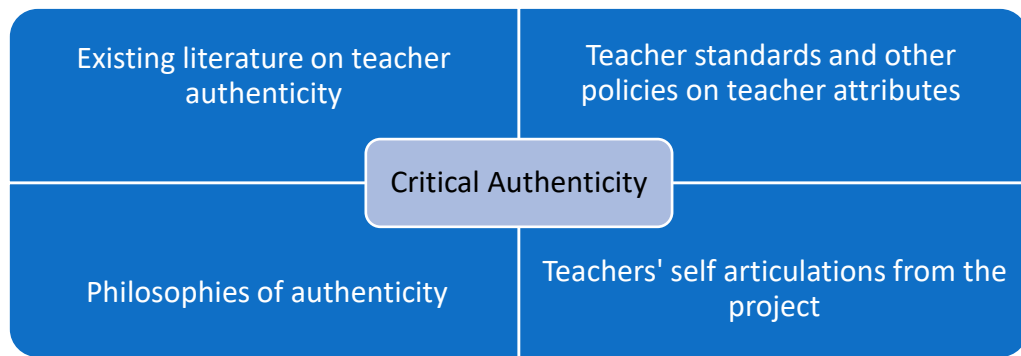
My project is original in that, first of all, it examines the notion of teacher authenticity for plausibility and applicability. It also invites teachers to contribute to determining what constitutes teachers' authenticities and to provide discourses on the conditions, histories, identities, intersecting beliefs, and conceptions that encapsulate their teacher-self. The second (and what I like to think is the most important) original contribution to knowledge that this project presents, is the concept of critical authenticity. It is important in my opinion, in its generalizability and its potential to support pedagogical practices in the areas of teacher self-exploration, self-identity, self-articulation, and reflective practice in education and in widening the conversation on teacher authenticity in the philosophy of education.

The notion of critical authenticity summarises Foucault's discussions of power, ethics and speaking truth about oneself and to power (1982;1984a/b; 1997a/b) and goes beyond Foucault's deliberations to present a workable, applicable pedagogy for responding to power and the mechanisations of power on the teacher self. From Foucault's (1997b) discussions on *epimeleia heautou*, the project invited teachers to position themselves at the centre of the power play that controls their work and invariably, their self-articulation. Through a care of

self and the exploration of their process in the care of others, teachers reflected on the critical configurations of their lives and the active agents in the determination of their self-conceptualisation. From Foucault's (2001b; 2021) discussions on *parrhesia* and the practice of speaking the truth about oneself and to power, poetic inquiry is presented as an active process where teachers can enter into meaning-making discourses on authenticity. This project presented the opportunity for teachers to draw up their definitions of what an idea of teacher authenticity may look like and to shape the parameters of understanding the teacher self.

Discussions in this thesis are designed to speak to the idea of teacher authenticity and to question existing literature on teacher authenticity. Critical authenticity, as both a concept and a practical tool through poetic inquiry, underpins the discussion, directing the questioning of existing beliefs, as well as presenting teachers' ideas of what constitutes their authenticities. Philosophical notions of authenticity are presented to argue that authenticity is incongruous with good teaching practice. And that, although teachers demonstrate in their poems that their beliefs in caring for others largely inform their altruism in their teaching careers, the daily choices they make may or may not be informed by these beliefs. As the table overleaf illustrates, the discussions in this thesis extend in four key ways, bringing in discourses on authenticity in education, teacher self-development, self-identity, professional self-conceptualisation, and self-articulation. The idea of critical authenticity calls into discussion existing literature on teacher authenticity, questioning its positioning on the narrativisation of the teacher self and its alignment with government policies on teacher professional identities. Philosophies of authenticity reposition the discussion in the thesis towards the idea of the individuality of the self, foregrounding the words of teachers later on in the thesis. Teachers' self-articulations serve to perform their own narratives through poetry.

Table 1: Intersection of Discourses



Arguments in this thesis engage not only with the problematic idea of a homogenous teacher self but also with the conflicts that surround teachers' work, both in their self-understanding and their care of their students. As one of the poems in the collection bemoans:

Constrains that bind are clear  
A ringing bell of rigidity  
An inner despotism of egotism  
Labyrinths of bureaucracy  
Strangles innovation  
Makes the nothingness  
pulse... <sup>1</sup>

In the literature review, I illustrate how the existing discourses on teacher authenticity speak to teacher standards and other government policies on teacher identity and professionalism. Discussions in the review also demonstrate how the idea of teacher authenticity consolidates performative agendas of neo-liberal approaches to education.

---

<sup>1</sup> Extract from poem: Articulation is Resistance, poetry collection

## A Landscape of Attrition

Education professionals all over the world are working and practising in unprecedented and challenging times. Changing classroom dynamics, bureaucratic, performative, and student-success-related pressures, in conjunction with comparative funding reductions are currently being played out against a backdrop of additional challenges and unpredictabilities, some created by COVID-19 and others by the deepening cost of living crisis. The politico-structural and economic realities of education are complex and so are the human structures that hold it together. Teachers form the frontline of this complex system and like all frontline workers, they come out of a system that trains and qualifies them to manage the details of the work of teaching and learning.

Globally, we are witnessing traditional teacher roles become progressively diverse and teacher responsibilities increasingly multifaceted. Combined with an increasingly performance-driven framework for educational institutions, teachers see the landscape of their professional roles permanently evolving (Ball, 2003, 2013). Some question the pervasive erosion of their professional autonomy and the personal ideals that drove their decision to enter the profession and feel they have no other recourse but to leave or realign (Williams, 2017). It is fair to say that many teachers do not leave, and that some do not experience a crisis of self (and if they do, learn to navigate, and negotiate it, successfully or unsuccessfully). But it is in the sheer numbers of teachers that leave teaching that we are unquestionably presented with a problem.

### The numbers:

In the UK, the National Audit Office report to the House of Commons illustrates that '42,000 full-time equivalent qualified teachers left the state-funded sector in the 12 months to November 2018' (HOC 2019:3). Research in the United States, Sweden, Australia, Canada, and South Africa shows a similarity in the numbers of teachers leaving the profession (Karsentil and Colin, 2013; Lindqvist *et al.*, 2014; Ingersoll *et al.*, 2016; Den Brok *et al.*, 2017; Santoro, 2018). The research cites among other things, accountability/performative-

driven pressures linked to neo-liberal policy changes, which leaves teachers feeling like ‘a technical workforce to be managed and controlled rather than a profession to be respected’ (Tomlinson, 2001: 36).

Mapping the Australian Education landscape, Clarke, and Moore (2013:11) decry the homogenisation of teacher identities through professional standards. They call for a return to ‘an ethic of singularity’, where that which is idiosyncratic about the teacher self is championed, instead of elided into an accountability framework. Santoro’s (2018) more recent analysis of the education landscape in the United States illustrates a similar crisis of identity and ethics. According to Santoro (2018:3), teachers leave for reasons including the work ‘failing to embody the values that have guided their practices for years ... [and] complying with mandates that compromise their professional ethics’. Poppleton and Williamson (2004:308) observed that countries with higher teacher attrition have also been countries ‘that were experiencing government-initiated and tightly controlled reform’. According to Ball (2003:215), ‘the novelty of this epidemic of reform is that it does not simply change what people, as educators, scholars, and researchers do, it changes who they are’.

Of teachers who stay, there is the question of how they thrive and what professional mechanisms support their ideals. Some of the supportive structures point to the culture of the establishments in which they work, country-specific systems that support teacher autonomy, or individual teacher constructions of self (Empowered Educators, 2016). We know that Finland, despite the lower pay grades for teachers (when compared to other European countries), has the highest retention rates (OECD, 2019). This is attributed to a positive social view of teaching, a professional development programme that is embedded in teachers’ daily work, and an emphasis on teacher autonomy and trust in teachers’ judgment and work (Empowered Educators, 2016). Johnson (2020) describes being surprised at hearing from her teacher colleagues on her doctoral programme that they felt stifled, silenced, and demotivated at their jobs in U.S. state schools. Her experience in the same sector (but at a different school) was different – she was supported, inspired, and felt that she could be herself at work. The examples here imply that



educational policies and work cultures that support teachers' ideals of self, encourage strong professional identities.

My experience as a teacher was little different from these examples. I moved from one institution to another, from one sector to another, seeking the space where I could bring my altruistic reasons for becoming a teacher to their full potential and where I could inspire students to reach their potential and expand their view of the world. I was often told to teach to the examination and high-stakes assessment processes meant that the number of my students who met the threshold was more important than the number who progressed from where they were. My creative, interactive, and sometimes individually focused approach to teaching and learning, was stilted and I felt I had to justify bringing in foreign texts into my sessions and introducing students to prose, poetry, and music from around the world. I found it difficult to understand how a black, female teacher, born to liberal, activist parents from West Africa, educated in both the Western and African traditions, could be expected to be such a singular individual – a teacher in one sense only. I struggled to diminish the rich tapestry of my education and experience, and the fact that these were what I wanted to share with my students – to make my students dream in metaphorical colour and to inspire curiosity about themselves and their world. There were, undoubtedly, opportunities where I could insert a little of myself in my work, but these were in settings where students' surveys did not drive institutional rating and the pass rate of the students did not make a difference to funding or rating – prisons and overseas teacher-training projects.

Still, the question persists, how much of one's true self is evident in the work teachers do and how relevant is the notion of teacher authenticity in education? Is such a concept plausible? Contemporary descriptions of teacher authenticity include characteristics such as boldness, consistency in thought and behaviour, criticality, a reflective attitude, and an inspirational outlook (Cranton and Carusetta, 2004; Kreber *et al.* 2007; Kreber and Klampfleitner, 2013; de Bruyckere and Kirschner, 2016/2017). When placed against the reality of teachers' work – constant target-setting, teaching to a performance framework, ensuring high student pass rates and high stakes assessment regimes, enhanced scrutiny, and pervasive distrust (Ball, 2003/2016; Clarke,

2012, 2013; Dunn, 2005) – the question of what it means to be an authentic teacher becomes problematic. Yet, how could teachers articulate these frustrations, both to the apparatuses that impose these barriers on them and to the general public who judge the work of teachers? This is where the critical authenticity project inserts itself – as the space where teachers can explore the expanse of their authenticities and articulate the barriers that confine them, to reinstall themselves as the authority in the narration of their identities.

## Teachers' Narratives Matter

The transformation of silence into language and action is an act of self-revelation (Lorde, 2017:3).

Policymakers, the media, public opinion, and professional groups representing teachers all interact in multifaceted ways to influence the perception of teachers' identities and their expressivity. This is done through policies that standardise teacher activities and accountability frameworks (Ball, 2003/2016), media presentations of teacher professional identities and work (Edling, 2015), public opinion polls, union interventions, and research materials from academics and other researchers. For instance, *The Guardian's* (2021) *100 Teachers, [...] series* demonstrates a teaching landscape of teachers who bring themselves to work: surfers who embed discussions on climate change in their science lessons, minority teachers who open up discussions on race and representation *etcetera*. The series raises its own questions. First of all, it is funded by the Department for Education and was published shortly before a news story in the same newspaper of a teacher, who, demoralised by her experience in the state sector, opened a fee-free private school (Staufenberg, 2021). By pitching these stories side by side, the lines are deliberately blurred, as if to say, but here are 100 teachers who do not feel the system is at odds with their personal values and beliefs of what good education looks like. Narratives like this one risk silencing teachers who feel otherwise and distort discourses on the role of teachers' self-conceptualisations in their work.

I argue that empirical research data analysis that categorises teacher authenticity into dualistic terms (authentic versus inauthentic), like those of Kreber, McCune, and Klampfleitner (2010), Johnson and LaBelle (2017), and De Bruyckere and Kirschner (2017), can be said to serve the ‘good teacher *versus* bad teacher’ dictum and can work as part of the ‘structural violence’ that diminishes the voices of teachers (Edling, 2015: 404). As highlighted in the literature review, pervasive definitions of teacher authenticity do not take into consideration the very personal nature of the term ‘authenticity’ and ignore its alignment to individual identity and agency in the interpretation of the self. Rather than clarify what teacher authenticity means, these studies further the ambiguity of the term and instate yet another structure of definition where teachers are judged, measured, and narrativised. Students are called to judge what an authentic teacher looks like, teachers are called to account for what qualities demonstrate teacher authenticity, without an opportunity to define or negate it.

As MacLure (1993) explains, providing a space for individual teachers to define themselves can be more illustrative for the researcher, the education system, policymakers, and the general public. Narrative research methods already demonstrate how research can contribute to elevating teachers’ voices (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000) but other methods that allow for research data to be shared more publicly would provide easier access and relatedness. As a very public form of expression and one with increasing public interest and acclaim, poetry lends itself well to the aim to promote the voices of teachers above those of government and policy. As can already be seen in works ranging from those of John Dryden to Amanda Gorman and dedicated poetic forms that carry political messages like the Kimondo,<sup>2</sup> poetry is a well-received form of (resistive) expression. Its narrative techniques focus the audience on the daily stitching together of life (Lyon, 2008); its desire to speak from a deeper part of the self (Behar, 2008) draws one into dialogue with oneself; and its persuasive abilities contribute to empowering our engagement with the world around us (Orr, 2008).

---

<sup>2</sup> A Kenyan satirical poetic form used to highlight corruption and expose politicians and influential members of society. Kimondo means ‘meteor’ in Swahili.

Embedded in the notion of critical authenticity posited by this project, is the narration of self and I make the argument that poetry can provide the expressive empirical space that is needed to facilitate this critical process (Rosaen, 2003; Lyon, 2008; Prendergast, 2009; Faulkner, 2017). The literature review on poetry and the methodology section on poetic inquiry also illustrates that poetry can function as an effective method of inquiry, 'a catalyst for, a window into the heart of human experience' (McCulliss, 2013:83). As 'the clarification and magnification of being' (Hirshfield, 1997:5), poetry allows the writer to combine narrative that engages with the human condition (defining the self), with poetic devices that is capable of subversion. This makes it a suitable tool for resistive expression; of making 'a political statement' (Sullivan, 2000:220); of speaking truth to power (Prendergast, 2009); and inserting oneself into the pervasive discourses on identity and authenticity.

## Positionality

The last chapter of this thesis discusses how courage is craft and craftsmanship and how poetry gives us the space to practise courage (Lorde, 2017). I have said elsewhere how the reading and writing of poetry have saved me many times (Ekpo, 2023). It is not only the opportunity to remind myself of who I am but the opportunity to articulate this, in a way that could also speak to others. Like many of the teachers on the project, my sense of self is a tapestry – the weaving together of my race with the way I am perceived as a black woman; my understanding of place with the historical truth of how that place came to be (colonialism and coloniality); my education in and of both the worlds of the global North and the global South, together with my lived experience in twenty-eight countries. The frustrations I have felt are articulated in the several languages I have mastered. Yet it is in the poems I write that I began to understand the actors in my frustrations with education and to conceive of the ways to navigate the barriers in my work. Language plays a big role in all these self-conceptualisations, and it is important to note also that mastery of different languages means that I articulate myself differently. Poetry helped to consolidate my self-conceptualisations and to helped me begin to observe

how the many parts of me fit together. It is through poetry that I have been able to articulate at the beginning, myself to myself (keeping a poetic diary), then to others (sharing my poems in the public domain).

It is in recognition of this that I have used poetic inquiry for this project. I wanted to be truthful in my approach – both in method and in methodology. That apart from speculating how the project might succeed in responding to the research questions and how it might not, that there are parts of that process that I know work. I expand in more detail on my motivations for using poetic inquiry in the methodology section. In the last chapter of this thesis, I reflect further on this opportunity to share oneself that poetry offers, and I explore, through the poetry from the project, how the teachers' courage helps them to craft the self, and how this, in turn, speaks to me and others.

### Purpose of the study

Throughout this thesis, I argue that the classification of the teacher self is a process of objectification and a practice aimed at the exclusion of teachers from the discourses that narrativise them. By criticising the idea of teacher authenticity, I put aside idealistic themes of authentic teachers to disrupt the power of the narrative and to question why we should expect authenticity in teachers, why there is a framework for examining these authenticities, and why teachers are judged by them. Using the idea of critical authenticity that is embedded in the activities of critical self-exploration and articulation, this project inserts the teachers' voices as the power that states what, if there is such a thing, the idea of an authentic teacher might look like. The space to speak to power is not only necessary but in itself an act of justice. As Foucault (1984:6) states:

The political task in a society such as ours is to criticize the working of institutions which appear to be both neutral and independent, to criticize them in such a manner that the political violence which has always exercised itself obscurely through them is unmasked, so that we can fight them.

We are engaged in power relations all the time – what is important is that individuals have the opportunity to alter power relations that alienate them. Scott (2001:1) defines power as the ability to act and that this ability is what defines ‘an organism as a human agent’. For teachers, having the power to speak for themselves is the opportunity to disrupt pervading narratives about their beliefs, values, and motivations. This power also has the purpose of ‘affecting the conduct of other participants in the social relations that connect them together’ (Scott, 2001:2).

I have been asked why I have not used the term critical reflection or approached the project through the idea of reflective inquiry. Working on the question of authenticity resides very much in the area of philosophy and reflective inquiry would not only digress from the question of whether teachers possess a homogenous sense of self, it would limit the possibilities of self-exploration within the project. The idea of using a philosophical concept to frame the discussion on teacher authenticity responds to Foucault’s (1983) notion of the self as a work of art. A created self implies a process – of exploration, attention, knowledge, technique, and articulation. This also implies the need for a framework that can work as what Foucault (1997) refers to as *techne*. Combining the practice of *epimeleia heautou* with the *parrhesiastic* principle of speaking for oneself and speaking truth to power, critical authenticity presents the opportunity to not only conduct self-exploration but do so within an understanding of the power play that exists within the narrativisation of teacher selves. Critical authenticity recognises that for teachers whose self-work is focused on the care of others, there needs to be the space for them to explore and articulate how this existence engages with their self, and to what extent the teacher self is created through the individual teacher and/or their care of others. Critical authenticity not only refers to the work or activity of self-exploration and self-knowledge but to the articulation of the process and the self-thereof. In the methodology section of this thesis, I examine in detail what this *techne* looks like within critical authenticity. A case is made for the use of poetic inquiry as both a methodology and a method and for the understanding of the possibility of experiential knowledge in data presentation.

Is there a homogenous teacher self? The poetry collection comes before the data analysis in this thesis to present the answer to this question in the teachers' own words. You are invited within the collection to go on the journey that the teachers on the project have created for the reader and in that process, come to your understanding of what constitutes a teacher self. In their articulations, we are invited into the recesses of each teacher's world – their hopes, dreams, and aspirations, both for themselves and their students, presented with the honesty that poetry affords (Leavy, 2020). In my analysis in the later chapters, I come across magicians, storytellers, cheerleaders, and guides. For me, what is more significant, is the courage the teachers had to speak frankly and openly, knowing their words will be analysed, perhaps criticised, and shared in the public domain. I view the process of such undertaking in meaning-making as craftsmanship and see in such exercise the potential of the methodology in supporting teachers (and individuals) beyond the project. In my final reflections, I propose the use of critical authenticity as a conceptual framework in teacher development and for its use in furthering reflective practice and inquiry. The toolkit inserted at the end of the last chapter of this thesis is intended as a suggestion, an example of the many ways critical authenticity may be used in storytelling practices to strengthen reflection and to prioritise the voices of participants and individuals in discourses that relate to them (Lengelle *et al.*, 2019).

What then is teacher authenticity? As you will encounter throughout this thesis, the answer is not that straightforward. For each teacher, there are elements of themselves that weave in and out of their relationships with others, their care of others, and their conflicts with the institutions (and policies) they work within. We can see in the poem *I am* in the poetry collection, that, for all there is about teachers' work, the poems that were produced during this project make one thing clear: the teacher self is at the centre of it all and their individuality is important in the understanding of their work. The last stanza states:

But...

Yes, I am a teacher that is who I am on paper.

But when I say: "I am a teacher";

I wish you can hear I AM out loud.

## Project Aims and Research Questions

From the onset, this project was focused on creating a critical space for teachers to engage in defining and reframing the idea of teacher authenticity. The project sought to problematise the concept of teacher authenticity and to invite teachers to join in reframing its meaning, significance, feasibility, and desirability. Using participant-voiced poetry, the main aim of this project was to explore the extent to which poetry can support, reflect, and comment on the facilitation of teachers' critical authenticity and its opportunities for speaking about themselves.

It did so by asking the following questions:

- Is teacher authenticity plausible as a concept? What makes up teachers' authenticities?
- How can a critical process support teachers in articulating their authenticities?
- How can poetry writing and sharing facilitate critical authenticity?
- How can poetry workshops provide educative and educational opportunities for teachers to explore their authenticities and professional identities?
- How can the sharing of participant-voiced poems contribute to constructive resistance to neo-liberal narrativisation of teacher selves?

In so doing, this project:

- contributes the notion of critical authenticity as a lens through which researchers can examine the idea of teacher authenticity; -
- Introduce critical authenticity through poetic inquiry as a critical process for facilitating discussions on the self; -
- contributes to research and discourses on the effects of neo-liberalism on teacher authenticity and teacher identity; -
- contributes to research using poetic inquiry in teacher identity studies and using poetry in teacher professional development; -



- contributes an educative strategy for using poetry in teacher professional development.

## Structure of the thesis

This thesis has been designed for individual chapters to have their own creative identities, while still being connected in discussion and theme. The introduction above presents the main arguments in the thesis and contextualises the position of the research. The second chapter of this thesis is the literature review, and it examines the relationship between existing ideas of teacher authenticity, policies underpinning the emergence of teacher standards, and the creation of a framework for the professional attributes of teachers and the philosophy of authenticity. A sub-section of the literature review examines the culture of performativity, and how the literature on teacher authenticity feeds into the accountability framework for teachers. To link the idea of poetry in a study on authenticity, there is a brief discussion on how poetry positions itself well in the discourses of power and the self and in practical explorations of the self.

The third chapter forms a compilation that includes the philosophical framework and the methodology for the project. It is organised in 'sessions', to represent the idea of poetry sessions, and serves to also create a poetic state in this section of the thesis. Each 'session' is preceded by a poem that engages with the discussions in that section. This section of the thesis stands apart in its form and creative intent. I have framed the philosophical framework within the methodology to best illustrate the relationship between critical authenticity and poetic inquiry. Here, critical authenticity is introduced as a notion that combines the philosophy of *epimeleia heautou* and *parrhesia* to create a technology for the practice of the self – a framework for exploring, understanding, and articulating the self. The use of poetic inquiry intertwines the discussion on experiential and interrogative methodologies, and an argument is made here for the poetry collection as an experiential presentation of data in the fourth chapter. In the poetry collection, participants' plenary poems are organised here to exist as participants' voices in the thesis, to prioritise their articulations of self before the reflective analysis in subsequent

chapters. The reader is invited to pause here, to contemplate what meaning-making the poems illustrate and to stop here, if they prefer.

The subsequent three chapters are made up of thematic content reflections on the ideas of the teacher self as presented in the plenary poems. Chapter five examines the idea of teacher authenticity and explores the themes that emerge from the plenary poems. Ideas of individualism merge with the realities of a multi-faceted self in the plenary poems. There is a perceptible understanding that the teacher self is connected to the care of others and that it is here that they oftentimes experience conflicts between the apparatuses of power and their self/work selves. Persistent also is the idea that these conflicts interrupt teachers' self-efficacy and can function as the cause of their eroding beliefs in their purposes unless they evolve. The analysis in this section also examines how many of the poems actively renounce the imposition of policies while others articulate how they evolve to subvert the system.

Chapter six explores the many iterations of the teacher self as presented in the plenary poem. Here, we meet magicians, cheerleaders, guides, and mediators. It is a joyful journey into the poems, sharing the sentiments felt during the workshops and in some of the workshop poems. It is here that I understand Leggo's (2012: xvii) position, that 'writing is a way of living in the world', and through my reflections, I present insights into some of the significances of the poems as they illustrate the teacher self.

Chapter seven refocuses the discussion on the philosophical significance of the teachers' articulations. I reflect on the idea of participation, exploration, and articulation as courage and present the implications that the practice of critical authenticity, as used in this project, has on teacher professional development and research in teacher identity and authenticity. At the end of this chapter, there is a suggested toolkit for the use of critical authenticity through poetic inquiry in workshops and reflective inquiry sessions with teachers. The generalisability of the concept and practice of critical authenticity is presented here, as well as its potential when using other story-telling methodologies.

I conclude this thesis with a poem. Both to continue to stay within the creative intent of this project and to extend the practice of poetic inquiry. Since

conclusions can tend to be a little repetitive, using a poem to summarise the thesis provides further insights, and hopefully, maintains in the reader, the poetic state that Valery (1954) refers to and which this thesis intends in its methodology. In the words that I have used often in the thesis; you are hereby invited to read, listen, and bear witness.

## Significance of the Study

Discussions and research on teacher authenticity tend to diminish the voices of teachers by, first of all, not considering the uniquely personal ways of being that express, evoke, and recall the underlying wholeness of one's human nature. Secondly, by not having a working definition of what teacher authenticity is and finally, aligning a list of arbitrary attributes to government policies on teacher professional development. This thesis is primarily a response to years of silencing that teachers have experienced regarding their sense of self, years of being spoken for by researchers and government mechanisms. By inviting teachers to define and contribute to the idea of teacher authenticity, the project gave teachers a voice and presented an original contribution to the definition of teacher authenticity – the idea that the teacher self is multifaceted and 'oriented in moral space' (Taylor, 1989:28). The poetry collection (chapter 4) presents poems that present and navigate the teacher self. The purpose of the collection is experiential, the teacher self is presented to the reader as the teachers told it, in their own words. Subsequent chapters further the understanding of the plurality of the teacher and the incongruousness of the idea of a teacher's authenticity.

In addition, the notion of critical authenticity presents a *techne* (Foucault, 1997b), a pedagogy or approach of engaging with the self – an approach which takes into consideration the need to articulate the self, as a way of engaging with narratives about oneself. A critical authenticity understands the power dynamics that are at play in the lives of teachers and the narration of oneself, responds to this power-play and can disrupt or alter it (Leavy, 2010; Faulkner, 2020). The methodology chapter (Chapter 3) discusses the philosophical framework that supports this methodology and underpins its use within poetic inquiry to illustrate how to apply the concept. The toolkit in Chapter 7 provides a step-by-step method for use with groups and individuals.

Providing both an educational and educative methodology for self-exploration, development, and articulation, as well as contributing to the use of poetic inquiry in education research.

Discussions in the literature review provide an extensive overview of how narratives on teacher authenticity perpetuate the good *versus* bad teacher dictum (Edling, 2015). Building on the work of Michel Foucault, Stephen Ball, and several others, that chapter illustrates how the mechanisms of performativity present themselves on the teacher self, and how the authentic *versus* inauthentic teacher narratives may contribute to how teachers are made accountable for their very nature, beliefs, values and ethical norms.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### Overview

This chapter will present a philosophical and theoretical review of the literature on teacher authenticity, teacher standards, and the notion of authenticity. The literature review will aim to illustrate how professional expectations stipulated in the teachers' standards (DfE, 2021) and other related policies inform theoretical discussions on teacher authenticity and will attempt to form an understanding of how the philosophical notion of authenticity has been co-opted into discourses on teacher effectiveness and teacher professional attributes. The role of poetry in discourses on authenticity is introduced in this section, and a review of the literature illustrates its use in existing research.

### Introduction

The notion of authenticity is prevalent in the social, professional, and political lives of teachers. It is presented in discussions on teacher identity, efficacy, and professional development (Bialystok, 2015). Despite its varied conceptualisations, authenticity is generally understood to refer to our conceptions of who we are, the existence of a primordial self, and the place of that self in the world (Tisdell, 2003; Cranton, 2001). From the self-deterministic interpretations sometimes linked to Thoreau and Emerson (van Lier, 1996; Bauer, 2017; Rings, 2017), to the more descriptive definitions linked to transformative learning theories (Kreber *et al.*, 2007; Kreber and Klampfleitner, 2013; Johnson and LaBelle, 2017), we cannot but acknowledge the growing need for further studies into how authenticity is defined regarding teachers and teachers' work and whether these have any bearing on discourses on teacher effectiveness.

Which comes first? Our selves, or our identities? Often considered in broad social categories including race, gender, class, religious beliefs, and sexual orientation, identity is a wide field of study. The complexity of defining or extricating the dimensions of identity often provokes questions, sometimes about the term itself (Appiah, 2006) or its broader, sociocultural frames (Olsen, 2012). While identity encompasses all that makes one, authenticity is a

concept connected to the idea of the existence of an embryonic self and responds to ontological ideas of being (Bialystok, 2014). The discussion of the place of the self in teacher identity is a complex one (Beauchamp and Thomas 2009). Whether we consider them as dimensions of the individual that inter-relate (Lauriala and Kukkonen 2005) or two separate entities that are intertwined (Rodgers and Scott 2008), a knowledge of the self is often considered to be necessary for teachers to understand their identities as teachers fully and to carry out their roles effectively (Hamachek, 1999). This notion of a teacher self that supports teacher identity formation is reiterated by Freese (2006) and Day *et al.*, (2006).

Rodgers and Scott (2008:739) define the self as the '*meaning maker* and identity as the *meaning made*' (emphasis in the original). According to Rodgers and Scott (2008), as the '*meaning maker*', the self carries an individual's sense of autonomy and agency, a concept that nods to Heidegger's idea of authenticity as *Dasein* (1962). As the '*meaning maker*' of identity, the self is elevated as the authentic aspect of one's identity – the 'true' self – of which we are mindful and protective of. This definition illustrates the tensions teachers are reported to experience when working in circumstances or being asked to engage in practices that are felt to go against their values and beliefs (Santoro, 2018). Emphasizing this connection, Clarke (2009:186) states:

the commitment to identity is not just a metaphysical proposition but a serious recognition that our work as teachers shapes and is shaped by the very mode of our being.

Some of the instances in which these tensions occur are when teachers change workplaces, experience changing classroom demographics, and/or navigate education reforms or policy changes (Zembylas, 2003; van Veen and Sledgers, 2006; Buchanan, 2014; Biesta *et al.*, 2015; Farrell and Lander, 2019).

Much research on teacher identity focuses on the professional selves of the teacher; this thesis recognises the congruence between teachers' personal and professional ethics and the tensions that arise when the two are in opposition. In looking to reframe the discussion on teacher authenticity, this

study situates itself in the liminal spaces between teachers' selves and their professional identities and hopes to realign the discussions on teacher authenticity with identity, moving the discussion on teacher effectiveness away from its focus on authenticity. I accept Rodger and Scott's (2008:739) definition of the self as the '*meaning maker*' in identity and hope to use this to frame the discussion around authenticity and whether there is value in the discussion relating to authenticity or the true self in teaching. I also hope to refocus the understanding that authenticity is not congruent with professional behaviour and that although teachers' responses to their work may be underpinned by some personal values and beliefs, other overarching factors interfere and influence how teachers navigate their professional selves.

## A Tale of Many Standards

Table 2: Teacher Standards



Robbin's report of 1963 signalled a turn in the perception of teachers' work and teacher education. The report repositioned the role of teachers in nation-building, suggesting that, as educators of the next generation, teachers needed a 'strong personal education' as well as the technical teaching skills they were already being provided (Furlong *et al.*, 2000:19). As a result, the new teacher education programmes (the then Bachelors in Education) focused primarily on the education of teachers, started to include subjects like

sociology, history, psychology, and philosophy. Although a clear set of descriptors for teacher competencies had not yet been implemented, school placements and practical knowledge remained a key part of the initial teacher training provisions. However, in 1972, the publication of the James Committee Report (James, 1972) refocused the course of teacher education in the opposite direction towards more skill-based provisions and school-based placements (with Polytechnics also offering courses in teacher education). This turn brought with them a need to codify what good practice in teaching should look like.

The publication of the 1983 White Paper on Teaching Quality signalled the beginning of the codification of teachers' skills and description of competencies. The White Paper recommended a strong focus on personal and practical skills and a rigorous process where trainees should be able to demonstrate 'satisfactory evidence of classroom competence' (DES, 1983:1). This document also signalled the beginning of growing government involvement in regulating teachers' work and assessing its quality. Subsequent circulars – 3/84 (DES, 1984) and 24/89 (DES, 1989) saw the government take a centre role in teacher education, changing the regulations on how long students should spend in school, inspections of Initial teacher education (ITE) provisions, provided gradings for inspectors and inspections and announced several provisos which included the right of the Education Secretary to intervene in the structuring and design of ITE provisions. The curriculum that emerged from this period started to be expressed in terms of outputs and exit criteria (Menter, 2010).

The use of the term 'competencies' to define teacher capabilities was used in the subsequent revision of the ITE policies, at which point Universities and ITE providers called out the government for the 'technicisation' of the profession (Stronach *et al.*, 2002:112). In 1994, the Teacher Training Agency (TTA) was founded and tasked with the job of setting the standards for the award of the Qualified Teacher Status (QTS). This finalised government's control over the criteria for qualifying as a teacher, where it has resided ever since. This also established the attitude of performativity, measurement, and technical accomplishment which has continued to inform future policies on teachers'



standards. The neo-liberalisation of education entered a complete phase and although the New Labour government of 1997 promised changes, they maintained the view that education is the 'key force in human capital development' (Giddens, 2000:73), and retained the policy trajectory of past conservative governments. Teachers' work, students' outcomes, and the national economy became more and more linked in policy and funding.

Before the publication of the Professional Standards for Teachers, in 2007 (TDA, 2007), what was known as the Teachers' Standards in the early 2000s went through various iterations (much of which is recognisable in today's Teachers' Standards). These were influenced by new Education policies such as Every Child Matters (DfES, 2003). These iterations were observed by many as serving the government's policy initiatives and foregrounding the Conservative neo-liberal view of education as a conduit for achieving national strategies (Newman, 2001; Gewirtz, 2002; Furlong, 2005; Furlong *et al.*, 2008). The new Professional Standards for Teachers had various new and more clearly defined parameters. First of all, it was designed to cover the whole of a teacher's career and not limited to assessing trainee teachers' capabilities. Secondly, it referenced the requirement for reflective and reflexive practice for the first time. Although the new Professional Standards for Teachers clarified the requirements for teachers and inspectors and was welcomed by both ITE providers and teachers, the general view of the new government control and managerialisation of teachers' work was that education was now conceived mainly as a mechanism for the market economy (Furlong, 2005). It is important to note how the evolution of policy is not coherent and can contradict each other. For instance, Every Child Matters (DfES, 2003) policy, heralded by the Labour government as the policy that foregrounded the United Nations' 1990 convention on the right of the child and responding to families' concerns was unceremoniously dismantled in 2010, a day after David Cameron and the Coalition government came into power.

Teachers' standards, here to stay, provide a clearly defined understanding of what the government expects good teaching to look like. The new Teachers' Standards 2011 (revised in 2021 to include new terminologies) brings together the competency model and the idea of the teacher as a reflective practitioner

together. The two sections illustrate the professional and personal expectations of teachers, aligning students' experiences and outcomes with what teachers do (DfE, 2011). Many teachers agree that this is necessary and view the standards as complementary to the work teachers do. In Furlong et al (2000:42), an ITE course leader states:

I don't see how an effective course can be run without the analysis of competencies. It permeates the work, but its greatest use is in self-analysis of students' practical experience.

In this conception, the benefits are seen to further professional learning and the descriptors to provide points of reference for teachers, managers, and inspectors (Mahoney and Hextall, 2000). The new Teachers' Standards highlights a relationship between teachers' work and student outcomes. An examination of the language reveals an assumption rooted in the idea that good teaching equals good student outcomes. Defending the new Teachers' Standards, one of the authors states that:

The new Teachers' Standards give an unequivocal message that highly effective teaching is what matters in this profession. The Review Group has seized the opportunity to raise the bar for current and future teachers. Our nation's children and young people deserve no less (Blatchford, 2014:1).

The understanding here is that education is linear, instead of a dynamic, complex situation, with unpredictable outcomes. Parents, the general public, and inspectors are made to expect a direct causal relationship between teachers' work and student success/failure. This mechanistic approach is also what informs the new Core Content Framework (DfE, 2022) and the Early Career Framework (DfE, 2022), both of which are to be used alongside the Teachers' Standards (DfE, 2021).

## Evidence-Informed

The standards and the continued mechanisation of teachers' work may be what has influenced the proliferation of the literature on teacher authenticity. Since the standards exist in the real world, the literature (and the empirical studies) on teacher authenticity seek to determine how teachers meet them from a personal point of engagement. Like the Teachers' Standards, the literature on teacher authenticity separates the variables that exist in teaching and learning, measuring their potential and effectiveness. For instance, the descriptor from Section 4 of Part 1 of the standards states that teachers should 'impart knowledge and develop understanding through effective use of lesson time' (DfE, 2011:1). The directive here aligns with the attributes in teacher authenticity of subject knowledge, passion, and punctuality (Kreber, 2009; De Bruyckere and Kirshner, 2006).

The assumption in both expectations is that the word 'effective' means the same for every student and is demonstratable by every student and also that, it is the teachers' responsibility to ensure students understand and can demonstrate the knowledge that has been imparted to them. An effective teacher = an authentic teacher. This attempt to isolate variables of teachers' work and to look to modify them to achieve better student outcomes undermines the complexity of teaching and the multifaceted processes of learning. Thus, the moral imperatives of teaching – that it leads to national and economic good require an accompanying narrative of the teacher self as an equally measurable and mechanistic entity. What the literature on teacher authenticity does, as reviewed below, is to underpin the Teachers' Standards with empirical studies that align the measurability of teachers' work and identities.

We see the trend, where research is used to underpin education policies repeated frequently and recently in the 2019 introduction of the Core Content Framework (CCF) (DfE, 2019a). In the document, the Department for Education (DfE) states that it is 'creating a world-class teacher development system', by embedding 'a "golden thread" of high-quality evidence' that will reinforce and serve to evidence learning and development throughout a teacher's career (DfE, 2019a: 4-5). According to the Core Content Framework

(DfE, 2019a), there are strict elements of what teachers must know and what they must know how to do. It has been argued that the lack of distinction between what teachers are expected to know or be able to do in their pre-qualification years and early career years undermines the intention of both the CCF and its accompanying framework, the Early Career Framework (DfE, 2019b; Brooks, 2021).

Further examination of the evidence that supports the government's Core Content framework for teachers questions the type of evidence that the government selects to support its teacher training policy and the nature of how that evidence is implemented. Horden and Brooks (2023:809-813) question, first of all, the absence of rigour in establishing best practice – the lack of a 'disciplinary community' that engages in negotiations to arrive at what constitutes best practice; the prevalence of texts and evidence from research and theory favoured by New Science, the almost complete absence of evidence from other areas of education (sociology and philosophy) and the monopoly of sources from the Education Endowment Fund (EEF). They also illustrate how EEF materials are used to validate the government's views on education, rather than informing them. It is important to note here that the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) aligns its initial teacher education inspection very closely to the core content framework (Brooks, 2021). Therefore, a well-trained teacher equals to a knowing teacher who equals to a research-informed teacher. This approach, of using research to validate government policy, is what persists in the understanding of teacher authenticity as the next section will illustrate.

## Teacher Authenticity

In Education, authenticity was initially used to connect with transformative learning theories when considering authenticity in curriculum design, teaching methods, teaching and learning activities, and assessment activities. Within this understanding, an authentic curriculum is that which is situated in the real world, where students make real-life connections to what they are learning and are given opportunities to practise real-life skills and are tested to this purpose (Newman *et al*, 1996, Doyle, 2000, Andersson and Andersson, 2005, Ashton, 2010). Malm (2008:374) defines an authentic curriculum as one that 'embodies the notion of difference, originality and the acceptance of diversity'. This project is concerned with the notion of authenticity as it relates to the teacher self only, and the definitions above demonstrate how the conceptions of authenticity within transformative learning theories might have influenced the application of the term to teachers professional selves and thus brought about the notion of what is known as teacher authenticity.

In the literature on teacher authenticity, to be an authentic teacher is to be self-aware, and genuine, to be true to one's values through action, and to be able to facilitate the authenticity of others (Mezirow, 2000). It also involves the ability to be humble enough to acknowledge one's limitations, to be credible and above reproach (Brookfield, 1990, Ray and Anderson, 2000). An authentic teacher should also demonstrate 'personal commitment, meaningful contexts, realistic intentions, respect for students and an ongoing professional development' (Malm, 2008: 379). van Lier (1996) defines an authentic teacher as one who has freedom of choice and brings this to bear in their teaching. There is no clear or dedicated definition in any of the literature on teacher authenticity what the notion means and how it may differ from other uses of authenticity in education. Cranton (2001:81), however, provides a description that may explain its use to describe teacher effectiveness. She states that:

The authentic teacher cares about teaching, believes in its values, wants to work well with students, and has a professional respect for students in general. Not liking a student is bound to happen; the authentic teacher wants to know why

and what to do. In other words, professionalism and ethical, moral behaviour take over.

This moral ideal of teacher authenticity can be linked to Taylor's (1991) explanation of authenticity as existing within a larger horizon of significance. Therefore, we may understand Cranton's (2001) description as pertaining to the relatedness of teachers' work and the universality of the purpose of teaching, and in fact, Cranton (2001) quotes Taylor frequently. The moral directive here is to do what is good for the good of students and society. This description echoes Grimmet and Neufeld's (1994:208) position that 'to be professional', teachers should 'possess an authentic identity'. For Grimmet and Neufeld (1994:5), an authentic teacher possesses an 'authentic motivation', [which is] caught up in a struggle to do what is necessary and of value, not just for the organisation nor just for oneself, but ultimately in the important interests of learners'. This authentic teacher stands in difference from the traditional and alternative teacher, whose motivations are to do what is rewarded and what is rewarding respectively. Today, the DfE might say that the authentic teacher is one who (using the language of the CCF) 'knows that' and 'knows how to' (DfE, 2019) and Ofsted will be looking to see how Initial Teacher Education (ITT) providers create opportunities for these authenticities.

It may seem that the moral and spiritual ideas within authenticity drive the discourses on teacher authenticity. In her book *Spiritual Strivings*, Cynthia Dillard (2006:73) cautions:

As teachers and researchers, ought we not be researching, teaching, and writing "as if we were dying"? Such a standard of rigor would require that we be ever vigilant in examining and tending to our body, mind, and spirit every day – and that we be absolutely cognizant of our short time on this planet .... Such practice would clearly help us to transform the ways we act, talk, and interact with others. And it is a way for us to live in a conscious manner.

Kreber *et al.*, (2007) use this to justify their premise that an authentic teacher is one who not only cares about the subject they teach but finds a way to communicate that care to their students and who can encourage them to see why the subject matters and why it matters in the real world. In their study of

implicit perceptions of teachers and students of what it means to be an authentic teacher, it is therefore not surprising that the six dimensions of authenticity that they come up with include: sincerity, candidness, and honesty; care – for students and subjects; and forming an identity around the Taylorian (1991) horizons of significance (Kreber *et al.*, 2007).

Teacher authenticity is also understood to be a value (or a set of values) that teachers can develop. Similar to the current alignment of the Core Content Framework with the Early Career Framework, these authentic values may supposedly, be developed at various stages of teachers' professional development. For Cranton and Carusetta (2004), university lecturers in the earlier stages of their careers are in the early stages of developing these authentic values while experienced educators are in the later stages. Through interviews with 88 University teachers, the study situated itself in the Jungian notion of individuation (Jung, 1973) and explored how teachers find themselves in their work and how this self is separated from the general norms of the faculty/institution. Their summary of results highlights four defining categories of authenticity: self-awareness, awareness of others, relationships with learners, awareness of context, and a generally critically reflective approach. Later works by Cranton and Carusetta (2005a), and Carusetta and Cranton (2005b) further this line of inquiry and extend to the study of the impact of environment on teacher authenticity and what other relational factors may inhibit authenticity or promote it. This view of authenticity as a set of values one acquires and whose acquisition depends on the length of time one works within the sector is interesting to note. It follows the understanding within the design of the teacher professional standards (DfE, 2021) and the core content framework (2022) that trainee teachers, early career teachers, and teachers with more than two years of experience will have varying degrees of competence in applying and demonstrating their skills and capabilities in teaching. It also takes for granted the fact that there are different kinds of trainee and early career teachers. That for some trainee and early career teachers, teaching is a second or third career, and they bring skills and knowledge from previous work experiences across that may mean that they have a wider knowledge and/or skill base than others.

Cranton's (2010) study with adult educators employs narrative inquiry to yield a more subjective insight into how the 18 new teachers interviewed develop authenticity and what factors inhibit or foster this development. The results of this study confirmed the characteristic traits for authenticity from former studies conducted by Cranton and Carusetta (2004, 2005a/b) but also highlighted additional contextual inhibitors to the development of authenticity as ranging from restrictive standards, multilevel accountability, ambiguous testing regimes, to on-going unresolved conflicts between staff. According to Cranton's (2010) study, to be an authentic teacher involves being flexible and adaptable; open (to learning and becoming); and being and showing optimism. The study also follows a similar description of authenticity which situates itself within skills and competencies and which orients the focus towards what is right and aligns with the purposes of education and the needs of students. The conclusion of this study points to inexperience as being a major issue in how new teachers navigate the workplace and therefore a hindrance to their construction or development of authenticity. For newly qualified teachers, feelings of uncertainty, lack of confidence, and an uncertain self-concept inhibits their authenticity (Cranton, 2010). These studies pointedly ignore the individual self as a central actor of authenticity and refer mainly to authenticity as values, skills, and competencies that may be developed externally.

Rabin's (2013) study into the link between caring and authenticity focuses on the impact of increased focus on standardisation and testing in a multicultural setting. Their understanding of authenticity situates the study within Noddings' (2003) ideas of caring for students as developing their understanding of themselves and the world, with references to Freire's (1971) ideas of critical pedagogy. For Rabin (2013), being an authentic teacher is synonymous with being a caring teacher. Their empirical study took the form of a phenomenological case study which interviewed 12 twelve teachers (5 experienced, 5 pre-service, and 2 from the senior leadership team). The description of an authentic teacher is however implicit in the discussion of their findings from the 12 interviews. In summary, an authentic teacher is one who has self-knowledge; is caring; connects to the subject matter; and embraces differences. To be authentic, there is also the expectation to follow one's



intuition and to be creative. There is the implication that authenticity here can be fostered and that conditions such as the willingness to be aware; the openness to self-disclosure; the freedom to follow one's values and an intrinsic connection to the curriculum may support the development of authenticity. The themes of fear and vulnerability, stated as the major inhibitors of authenticity in Cranton's (2010) study, as well as the authoritarian nature of a competency-driven system are key inhibitors of authenticity in Rabin's (2013) study.

Kreber's (2009) comparative study linking teachers' identities to their pedagogies identified three contextual factors to authenticity: flexibility (of the department/institution), openness from students, the link between teaching and research, and five personal factors to authenticity: confidence, experience, critical reflection, subject knowledge, and passion (for the subject). The (2010) study by Kreber et al. compared the perceptions of authenticity of teachers and students to philosophical definitions (Heidegger, Taylor, and Noddings) and investigated the role of courage and compassion in the search for authenticity, concluding that authenticity is a process of becoming. Kreber and Klampfleitner's (2012) study extended the Kreber et al. (2010) inquiry, comparing philosophical conceptions of authenticity with those of students and lecturers. Their conclusions noted that:

the formal dimensions of authenticity ..., feature the least strongly in laypeople's conceptions of authenticity in teaching, and were not closely associated with teaching effectiveness (Kreber and Klampfleitner, 2012: 483).

This study touches very closely on the question of the plausibility of the term 'teacher authenticity' and the possibility of measuring it. However, the researchers do not acknowledge or explore this. Rather, the summary in both studies listed openness, confidence, critical reflection, passion, experience, and subject knowledge as indicators of an authentic teacher; further aligning its understanding of authenticity with professional attributes in the core content framework (DfE, 2022).

LaBelle and Johnson's (2015) quantitative investigation of student perceptions of teacher authenticity in the classroom and Johnson and LaBelle's (2017)

examination of students' perception of teacher authenticity in a college classroom in the United States of America (USA) draws conclusions which point to descriptions of teacher authenticity as professional behaviour. Similarly, to others, an authentic teacher is described as one who is approachable, sensitive to the needs of students, attentive (caring), and respectful. The study is situated theoretically within Kreber *et al's* (2010) already defined premises of authenticity and follows an understanding that authenticity is aligned with care for others.

Ramezanzadeh's (2017) interviews with English language educators; Ramezanzadeh *et al's* (2016a) study of Iranian adjunct teachers' views and Ramezanzadeh *et al's* (2016b) interviews with Iranian University teachers focus on the question of how their participants conceptualise authenticity in the context of teaching. All three studies are built on Kreber's (2009) conceptualisation of authenticity, with some references to critical theory and existentialist ideas. An authentic teacher is characterised as one who is one's own self; who is aware of the horizon of significance; who can practise deconstructive thinking; who has a sense of responsibility and emotional consciousness. An authentic teacher is also one who practises emotional labour; is caring and loving; engages in a positive pedagogical relationship and is continually in a search of ultimate meaning. The spiritual references here link clearly to the moral underpinning of teacher authenticity and Dillard's (2006) directive to study with rigour.

Rappel (2015) focuses their study on teacher authenticity around ideas of critical reflection and how organisational contexts support individual practices. Their understanding of teacher authenticity is underpinned by transformative learning theories, particularly, Dirkx's (2000) position that the process of gaining self-awareness and self-knowledge can only be achieved through critical reflection and understanding of one's context. There are also references to critical theory and pedagogy and the idea of working for the good of others. Using a life history methodology with field notes and structured interviews as a method, the study comes to the same conclusion as all the others reviewed previously, albeit, with a longer, more defined list. Authentic teachers from this study are: – benevolent, altruistic, trusting, risk-taking,

inspired, and inspirational, flexible, empowered, and empowering, and collaborative. They also suggest that conditions such as opportunities to engage in meaningful practices and forums for growth, conscious relationships and connection and camaraderie, integrations, and perceptions of safety (among others), foster teacher authenticities. This position further consolidates the understanding that studies in teacher authenticity and those who use the term, understand it to be a value or set of values that one may acquire through study and a conducive environment.

De Bruyckere and Kirschner's (2017) quantitative study with secondary school students which extends their 2016 research into the criteria students use in measuring teacher authenticity yields the additional idea of professional distance as a characteristic of teacher authenticity. As well as passion (for the subject matter and for working with students), an authentic teacher has expertise and can recognise the uniqueness of each student (including their setting and class) and adapt to them (and adapt learning to them). The attributes listed in De Bruyckere and Kirschner's (2017) are more closely aligned to the teacher's standards and the grounded theory approach makes very little reference to theories of authenticity, apart from references to transformative learning approaches and ideas around critical pedagogies.

The studies reviewed so far, including other literature on teacher authenticity (Rappel, 2015; De Bruyckere and Kirschner, 2017; Ramezanzadeh, 2017; etc.) are unanimous in their conclusions that there is, first of all, a working understanding of a notion of teacher authenticity. Secondly, that this concept is exemplified by a series of attributes which include: a commitment to self-reflection, an openness to dialogic encounters, passion about their interests, confidence, and awareness (of self and operating contexts); these attributes are developed through study, experience, reflective practice, and a conducive/supportive environment. Finally, that a measurement framework may be developed to test and identify if teachers possess these authenticities or not; a framework that research participants (both students and lecturers/teachers), and possibly line managers, may use to judge teachers (as exemplified by these empirical studies).

From this review, we can see how research on teacher authenticity has not committed to a particular definition of teacher authenticity. We can also see how teacher authenticity is understood more as a set of values, skills, and attributes, than a highly individual notion of self and self-practices. It is also evident how previous studies on teacher authenticity, in their research questions and tools of inquiry, align the concept of an authentic teacher more closely to government policies on teacher development than with theories on teacher identity. In the table below, I have attempted to map the attributes that characterise an authentic teacher as presented in the reviewed literature to the 2021 teacher standards (DfE, 2021). I am hoping that this will enable us to better visualise my argument, that literature on teacher authenticity is more closely aligned with government policies on teacher standards. Moreover, the research is far from the philosophical idea of authenticity as an individual concept.

Table 3: Teachers' Standards Vs Teacher Authenticity

Teacher standards (adapted from DfE, 2021)	Teacher authenticity
Set high expectations that inspire, motivate, and challenge pupils	Inspired/inspirational, engaged in emotional labour, sense of responsibility, empowered/empowering (Rappel, 2015; Ramezanzadeh <i>et al.</i> , 2016a/b)
Promote good progress and outcomes by pupils	Care about teaching and students (Cranton, 2001)
Demonstrate good subject and curriculum knowledge	Studious, keep up with professional development, and subject knowledge (Dillard, 2006; Kreber, 2009)
Plan and teach well-structured lessons	Expertise, experience, subject knowledge (Kreber, 2009; De Bruyckere and Kirshner, 2006)
Adapt teaching to respond to the strengths and needs of all pupils	Unicity (recognising the uniqueness of every learner) (De Bruyckere and Kirshner, 2006)

Make accurate and productive use of assessment	Cares about teaching, connected to the subject, and critical reflection (Kreber <i>et al.</i> , 2007; Rabin, 2013)
Manage behaviour effectively to ensure a good and safe learning environment	Sense of responsibility, caring, professional distance, awareness of context, and relationships/rapport with learners (Cranton and Carusetta, 2004; De Bruyckere and Kirshner, 2006; Rappel, 2015)
Fulfil wider professional responsibilities	Dialogic relationships, open to learning and becoming, awareness of context and others, fostering relationships with others, and pedagogical relationships (Cranton and Carusetta, 2005a; Cranton, 2010; Ramezanzadeh <i>et al.</i> , 2016b)
Teachers uphold public trust in the profession and maintain high standards of ethics and behaviour, within and outside the school	Professional distance, respect, sense of responsibility, self-aware and self-regulating (reflexivity), trusting, altruistic, sincere, dialogic encounters (Kreber, 2009; De Bruyckere and Kirshner, 2006; Cranton and Carusetta, 2005a; Cranton, 2010; Ramezanzadeh <i>et al.</i> , 2017)
Teachers must have proper and professional regard for the ethos, policies, and practices of the school in which they teach and maintain high standards in their attendance and punctuality.	Sense of responsibility, subject and context knowledge, and awareness, respect, professional (Cranton and Carusetta, 2004; De Bruyckere and Kirshner, 2006; Rappel, 2015)
Teachers must have an understanding of, and always act within, the statutory frameworks which set out their professional duties and responsibilities.	Sense of responsibility, critical reflection, keep up with professional development (Dillard, 2006; Kreber, 2009; Rabin, 2013, De Bruyckere and Kirshner, 2006)

The table demonstrates that the attributes and determining parameters of authenticity in the discourses on teacher authenticity align more specifically with the professional standards for teachers. Although there is a discussion on

authenticity as a philosophical basis for the notion of teacher authenticity, it seems this understanding is more arbitrarily applied within the context of reflection and self-knowledge and the potential of altruism in supporting teacher professional development and resilience. Kreber et al. (2007:39) provide a discussion on what philosophical underpinnings contribute to the idea of teacher authenticity in the table below:

Table 4: Teacher Authenticity And Philosophy (Kreber *et al.*, 2007:39)

- Consistency between values and actions (e.g., Brookfield, 1990; Chickering et al., 2006; Cranton & Carusetta, 2004a, 2004b; Jarvis, 1992; Rogers, 1983)
- Presentation of a genuine Self as a teacher (being candid, genuine; e.g., Buber, 1958; Cranton, 2001, 2006; Dillard, 2006; Freire, 1971; hooks, 2003; Rogers, 1983)
- Care for students (but rule-bound and authentic caring is not the same; e.g., Buber, 1958; Grimmet & Neufeld, 1994; Noddings, 2003; Rogers, 1983)
- Care for the subject and interest in engaging students with the subject around ideas that matter (e.g., Palmer, 1998; Taylor, 1991)
- Care for what one's life as a teacher is to be (e.g., Dillard, 2006; Heidegger, 1927/1962)
- Self-knowledge and confronting the truth about oneself (e.g., Cranton, 2001, 2006; Heidegger, 1927/1962; Williams, 2004)
- Being defined by oneself rather than by others' expectations (e.g., Cranton, 2001, 2006; Tisdell, 1998, 2003)
- Critically reflecting on how certain norms and practices have come about (e.g., Adorno, 1964/2003; Cranton & Carusetta, 2004a, 2004b)
- Self-definition in dialogue around horizons of significance (e.g., Taylor, 1991)
- Making educational decisions and acting in ways that are in the important interest of students (and ultimately society; e.g., Dillard, 2006; Grimmet & Neufeld, 1994; hooks, 2003; Taylor, 1991)
- Promoting the "authenticity" of others (at least their learning and possibly their development in a larger sense; leaping ahead rather than leaping in; e.g., Buber, 1958; Cranton, 2001, 2006; Dillard, 2006; Freire, 1971; Heidegger, 1927/1962; hooks, 2003; Jarvis, 1992; Noddings, 2003; Palmer, 1998; Rogers, 1983)

- Reflecting on purposes (and on one's own unique possibilities, that is those that matter most) in education and teaching (e.g., Heidegger, 1927/1962; Taylor, 1991)
- Constructive developmental pedagogy emphasizing the dialogical character of the teaching-learning interaction (e.g., Baxter Magolda, 1998, 1999, 2001)

Authenticity in teaching and teacher authenticity seem to be understood as an exchangeable idea. This is, however, problematic when within the same literature, there are references to being one's self or staying true to one's self (Kreber, *et al.*, 2010; Rabin, 2013) – a philosophical notion that clearly links to existentialist or essentialist theories of the self. It is my argument that if the discourses on teacher authenticity were to situate themselves more firmly within constructivist learning theories and follow Dewey's (1938) connections of experience and education and Piaget's revolutionary focus on the role of learners' cognitive abilities to contribute to their own learning experience (Phillips, 1995), then the links between the teacher attributes and authentic learning would be more strongly established. For instance, Kreber *et al.*'s (2007) and Kreber and Klampfleitner's (2012) empirical studies illustrate a clear overlap between constructivist pedagogy and teacher authenticity. The influence of Baxter-Magolda's (1999) theory of constructive developmental pedagogy here is undeniable. For Kreber and their counterpart, an authentic teacher promotes students' engagement with the subject and connects the curriculum to students' realities. Just as an authentic learning environment is synonymous with a constructive learning environment (Slavkin, 2004), an authentic teacher may support a constructive learning experience. This might be one way of contextualising the concept of teacher authenticity and a renaming of the notion, to situate it more clearly, might also be helpful. I would recommend referring to this idea as professional self-positioning, rather than teacher authenticity.

The misalignment between the notion of teacher authenticity and philosophies of the self is not the only contradiction observed in the studies reviewed in this

section. There is also a contradiction in the reality of teachers' work and the idyll illustrated in the discourses on teacher authenticity. In the first instance, if to be an authentic teacher, is to be intuitive, creative, and true to oneself, how would teachers navigate policies of accountability and standardised frameworks? How can teachers be true to themselves when bound by policies and competencies that seek to homogenise the profession? How would teachers uphold their own truths against government policies that may strip them of the licence to practice as teachers or frustrate the institutions within which they work?

There is also the absence of discussion around the nature of the self, the self that teaches (Palmer, 1998), or identity. Interestingly, even though Palmer (1998) is frequently referenced throughout most of the literature on teacher authenticity, Palmer themselves never uses the term authenticity in their work to refer to the teacher self or its relative identity within the profession. Palmer's (1998) work is situated within the discourses on teacher identity, and they make the distinction between the teacher self (outside/before) and the teacher self that teaches. Palmer's distinction aligns more clearly with the expectations in the teacher professional standards and the teacher self that teaches is seen as a clear constructivist possibility – one that may adapt invariably away from their personal beliefs and values to assume the responsibility of educating others and working for the greater good.

The close association that the notion of teacher authenticity maintains with the philosophical ideas of the self raises questions about personal beliefs and culpabilities, genetic/biological makeup and/or altruistic motivations. What if an individual teacher's self is not aligned with the qualities identified in the literature as authentic? For instance, neurodiversity prevents one from being collaborative or sociable (as with teachers on the autism spectrum and those that struggle for other reasons like the effects of post-traumatic stress disorder); or one's cultural or personal beliefs (and/or life experiences, workplace culture) causes one to be averse to self-disclosure or risk-taking (for instance, those who work in prisons or other holding facilities). Should these individuals not become teachers? Or considered inauthentic?



As Bialystok (2015:319) observes, none of these definitions or descriptions of teacher authenticity 'reveals fidelity to the true self'. If the research refers to sincerity, then we must question the significance of role-play: the ways in which teachers embody other identities to bring variation to their teaching and how they adapt themselves to the needs of different pupils and groups of pupils (Buchmann, 1993, Stillwaggon, 2008). If they refer to autonomy, then the government framework used in measuring teacher effectiveness may become problematic and teachers will be unable to meet many of the standards in the government policy and therefore risk losing their jobs. The nature of being and the concept of the self is downplayed in these studies, and there is an understated understanding that teacher authenticity is congruent with education.

Pervasive, also, is the idea of desirability. Teacher authenticity is presented as advantageous and demonstratable. Pitted against what the literature terms as inauthentic traits – unapproachable, inattentive, disrespectful, incapable, insensitive (Johnson and LaBelle, 2017; De Bruyckere and Kirschner, 2017), teacher authenticity is entered as a binary. It is unclear whether authenticity is synonymous with professional behaviour and inauthenticity with unprofessional behaviour. Bialystok (2015:322) makes an illustrative case for the possibility that authenticity is not congruent with good teaching or characteristic of a good teacher, although it is understandable that the education sector should be 'opposed to dissimulation, ignorance, manipulation and related states of misalignment between truth and selfhood'.

There are opportunities in these studies for research to engage with other possibilities within the notion of teacher authenticity, to redefine it and situate it more clearly within the literature and research on teacher efficacy. Also, the measures that inhibit teacher authenticity could be contextualised in the discussions, exploring the role of the teaching context in facilitating effective teaching attributes and fostering better teaching and learning environments. The purpose of my study is to recentre the discussion on teacher authenticity within the philosophical notions of self and being and of authenticity as a description of identity (Bialystok, 2015:314). Through the notion of critical authenticity, the research positions the teacher self within its existing

narratives as presented in the literature on teacher authenticity. It also invites the teacher to consider the many mechanisms of power that are at play in their self-conceptualisations. My study moves away from the current assumptions around authenticity as characteristic of good teaching and explores with teachers and through their poetry, the feasibility of the term, as regards teachers and teaching, reimagining the concept as the space with the potential to give voice to the multiplicity of the teacher self.

Vannini's (2007) empirical study with University professors is the only empirical research that explores the issue of authenticity philosophically and that situates the idea of teacher authenticity within the self-definition and self-understanding of educators. The study explores how university professors navigate the constraints of their work and how they negotiate their own values and beliefs within it. Vannini (2007:3) uses the symbolic interactionist understanding of authenticity to underpin their study and defines authenticity as '*the emotional experience of being true to oneself*' [italics in the original]. They distance the definition from the general association of authenticity to sincerity and the metaphysical notion of being a true self. Referencing Denzin, 1989; Holstein and Gubrium, 2000; Maines, 1993; Maines and Ulmer 1993, authenticity is seen as fluid 'self-meanings' that evolve through socialisation and provide a sense of continuity and identity for individuals (Vannini, 2007:4).

For Vannini (2007:33), an empirical approach to exploring authenticity is important because 'for the self to experience authenticity what is needed is not a metaphysical notion of the True Self but instead a pragmatic view of the reflexive self's ability to define its own authenticity'. The study uses a phenomenological/interpretivist approach to explore the lives of several professors from one university. The analysis presents a varying sense of self-meanings among the participants, and in so doing, provides insight into the liminal spaces of the lives of university professors, making them visible in their self-articulations and giving them a voice within the research.

I agree with Vannini's opinion that studying authenticity in the teaching environment is important. Like Vannini's professors, teachers love their work due to the intrinsic pleasure and gratification they derive from it. An empirical

study that explores their authenticities should be to provide a space for others to hear from teachers, not to judge them against a framework of competencies. Although Vannini's study pursues a philosophical inquiry into the lives of University professors in relation to their work, there is still an element of the technician view on authenticity. In the analysis, Vannini could not resist applying similar judgments of authenticity vs in(un)authenticity on the self-performance of the professors. By doing so, this study similarly plays into the binary descriptions present in the mechanistic policies of the Teacher Standards and pervading literature on teacher authenticity.

Unlike Vannini, my study introduces a philosophical concept of critical authenticity, which upholds the act of articulation as a way of engaging with the ongoing narrative construction of the self. The concept is useful as a philosophical framework to engage with the empirical study of teacher selves. There is a strong insistence on the voices of the teachers telling us, through poetry, what their conceptions of self are and where the tensions lay for them. The concept of critical authenticity is presented in more detail later on in this chapter, where it is better situated within the notion of authenticity in philosophy. Its application as a philosophical framework is also presented in detail in the methodology chapter.

### Performativity and the Teacher Self

I have argued so far that the idea of a homogenous teacher self plays into the wider attempts to codify the work of teachers and to align professional identities more closely with the professional expectations for teachers. Teachers' work is increasingly being judged by resulting pupil achievement, which in turn determines funding and institutional ratings. This process has come to be known as performativity. Performativity in the context of education refers to the idea that teachers are not just individuals carrying out a set of predetermined tasks but are actively performing their roles in ways that are shaped by various influences, including societal expectations, policies, and cultural norms. According to Ball (2013:136):

The essential point about performativity is that we must make ourselves calculable rather than

memorable. In the regimes of performativity, experience is nothing, productivity is everything.

Performativity is often associated with the accountability measures and standards imposed on teachers. Policies such as standardized testing and performance evaluations contribute to a sense of being constantly evaluated and judged. For this reason, teachers construct their professional identities through a series of performances. This includes not only what happens in the classroom but also interactions with colleagues, administrators, and parents. The expectations placed on teachers, whether explicit in policies (as illustrated above *vis-a-vis* Teacher Standards, or the Core Content Framework) or implicit in societal norms, contribute to the shaping of their professional identity.

Buchanan's (2015) study with teachers in the United States illustrates this conflict clearly. The role of policy in teacher agency and identity is no longer symbolic, but instrumental. Teachers feel that they have no option but to alter their instructional practices and relationships with students to suit accountability demands. She quotes one of the teachers to illustrate this point:

[Benchmark tests] can't contractually be an evaluation process. But it is really probably the biggest ... thing people are looking at. So, it is kind of pulling you away from the way that you know is good for teaching and good for kids (712).

Within performativity, students' outcomes become centralised around the teacher self, and this becomes a site of power play. Knight (2017:10) questions this causal relationship – where good results equal to good teaching or *vice versa* and condemns the idea that the teacher is the only 'significant causal mechanism' in the whole structure. Understanding performativity in the context of teaching can lead to critical reflections on the nature of the profession, the impact of external influences, and the importance of maintaining authenticity in one's teaching practices. It also highlights the need for a supportive and empowering educational environment that allows teachers to fulfil their roles in ways that align with their professional values and beliefs. The broader cultural and societal context plays a significant role in shaping the expectations

placed on teachers. Societal values, beliefs, and attitudes regarding education influence how teachers are perceived and how they perceive themselves.

### Sites of Power

I have cited Foucault's views on power throughout this thesis. His ideas on power, discourse, and the operation of institutions have been influential in shaping discussions about performativity in education. Although he did not explicitly use the term performativity in the same way that it is used in some contemporary educational discourses, Foucault's work provides a theoretical framework for understanding how power operates in educational settings, how knowledge is produced, and how individuals are subjected to certain norms and practices. In education, power operates not only through explicit rules and regulations but also through the production of knowledge within institutions. Educational practices, curricula, and disciplinary mechanisms contribute to the exercise of power, shaping what is considered valid knowledge and appropriate behaviour.

In *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (1975), Foucault introduced the concept of disciplinary power, which involves the surveillance, normalization, and regulation of individuals within institutions. Educational institutions, through various mechanisms such as examinations and grading, function as sites of disciplinary power. The disciplinary nature of education influences how teachers and students perform their roles, aligning with the idea of performativity in the sense of conforming to established norms.

Disciplinary power also involves surveillance and Foucault's concept of the panopticon in the same book, a hypothetical prison designed for constant surveillance, is applicable to the way the teacher's work is surveilled, through standardised testing, standards, and inspections. By shaping skills, knowledge, and subjectivities, performativity in education can be seen as a mechanism through which individuals are governed and normalized. In subsequent literature, Foucault (1997 a/b; 1999; 2006) argues that individuals are not merely passive recipients of power but are also active in the process of subjectification. In education, individuals actively engage in self-formation, internalizing norms, and expectations. Teachers and students, through their

actions and engagements within educational contexts, actively participate in the performativity of roles and identities.

This reforming and mechanistic view of education is what Ball (2003, 2013, 2016) cautions against in his writings. An admirer of Foucault, Ball's work is committed to critiquing the effects of neo-liberal accountability on education and in illustrating its many ills. In *Education Policy and Social Class*, Ball (2005) introduces his view of performativity and provides insights into how performativity manifests in educational settings. He highlights the influence of market forces, policies, and accountability measures on educational practices. The chapter: 'The Teacher's Soul and the Terrors of Performativity' illustrates the damaging effects of performativity on teachers' self-conceptualisations and the ensuing confusion and complexity that such a system produces.

His summary book, aptly titled: *Foucault, Power, and Education*, Ball (2013) summarises Foucault's positions on subjectivity and power and makes the arguments that in education, the power is exercised through performativity and that, quoting Foucault, teachers stand before a 'permanent economic tribunal', against which 'all intellectual activity is judged' (138). His work encourages a critical examination of how these external factors shape teacher behaviours, institutional cultures, and educational outcomes, and how they intersect with broader social and economic changes.

In examining how the narrative on teacher authenticity takes for granted that a homogenous teacher self exists, this thesis presents the idea of teacher authenticity as both a site of power and also an example where teachers are expected to contribute towards their own subjectification. In this way, performativity does not only judge teachers' intellectual activity but also their beliefs, values, and every other personal factor of the teacher self. For teachers involved in the many research projects in the literature review on teacher authenticity above, where they map themselves against the authenticity factors of good *versus* bad, they join the 'moral system ... that makes us responsible for our performance and the performance of others' (Ball, 2013: 138).

Critical authenticity calls for teachers to re-examine the power that the narrative of teacher authenticity has and to disrupt it by inserting their own ideas into what constitutes an authentic teacher. The writing of oneself within this project is an act of resistance to the narrativisation of the teacher self as enacted through performativity, where teachers become governable subjects. It is also the 'establishment of a certain objectivity, the development of a politics and government of the self, and an elaboration of an ethics and practice in regard to oneself' (Foucault, 1997a:117). Critical authenticity brings together Foucault's ideas on power and the self into an arena where teachers (and individuals that may apply this idea to their work/self), may confront the apparatuses of power, and insert their own narratives into discourses that concern them. Unlike Foucault's deliberative approaches to the self, critical authenticity highlights the performative agents and pitches the voices of individuals (teachers in the case of this project) against the pervasive system that narrates the (teacher) self.

Like Ball (2003, 2013, 2016), I draw very much on Foucault's philosophy to underpin the discussions on power and the narrated self in this thesis. Where Foucault suggests a 'culture of the self' (2021: 24), critical authenticity introduces an articulated pedagogy (*techne*) that individuals may apply to create such a culture. In the last chapter of this thesis, I include a toolkit that also suggests how other storytelling methodologies may be used within critical authenticity.

### Authenticity: An attempt at a definition

We are invited very often, by teachers, friends, family members, the media, and even event organisers, to 'be true to ourselves', 'speak our truth', 'march to the beat of our hearts', to be 'authentic'. The phrase 'be yourself, everyone else is taken', is a common quip in every day. It is espoused as a desirable quality, an expected characteristic in many professions. In Education, authenticity is presented as compatible with having good relationships, good learning outcomes, and good learning and assessment tools (Kreber *et al.*, 2007; Kreber and Klampfleitner, 2013). But what is it to be authentic? Who can be said to be an authentic individual? These questions are considered in some of the definitions and studies below.

Referring to the intersecting ideas of how one presents oneself (or something) and what one or the thing is, authenticity generally refers to the idea of being true to oneself or the thing. It has historically been presented as a quality of sincerity and autonomy (Guignon, 2004), and this understanding persists in the literature about teacher authenticity today. The word authenticity signifies an alignment to a conviction one has of one's beliefs and personal grounding. As a term, it has always been a source of much deliberation. The historical provenance of the idea of the self and the subject of authenticity is expansive and so is the various understanding of its relevance and import, from Socrates to Sartre.<sup>3</sup> The Romantics reintroduced the idea of authenticity to the Enlightenment period and their view was that of finding one's true self, of turning inwards, away from the corrupting influence of the world to an inner compass (deep inside oneself) to determine the right way to live (Rousseau, 1992 [1754]). This definition of authenticity is often criticised for being narcissistic and self-centred, with Adorno labelling it the 'liturgy of inwardness' (1973:70) and others questioning its highly objective view of the goodness of man – Foucault terms it the 'Californian cult of the self' (1983a:266). Slater (1970), Sisk (1973), Yankelovich (1981), and Bellah *et al.*, (2008) also argue that this internalistic view of authenticity disregards the importance of social bonding in the construction of individual identities. The supporters of Rousseau's view of authenticity argue that Rousseau's meaning extends to the idea that one is also innately empathetic and benevolent. That by turning inward, we can turn also 'upward' and engage more fully with the world (Taylor, 1989:419-455). This 'upward' movement implies a progression – a journey rather than a destination.

Echoing Kierkegaard's (1992 [1846]) position of authenticity as being in the degree of positionality (expanding thoughts, experiences, and possibilities versus limiting actuality), Heidegger (1962) reintroduces the question of what it is to be authentic in 20<sup>th</sup> century philosophy. For Heidegger, we exist for ourselves and although it is in introspection that we can reveal our true selves,

---

<sup>3</sup> See Charles Taylor's monumental work, *Sources of the Self* as well as Jerrold Seigel's *The Idea of the Self*. In terms of the history of authenticity specifically, Charles Guignon's *On Being Authentic* and Lionel Trilling's *Sincerity and Authenticity* provide a rich historical discussion.



this true self is in constant flux, an ongoing construction, a narrative journey. Heidegger reframes authenticity in the German word *eigentlichkeit* (which he creates for this purpose). In very crude form, *eigentlichkeit* means ownedness – from *eigentlich*, meaning truly, and *eigen*, meaning own or proper. The word *eigentlichkeit* suggests that our sense of ourselves is embryonic and it is for this reason that we are always careful about how we define ourselves (*verstehen*), how we understand our identity to be, and how the decisions and choices we make reflect our sense of who we are. This purposefulness in enacting one's true self is also not exclusive of the social context since our understandings of ourselves and our life stories are wrapped up in our experience of the world and of others. For Heidegger (1962:12), authenticity is *Dasein* (the human being as a 'relation of being'), calling into understanding who we are at a given moment and the possibilities of who we will be.

The recent language used to define authenticity may be as varied as historical definitions have been but the major writings in this field agree on the idea of authenticity as a process of becoming (Palmer 1998:13). Tisdell (2003:32) defines authenticity as 'having a sense that one is operating from a sense of self that is defined by oneself...' and Cranton (2001: ix) as the 'expression of one's genuine Self in the community and society'. Self-knowledge, autonomy, and context are key aspects in contemporary discourses on authenticity (Bauer, 2017; Rings, 2017). According to Dirkx (2000), this process of gaining self-awareness and self-knowledge can only be achieved through critical reflection and understanding the context in which one lives, and consciously separating what one believes from the inclinations of others. This idea echoes Freire's (1971) explanation of the authentic individual as being one who is careful of the contradictions of society (even as one acknowledges the importance of the relationship with society) and requires the 'segregation of the individual from the undifferentiated and unconscious herd' (Sharp, 1995:48). It is also generally agreed that authenticity makes 'individuals more whole, more integrated, more fully human, more aware, more content with their personal and professional lives, their actions more closely linked to purpose' (Kreber *et al.*, 2007:24).

## A Brief History of Authenticity

The history of the philosophy of authenticity is rooted in various philosophical and cultural developments across different time periods. While the concept of authenticity has ancient roots, its more focused exploration began to take shape during the Enlightenment and continued to evolve through the works of influential philosophers up to the present day. The philosophy of authenticity is a complex and multifaceted topic that has been explored by various thinkers from different philosophical traditions. It continues to be relevant in contemporary discussions about identity, ethics, and the nature of human existence. In Ancient Greece, Socrates emphasized self-examination and the pursuit of knowledge as a means to live an authentic life (Nehamas, 1999). Socratic wisdom involves understanding one's limitations and acknowledging the extent of one's knowledge. In Hinduism and Buddhism, the idea of authenticity can be found in the quest for self-realization and enlightenment, where individuals seek to discover their true nature and transcend the illusions of the material world.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau is often considered one of the earliest Western philosophers to discuss the idea of authenticity. In *The Social Contract* (1762), he explores the notion of authenticity in the context of political theory, arguing that authentic society should be based on the general will of its members. He emphasizes the need for individuals to maintain their true selves while participating in a collective political structure.

Existentialism emerged as a significant philosophical movement in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. In his seminal essay, *Existentialism is a Humanism* (1946), Jean-Paul Sartre discusses existentialism and its connection to authenticity. He argues that humans are condemned to be free, meaning that they must take responsibility for their existence and create their values. Authenticity, for Sartre (like for Rousseau), lies in the ability to act in accordance with one's true self and not be determined by external influences. Existentialist thinkers like Heidegger, Sartre, and Simone de Beauvoir explored the theme of authenticity in the context of individual existence and the struggle for meaning and identity. Heidegger's *Being and Time* (1927) presents the concept of authenticity as the realisation of one's own existence

and the ability to take responsibility for one's choices and actions. The idea of inauthenticity is introduced also, to parallel the idea of staying true to one's self and to explain for those that conform to social norms and expectations without question. Phenomenologists, such as Edmund Husserl and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, also contributed to the discussion on authenticity by examining the nature of consciousness and the lived experience of authenticity (Moran, 2009).

In Contemporary Culture, authenticity has become a popular topic, with discussions about authentic experiences, authentic relationships, and authentic self-presentation in the age of social media. Postmodern philosophers like Jean Baudrillard, Charles Taylor, and Michel Foucault critiqued the concept of authenticity. They argued that authenticity itself can be a constructed and commodified notion, shaped by cultural forces, media, and consumerism. These critiques questioned the possibility of genuine authenticity in a hyper-mediated and hyper-consumerist society. For Baudrillard, we live in a world dominated by simulacra, which are copies or representations of reality that have lost their connection to an original reality. He believed that the proliferation of simulacra has made it difficult to distinguish between what is authentic and what is a simulation. In his book, *The Hyper-realism of Simulation*, (1988), Baudrillard introduced the concept of hyperreality, which refers to a state where the boundary between reality and simulation becomes blurred or disappears altogether. In a hyperreal world, signs and symbols take on a life of their own, and people often mistake simulations for reality. Authenticity, in this context, becomes elusive because there is no longer a clear reference point for what is real. He argued that modern consumer culture and media have created a society in which authentic experiences and emotions are increasingly rare. He believed that our experiences are often mediated by images, advertisements, and simulations, which can distort our perception of what is genuine (Baudrillard, 2001). Baudrillard was concerned more about human experiences of the world than authenticity as a state of being.

In *The Ethics of Authenticity* (1991), Charles Taylor examines the modern concept of authenticity and its historical development. He explores the tension

between the traditional social frameworks that dictated people's roles and the modern desire for self-expression and individuality. Taylor also criticises certain aspects of contemporary authenticity, which he sees as leading to a self-centred and shallow pursuit of personal fulfilment and attacks the popular directive to be oneself. He argues that modern Western culture has been marked by a shift toward expressive individualism. This is a cultural orientation that emphasizes the importance of personal self-expression and self-discovery. It places a premium on individuals being true to themselves and their inner desires.

Taylor suggests that authenticity is not a monolithic concept but has multiple moral sources. He identifies three key sources:

- a. The Romantic Tradition: This source of authenticity emphasizes the inner, emotional life of individuals. It values self-expression, self-discovery, and the pursuit of one's desires and passions as central to authenticity.
- b. The Moral Tradition: This source emphasizes the moral values and principles that individuals hold. Authenticity, in this context, involves living by one's deeply held moral convictions.
- c. The Kierkegaardian Tradition: Drawing from the works of Søren Kierkegaard, Taylor highlights the idea of authenticity as a struggle. It involves the continuous process of defining one's identity through ethical and existential choices, often involving inner conflict and reflection.

Taylor acknowledges that the pursuit of authenticity can be challenging in a modern, pluralistic society. He discusses the tension between individualism and the pressures of conformity and homogenization. Like Jean Baudrillard, he cautions that the commercial and consumer culture can also commodify authenticity, turning it into a marketable product. He emphasizes the importance of recognizing our responsibilities to others and the need to engage in a dialogue about the boundaries of authentic expression in a diverse and interconnected world. He values the diversity of perspectives and moral traditions in society and encourages a more inclusive and dialogical approach to authenticity.

Foucault, on the other hand, was interested in how individuals construct their subjectivities and identities within the context of social and historical discourses. He believed that the self is not a fixed or essential entity but is rather a product of various discourses, power relations, and historical contexts. In this sense, the quest for an authentic, essential self is problematic because the self is always shaped and contingent on external factors (Kelly, 2013). Foucault's (1972) work on discourse and power, emphasized the role of discourse in constructing knowledge and identity. He argued that institutions and systems of power produce and regulate knowledge, which in turn shapes the way individuals perceive themselves and the world. Authenticity, from Foucault's perspective, may be seen as a product of dominant discourses and power structures.

While Foucault was critical of essentialist notions of authenticity, he did value individual agency and resistance to oppressive power structures. He believed that individuals could engage in practices of self-care and self-examination to challenge dominant discourses and exercise a certain degree of freedom (Foucault, 1990). This could be seen as a form of authenticity in the sense of self-reflective critical engagement. This project focuses on this understanding of authenticity, as it serves to support an empirical approach to the question of authenticity in teacher identities. The idea of critical authenticity in this project borrows from Foucault's later works, particularly his exploration of ancient Greek and Roman ethical practices, focused on the idea of ethical self-formation (Foucault, 2001b). He was interested in how individuals in antiquity engaged in practices of self-discipline and self-examination to cultivate ethical virtues; which can be seen as a form of authenticity in which individuals actively work on themselves to shape their ethical character. The concept of critical authenticity adapts this notion for a practical approach to support teachers in exploring their desires and intentions, navigating through the reasons they chose to become and remain teachers, and to articulate what they conceive as their authenticity.

Although Foucault does not provide a clear-cut theory of authenticity, his work can be interpreted as challenging traditional notions of authenticity by emphasizing the contingent and constructed nature of subjectivity. He

encouraged critical self-examination and resistance to oppressive power structures as ways for individuals to assert a degree of autonomy and ethical self-formation, which could be considered forms of authenticity in his philosophical framework.

## Poetry and Authenticity

From Aristotle to Lorde, poetry is generally accepted as an expression of imagination, an expression of life, an expression of the self, and an imitation (of life). Jerome (1966: xxii) defines poetry as the 'material of life', Cummings (1965) describes it as being and Robert Penn Warren (1975) presents in his poems the idea of poetry as the expanding self. All poets have an opinion of what poetry is in relation to the self – Yeats, Coleridge, Neruda, Walker, me<sup>4</sup>. Other poets side-step the temptation altogether, Houseman (1993:47) states 'I could no more define poetry than a terrier can define a rat'.

Who is a poet? The answer is, who isn't? Former American poet laureate Ted Kooser (2005:5) wrote, 'I'd like a world, wouldn't you, in which people actually took the time to think about what they were saying? [...] I don't think there could ever be too many poets'. As much as it is generally accepted that anyone can write poetry as Kooser implies above, there are calls to ensure research using poetry has artistic value (Cutts and Waters, 2019).

It is in the purpose of poetry that we understand its significance and relevance to the self. For Shakespeare, the poet's job is that of naming and we are familiar with these lines from (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Act 5, Scene 1- Theseus speaking):

'The poet's eye in a fine frenzy rolling,  
Doth glance from heav'n to earth, from earth to heav'n;  
And as imagination bodies forth  
The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen  
Turns them to shape, and gives to airy nothing  
A local habitation and a name.'

---

<sup>4</sup>The list is innumerable. Some well-known examples of poems about poetry include *Digging* by Seamus Harvey (1966), *Poem* by W.H Auden (1937), *Notes on the Art of Poetry* by Dylan Thomas (1957) and of course *Shelley's A Defense of Poetry* (1895) to mention a few.

Rushdie (2009) reiterates this and refers to the poet as one called to bear witness to life. For Shelley (1895), poets are mediators, law makers and historians. A highly personal form, poetry allows for an engagement with the notions of the self in its permissiveness and in its ability to be both expository and/or subversive. It is not only an ‘honest duplicity’ (Cook, 1968:63), or a ‘true lie (Gerber, 1966: 132) or ‘saying one thing and meaning another’ (Frost, 2007: 147); poetry provides the necessary space for introspection (Lyons, 2008) and can help us suspend our usual interpretations of our temporal existence. Often concerned with human existence (mortality), and experience and in narrating it, poetry is an excellent form for facilitating critical authenticity. As Lorde (2017:8) states, ‘[poetry] is a vital necessity of our existence. It forms the light within which we predicate our hopes and dreams toward survival and change, first made into language, then into idea, then into tangible action’.

It is to the field of Psychology that we owe the use of poetry in empirical research to facilitate understanding around the notion of self and for constructions of expressions that can serve critical authenticity. From Miller’s (1978) study to current research that includes Mazza’s (2003) work in poetry therapy, it is suggested that giving individuals (patients in their case), the opportunity to express themselves through poetry writing enhances introspection and encourages expression through imagery and metaphor. The methodology section outlines the breadth of this method in more depth.<sup>5</sup>

In teacher professional development, poetry is used mostly to foster a sense of teacher identity and to facilitate reflective skills among teachers in training. Studies conducted by Ingram, (2000), Gay and Kirkland, (2003), Clark, (2009) and Cowin, (2012) demonstrate how poetry functions as both a useful tool for student teachers to explore their identities as teachers, engage in reflective activities, process those experiences, and record them. Spear and Henshall (2014) illustrate in their research the importance of poetry in establishing reflective protocols with trainee teachers and Hassler *et al.*’s (2020) study exploring the use of digital poetry to support teachers’ professional development during the Covid-19 pandemic found that teachers engage very

---

<sup>5</sup> Also see Prendergast (2007) for an annotated bibliography of works in Social Science research using poetic inquiry.

willingly in these types of activities, supporting one of the aims of this project for the use of poetry to support teacher professional development. Certo *et al.*'s (2012:111) work with pre-service teachers in the United States also found that as an aesthetic experience, poetry 'ask[ed] students to feel and surrender' and teachers were more engaged with the process and felt more positive towards poetry teaching as a result. Elbelazi and Alharbi's (2019) use of poetic auto-ethnography explored the researchers' identities as Muslim female academics in the United States. The findings contributed to raising awareness of how the authors are viewed. The poems they wrote illustrate the journey to this understanding and project their voices into the representative expressions of others, disrupting them.

To engage with the idea of teacher identities and the ontological questions teachers ask, Carl Leggo's (2012) *Sailing in a Concrete Boat* is an insightful departure. It is notable in that it uses narrative poetry to illustrate the converging possibilities of poetry (mixed with narrative) in pedagogical practices. Deeply intuitive, it narrates the story of one teacher as he navigates the questions of his being amid the other aspects of his many identities. Through the poems, Leggo invites the reader to envision themselves as the teacher is doing, and to ask similar questions about their own existence.

Also examining the notion of self and facilitating resistance through poetic expression, Cross *et al.*'s (2018) study involving the authors as participants used poetry writing to explore questions of the self within the accountability structure of the teacher education reform in the United States. Their initial findings revealed four stages of constructions: 'a cycle from hopelessness, to silence, to acquiescence, to collective resistance' (Cross *et al.*'s 2018:2). Exploring the tensions between these four states, the authors admit their silence to be rooted in survival and their resistance fraught with risk. The conclusion of this very personal study asked more questions of the act of resistance than it gave answers but nevertheless points to the significance of taking a cogent stand in the expression of what is true to one's self.

As one of the first studies completely focused on teacher authenticity and resistive expression through poetry, it closely presents the complexity of being



one's true self in an accountability-driven culture. It is reflective of what may be the general experiences of teachers at large, effectively illustrative of the significance of poetry as powerful utterance and focused on the effect of neoliberal education reforms on teacher educators. There is, however, a bias in the research process due to the small sampling of the research participants and the fact that all the participants were already conflicted at their jobs when they entered the study. Teacher authenticity is also presented here as a desirable quality, it is not defined in the context of teaching or of teacher identity and there is no deliberation on the value of authenticity in education (Bialystok, 2015).

This project is different from Cross *et al.*'s (2018) study in many ways. The first point of departure is the question of teacher authenticity itself, its value, feasibility, and demonstrability. While Cross *et al.*'s study accepted the established understanding of teacher authenticity and looked to examine why teachers felt conflict and/or where conflicts might arise from, this project calls on participants to reframe, redefine and/or dismantle the concept of teacher authenticity. Secondly, this project recruited a large sample of participants (53 in total), from a variety of education sectors, backgrounds and geographical locations and there is enough diversity in the identities and teaching circumstances of the participants to provide a wider perspective on what might be conceived as teacher authenticity and the impact of environment on its construction and expression.

Critical authenticity, as a notion that brings together the philosophical notion of authenticity as a constructed process, the idea of the self as art, and the understanding that a pedagogical function can support the exploration and articulation of the self, underpins the project. The idea speaks to the politics that surround the teacher self as well as the mechanisms of power that threaten it. In various forms and sources, these are ideas supported by the works of Michel Foucault on power and subjectivity (see reference list). Where Foucault (2001b) highlights the games of power and the many ways in which individuals become subject, and although he recommends a *techne* through the arts, there is no demonstrable specification of how one might proceed to engage with the power play. A critical authenticity responds to the context of

oppression and invites individuals in that space to name the mechanisms of power, highlight the modes of oppression and to insert their voices to disrupt or dismantle the apparatuses that disenfranchises them. Poetic inquiry consolidates the practical methodology of the self – providing both a method and an approach to articulating the self. Any storytelling form, when applied purposely, may serve the same function within critical authenticity. A critical authenticity responds to Foucault’s warnings and discussions but goes further to provide a workable approach for individuals to practise the ‘culture of the self’ (Foucault *et al.*, 2021:24).

## Chapter Summary

This chapter has presented the literature that underlines this thesis and the project. By introducing the idea of standards at the beginning, I proffer an introduction to the narrativisation of the teacher self that is first, present in policy then perpetuated in the literature and existing research on teacher authenticity. A detailed overview of the philosophy of authenticity illustrates how historically, authenticity is viewed to refer to the individual self, rather than a homogenous description of a body of professionals.

The potential of poetry to respond to the concept of critical authenticity is explored in the last section of this chapter through existing literature using poetry in identity studies. The role of poetry responds to Foucault’s (2001b) work on *parrhesia* and presents the practical approach to inserting one’s voice within narratives that subjectivises one.

The next chapter discusses the philosophy and methodological approaches in this project and presents details on the method and practical aspects of the project. It is presented in ‘sessions’, to mimic the idea of a poetry session and to match the lyricism of the use of poetry within this chapter. I have purposefully introduced each section with a poem, which introduces the ideas in that section and continues to ensure that the poetic state is felt throughout the thesis.

## Chapter 3 – Methodology

### Preface

#### **An Authentic Teacher?**

What would you have me be?  
I chose the path I now pursue  
That everyday be true to cause  
To hold, support, enhance, imbue  
In others young and old a thirst, a pause.

What are these lines here drawn?  
Boxes constrained to batter my soul.  
Why do my wings feel pruned?  
Shaped to fill a frame you polled.

What would you have me be?  
The mask I wear today has cause.  
To distance the disappointment from the work  
To keep things smooth for those whose eyes  
Look up to mine.

I came here ten years, twenty years hence,  
But the things I learn I might be a baby still.  
I came here yesterday, one year hence,  
But the spirit I bring sparks stars in the sky.

I am old, I am young, I am every way wrong,  
I can a truth shade to make the day get along.  
I am proud, I am shy, I am every way strong,  
Sometimes, no idea what day has sprung.  
Then we hold hands and agree, we can that character,  
fully build.

What would you have me be?  
Your list is long and cumbersome, yet  
I know my dreams are true to heart  
The road for my students, built to last.

I am earth, I am fire, I am every way right  
I am air and water and I know this to be true  
I am everything different, for myself am right  
I am who they need me be, for them am true  
Inauthentically, authentically, teacher, me. <sup>6</sup>

---

<sup>6</sup> This question-and-answer poem introduces the argument that this project set out to explore – should teachers be authentic and who can say if they are or not? The stanzas engage with current literature on teacher authenticity and some of the sentiments seen in the poetic data collected during the workshops.

## Session 1: An Introduction

Welcome.

The journey is long and myriad turns

take, trundle or runs along the narrow

dark

lit

shadowy

worlds of actors, players, teachers, researcher...

words searched, dredged to represent, present

who we are, aren't, could be, might become?

Come,

read,

listen,

bear witness.<sup>7</sup>

The poem in the preface to this chapter sets out a careful argument for the right to state who one is. The voice in the poem endeavours to push back from the constraints of what a reader can determine to be existing prescriptive parameters of what constitutes an authentic teacher and presents an argument for being beyond them. Literature on teacher authenticity states that to be considered authentic teachers, teachers should be autonomous, aware (of their context, self and others), confident, committed, critical, credible, constantly evolving, professionally distant, experienced, flexible, genuine, humble, knowledgeable, passionate, realistic, reflective, respectful, open etc. (van Lier, 1996; Brookfield, 1990; Ray and Anderson, 2000; Mezirow, 2000; Cranton and Carusetta, 2004, 2005a/b; Kreber, 2009; Kreber *et al.*, 2010; Kreber and Klampfleitner, 2013). These attributes are presented as being compatible with good learning outcomes, having good relationships (with students) and having good learning and assessment tools (Kreber *et al.*, 2007;

---

<sup>7</sup> A poem from my reflexive journal opens every 'session' in this chapter. These are unpublished poems, therefore have no citations. I have chosen to present these as sessions in the sense of poetry sessions – where often, socio-political discourses are interwoven with poetry readings and where poets and listeners understand that the use of language is itself, political (Gee, 2011)

Kreber and Klampfleitner, 2013). The idea of authenticity in education is not new. Sometimes linked to transformative learning theories, authenticity in education derived mainly to explore issues in curriculum design, teaching methods, teaching, and learning and assessment activities (Newman *et al.*, 1996; Doyle, 2000; Ashton, 2010). Malm's (2008) notion of an authentic curriculum as one that upholds difference and diversity sits awkwardly with the more prescriptive framework for teacher self that the literature on teacher authenticity sets out.

As illustrated by the preface, this project set out to question the claims for a framework of reference for teacher authenticity. It sought to problematise the concept of teacher authenticity itself, questioning its plausibility and its applicability. The project used an empirical approach with teachers and invited teachers to present in their own words, what constitutes their authenticities. This research was borne out of a personal contemplation of the idea of a homogenous authenticity, and how teacher identity policies build narratives to frame identities, and how these narratives undermine the individualities of teachers. Also, observing how the discourses that define teacher authenticity plays into the wider frameworks that determine teacher effectiveness at work (Rose, 1996; Ball, 2016), it became obvious to me that the teacher self exists within two conflicting relations – their own agency versus the power relations at work and within historical constructions of teacher identities (Han, 2002). I felt it was important to question how congruently the concept of teacher authenticity aligns with teachers' identities or the concept of the existence of one's true self for that matter (Bialystok, 2015). Authenticity as a philosophical concept, as illustrated in the literature review, is itself under continuous interrogation – who we are, who we can be, constructed, in progress etcetera. (Guignon, 2004). The existence of a framework of reference for teacher authenticity I thought, was problematic.

Considering professional authenticity is to also consider the several layers that mark an individual's identity – from the obvious, easily determinable categories of race, gender, political affiliations to the more personal – sets of beliefs, values, and philosophical positions (Olsen, 2012). For this project, there is an ineluctable conflict between the philosophical question of authenticity, and the

politics of representation that are at play in the professional definitions of teachers. Like many professions, education has a set of attributes for teachers to measure themselves against (Clarke and Moore, 2013). These attributes outline competencies but also include expectations relating to the personal. On the surface, the frameworks seem to provide guidelines for professional practice but in essence, imply a more prescriptive directive for conformity and acquiescence (Ball, 2016). Discourses in research around teacher authenticity are informed by these stipulations (Cranton, 2001/2010; Kreber *et al.*, 2007; Kreber, 2009; etc.). Through this – the intersection of policy and research, the teacher self becomes a site of power play and teachers are asked, through adherence and acceptance of these parameters (since they are presented as best practices), to become complicit in their own institutional subjectification (Foucault, 1980; Rose, 1996).

As Bialystok (2015) states, the literature on teacher development could focus on the professional expectations of teachers and cease to use the term authenticity. By insisting on applying a terminology used to refer to personal and individual conceptions of self to set up a framework of competencies attributed to the teacher self, teachers are thus called into a game of representation (Foucault, 1980) and the individual teacher self is maligned, and their identity pushed into invisibility. One may ask which truth represents the authenticity of teachers. Is it the one that is underpinned by research and sanctioned by government policies, or the one presented by teachers themselves? The process of undoing the narrative, of engaging in the game, calls for two sets of practices which together form what I proposed in this project as critical authenticity: *Epimeleia heautou* or care of the self, (Foucault, 2006) and *parrhesia* or fearless speech (Foucault, 2001b).

The sections in this chapter are titled ‘sessions’, as in poetry sessions. This situates the discussions in the chapter within the poetic practice and invites the reader to think of this as a space to discuss both the poetic meanings in the poems shared and within the methodology and method of the project. The following ‘session’ explores and expands on the philosophy of critical authenticity as proposed by this project and presents the philosophical framework for the project.

## Session 2: A Lover's Gifts: Philosophical Framework

I'd give you sunbeams  
strung along the trees,  
but twigs without leaves  
do not make good reflections of  
light on raindrops.

I'd give you river journeys  
complete with a crew,  
but night without day  
holds no substance to the length of stay.

I'd deliver the mornings  
in the space between your consciousness  
and your soul,  
and will the days to close to an infinite hue.  
But a thousand stars will not replace  
your knowledge of you. <sup>8</sup>

The concept of critical authenticity as proposed by this research project is framed by Foucault's discussions of the ancient Greek philosophies of *Epimeleia heautou* or care of the self, (Foucault, 2006) and *parrhesia* or fearless speech (Foucault, 2001b). Within critical authenticity, the self is, first of all, a creative process – from Foucault's idea of the absence of a primordial self and the self 'as a work of art' (1983b:237). From this understanding, the self is not a fixed, sovereign individual, but a historically constituted being. It is bound to experience, to the processes of questioning, adapting, changing, accepting and it is influenced by its interactions with the world. This view of the self as an aesthetic practice has invited some criticism of the Foucauldian ideology on authenticity as being more aligned with Baudelaire's *dandyism* (*dundysme*) (Garrison, 1998). I, nevertheless, agree with Foucault's defence

---

<sup>8</sup> This reflective poem illustrates the importance of self-knowledge in finding our place in the world and making sense of the spaces around us.



that critical self-creation is necessary for self-assertion – where we have been told by others of who we are, the more critical act would be to refuse that identity in the first place (Foucault, 1982), and to reconstruct our narratives of ourselves from our own self-knowledge.

Secondly, the self exists within historical power relations – of social norms and value systems (religious or otherwise), governmental apparatuses, and our own self politics (Han, 2002; Foucault, 1980; Ball, 2016). Thus, the work of self-exploration, evaluation, understanding, construction, articulation (or what Foucault (2006) calls practices of the self), is itself, a political act. The self, in summary, is not only a creative process, but also of knowledge of the self (*gnothi seauton*) and care of the self and others (*epimeleia heautou*) (Foucault, 2001b) and articulation, (*parrhesia*) (Foucault, 2006; 2001b).

This complex iteration of the self (including its interactions with the world) and its subsequent angst, is what Heidegger (1962) describes as tension. Within the concept of critical authenticity, this tension requires observation, understanding and articulation. Critical authenticity, unlike other discourses on authenticity, foregrounds the political significance of the language of identity (Gee, 2011) and presents opportunities for individuals to reclaim the rights to represent themselves and to resist the apparatuses of power that seeks to control the narrative on individuals.

In this project, the idea of critical authenticity is used alongside the method of poetic inquiry. Poetic inquiry, as the art form, is the *techne* that applies the idea of critical authenticity in a practical sense. As an idea, a critical authenticity remains only an understanding that we exist within various mechanisations of power – both in our practices and self-identification. When used alongside an artistic method of self-articulation, then the idea becomes activated, to work in the real sense of that understanding. It is in this way that critical authenticity, within the practices of *epimeleia heautou* and *parrhesia*, becomes an act of justice, not only for ourselves but also for others (in the care of others).

### *Epimeleia heautou* (Care of the self)

For ancient Greeks, the practice of the care of the self was a socially contextualised attitude and was performed as part of a philosophy of self-knowledge and mastery (Kelly, 2013). It was not a call to selfishness but a directive to be mindful of one's ethical commitments to oneself and to others. The meaning of the care of the self incorporates three main principles:

- A general attitude towards the self, others, and the world. Linked to performative practices that relate the individual to others.
- Connected to the Greek *melete* (practice or exercise) – which relates to *techne* (craft or art), incorporating both physical activities and emotional preoccupation and attention to caring.
- It does not assume the world's gaze, or focus too intently on the thoughts of others, but deals primarily with the activities which preserve the self in the way it constructs, defines, adapts, understands, and forms itself as a subject (Foucault, 2006).

As a critical act, *epimeleia heautou* connects to this project's contemplative aim of critical authenticity and to the use of poetic expression to form the connection to others and the world. It presents the opportunity for teachers to conceive and reconceive themselves within and without the contexts of their existence – their work, ethical ideals, and responsibilities. *Epimeleia heautou*, as an expressive act, sets the groundwork for change and to rid oneself of the perception that change is impossible (Foucault, 1997b).

Responding to the philosophy of *epimeleia heautou*, teachers were invited in my research project to meditate in multiple workshop settings on what they consider constitute their authenticities. The discussion was supported by an environment of empathy and respect, and teachers were reminded to be kind to themselves, mindful of their needs and to endeavour to define themselves in the ways in which they conceive themselves to be. The longitudinal nature of the project presented opportunities for creativity, adaptation and change and new/different representations of self by the participants was acknowledged as engaging with the constructive aim of the project. There was a clear understanding that defining oneself is a political act. This critical

process allowed the project to reach one of its main aims and one of its original contributions to knowledge: - introducing the notion of critical authenticity as a lens through which researchers can examine the idea of teacher authenticity within the discourses on teacher identity and presenting teachers as the conduit for their own representation.

Within the practice of *epimeleia heautou*, this project also engages with the dominant discourses on teacher identity and contributes to research and discourses on the effects of neo-liberalism on teacher authenticity and teacher identity.

### *Parrhesia*

In an interview with Gauthier (1988), Foucault explains the shift in his focus on truth. In his earlier works, truth is presented as a 'production, regulation, distribution, circulation, and operation of statements' (Foucault, 1980:133) – where the subject (individual) is denied agency through historized social practices (regimes). In the latter works, the individual is placed as central to the composition of truth. In this position, truth-telling forms a significant aspect of freedom from and resistance to ~~historisation~~historisation (Foucault, 2001a). This change, Foucault claims, is informed by the realisation that 'while the human subject is placed in relations of production and of signification, he is equally placed in power relations that are very complex' (Foucault, 2001a:326-327).

It is in these complex relations of power that teachers exist today. Ball (2016: 1131) identifies the sites of power as existing in the practices of education governance – 'league tables, the Higher Education Research Excellence Framework, annual staff reviews, performance related pay', and that it is here that truth is communicated, and teachers are called to recognise themselves in prescriptive terms. In the proposal (and in the introduction), this project articulated that this is the point of conflict for many teachers. In telling teachers what is true to them, what teacher authenticity should be (accommodating, friendly, open to self-disclosure, optimistic, passionate etc.), the basic practices of the self are negated and usurped by what is outside of the teacher, often causing friction. The characteristics of the self of the teacher are

presented to teachers as truth and these truths find their way into policy documents and teacher rating apparatuses, establishing themselves as best/acceptable practices (Rose, 1996; Ball, 2016). As Foucault (1980b:93) states 'power never ceases its interrogation, its inquisition, its registration of truth' it then becomes necessary to dismantle these narratives, (thus the term critical authenticity), and this project presented that opportunity for teachers to engage with, reclaim, re-conceive, resist, and/or refuse the truths told to them but most importantly, to set about articulating their own truths and presenting them, for themselves and to others (Mills, 2003, cited in Ball, 2016).

Foucault's later lectures focus on the individual as possessing the agency to effect change by resisting the urge to be silent. He introduces the discussion on the Greco-Roman practice of *parrhesia* as an expressive activity. According to Foucault (2001b:169), the word *parrhesia*, translated into English as 'free speech' or 'fearless speech' is the 'problem of the truth-teller'. It is not only the 'problem of truth' (not only what is spoken) but its intention. In other words, it is not an issue of tone or style as in rhetoric but since the truth is related to the knowledge an individual has of themselves, this knowledge is not in question but the speaker's intention. As a 'practice of the self' (Foucault, 1997b:277), *parrhesia*, is an activity, a role where the speaker has the duty of care to themselves and to others.

The practice of *parrhesia* as it developed in Greek and Roman culture had five key characteristics:

1. Frankness: the speaker is clear about what he believes and 'he expresses his personal relationship to truth' (Foucault, 2001b:19), 'he says what he knows to be true' (2001b:14).
2. The relationship to truth and belief is evident: 'the "*parrhesiastic* game" presupposes that the *parrhesiastes* is someone who has the moral qualities which are required, first, to know the truth, and secondly, to convey such truth to others' (Foucault, 1999:3) – seeking not to persuade (as in rhetoric) but to speak the truth.
3. Moral courage – conviction in one's beliefs and therefore the fearlessness of sharing it.

4. 'The function of *criticism*: criticism of the interlocutor or of the speaker himself' (Foucault, 2001b: 17; original emphasis).
5. Duty, 'no one forces him to speak, but he feels that it is his duty to do so' (2001b:19).

It is my summation that, as a critical activity, the *parrhesiastic* activity implies a sequence of actions: observation, reflection, and articulation. This sequence reflects the process of poetry making, and links to the role of poetry as an imitation and a narration of life. Like the *parrhesiastes*, the poet observes, reflects on and comments on the world around them, they are also aware of the risk that is inherent in such articulation, yet they tell it anyway (Faulkner, 1957).

Writing, according to Foucault (1997b:212), 'as a personal exercise done by and for oneself is an art of disparate truth, [such writing] also constitutes a certain way of manifesting oneself to oneself and to others'. Poetry writing submits itself in this project as this 'art of the self' (Foucault, 1997b:277) without which, it would be difficult to engage in *parrhesia*. This project took the position that poetry writing also carries the function of *parrhesia*: it sets the space for teachers to speak freely; holds the capacity in figurative language for teachers to criticise, does its duty in speaking the truth and understands the risk in doing so if shared in the public domain. By this duty, we are reminded of Paul Valery's (1954:216) invocation that 'the poet's function is not [only] to feel the poetic state [but] to create it in others'.

~~The use of poetic inquiry as a methodology and data collection method provided the opportunity for teachers to practice *parrhesia*. The speaking of one's own conceptions of oneself is truth speaking. This required the participants to speak beyond the demands of authority and beyond existing knowledge (of teacher authenticity) (Westerink, 2020). The poem this introduction opens with, asks the reader to bear witness to these representations, but it does not stop there. It also signifies my position as researcher on the project — as a witness to teachers navigating their authenticities, articulating them. The teachers themselves were witnesses to themselves and each other, as peers navigating similar realities in their professional lives and as peers articulating themselves in the poetry~~

workshops. These activities, together, extended the practice of *parrhesia* within the project. The question of risk as inherent in the practice of *parrhesia* is an interesting one for this project. Although it might seem evident that due to the research ethics prescriptions around anonymity, that risk is mediated for participants within the project, and in this way, the impact of their articulations is equally reconciled. It is, however, obvious within the poetry submitted by teachers, that in articulating themselves, participants are awakened to the possibilities of change and the work of resistance (Foucault, 1997b). For the teachers, risk is presupposed by self-critique (Anderson, 2019) and for many teachers, joining a project like this one presented enough risk for them (the teachers from China and Hong Kong in particular, were very clear about the risk of being found out they were participants on the project); yet they participated and contributed openly. Within *parrhesia* is the display of courage. This could be the courage to carry forth from the project to engender the same ideology of critical authenticity among colleagues (as many of the teachers have done), questioning the *status quo* and rupturing the pervading order of power, continuing to write and share their work publicly or merely acknowledging for themselves the possibilities of resistance, the teachers displayed courage in participating in the workshops and in submitting their poems to the project.

The use of poetic inquiry as a methodology and data collection method provided the opportunity for teachers to practice *parrhesia*. The speaking of one's own conceptions of oneself is truth speaking. This required the participants to speak beyond the demands of authority and beyond existing knowledge (of teacher authenticity) (Westerink, 2020). The poem this introduction opens with, asks the reader to bear witness to these representations, but it does not stop there. It also signifies my position as researcher on the project – as a witness to teachers navigating their authenticities, articulating them. The teachers themselves were witnesses to themselves and each other, as peers navigating similar realities in their professional lives and as peers articulating themselves in the poetry workshops. These activities, together, extended the practice of *parrhesia* within the project.

The workshops facilitated poetry writing through an introduction to poetic forms that are accessible, and teachers were guided through demonstration to write their own poems, expressing their concepts of self. In this way, this research contributes to research using poetic inquiry in teacher identity studies and using poetry in teacher professional development. The project also provides an example of an engaging educative<sup>9</sup> and educational<sup>10</sup> teaching approach for using poetry in teacher professional development and reflective practice.

The literature on teacher self-representation and resistance already juxtaposes the idea of the consistent teacher identity with the polysemic one (Smith, 1996; Rose, 1996b; Connelly and Clandinin, 1999). Like the methods which narrative research employs to investigate the various delineations of teachers' perceptions of self and identity, this project also explored how interaction, articulation and self-presentation through poetry can further resistive practices.<sup>11</sup> As illustrated in the literature review, research that examines teacher self has focused on the attributes set out by Kreber *et al.*, (2007; 2010) and sought to determine if teachers fit those delineations or not. Cross *et al.*'s (2018) study on teacher authenticity using poetic inquiry attempted to examine what constitutes the self for teachers within the accountability structure of the teacher education reform in the United States. Although the study presents one of the research projects closely focused on exploring the concept of teacher authenticity and resistive expression through poetry, it ~~tracked-observed~~ more the ways in which teachers respond to their subjectification rather than ask questions of the feasibility of the concept of a

---

<sup>9</sup> The workshops provided teachers (and me) the opportunity to reflect and to learn about ourselves. This self-examination, towards self-knowledge is an educative experience.

<sup>10</sup> Learning poetic forms and attempting to write in these forms provided teachers with the tools to express themselves – thus an educational experience.

<sup>11</sup> Several ethnographic and theoretical research illustrate the presentations of the teacher-self. See, for example, CARTER, K., 1993. "The Place of Story in the Study of Teaching and Teacher Education," *Educational Researcher* 22 (11), pp. 5-12; CLANDININ, J. and CONNELLY, M., 1995. *Teachers' Professional Knowledge Landscapes*. New York Teachers College Press; CLANDININ, J. and CONNELLY, M., 1998. *Stories to Live by: Narrative Understandings of School Reform, Curriculum Inquiry*. 28 (1) pp. 149-164; CLANDININ, J. and CONNELLY, M. 1999. *Shaping a Professional Identity: Stories of Educational Practice*. New York: Teachers College Press; and FEUERVERGER, G., 1997. *On the Edges of the Map: A Study of Heritage Language Teachers in Toronto*. *Teaching and Teacher Education* 13. pp. 39-53.

professionally homogenous authenticity in the way this research project did. In this way, this project is original in its questions and concepts.

A reminder of the aims and research questions this project was guided by:

Aims	Research Questions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduce the notion of critical authenticity as a lens through which researchers can examine the idea of teacher authenticity.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is teacher authenticity plausible as a concept? What makes up teachers' authenticities?</li> <li>• How can a critical process support teachers in articulating their authenticities?</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduce critical authenticity through poetic inquiry as a critical process for facilitating discussions on the self.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How can poetry <del>writing</del>writing, and sharing facilitate a critical authenticity?</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contribute to research using poetic inquiry in teacher identity studies and using poetry in teacher professional development.</li> <li>• Contribute an educative and educational approach for using poetry in teacher professional development.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How can poetry workshops provide educative and educational opportunities for teachers to explore their authenticities and professional identities?</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contribute to research and discourses on the effects of neo-liberalism on teacher authenticity and teacher identity; -</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How can the sharing of participant-voiced poems contribute to constructive resistance to neo-liberal narrativisation of teacher selves?</li> </ul>

As ~~you would have already noticed~~stated earlier, this chapter is presented in sessions – as in poetry sessions. Each session focuses on discussions around the ontological and epistemological position of the project, the methodology, methods of facilitating a critical authenticity process, the tensions that are



present in the practice of poetic inquiry, a discussion on recruitment, data collection, framework of analysis and ethical considerations amid the realities of carrying out research of this nature. The idea that authenticity is, and can be, a critical process – process rather than a state (Taylor, 1989) – is interwoven with discussions on why a poetic methodology offers teachers the opportunities for expressive resistance to subjectification.

Each session is also, preceded by a poem from my personal and reflexive journal. The poems trace the reflexive process, prior to the research and throughout, and provide a poetic context for engaging with the discussions. The poems also serve to illustrate a poetic inquiry approach to writing about research.

### Session 3: My Heart is a Bird: Ontology and Epistemology

If your heart were  
an animal,  
what would it be?  
I think I know for  
I've seen it coil in terror  
at a mere swish in the trees.  
and at a full moon cower,  
in a burrow of leaves.  
It fears that it might love  
in so doing, be forever hurt.  
Its shimmering skin  
Turning to needles  
at a blown kiss.  
Mine is a bird,  
for sure it flies.  
Here and there  
to love and lose<sup>et</sup>

In good times and in rain.<sup>12</sup>

Ontological questions are reflexive. When we ask others to define how they see the world, it is because we want to understand how that relates to how we see it. When we ask others to define what sets them apart, it is to understand how our separateness intersects to form the whole that makes the world we live in. The idea of a critical authenticity introduced by this research project presented four key practices of inquiry: questioning, exploring, understanding, and articulation. In critical authenticity, the self is not a fixed, sovereign entity, it is constructed (and/or deconstructed) through experience, knowledge, expression and self-motivations or what Foucault (2001) calls care of the self, it is also, most importantly, situated within a political praxis. As illustrated earlier in the ‘session’ on the philosophical framework of this project, the care of the self is an ethical philosophy, a spiritual project that marks not just an understanding of the self, but carries the possibility of a change in attitude, personality, values, if it is desirable (White, 2014). This fluidity underpins the ontological and epistemological position of this project – that our world view is not static, that it can change and adapt, depending on our understandings and the knowledge that is available to us. That knowledge is experience, perception, and articulation. From time immemorial, poetry has served as a powerful conduit and representation of knowledge in these forms (Lorde, 2017).

One of the key things that marks poetry as knowledge is its freedom, its ineluctable presence, and its capacity to provide a meaning for every reader at different times (Leavy, 2020). In many ways, it is the atypical approach to inquiry – seeking truths (and untruths) about the world and presenting its impressions in different forms for each separate individual to experience in their own ways (Vincent, 2018). I admit that this brings into question what truth in poetic inquiry is and problematises any pursuit of truth in poetic data analysis. However, as Elliott (2012: iv) observes, poetic inquiry is ‘a mode of thought and discovery that seeks to reveal and communicate truths via intuitive

---

<sup>12</sup> This is what I like to call an ontological poem. For me, the poem illustrates the way one sees the world – as an opportunity or a threat and how this ontological position contributes to one’s concept of oneself.

contemplation and creative expression' and following Foucault (2001b), truth is what the *parrhesiastes* and the poet presents. For this project, it has been particularly important to consider truth in this way, especially considering the subjective nature of poetry and the aims of this project. To argue with teachers' presentation of their truths, would be to ask them to engage again in yet another game of truth (Foucault, 2001a), as the existing literature on teacher authenticity already does. For this project, truth is what and how teachers have written themselves and the reader may experience these truths within the context of the writers' experiences or in relatable terms (within the context of their own lives and self-knowledge). A later discussion of poetic inquiry as an experiential methodology foreground this understanding of truth in qualitative research.

I began this session with a poem I wrote when I first arrived in Liverpool, in my first ever attempt to do what my mother calls 'settling down' and, in a bid to understand why at the age of forty-two, the idea was still a struggle. It was also the period I conceived of this PhD – finally planning to find a home, I could create the necessary conditions to go back to full-time study. The poem illustrates my own self-knowledge, as a young black woman navigating my world in the only way I know how. As a professional, this freedom, in movement and ideologies are borne out of a privileged education in the humanities and an upbringing which upheld the freedom of the individual to choose their own paths and to follow dreams. The poem implies these privileges but also carries within it the pressures, complexities and challenges of my race, my gender and of my aspirations.

A year after it was written, I used the poem to illustrate a discussion on teacher identity, inviting teachers on an international master's programme to explore ideas of independence and fear in leadership in education. Three years later, I used the same poem as catalyst for discussion at a seminar for women who have suffered different kinds of trauma. The differing reactions and responses to this poem provided an avenue for participants in both seminars to explore their own struggles about their identities, engage with the ways in which they have been defined in different contexts, come to an understanding of how they define themselves and to articulate them in their own poems. The above poem

asks a simple ontological question, the responses were particular to the individual, and offered differing ontological representations, proffering insights of the experiences and perceptions of those involved.

To extend this example; I do not think that when T. S. Eliot (1943) wrote the fourth quartet of the *Four Quartets*, he meant it to be experienced as a discussion on research methodology. But a quote from an extract from the fifth stanza is used to premise the latest Sage guide to qualitative research (Denzin and Lincoln, 2018). Its import is easy to understand in relation to qualitative inquiry: qualitative researchers practise in a changing environment of being and conditions, a tapestry of lived experiences and tales and since the nature of life is dynamic, knowledge is not static. The eleventh line from which the quote is taken from emphasises the lack of starting and ending points in qualitative inquiry: 'Every phrase and every sentence is an end and a beginning/ Every poem an epitaph' (Eliot, 1943:4:11). This ability to go back and forth and to gain new insights from a piece of data is fundamental to the practice of poetry in inquiry. Central to the practice of poetry itself – meaning is relative to the person that experiences it, the way in which it is perceived and to the context in which it is experienced.

Thus, this project approached knowledge as both experience and interrogation. In asking teachers to attend a workshop, talk about themselves and articulate these ideas in poetic form, the project sought to understand if there is validity or feasibility in the concept of teacher authenticity as presented in the literature (Cranton and Carusetta, 2004, 2005a/b; Kreber, 2009 etc.). Teachers' self-presentations are submitted as the only data in the project, and as the poem that precedes the introduction to this chapter illustrates, the reader is asked to bear witness, to experience for themselves what teachers say make them who they are. The reader may choose to see how these definitions are relevant or relate to them, they may choose to perceive the poems as they may be applied to their own selves, or '[be jolted] into seeing and thinking differently' (Leavy, 2015:24).

## Session 4: A rock and a soft place: Between art and methodology

I left all my toys at home,  
and asked if I wished to play  
with others' tools and ply  
my own woos to theirs,  
I shook my head and  
riffled through to see  
What would do.<sup>13</sup>

This session continues the discussion on epistemology and links it more closely to poetic inquiry as a methodology. It starts the discussion with a focus on the art form of poetry itself, then moves to look at how the art offers itself as an empirical tool. It makes an argument for poetic inquiry as both an experiential methodology, as well as an interrogative one and presents the ways which this project uses both in its data analysis.

Many references to poetic inquiry and definitions engage with the approach as an artistic form. Faulkner's (2020) revision of the first edition of what is considered the handbook for poetic inquiry presents it as an arts-based research approach within qualitative inquiry, but it is in the many definitions of poetry and the practice of poetic inquiry that we see how closely the relationship exists between the art and the methodology. Fairchild's (2003:1) definition of poetry recalls it as an oral form: 'A poem is a verbal construction employing an array of rhetorical and prosodic devices of embodiment in order to achieve an ontological state, a mode of being ...'. Here, we see poetry as a presentation, a form that is neither interpretive nor representational. This definition engages with Jerome's (1966: xxii) definition of poetry as the 'material of life', Robert Penn Warren's (1975) idea of poetry as the expanding self and Carl Leggo's (2008) understanding of poetry as showing, not telling. My poem, *My heart is a bird*, presents one reality of the poet's existence and only that. It does not seek to offer insights deeper than the present state of

---

<sup>13</sup> The idea of using art as a methodology is, in my opinion, a borrowing. There are artistic methodologies that are suitable for certain empirical designs, but one has to select carefully.

mind of the poet and it is in how the reader experiences the poem that the insights are revealed (Leggo, 2008). As art, the knowledge presented is not in question, what is explored is the individual's experience of it, their own understanding, their own embrace of that understanding.

What then is the role of the researcher in an experiential methodology? The simple answer would be to present the experience, to make the experience available. In many of the examples of poetic inquiry in practice presented in Faulkner's (2020) edition and in the examples from Clement and Prendergast's (2012) annotated bibliography of poetic inquiry, knowledge (in the form of poetic data) is presented and left to be experienced by the reader. These poetic experiences range from the feminist to the racial, the environmental to the economic, the personal to the public. The poems submitted as data from this project will be presented in the appendix due to the volume of the collected data. This plenary poems, written as summaries of all the poems written, encapsulating the participants' *oeuvre*, representing what might be called their final say on the project, is included in this thesis as a poetry collection. The collection weaves together key themes that emerged from the workshops and the final discussions in the plenary session. The reader will be able to experience these poems in their own right, without the burden of my interpretation, if they chose not to read any further.

For this project, I and the participants experienced each other's presentations about ourselves. As the workshops ran over the period of eight months, many of the participants attended more than two workshops and got to know each other's conceptions of self well. They also recognised the changes and evolutions, not to judge, but to acknowledge evidence of growth, adaptability, or acceptance. They (the participants) often made these comments in light of their own changes, highlighting them in their own poems. As the researcher, I observed these interactions as another example of the experiential opportunities the methodology provides.

The experiential nature of poetic research (and other arts-based research methodologies) is often criticised for focusing too narrowly on humanistic experience and for not applying enough traditional form to inquiry (Silverman,

1997; Heron and Reason,1997). It is criticised for presenting human experience aesthetically and for privileging it (human experience) above deductible forms of knowledge (Hammersley, 2008). For me, the critique is problematic in many ways – human experience is knowledge, and knowledge is for human experience. Therefore, if researchers ignore the significance of the aesthetic in knowledge acquisition and public understanding and experience of knowledge, then we risk creating (and maintaining) the same elitist ideology in research that academics have been criticised for doing (Barone and Eisner, 2012).

Lichterman (2021:585) calls qualitative research ‘a moving target, ... a name for an evolving collection of moving parts’. What accounts for knowledge in poetic inquiry is inductive, an iterative process where conclusions are not drawn hastily, there is always something new to learn from something old – the distance to the information (closer or further) offering different understandings, interpretations, allowing researchers to make distinctions they had not been able to make previously (Aspers and Corte, 2019). The flexible nature of poetic research invites researchers to be creative in their approaches towards knowledge acquisition and to acknowledge that the particularities of human existence and the peculiarities of human action must be represented in not only numbers, but in ways (and words) that mirror more closely, the way we live our lives and expend our intentions (Butler-Kisber, 2019). What can be observable of human nature and processes has the potential to be untidy and to change. This understanding is embedded in the iterative processes of the longitudinal nature of this project.

There are, in fact, tensions within the field whether researchers should apply interpretivist tools to poetic data, with many arguing that the art risks losing its validity in the event of interpretations (Dimitriadis, 2016). The contention is that the data presented and interpreted can become blurred by the researcher’s personal understanding, the research aims and organisation gains, robbing the independent reader of their opportunity to experience the data in their own ways (Burchell, 2010). This project applied both experiential and interpretivist approaches to the research. It found interpretivist tools to be useful for

engaging with the data when determining questions of power, subjectivity, and resistance (Leavy, 2015).

Parini's (2008:179) definition of poetry as '... of the world of spirit in nature' helps us to see poetry as both an art form and an interrogative methodology. In this definition, Panini extends the idea of poetry as an existential activity, an inquiring process that seeks answers to who we are and to the purpose of life. This introduces an interpretivist paradigm into the work of poetic inquiry – interrogation invites ideas and perspectives and presents opportunities for explanation. Interrogation introduces questions such as '... how does the work make one feel? What does it evoke or provoke? What does it reveal?' (Leavy, 2009:17). This recognises that research is not value-free and provides opportunities for researchers to explore themes and discourses that might occur in the data collected and to interrogate their own experiences of the data (Hennink, Hutter and Bailey, 2020).

The landscape of the use of poetic inquiry as a methodology is vast and represents what Leavy (2015:66) calls a 'turn towards scientific artistic expression'. Although this can equally be achieved through the use of other methodologies like narrative or art inquiry, this project preferred the use of poetic inquiry for its simplicity and flexibility of form, the qualification of the researcher (as a published poet and one trained in poetic analysis and techniques), and my personal interest in the methodology and its methods. Poetic inquiry's capacity to encourage different ways of knowing, adds to its potential to permit varied views to be expressed within the same research and in different forms (Prendergast, 2009). Surprises are an expected part of the practice of poetic inquiry, and this comes either in the multiplicity of expression (layers of meaning) or the reactions to the data (Cahnmann, 2003) as illustrated by the data I have collected.

I saw (and still see) poetic inquiry as a form that 'brings attention to silence' (Leavy, 2015), as a form which could support the elevation of my participants' voices – ensuring that the multiple layers of meaning embodied in poetic form is preserved. Prendergast and Galvin (2012:5) describe poetic inquiry as a methodology that responds to research that 'appropriated, overpowered,



fragmented, rendered-over summative or even silenced' participants' voices. As articulation is primary to the practice of poetry (through writing and performance), and to the practice of critical authenticity as proposed by this project, poetic inquiry lent itself suitably to this research in its capaciousness and propensity for fluidity and its elevation of my participants' voice.

## Session 5: Poetic Inquiry: A Definition

What then is poetic inquiry? Faulkner (2017) summarises it as the use of poetry as/in/for inquiry'. I condense the different definitions I have come across below in a found poem<sup>14</sup> from Prendergast's (2009) bibliography and Faulkner's (2020) evolving list of explanations, definitions, and descriptions:

### **Poetic Inquiry is...**

A form, art, art-like, not-quite-art, completely art  
Meandering, lingering, twisting, turning, revealing  
A long history it hides, in performance, song  
Storytelling, witnessing, taletelling, dance.  
Qualitative, interpretive, experiential, present  
In fields from education to geography  
Human experiences to track and chart.

Aware it is to voices and bodies, present  
In the story or not present at all  
Careful it is to the nature of the struggle  
Of the politics of representation, inquiry, and power.  
It builds alliances, bridges, interplays  
With the rest of the forms  
In music, it dances, in images it pushes and gives a  
confident  
stare through a polaroid or a film.

---

<sup>14</sup> A poem created from words, phrases, and quotations from another text.

Crystallised in language,  
Synthesised in imagery  
Technical in meter, rhythm, rhyme.  
It seeks attention, openness, a revelation  
Of the world, the self – other or both  
Exploring the liminal spaces  
of memory, identity, hope, fear, desire, love.

It is affective  
A sometimes phenomenological and  
existential choice  
Political, activist, creator  
Bearing witness  
to shape, to turn.  
It is distinct,  
Sometimes true to form or none at all  
A haiku, a sonnet, a limerick, a pun  
Or lines of freedom, running across the stage.

It is not without contention  
For shadows stalk its halls  
Quality, qualifications, who should and how  
Elitist it has been accused to be  
But history stands in defence  
For its processes support  
Its inquiry justified.

Practitioners come  
From far and wide  
They wade in its magic  
But stay in its call.  
Critical in their roll

Clear of the privilege  
 To be allowed entrance  
 To listen, record, observe, transcribe  
 Neither god nor servant but inquirers all.  
 Poetic inquiry is...  
 Poetry, poetry in motion, poetry as witness, poetry as being.

There are many ways to use poetry for inquiry as the table below sets out. van Luyn et al. (2016) makes a distinction between participant-voiced poetry, autobiographical poetry, and research poetry. This project made use of participant-voiced poetry, which is sometimes referred to as *vox participare* (Prendergast, 2009), found poetry (Sjollem et al., 2012), or data poetry (Willis and Bishop, 2014). Participant-voiced poetry makes use of data produced solely by participants. This can be poems participants themselves wrote, as in this project, or poems created from interview transcripts or written reflections.

While autobiographical poetry may sometimes be confused with research poetry, the distinction that van Luyn et al., (2016) makes is that research poetry tends to respond to literature (as in the poem in the preface of this chapter), while autobiographical poems track the researcher’s response to the research.

Table 5: Types of Poetic Inquiry, Functions, and Examples

Type of poetic inquiry	Description	function	example
Participant-voiced poetry	This can be used as a method of data collection, data presentation or data sharing. Either represented in its entirety as written by participants (as in this project) or constructed	Used to elevate participants’ voices, especially for research where the aim is to give priority to the experiences and opinions of participants. Also useful in moving beyond mere	Speare, J., and Henshall, A., 2014 ‘Did anyone think the trees were students?’ Using poetry as a tool for critical reflection, <i>Reflective Practice</i> , 15:6, 807-820.  Poindexter, C. C., 2002. Meaning from methods: Re-presenting narratives of an HIV-affected caregiver. <i>Qualitative Social Work</i> [online] 1(1), pp. 59-78. Available from: <a href="http://qsw.sagepub.com/content/1/1/59.full.pdf_html">http://qsw.sagepub.com/content/1/1/59.full.pdf_html</a>

	from participants' words into poetic form. It includes participatory methods – a popular method is digital poetic inquiry, where digital text is used to create found poems.	descriptions – observing a process of being and becoming. Used to engage in creative forms of self-expression, confidence building and engagement with difficult questions.	
Autobiographical poetry	Rendered from reflective journals, field notes and research diaries. Keeps record of the researcher's experiences and responses during the research process.	Supports reflexivity and a rigorous engagement with the research. Provides a creative avenue to demonstrate reflexive practice.	Furman, R., 2004. Using poetry and narrative as qualitative data: Exploring a father's cancer through poetry. <i>Families, Systems, &amp; Health</i> , [online] 22(2), pp. 162-170. Available from: <a href="https://doi.org/10.1037/1091-7527.22.2.162110">https://doi.org/10.1037/1091-7527.22.2.162110</a>  Faulkner, S. L., 2015a. <i>Knit four, make one: Poems</i> [chapbook]. Somerville, MA: Kattywompus Press.
Research poetry	Sometimes referred to as 'vox theoria' (Prendergast, 2015). A creative presentation of the literature.	Helps with summarising a large body of literature. Used to highlight key ideologies. Makes the literature more accessible.	Faulkner, S. L. (2016) 'The Art of Criteria: Ars Criteria as Demonstration of Vigor in Poetic Inquiry', <i>Qualitative Inquiry</i> , 22(8), pp. 662–665. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800416634739">https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800416634739</a> .  Lahman, M. K., and Richard, V.M., 2014. Appropriated poetry: Archival poetry in research. <i>Qual Inquiry</i> . 20 pp.344–55

### Tensions and discomforts in practice

Tensions occur in who can or should practise poetic inquiry and these tensions lie in the understanding of poetry as an art and its function as a methodology in qualitative research. Questions around quality and qualification struggle alongside discussions around personal creativity and a methodological approach that is expansive and has the potential to push boundaries. Some

researchers are of the opinion that poetic inquirers should learn the craft, and study poetry to be able to use it effectively in research (Barone, 2001; Piirto, 2002; Faulkner, 2007, Leggo, 2008). This feeds into the overall problem of quality, with Cutts and Waters (2019) arguing that poetic data should also possess artistic value. It is pertinent to note that the cited researchers are also poets in their own rights. Lahman *et al.*, (2011:894) on the other hand, argue for the methodology to be made accessible; that a 'good enough research poetry' is poetry. They caution against the continuing elitism that the practice (reading and writing) of poetry implies, maintaining that poetic research opens up the genre as well as allowing researchers opportunities to engage with data in different ways.

As the discussions grow with the popularity of the methodology and its methods, this project used workshops in data collection for the reason of ensuring that participants gain a good sense of what poetry is before they are asked to present their ideas in poetic form. Learning poetic forms gave participants confidence in their articulations, but also an understanding of the purpose and function of the various poetic forms. Learning to write poetry supported participants in writing more purposefully, making use of the characteristics of poetic forms intentionally to express themselves. The process of learning, writing, reading, discussing helped to further criticality (Lengelle *et al.*, 2019).

As a poet and one with a qualification that includes the study, analysis, and appreciation of poetry, I was confident in using poetic inquiry as a researcher – clear of the restrictions that attention to form presents, aware of poetry's capacity to use language creatively and also appreciative of its potential for freedom in form and style. More of how the use of workshops in poetic inquiry was effective in promoting quality and engagement in this project is discussed later in this chapter.

## Session 6: A Parliament of Owls: Participant Recruitment

What do you call a gathering of teachers?

A band

A babble

A bench

A blush

A bevy

Or a boast?

Some are boys, some are girls,

Some are noisy, some are not.

Some are judges, parents, soldiers, experts,  
actors, priests...

Maybe they are a syndicate,

A worship, a shrivel, a slate.

They may rage, but they're not all maidens,

Some are superfluous but not all are nuns!

If they were all French, we'd call them a peck

Some are English, maybe a pound?

But the Irish will argue, we are a pint!

And what would we do with the rest of us?

A melody if they all harped

A poverty if they all piped

A fagot or roll if they all drummed

A meter for the percussionists.

We see them in faculties, drifts, quizzes, and pomposities

But I prefer a melody, as in messengers

A discretion, for their perseverance

A talent, for the gamble they take with their words

But most of all,

an illusion, for the magic they bring to their world.<sup>15</sup>

Criterion sampling (Moser and Korstjens, 2016) was used as the main format for participant recruitment. The two main criteria were that teachers should have at least two years of teaching experience and should be teaching at the time of the project. The main reason for requiring teachers to have a minimum of two years' experience was to ensure that the participants have attained some level of understanding of their roles as teachers and are possibly, not still struggling with their identities as teachers (Morettini, 2021). I also did not want the project to digress into focusing on early career teachers or trainee teachers. Working in an active role as a teacher brings one's sense of their identity more readily into focus (Zembylas, 2003) – with day-to-day experiences of teaching providing a useful bank of examples for exploring the self in teaching.

The recruitment was on an on-going basis, and the population recruited was large across all sectors. At whatever stage a participant was recruited, they could join whichever two or more workshops they could make or make up for a missed workshop by attending the catch-up workshop that was organised or catch up in their own time, using session recording and resources. The project recruited sixty-five participants altogether, however, only fourteen to sixteen teachers attended each of the first two workshops. The numbers went down to ten and twelve participants for the last two main workshops respectively. The makeup workshops hosted eight and twelve participants respectively. The total number of participants who attended a minimum of two workshops and duly submitted at least one poem was fifty-two.

Diversity was a main consideration in participant recruitment. Teachers were recruited globally and across all levels and sectors of education. It was important to endeavour to recruit as wide a demographic as possible, if the project was to be able to represent what constitutes the authenticity of teachers more widely (Webber-Ritchey *et al.* 2021). My aim to get as wide a

---

<sup>15</sup> A playful poem using on collective nouns for people to describe a group of teachers.

demographic as possible was not as prolific as initially hoped. Teacher responses were low mainly due to many still grappling with the after-effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, increased workload, and other personal, mental, and physical challenges.

The total number of teachers recruited are represented in the table below, showing sectors, subjects, gender, age group and race. Geographical information is presented in the map following the table.

Table 6: Teacher Demographic

Early Years	Primary	Secondary	Further/Foundation Education	Offender learning/alternative provision	Peripatetic
5	8	11	15	6	7
Maths	English	Science	Arts and Humanities	Health etc	Various
6	7	4	3	7	25
Male	Female	Other			
19	33	0			
20-30	30-40	40-50	50-60	60+	
4	21	18	6	3	
Black	White	Hispanic	Asian	Mixed heritage	
11	18	7	8	8	

Most of my teachers were recruited from social media teacher groups that I or my peers belong to. These groups are resource-sharing groups – groups created for teachers to share teaching resources and ideas on inclusivity in teaching and learning. Many also came from former student cohorts on the master’s in education programme at the University of Essex Online and had responded to the call-out shared through the student support office. They needed not to be currently enrolled on any of the modules I taught. Some were former colleagues and peers and many of these teachers brought along their



friends and colleagues from their networks. The map below denotes the regions where teachers joined from. It is important to note that for many teachers, their countries of resident differed from their countries of origin. Themes and questions that emerged from the intersections of teachers' identities, subjects taught, including the question of place and location, are discussed in the data analysis.

Figure 1 : Teachers' Geographical Locations



## Session 7: Don't you like children? Poetic Inquiry as Method

What is here and who is this?

Strapped in flesh both new and old

Stories abound of its history I'm told

I feel, I mirror, I dance to the flow.

Purpose, purpose, purpose!

Check you have one or check the door!

Found in there and here to lack

A basket of hope, potential to cure.

I feel, I mirror, I dance to the flow

I find a home in rooms of old

Faces, older, than the usual school

I prefer their chat to the mizzling young.

For my humour is wry

My outlook brie

I speak in rhymes

And ancient tongues

The young-uns would stare in wide-eye array

If I were to ask them, 'do a huzzah!'.

But these ones they know

Some paths are wide-strewn

To my requests they 'huzzah'! and 'huzzah'! with oomph

We laugh and clutch our sides in delight

A literary take on the day's exercise.

I am black and brown and all sides yellow

My tastes reside in neat, tidy lines

The young-uns would wilt in my clean hands

And beg for sandboxes, mud, and a sling.

I am here, for all purposes intent

To inspire, enquire and curiosity support

For the older, they too need these

A life-long journey of learning they're on.

So, a teacher, cheerleader, facilitator I am

I feel, I mirror, I dance to the flow

My web of lives intertwines in truth

A tapestry of poet, dancer, hiker, nerd

Of words and stars to make

A path for others clear and strong.<sup>16</sup>

When I undertook my post graduate certificate in education in 2009, no one asked me why I wanted to teach in the post-16 sector. This might be because we were all already teaching in the sector and many of us were even nearing retirement. The course was designed to provide the much-needed pedagogical under-pinning to the work of teachers in Further Education colleges, and the facilitators must have taken it for granted that our reasons were far too long embedded for us to explore on the course. I think they missed the opportunity to explore what is an essential question in teaching – why are we doing what we are doing? And why the sector we have chosen to work in? My first real moment of reckoning came at a teacher training event in Northern Iraq, the Kurdish administered region, many years later. The teachers, who ranged from Primary school teachers to university lecturers wanted to know if the reason I avoided teaching in the compulsory education sector is because I did not like children. My fumbled response was inadequate, they left convinced I did not like children. The following day, I presented them with the above poem and was given an opportunity for inquiry for the group as a whole: how does our definition of who we are influence the teaching pathways we choose? To bypass the rational (which I could not eloquently articulate the day before anyway), poetry enabled me (and the teachers in the session) to engage with our 'emotional and imaginative substrate' (Leitch and Day, 2000:188), to articulate our motivations and actions as teachers.

Poetic inquiry is applied in different ways as method. For this project, participants were asked to write poems that articulate who they were – as teachers and as humans. Poetry writing functions as an 'art of the self'

---

<sup>16</sup> One I like to call an existential poem, illustrating my place as a teacher in the world.

(Foucault, 1997:212) and participant-voiced poems support the practice of *parrhesia*<sup>17</sup> (frank speaking/speaking truth to power) in the opportunities it provided for my participants to speak about their own authenticities. As with the Kurdish teachers above, poetry also provided an avenue for the participants to wade through the series of definitions about themselves, giving those ideas shape (Leavy, 2020) and presenting them in their own ways.

This idea of shaping is important in data collection about individual subjectivities and poetry provided a clear framework for this project to marry content to form (Foucault, 2001b). Prendergast's (2015) categorisation of poetic voices is useful in classifying and clarifying the interweaving themes that are presented in the poetic data collected by this research project. For this project, the categories illustrate where teachers' lives intersected in their articulations of being and provided opportunities for the discussions to engage with those liminal areas of self, connecting them to the overall structure of building a landscape of what constitutes teacher authenticity. It also connected the themes of power, resistance, a critical self-articulation, and poetry writing in this project. This kind of epistemological approach to research is well-supported in poetic inquiry. The rendering of space for the voice of others, in itself becomes a way of knowing, of finding out new knowledge, forming new or different perspectives and making new connections (Lyons, 2008; Faulkner, 2017). For this project, these spaces, explicated through Prendergast's (2015) categories, with the addition of a critical voice to engage with the critical aim of this project, can be seen thus:

*Vox Theoria/Vox Poetica*: Teachers reflected and articulated their understanding of their self through poetry writing. The representations were varied and numerous, explaining the complex lives that teachers live and the many configurations that their authenticities take.

*Vox Justitia*: The poems engaged with issues of justice, of problems with systems that are oppressive to teachers and on teacher identities – systems that seek to subjectify teachers and to homogenise the profession. The poems

---

<sup>17</sup> The concept of *parrhesia*, as it applies to this project, is explained broadly in the introduction, and expanded upon as a philosophical framework and woven into the discussions in the data analysis.

also articulate the tensions teachers experience relating to their feelings of equality, freedom, and equity.

*Vox Identitatis*: Within the complex narrative of self, the teachers' poems explore how their different identities intersect to create or underpin the work they do. How their own understanding of their race, sexuality and intersectional identities can support the work they do.

*Vox Custodia*: Present in the poems exploring the liminal lives of teachers are elements of themselves as carers. The poems illustrate how care is fundamental to the work of teachers and how other caring responsibilities teach, support, encourage or discourage them from being caring in their work.

*Vox Procreator*: The poems also illustrate the teacher self within the wider structure of society – as parents, family members and/or members of a religious group. There are constant metaphors of the filial running through many of the poems and fraternal anecdotes. Relationships in work often being presented in contrast or in relation to relationship outside work.

\**Vox Critica*: This category has been added by this project to illustrate the practice of critical authenticity that teachers engaged in during the workshops. At this point, the critical voices of teachers engaged with the practice of *parrhesia*, giving voice to their truths and representing their own selves. The truth that is spoken is one that is known to the teachers alone, shared within the workshop, and extended by this research. Here, the teachers understood that self-knowledge alone is not enough, and that as individuals working within a highly politicised environment and living within socio-political structures, their self-articulation is a political act. They understood and expressed the role of pastoral power (Foucault, 1994) in their identities as teachers and how this add to their self-conception. Their work express the risks inherent in speaking out, but they embraced the opportunity to temper the power they feel is exerted upon them.

The data was collected during the poetry workshops, as illustrated by the session on project design below, with participants submitting any unfinished poems to the project's Google Classroom or by email.

## Session 8: We were all just scaffolding: Project Design

Build a sign and clarify  
What the recipe will verify  
For a thing we built up to dismantle  
at daybreak in Freemantle.  
Don't be tardy, don't be coy  
don't be foolhardy or annoy  
Pick the method, decide the rhyme  
Say if it will dance or it will mime.  
Bring the workers – sayers or nay  
Line up the questions, pringles or hay  
Draw the diagrams – circles or squares  
Make them swirl or instantly pair.<sup>18</sup>

**The form:** The use of workshops in poetic inquiry is commonplace. Almost every poetic inquiry seminar, conference or symposia include workshop opportunities, and the focus is often on poetic forms and the management of poetic data. For work with participants unfamiliar with poetry writing, workshops provided an environment where participants could explore the genre, learn forms, and gain confidence with expressing themselves in poetic form. Workshops also ensured a degree of rigour is applied to the data collection process, ensuring participants learn the skills required to present their ideas (Cutts and Waters, 2019). Applying this level of practice responds to questions around capability and skills in the practice of poetic inquiry (Piiro, 2002). There were participants who are themselves poets and therefore familiar with form and writing. They created a balanced dynamic to the overall group, supporting the workshop sessions by running a session, providing examples, joining in more proactively, and in this way, encouraging others.

Workshops also provided a platform for both participants and researcher to explore the complex network of identities, form clear understanding of what constitute the self for teachers, create relationships that support the honest

---

<sup>18</sup> A rhyming couplet illustrating the complex choices one has to make in project design.

engagement that poetic endeavours require (Ørngreen and Levinsen, 2017), furthering the educative aim of this project. As an educational tool, the poetic forms learnt added to knowledge and supported what Dewey (1987:350) calls 'poetic social-self-creation'. Teachers commented that the sessions also demonstrated for them, how they could use poetry to engage their own students, or to run training workshops for their peers.

Four main workshop sessions were spread over a period of eight months, from December 2021 to July 2022.<sup>19</sup> The workshops ran at midday on a Saturday, to ensure teachers from different time zones could participate. There were two make-up workshop sessions organised after the first two and the last two main sessions, respectively aimed at giving teachers who missed a workshop an opportunity to make it up. The workshops ran on the last Saturday of January, and February, a make-up session in March, April, and May, and a make-up session on the first Saturday of June. The fifth main session in July was designed as a plenary and an opportunity for all the participants to come together to write a plenary poem, share their poems, provide feedback on the project and network. A doodle poll identified that half the teachers preferred a plenary in June, a session was added for the last Saturday of June to accommodate these teachers.

Although the project was expected to run into August 2022, it was quickly understood that many teachers would be on holiday then and therefore unavailable. It was important to involve participants in the scheduling of the workshop sessions. This encouraged rapport, and a sense of care in the research process and communicated the value that I as a researcher have for the participants' time and effort (Denzin et al, 2018). It also engages with the ethical responsibility of the project to equally empower participants (Ross, 2017).

Each participant attended a minimum of two workshops over the period, with many staying with the project and attending all four or six sessions diligently. The stages the project followed can be seen in the diagram overleaf:

---

<sup>19</sup> See appendix 1 for workshop invitation and schedule.

FIGURE 2: PROJECT DESIGN STAGES



**The location:** The workshops took place online, using the Zoom application. This allowed participants the flexibility of joining from anywhere. For many participants, this was from the comfort of home, while others were able to join if they were away on holiday or even at work. Using an online platform also meant that sessions could be recorded and saved for review later on (Archibald, *et al.*, (2019)).

**The activities:** The activities were planned before-hand on a PowerPoint presentation<sup>20</sup>. These included questions for reflection, an introduction to the poetic forms to be studied and examples, time and quiet space for writing then followed by a sharing session. Where participants offered to facilitate a session, we agreed on the format of the workshop and on the content beforehand. Reflective questions (see Figure 3) were designed purposely to centre participants' focus on themselves, how they see themselves and how they see themselves in the world. The reflective questions not only fed into the poetic activities of the session – the introductory poem, sample poem/s or poetic form but also helped participants to engage with the research questions of the project. Without presenting the existing research on teacher authenticity and instead asking them to reflect, teachers were able to articulate what constitutes their authenticities and the poetic tools allowed the project to understand just how effectively poetry could facilitate critical authenticity.

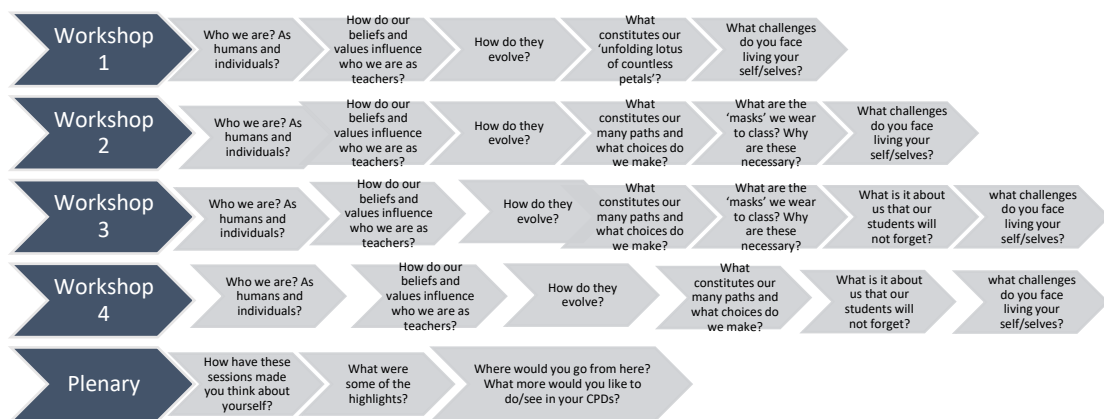
---

<sup>20</sup> See appendix 2 for the scheme of work.



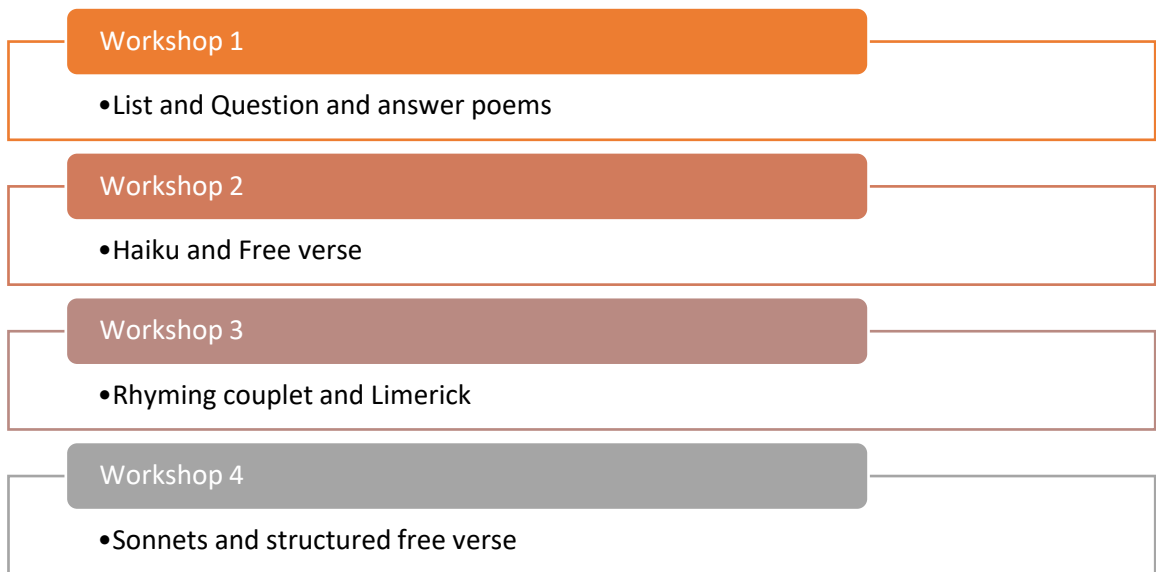
The value of asking participants to reflect allowed the data to engage more specifically with the teacher self and avoided digression into the politics of teaching, ensuring reflection, not rumination (Lengelle *et al.*, 2019). It also made sure that teachers could allow themselves to feel vulnerable, surrendering to the process of the workshop sessions more readily (Certo *et al.*, 2012). The aesthetic experience of using poetry to reflect then engaging with expressing themselves through poetry also helped participants to affirm their beliefs and values, seeing their profession as a worthwhile endeavour (Speare and Henshall, 2014).

FIGURE 3: WORKSHOP REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS



Over the four sessions, participants learnt how to write in eight different poetic forms:

FIGURE 4: POETIC FORMS PER WORKSHOP



### **Facilitators:**

I was the main facilitator for all the sessions. However, as indicated in the ethics application document, participants were also invited to run a session if they wanted to. Inviting participants to facilitate a session recognised their capabilities as teachers and also gave credence to the participants who were also poets. This created an atmosphere of collegiality, where their dignity was maintained, especially considering that participants were being asked to allow themselves to be vulnerable (Ellis, 2007). One of the teacher/poets recommended a facilitator from outside the group to run the session on limericks. This is a well-known poet in the community, whose limericks are well-known for their subversiveness and wit. This session proved to be the most popular of all the sessions, as participants felt they learned a lot during the session, produced a lot of limericks and were also thoroughly entertained.

### **Sharing and submission:**

To encourage an atmosphere of collegiality and community, participants were encouraged to share their poems in the workshops. These were mostly in parts, a line or two, mainly to encourage sharing without the burden of feeling that they have to have written an entire piece. Participants were offered the opportunities to rework or finish the poems in their own time. I also offered to read their poems if they did not want to or could not share (were joining the

session at work or in a public place and could only use the chat function to engage). This proved to be very encouraging, with participants commenting that their poems sounded 'better' and 'lived' when read aloud. Doing it that way helped to 'create an expressive form that [enabled the teachers] to secure an empathetic participation in the lives of others and in the situation studied' (Baron and Eisner, 2012: 8-9).

Completed poems were submitted to a dedicated Google Classroom. Participants were also offered the opportunity to email completed poems to my email account if this was more convenient and accessible to them. This flexibility of approach at every turn was encouraging and helped participants to understand that I was sympathetic to their needs and grateful for their time and effort.

The plenary session was designed to discuss participants' observations and experience of the project and to give them the opportunity to comment on themes they felt the sessions highlighted. The participants all agreed that the following themes were highlighted in their submissions and discussions:

- The idea that the teacher self is constructed and evolving; -
- The teacher self is an individual evolution/construction/pursuit; -
- There is a strong sense of care of others within teacher self-constructions; -
- This sense of care is evolving not static; -
- The pervasive fear of organisational power and a frustration with the system; -
- Determination to articulate the teacher position is seen as resistance; -
- Articulation is owning – the speaking truth about oneself is liberatory, giving justice to oneself.

The poems written in the plenary sessions responded to these themes and explored other key elements of the teacher self that participants felt were important. Teachers opted to write their plenary poems using a variety of poetic forms from the workshop. The next chapter presents a collection of

these plenary poems. The project officially came to an end with the last plenary session on July 23, 2022.

## Session 9: Gathered Up: Reflexive Thematic Analysis

Of all the things gathered up,  
You came down to me.  
Push and pull through the storms you did,  
To get to the other side of the drought.

Of all the things gathered in,  
You lost your way with me,  
Backwards and forwards down the street,  
You went,  
To get to where we held hands and ran.

Of all the things gathered high,  
Smooth and tough and warm and short,  
You came and went without a clue,  
Into the sunset and the blue.<sup>21</sup>

Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA) is a qualitative research method used for analysing textual or visual data to identify and interpret patterns, themes, or meanings within the data. It is a form of thematic analysis that places an emphasis on the role of the researcher's reflexivity throughout the analytical process. Braun and Clarke (2021) follow the understanding that knowledge is situational and because the conclusion from qualitative data is often served from the interaction between the research and the data, analysis should recognise the researcher's position and their contribution. Reflexive Thematic Analysis is particularly valuable in studies where the researchers' subjectivity and positionality can impact the interpretation of data. It emphasizes transparency and self-awareness, helping to provide a richer and more nuanced understanding of the research findings.

Poetic renditions concerned with the self can be as conceptually complex and nuanced as the self is (McCullis, 2013). The often short and trite nature of

---

<sup>21</sup> An exploration of how we work with poetic data – where the data and/or our understanding can be both present and real yet elusive and independent.

poems means that there is never a complete enough overview of the entire definition that the poet has of themselves or their ontology in a single poem. For my research study, it was important instead to focus on interrogating how and where the poems defined the participants' authenticities, where tensions of conceptions of self exist, and in what ways these renditions spoke the truths of their writers to power, pushing boundaries and speaking beyond the boundaries of knowledge and power (Westerink, 2020). It was also important to examine existing patterns of belief, norms and values that are expressed in the poems (Johnstone, 2008). Reflexive thematic analysis (RTA) offers the opportunity for the analysis to elicit the main themes of the project, (some of which were already highlighted by the participants in the plenary session), respond to the research questions, and engage with the function of the philosophical framework, ~~and to use these to design a model for engaging with the poems participants submitted~~

As a form of analysis that interrogates meaning and can explore how language is used to define identity, and how it serves as a constructive tool for rebalancing the discourses on representation, RTA helps to situate the poetic data within the socio-political context of education, ~~and the politicisation of teacher identity,~~ instead of looking at them as autonomous pieces of work (van Dijk, 2008). The key question of this project – what constitutes teacher authenticity? Is placed side by side with the potential of the poems to demonstrate critical authenticity. As stated in the introduction, critical authenticity ~~also~~ encapsulates the process of producing empowering utterances (expression) that describe participants' authenticities and the potential of these utterances to be seen as resistance (Shapiro, 2004). Utilising RTA thus allowed me to engage with how language use in existing literature on teacher authenticity reflects power inequalities and how teachers' poems counter these (Leavy, 2010). Although analysis in this method cannot make claims to truth or objectivity, it, however, acknowledges the subjective nature of analysis and prefaces the data analysis with the understanding that the researcher's positionality does influence the interpretation of data, even more so when concerned with poetic data. Analysis can be weak or strong, but it is important to apply what Braun and Clarke (2021:5) refer to as a 'critically

interrogating' gaze – the process of asking questions not only about the data but also about how we see them and why we see them the way we do.

Braun and Clarke's (2021) four domains provide a clear direction on how one could apply RTA. These are:

### **Orientation to data**

*Less reductive vs more reductive:* Inductive analysis involves an exploration of the data to identify prominent themes and to capture meanings that are evident in the data set. It presumes, in its purest form, that analysis can preserve participants' voices and objectively present meaning without the interference of the researcher's positionality and/or subjectivity. Braun and Clarke (2021: 56) point out that this cannot be fully realised because of what we, as researchers, inevitably and unavoidably bring to the analysis 'as theoretically embedded and socially positioned researchers'. In contrast, deductive analysis begins explicitly with the researcher, in particular, a theoretical or conceptual model that is used as a framework and lens to interpret and extract meaning from the data. A researcher can bring a theoretical interest into the data set or realise soon after analysing the data that the nature of the themes identified would be best served and illuminated when interpreted through a particular theoretical framework. To ensure that my analysis stayed true to the intentions and meanings of the poems, the approach in the analysis was inductive.

### **Focus of meaning**

*Semantic -Latent:* Semantic analysis explores the meaning on a surface level, drawing out themes that are readily and explicitly identified. The researcher remains close to the meaning overtly articulated by the participants, thus tending to produce a more descriptive analysis of the data. *Latent* analysis, conversely, focuses on exploring the underlying, covert, and often implicit meaning of the data. They tend to be derived from the researcher, or theory-seeking connections and meaning that aren't self-evident and require some abstracting from the data. The analysis in this thesis took both a semantic and latent approach to meaning-making.

## **Qualitative framework**

*Experiential – Critical:* An experiential analysis focuses on the participants' voices, drawing out and highlighting their lived experiences and perspectives. It assumes that language is used to accurately communicate meaning. Whereas a critical analysis focuses on a topic or issue and organising the participants' contribution around that. I applied both approaches in the analysis.

## **Theoretical frameworks**

*Realist, essentialist – Relativist, constructionist.* A realist, essentialist approach endeavours to find the reality and truth encapsulated within the data set. It presupposes that there is an objective reality to be extracted from the data and reported on. A relativist, constructionist approach on the other hand, seeks to examine the meaning of the realities expressed within the data set. In other words, it attempts to understand the social construction of meaning articulated by the participants. There is no objective reality to be mined from the data because reality is a manifestation of individuals and societies sense-making. Therefore, the act and products of this sense-making are what come under scrutiny in the relativist, constructionist approach. My approach was relativist and constructionist as a way to ensure the realities of teachers' work, as illustrated by the poems were highlighted as well as their vulnerability and vibrance.

Braun and Clarke (2021) note that inductive, semantic, experiential, realist, and essentialist approaches tend to group together and deductive, latent, critical and relativist, constructionist group together. However, these dimensions are not dichotomous, and research will often contain elements of multiple dimensions. Recognising these dimensions however was key to my approach, not least to facilitate my understanding of the different approaches, but also to make explicit within the methodology, which approach has been favoured and why (Braun *et al*, 2022).

## Process

Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA) requires the following steps, and although I have not followed this chronologically, they served to support the process of orientating around the data and making decisions on how to approach the analysis itself:

1. **Reflexivity:** Reflexivity refers to the researcher's critical self-awareness of their own assumptions, biases, and perspectives throughout the research process. Researchers employing RTA are encouraged to acknowledge and consider how their background, beliefs, and experiences may influence the analysis and interpretation of data. For this project, I asked the participants to engage in this step with me and utilising the plenary session, we read the poems submitted to the Google classroom together and reflected on them. Following this, we discussed our own impressions, and the participants were able to provide insights into why they wrote or approached the poems the way they did. The plenary poems illustrated these reflections and summarised the overall feelings and decisions of the participants as how they want to present themselves. As the researcher, my role here was to listen and to endeavour to put aside my preconceptions and to accept the teachers' submissions. I shared my impressions, some which were redirected by the participants towards a different understanding of the poems, and some agreed with.
2. **Data Familiarisation:** The researcher starts by becoming familiar with the data they have collected. This may involve transcribing interviews, reading through textual documents, or examining visual materials. Working with poetic data offers several challenges, not least, the underlying meanings in metaphors and other imageries. Involving the participants in the first stage of reading the data provided a strong basis in knowledge and understanding, and the plenary poems helped to reduce the amount of data to a manageable number, where I could refocus myself to and become familiar with in more detail. I also engaged in public reading of the plenary poems to further familiarisation. Apart from being one of the aims of the project – to use



public platforms to extend the voices of teachers – public performances offered different understanding of the poems and feedback and the reactions of others, helped provide another perspective to my readings (Novak, 2011).

3. Initial Coding: In this stage, the researcher begins the process of coding, which involves systematically labelling or categorizing segments of the data with descriptive codes. These codes are used to represent important ideas, concepts, or patterns present in the data. The research questions for this project helped to contextualise the coding process. The main focus being the philosophical inquiry of what makes up teachers' authenticities and if the concept is valid. The coding included labels for demonstrations of individual/personal beliefs and values, and presentations of how those values interact with the teacher self and the teaching role. I also looked for language that illustrate the relationship between the teacher and the teaching context, how they view their roles and to what extent their personal motivations support or mitigate their work. This also helped to understand if the methodology supports teachers in critical self-exploration and self-expression. The second set of coding explored situations of resistance – where teachers use the poetic opportunity to speak to power and how these are expressed. This helped to explore the research questions around how the methodology and the method can support teachers in developing and expressing resistance, and how they may be supported to narrativise their lived experiences and to push the boundaries of power (Foucault, 2001a).
4. Identifying Themes: After coding the data, the researcher looks for broader patterns or themes emerging from the codes. Themes are overarching concepts that help to organize and make sense of the data. In the plenary session, we had already begun to identify the dominant ideas in the poems and to explore what they were. My refamiliarization and re-reading of the poems identified additional themes, some which corresponded to the themes suggested by the teachers.

5. **Data Exploration:** The researcher explores the relationships between different themes and codes and considers how they relate to each other within the dataset. In the analysis, I have merged similar themes (from mine and the teachers' reading) to enhance the nuances of the discussion and examined the relationships between the poems and the research questions.
6. **Reflexive Analysis:** Throughout the process, I have engaged in reflexive analysis, critically reflecting on my interpretations, assumptions, and potential biases. This reflexivity helps ensure that my perspective is acknowledged and considered during the analysis. To some extent, my reflexions mirror the impressions of the teachers, as it has been difficult to forget what they have shared with me. I have endeavoured to make this clear in my analysis and to clarify where my interpretations have been influenced by the shared reading of the poems in the plenary session.
7. **Theme Refinement:** In the second section of the analysis (chapter 5), the themes are further refined and defined, and I have ensured that they accurately capture the essence of the data. This closer reading of the poems, beyond the themes that directly respond to the research questions, furthers an understanding of the teacher self beyond the boundaries of knowledge (Westerink, 2020).
8. **Interpretation and Reporting:** As stated earlier, it is not expected that these stages should be followed chronologically, in a strict linear process. One of the last steps involves the interpretation of the themes and their significance within the context of the research question. For this project, I have done this throughout both data analysis chapters. The reflections in the foreword of the poetry collection engages also in some interpretation that underlines some of the significances of the poems. In using excerpts and quotes from the poems, I have provided a transparent and clear analysis of the dataset.

## Developing a Framework for Reflexive Thematic Analysis of Poetic Data

As a method that is still undergoing construction, description and form, there are limited variations on how poetic data can be analysed in the use of Poetic Inquiry as a method. Often, poetic inquiry is used as an analytical tool in itself (Faulkner, 2020; Fernandez-Gimenez *et al.*, 2018). With a background in English and Comparative literature, I recognised the potential that poetic analysis could offer in reflexive thematic analysis of poetic data. The analysis of language, metaphor, imagery, repetition, rhythm, meter, words, phrases, tone, can combine to offer insights into meaning, thus giving the poetic data more form and providing a level of rigour to the analysis. Combining this with a latent analysis of the underlying and covert meaning of the poems, offers a nuanced and relativist reading, underlaid by the understanding that the reality of the participants is a manifestation of individual and communal sense making (Braun *et al.*, 2022).

~~Figure 5 below illustrates how these themes intersect in discourses of the self. This kind of approach, for this project, also illuminated instances of contradictions and derivative ideas in the poems and offered me the opportunity to investigate the idea of ambiguities in self construction and in particular, the understanding of what constitutes authenticity for teachers. These illuminations fed into the general discourses on power, subjectification, and resistive expressivity and interrogated the contentions and tensions surrounding self-understanding, self-construction, and self-expression. It helped to illustrate the potential trends that signify the non-feasibility of the existence of the term 'teacher authenticity' to describe individual subjectivities, even when the individuals may be considered as a homogenous group of professionals.~~

The model below (figure 5) is underpinned by the philosophical framework of this project. It helps to answer the research questions by highlighting in what ways language used in the poems, expresses teachers' conceptions of self, self-knowledge, and self-constructions. Within the practice of *epimeleia heautou*, teachers used words, phrases, imagery, stress, tone, and repetition, to highlight their self-understanding and/or self-constructions, including their conceptions of self in relational terms to others and their environment

(politically and socially). As parrhesiastes, teachers used language (and imagery) to subvert, resist and dismantle political and research definitions of themselves (Leavy, 2010).

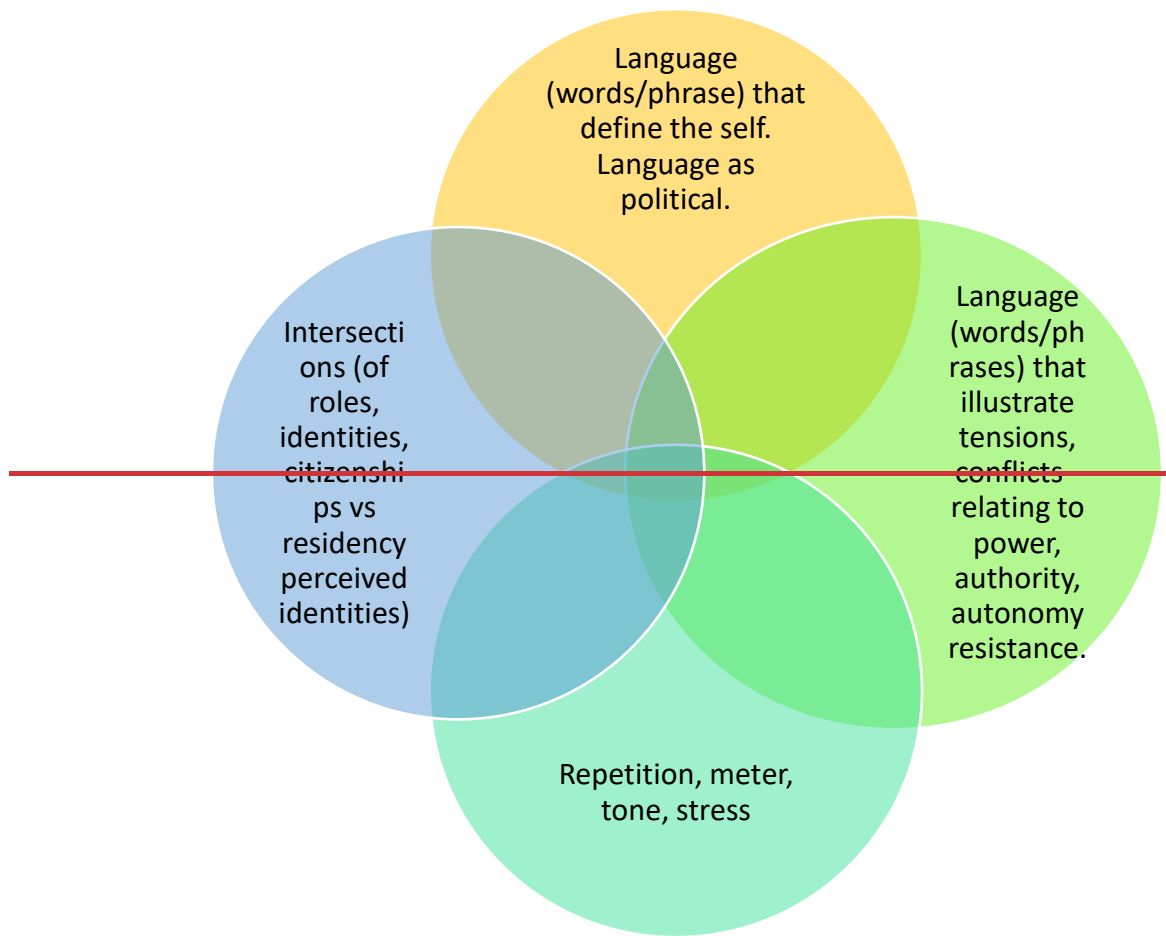
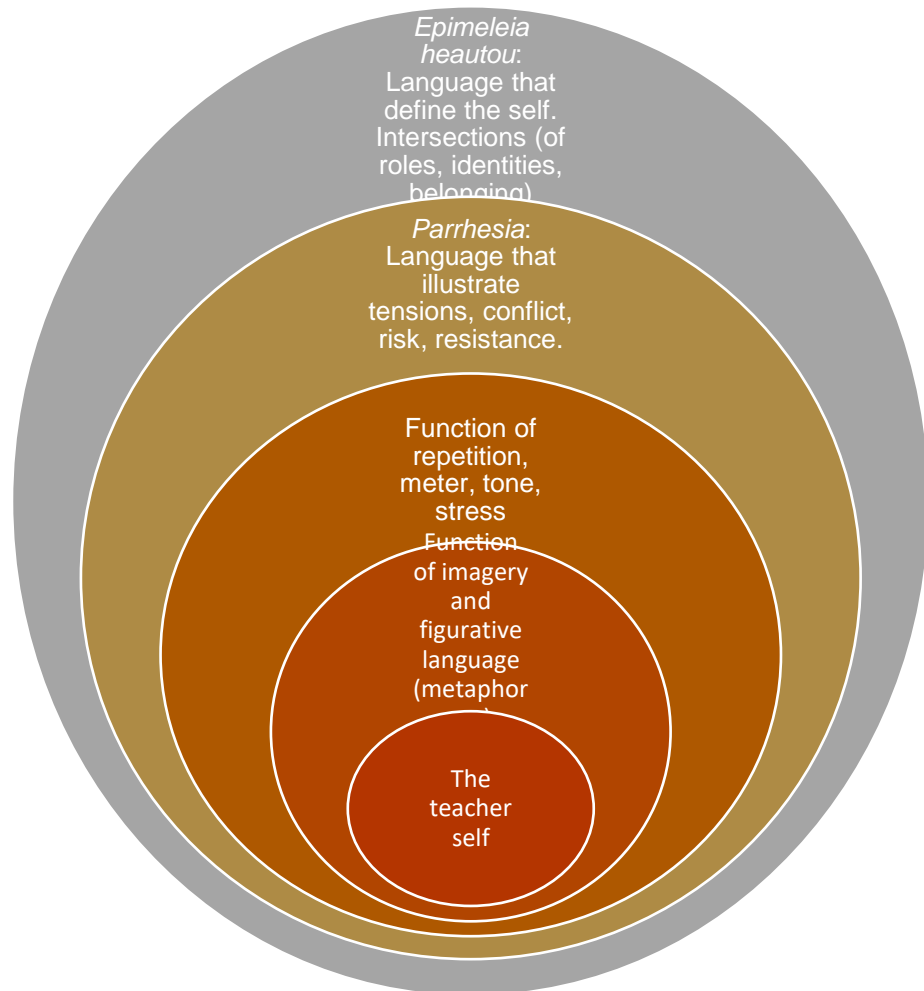


FIGURE 5: ANALYTICAL MODEL FOR CRITICAL AUTHENTICITY



---

The self in construction, engaged in political self-embodiment and in signification to its environment is apparent in the poems submitted by the teachers. The key aspects of the philosophical framework are highlighted by the teachers' use of language to illustrate that every activity of the self, is political, be it social, economic, or otherwise (Gee, 2011). The poems also demonstrate that, speaking the truth about oneself, providing the care for others to speak the truth about themselves, is in itself, a political act.

Figure 5 illustrates how the themes highlighted by the poetic data intersect in discourses of the teacher self. This kind of approach, for this project, also illuminated instances of contradictions and conflict in the poems and offered me the opportunity to investigate the idea of ambiguities in self-construction and in particular, the understanding of what constitutes authenticity for

teachers. These illuminations fed into the general discourses on critical authenticity – power, subjectification, and resistive expressivity and interrogated the contentions and tensions surrounding self-understanding, self-construction, and self-expression (Gros, 2005). It helped to illustrate the potential trends that signify the non-feasibility of the existence of the term ‘teacher authenticity’ to describe individual subjectivities, even when the individuals may be considered as a homogenous group of professionals.

The analysis of the poetic data will use the model above to contextualise the discussion on teacher authenticity within the concept of critical authenticity. Following the model, the analysis will, interrogate the self as a political entity, as highlighted by the poetic data. This is evident in poems that illustrate the tensions with power and authority, be they school management, government policies or parents’ expectations. It is important to highlight the notion of relativity – the relationship between the self the environment, and others here. The analysis will look at the notion of conflict in self-construction, and tensions with the apparatuses of power, also interrogating the figurative and poetic use of language to articulate resistance. There is a strong illustration of care – for both the teacher as an individual and their students. The latter was more pervasive than the former. These poems use imagery and metaphors to narrativize the relationships between the teachers and their students, and the many forms that their identities take in order to perform these relationships. Within some of these poems are demonstrations of grief and nostalgia, emotions that are closely bound to the care of others. Earlier in this section, I have written about the links between the research questions and the poetic data set. The analytical model above highlights the main characteristics of the poetic dataset and illustrates how they link to discussions on the teacher self.

## Session 10: Tread Softly: Ethics and other considerations

If you stand in my shoes,  
Just for today, this morning, tonight  
Time might not so friendly yield  
Or the day so slow  
So, you stamp and scratch  
And wish for a faster pace.

If you stand in my shoes tonight,  
You'll glide softly through the room  
Fearing the pinch, watching the door  
Wanting it all never to end.<sup>22</sup>

This project used Tracy's (2010) four domains of ethics in the project registration to frame the ethical considerations that the research might face. These four domains continued to support the considerations now understood in the carrying out of the project and which supports the rest of the thesis.

*Procedural ethical considerations:* This project completed all the necessary documentations required for the approval of the research to commence. I followed the processes mandated by the Education Research Ethics Committee and the University Research Ethics Sub-Committee. My proposal was approved on the basis that information regarding data collection, analysis, data management and participant recruitment etcetera. was accurate, free from fabrication, omission, or contrivance and most importantly, that all potential risks were well identified and appropriately mitigated.

Participants were provided with all the information relating to the project, including a participant information sheet (with contact details for the project supervisors and ethics committee contact), consent forms, a schedule for the workshops and a withdrawal form. All participants to date have submitted a

---

<sup>22</sup> Paying close attention to ethical issues in research is the figurative walking in others' shoes. It was important for this project, to ensure that I saw myself as the participants did – that I stood in their shoes, at all times.

consent form and none has withdrawn from the project (although not all of them have attended the workshops).

All communication was carried out using my university email address and all documents were generated, shared, and saved on the university One-Drive. The university (and national) regulations on collection, usage and storage of personal information have been followed. There have been instances where participants have broken the anonymity clause themselves, either by presenting their writing in the public domain and linking it to the project or by talking about their involvement in the project. They have done so, having signed a waiver to anonymity in this instance.

*Situational ethical considerations:* A situational ethic goes beyond the legal and regulated requirement of the ethics application process and is concerned with the changeable and variable moments in the project (Ellis, 2007:4). This called for me to consider the motivations of my participants in joining the project, considerations that may affect their continued attendance at workshops and their needs throughout the project. For some of the participants, the main motivation was curiosity and an interest in participating in a poetry workshop with other teachers. It was necessary to ensure that sessions were limited to an hour, which was long enough to maintain interest and did not pose a hardship to participants. Participants appreciated this consideration and used the time efficiently to share and network.

Workshop presentations were shared with participants who requested them, either to use to catch-up on a missed session or to review the taught component when writing up their poems. A catch-up/make-up workshop session was organised after the last workshop to give those that joined later and/or missed a session the opportunity to participate more fully.

Consideration was given to participants who could not verbally contribute during the workshop, either because they were in a public place or joining late in the evening, when their families had gone to bed. They were participants that chose to observe the sessions and to respond separately, in an email or in their poems. They were afforded this space and consideration and their presence appreciated, even by fellow participants.



The participants agreed on how to proceed with the sessions – deciding together within the sessions, on how long to meditate, how much to share and if they wanted to read their poems or ask others (or myself) to read instead. Often snippets of poems in progress were shared in the chatroom and I would clarify if they would like me to read this aloud or not. The chatroom provided ample engagement, also providing the space for teachers who did not want to speak and who felt more comfortable ~~felt safer~~ staying in the background but participating all the same.

Inviting the participants to facilitate a session added a dynamic approach to the sessions and highlighted that the project recognised their roles as teachers (and poets in some instances) and that it sought to maintain their dignity and extend their sense of self. Two of the participants ran a session respectively: one a session on list and question poems and the other the session on sonnets. They recommended a well-known poet from the community to run the session on limericks, as they are well-known for their witty limericks. This was well-accepted within the group and contributed to an atmosphere of fun and collegiality.

*Ethical relationship considerations:* As the researcher, workshop facilitator, as well as a teacher, my positionality within the project called for an enhanced sense of self-awareness, a duty of care (to the participants and myself) and consistent reflexivity. According to Ellis (2007:4), relational ethics ‘recognises and values mutual respect, dignity, and connectedness between the researcher and researched, and between researchers and the communities in which they live and work’. The practice of *parrhesia* is an ethical issue – participants take risks in baring themselves so openly in poetic form. *Parrhesia* also calls into the witnessing the other participants. In my position as researcher, I was also a witness to the truth-speaking of my participants, and I held the responsibility of practicing my own truth-speaking in the representation of their truths. This connectedness made me equally a *parrhesiastes* – tasked with the role and the risks that are inherent in that role. This was a position of trust and I had to ensure that my relationship with the participants remained transparent to uphold this position (Fine *et al.*, 2000).

To manage this relationship, I maintained a connectedness with the participants, offering encouragement in their writing and motivating them to write even when they did not always keep to the forms taught. Participants often sent through fragments of their writing asking for feedback and I always accepted whatever they have written to be good work and encouraged them to submit those without influencing a change in form or style. The use of ~~a~~the recommended guest facilitator for the workshops was effective in both entertaining the participants (~~these are poets~~this is a poet who performed their own work at the sessions) and demonstrating the potential of poetry as a community practice (Novak, 2011). ~~Some~~Two of the facilitators were themselves participants, which served to balance the power dynamics of the project, with participants feeling that they had equal status within the sessions.

My poetic reflexive diary was useful in tracking my own responses to the research process and to help me reflect on my role as witness to the teachers' articulations of their authenticities (Hennink, Hutter and Bailey, 2020). I managed to maintain an objective, yet engaging view of my participants, their definitions of themselves and the role that I served. Often, the experience required me to reflect on my own identity and my own conceptions of myself. These can be observed in the poems that have been shared in this chapter.

*Ethical issues exiting the study considerations:* The ethical issue at this stage concerns anticipating public response to the data – how it might be received, reviewed, distorted, or misused. It is also about being transparent with participants at the beginning – in documentations and throughout the project, about how the data will be used and the potential implications, something that (Fine *et al.*, 2000:127) calls 'being clear at the hyphen'. For this reason, the poems written by teachers are presented in the data analysis section as a poetry collection. This allows the teachers to have the final say on the project and to return to their positionalities, confirming or changing them. The plenary poems were not edited in any form; they were arranged in a way that maintained the integrity of the expressions but provided aesthetic relevance. The poetry collection represents the experiential methodology of the research project – the teachers' poems as analysis, thus providing an opportunity for the poems themselves to express the critical authenticities of the teachers and

to speak for themselves. Teachers were informed that their poems will be collated in this form.

Participants were made aware of the risks they invite if they present their work publicly, outside of the project. They were notified that the project could no longer guarantee anonymity in such instance. Many of the participants shared their work at poetry events, having waived their rights to anonymity in the consent document.

## Chapter summary: No ends, only middles

And in all our wanderings return we  
Not to where we started;  
But to someplace in-between.

All through the process of writing this chapter, I have had the sense that I am travelling in the middle of things. In a real sense, I am, because this chapter has been written before the preceding ones and precedes the data analysis. Doing a doctoral study is in itself a middle, the journey before heralds the study and the study points to one's future in research and whatever else is to come. This chapter has provided the theoretical basis for using poetic inquiry as both a methodological approach and a method of data collection for this research project. It has also outlined ways in which poetic inquiry is used and tensions that exist within the practice (Faulkner, 2020), as well as making a case for poetic inquiry as an experiential and an interpretivist methodology. The philosophical framework that supports the methodology has been discussed in specific and general terms as it relates to the issues raised by the project.

The chapters that follow will focus on the data collected from this project and the data analysis. The first section is the poetic data from plenary session, which is presented in a poetry collection. This section engages with the presentation of the poetic data as an experiential methodology (as stated in the earlier section on methodology in this chapter) – so that the data may exist on its own, without interpretation (Shapiro, 2004; Faulkner, 2020).

The following chapters on data analysis will focus on the how the data responds to the research questions, engaging with the ideas presented in the poems in the collection, highlighting, expanding, and amplifying the truths about teachers' authenticities and extending the meanings presented within their words. In this section, the main themes of this project come together –

the critical process of engaging with oneself, made into language then into expressive action (Lorde, 2017).

## Chapter 4: Poetry Collection

### Overview

The methodology chapter made a case for poetry as an experiential methodology, as an opportunity for the researcher to suspend judgement (and ego) and to allow the data to speak for itself or rather, the reader to experience the data for themselves (Leavy, 2020). This chapter is a collection of poems written by teachers in the plenary session of the critical authenticity workshop. The poems, a summary by the participants (teachers), respond to themes emerging from eight months of self-contemplation, self-exploration, and self-articulation.

In the methodology chapter, the research questions included two key questions: How can poetry ~~writing~~writing, and sharing facilitate a critical authenticity? And how can poetry workshops provide educative and educational opportunities for teachers to explore their authenticities and professional identities? The poems in this collection respond to these two key questions. In providing opportunities through poetry workshop settings, teachers could engage in critical self-reflection and discussion, continue the exercise in their own time and write poems that articulate what their authenticities are. The writing in itself extends the critical process and the sharing within the workshops provide opportunities for teachers to continue to interrogate their conceptions of their identities and to evaluate their notions of self. Writing, according to Foucault (1997:212), 'as a personal exercise done by and for oneself' is an art of disparate truth, and we see this in the frankness of the poems and the consistency of thought in the messages within the poems. The process of such self-exploration, of course, does not end in the communion within oneself, but in the communal sharing of ideas about what it is to be human, and also what it is to be a teacher. As Foucault states (1997:212), '[such writing] also constitutes a certain way of manifesting oneself to oneself and to others', bringing into practice, the philosophy of *epimeleia heautou*, that is central to critical authenticity and the understanding that, the care of self is also the care of others.

Learning about poetic forms extended the educational purpose of the project. Teachers reported feeling more confident about writing and working with poetry and that they have discovered the opportunities poetry holds for both self-reflection and exploration, for themselves and their students. They also emphasised, both in the poems and in the reflections in the chat rooms, that poetry reading and writing can help them to create communities of critical thinkers among their colleagues and students, and many fed-back on various instances they have started to introduce the concept to their work. Embedded in the educational opportunities of poetic inquiry is the educative import that poetry writing and sharing also provides opportunity for participants (and facilitator) to learn about themselves (Hasler et al, 2020). As one of the teachers said in the plenary of workshop 3, the reflections and sharing allowed their 'ideas [of themselves] to stumble and settle'.

Only twenty-two teachers returned to the plenary session at the end of the eight months. However, seven other teachers reviewed the plenary video and presentation and sent their poems through at later dates. The plenary session offered the participants and me another opportunity to reflect on the workshops as a whole and to do them together. Together we read the poems submitted to the Google Classroom, reviewing some of the comments made in the chats in the workshops, and participants were given the time to reflect on some of the poems they had submitted. Our impressions were summarised into themes that we agreed upon together, and the twenty-nine plenary poems respond to some of these themes. They include:

- The idea that the teacher self is constructed and evolving; -
- The teacher self is an individual evolution/construction/pursuit; -
- There is a strong sense of care of others within teacher self-constructions; -
- This sense of care is evolving not static; -
- There is a pervasive fear of organisational power and frustration with the system; -
- Determination to articulate the teacher position is seen as resistance;

- Articulation is owning –speaking truth about oneself is liberatory, giving justice to oneself.

These themes speak to the political import of self-articulation (Lorde, 2017; Faulkner, 2020) and the power of poetry in supporting such engagement (Leavy, 2020). The teachers were clear on the significance of these themes for themselves and many suggested that knowing what they understand about themselves, changes the way they view/articulate their identity vis-à-vis their profession. These themes will be evaluated in the proceeding chapter, within the context of the project's research questions. The educative and educational import of the project is evident in the poems submitted in this chapter in their creativity and explorative content.

The decision to move from presenting this section of the data as a mega poem was mainly informed by the data itself. In the planning of the plenary session, teachers were expected to respond to emerging themes in free verse, which would have been arranged as one continuous poem with each poem headed in roman numerals. However, in the spirit of the project (of teacher autonomy and creative freedom), teachers opted to write poems in different poetic forms learnt in the workshops. They experimented with rhyming couplets, sonnets, limericks, haikus, question poems, list poems, and free verse. The result is an enlivening collection of poems that speak to their authenticity.

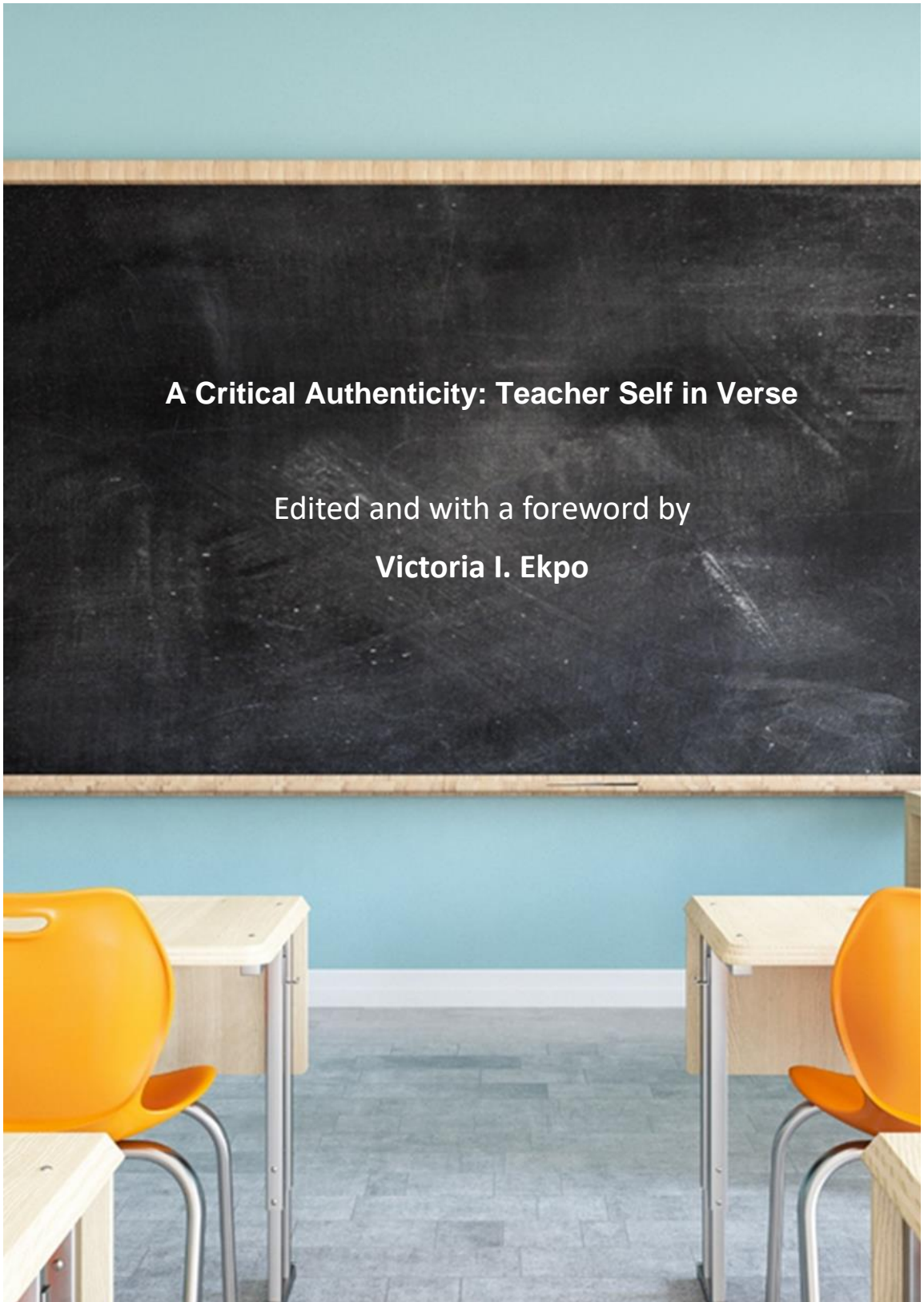
This chapter is presented like a poetry collection, with a foreword to set out the background to the philosophical discussion that underpinned the project and main arguments. The foreword also highlights the research questions that this chapter responds to and the significance of an experiential methodology. It will also present my personal reflections on poetry of this nature – poetry of the self – and will introduce discussions around the questions of risk, truth, and tension in critical self-articulation. The foreword will respond to the politics of representation surrounding the teachers whose works are collected here, and how place and agency influence one's articulation of self and contributes to critical expressions of resistance. The acknowledgement section, as well as paying tribute to those who contributed in some way to this collection, also acknowledges the works referenced in the foreword. Please note that poetry



collections do not ordinarily carry citations or a reference list. For the purpose of the thesis, the works cited are included in the final reference list.

The organisation of the poems do not follow any particular order and do not imply any empirical, hierarchical, or thematic purpose other than the aesthetic. Longer pieces are interspaced by shorter ones, to break up the intensity of the presentation and to offer the reader some pause. The different forms are equally interspaced to the same effect, a question poem is followed by a short free verse, a list poem followed by a sonnet and so forth. This collection is an invitation to the reader to read, listen, and bear witness to the teachers' authenticities.

A Critical Authenticity: Teacher Self in Verse



**A Critical Authenticity: Teacher Self in Verse**

Edited and with a foreword by

**Victoria I. Ekpo**



## Contents

### Foreword

1. The living soul of things
2. Still cool
3. Paddling in New Waters
4. Shirt Signing
5. Articulation is resistance
6. A couplet
7. Growing up
8. Stephanie
9. Rainbow Road Haiku
10. Just their teacher
11. Question
12. Calorie Counting
13. Life is not a race
14. Untitled
15. Teacher-student relationship
16. I am
17. A mirror held up
18. Gifts
19. We are strong, we are crazy, we are free!
20. Out of hours
21. Children still
22. 10 in a bag

23. A whole new game

24. Hope

25. Extra baggage

26. An open window on a rainy day

27. Telling lies

28. Giving all to life

29. Ough

Acknowledgements

## Foreword:

What is the purpose of poetry? To what end do poets so persistently articulate themselves? These questions recall Theseus' lines in Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Act 5, Scene 1:

The poet's eye in a fine frenzy rolling,  
Doth glance from heav'n to earth, from earth to heav'n;  
And as imagination bodies forth  
The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen  
Turns them to shape, and gives to airy nothing  
A local habitation and a name.

This idea of the poet's role as being one that names a thing is echoed by Alba Newman in their review of Williams Carlos Williams' *Paterson*. Here, they present poetry as the link between ideas and things. If the naming process involves, as Newman states, a 'condensation of the experiential and the imagined', then we could imagine that there is something embryonic in the poetic articulation of the self. The concept of critical authenticity, introduced by the project where these poems were written, sets out the framework that engages with the liminal spaces between our imagined and experiential self. Critical authenticity combines two Greek philosophies *Epimeleia heautou* and *parrhesia*, as presented by Michel Foucault in *Fearless Speech*, to theorise the concept of the self as a political entity. The Greek philosophy of *Epimeleia heautou* (care of the self) introduces the importance of contemplation in self-understanding and self-knowledge. It also sets the practice of contemplation beyond the individual self and engages with the understanding that the teacher self exists relationally, with others and within a politicised setting (socially, economically, and ethically). *Epimeleia heautou* also calls the teacher to recognise that the teacher self is situated in a complex structure – of narratives and definitions – that blurs the lines between their work and themselves as individuals.

The role of *parrhesia* not only highlights the importance of language in self-articulation but of the politics involved in expressions of the self. The created self is a personal exercise and thus requires articulation to engage with the politics of its representation. Poetry writing is itself what Foucault (1983) terms the 'art of the self' and presents the opportunity for teachers to share what

constitutes their authenticities. Within *parrhesia*, the teachers become active agents in the narrativisation of teacher authenticities, creating the knowledge and power bind.

The subjective nature of the self, in itself, brings into focus the question of truth, and what truth research using poetic inquiry can produce. The two techniques that critical authenticity requires involves the communication of truth through thoughtful deliberation and poetic expression. Thus, if *epimeleia heautou* requires the care of oneself and of others, then the truth we communicate about ourselves engages with this injunction. The poems in this collection express a particular truth about the authenticities of the teachers that wrote them. There is an ineluctable relationship between their conceptions of their teacher selves and their personal selves, extending the metaphor of poetry as the 'material of life' and underpinning the idea of poetic inquiry as an experiential methodology. It is my hope that the reader's relationship with the poems will reveal insights into what constitutes the teachers' selves and that they will enjoy this opportunity to engage with the poems without the researcher's analytical frame.

The risk inherent in truth-speaking is undeniable. For these teachers, the first risk they took was to sign up to the project. For many, this is an act punishable in the countries where they work, if it were found out that they had participated in sessions where they could possibly criticise their governments' activities. For all the participants, it was the risk of finally articulating, in a form that is shareable, their innermost fears, anxieties about their identities, sense of value and purpose, as both humans and teachers. It was the constitution of themselves by their own techniques instead of accepting the techniques of others – whether they be techniques of power or of knowledge, that they feared most. Such self-creation, as Foucault termed it, also constitutes the risk of a self-realisation that one may not be prepared for. This unpreparedness for the insights that a critical self-exploration might reveal for the participants can be felt in some of the poems. In workshop 3, participants blame the system within which they work for this distance between themselves and their self – *the detritus strewn in the way of teachers' work* – which takes up the space necessary for a critical re-engagement with one's essence. The risk all the

participants took was the act of writing, of bringing into form the idea of resistance in spite of the political pressures that surround their existence, rupturing the pervading order of the narrative on teacher authenticity. They took the risk of hope, that their utterances, writing of themselves, will temper the power game and allow them a space in the arena. They became active entities.

As a poet and the facilitator of those workshops, I was continually humbled not only by the vulnerability of the teachers' words but also by their honesty and insight. As a teacher, I found my own anxieties mirrored in the poems that they offered, and my anguish justified in theirs. The idea of the conflicting self resonates throughout the poems in this collection. One of the teachers compared the teacher self to the character Canio in Ruggero Leoncavallo's *Pagliaci Veriso* Opera. In the famous aria played by a tenor, Canio deliberates the challenge of playing a clown while he was in fact, terribly heartbroken by both his wife's betrayal and his murdering of her and her lover. This metaphor of the mask is extended in many directions in the workshop poems, but we can also glean this clearly in this summary from the zoom chat of the first workshop, of what the teachers said they would put in their teacher bag:

A sense of humour  
A slice of humble pie  
A poem made of silk.  
A bag big enough to fit everything  
Patience  
Their beat-up guitar  
A whistle  
A string and a wire  
A laser pen  
A treasure chest  
A wallet of motivational quotes  
Enough hands to hold every child  
An eraser  
Roses



Character accents for reading aloud

A to-do list that is never completed

Bags from under their eyes

Their biggest fake smile.

There is hope in all of their words, an indefatigable spirit of determination to continue to keep alive their altruistic reasons for becoming teachers; even within the political dramas that unfold constantly in their work. This collection speaks to many things but most importantly, illustrates the complex tapestry that is the teacher self.

Read, Listen, Bear witness.

## Dedication

To the teachers who left their footprints in this sand of time.

## **The living soul of things**

Remember a time when everything was still.  
immobility, what a strange notion;  
oftentimes desired to savour every single moment;  
oftentimes despised, exacerbating every single painful moment.

Remember a time when everything was moving,  
twirling, making you feel like a child playing in the playground,  
spinning around, trying to catch your breath,  
excited, mesmerized, happy.

Life, moving, still. bright, nebulous.

Control, relaxing;  
Experience, living in the moment;  
Anguish, feeling serene;  
Action, feeling the gravity station you.

Introspecting, meditating, just living;  
Life a colourful blank, white page.

Intoxicated and innocent little souls,  
singing the song fashioned a long time ago;  
singing the song blossoming like a spring bud.  
Inspirationally living and experiencing  
These little souls aligned with mine,  
travelling together through time and space,  
leaving their mark and changing the other along the way.

Let my soul go back to my childhood innocent years;  
Oh, my dear little souls, look at my inner child!

Constantly redefining,  
reflecting,  
repurposing,  
recalibrating,  
reposing.

The living soul of things;  
what an inspiring image.

Stillness, motion;  
interchangeable ideals.

Teaching.

Learning.

Living.

Life.

## **Still Cool**

There was a teacher who was also a mum,  
So, she went home, and sang and was dumb,  
I am not at school,  
But I am still cool,  
She said to herself while pouring some rum.

## **Paddling in New Waters**

After years, I still walk into the classroom feeling  
    As if I were mapping unknown territories  
From the riverbank, into the uncertain,  
With tentative steps, and a faint sense of  
Foreboding, which I try to suppress. Feelings  
Dwarfed by a paradoxical confidence  
Of discovery, and somewhat a naive faith  
To overcome initial fears, among eyes  
That look with intensity that both stimulates.

And disconcerts. That is how I begin my days.

    Like a person who barely knows how to swim, launching  
A canoe next to lapping water, looking into  
Green islands of tall grass, where the blue-backed,  
Orange-bellied kingfisher dashes in and out  
Of cord grass, the colour of sunset upside down,  
Which disorients and fascinates. I hear  
Chirping chicks well hidden; their black-faced  
Parents guard the territory by swirling in mid-air,  
Playfully riding the wind—an element much larger,  
Much scarier, in my mind. They remind me.

Of the necessity, the banality of learning how to  
Fly. For birds. Astonishing feats performed  
With apparent ease, but every minute a fight for  
Life. So, what if after years I'm still fighting too,  
Among curious eyes that make me self-conscious,  
And wondering what may happen, yet  
Not to know completely. I am that small bird  
Flapping hard against the current, and dashes in  
And out of air and water, exposed to nature's forces,  
But still manages to want to keep going. And if

humble love for adventure can be an example,  
A comparison, then let it be that I keep walking back  
Into the lives of younger, tenderer beings, and  
Venture with them into invisible, new waters.

## Shirt Signing

After the leaver's assembly,

You asked if I'd sign your shirt.

"The last few years have raced by,"

You observed with a wry grin.

Obligingly, I took the proffered Sharpie.

Joked about how you'd finally remembered to bring a pen to school.

Its pungent smell stinging my eyes.

Then, searching the once blank canvas

Which was now filled:

Countless names,

Heartfelt messages,

In-jokes,

I located a patch of white

On your shoulder.

But there was no pearl of wisdom,

No nugget of advice

No final lesson

I could offer you.

Instead, I simply wished you luck

Which seemed both inadequate and completely apt



Before offering the Sharpie back to you.

Grinning once more, you took the baton

Firmly in your hand

And I watched you

Race into the distance.

## **Articulation is resistance**

I? I am no one, nothing

An ant in a colony

Of ants climbing over other ants

To obtain diminishing psychic returns

For reasons I know not why

Other than instinctive human nature

What value lies in nothingness?

Existence (awareness of self and other)

Freedom to choose

The abandonment of indoctrination

Cherishing moderate pleasures

(And maybe the facilitation of same in others

Without conflicting with their inherent values)

Attention to process, not outcome: the Zen of being

To just be free, engaged, with limited attachment to validation

I query whether others will ask

How (or why?)

They comprehend their own nothingness

A fruitless endeavour

Constraints that bind are clear

A ringing bell of rigidity

An inner despotism of egotism

Labyrinths of bureaucracy

Strangled innovation

Makes the nothingness pulse

With growing derision

Causing spiritual exhaustion

And what of change?

Unavoidable (Yet not without extreme battles in preserving How The World Works)

Will acceptance of chaos conquer human nature?

Will established structures find holistic cohesion?

Will I stomach playing a part?

To quote Bartleby: "I'd prefer not to".

### **A couplet**

The enlightenment of being well taught

Is a thing that is not easily bought.

## **GROWING UP**

The first time I saw you my heart went pitter patter

Dark hair, piercing eyes, the eyes of an old soul

You hardly cried

Adventure was your name

I want to see the pigs

Can I feed the chickens

Neighbour, what's that you eating?

I does eat that too

Bags of that was left on the steps for you

You grew up and you smiled, and the world smiled with you

Manners maketh woman

Today I shed a tear as you took to the sky

In that big red and white metal bird

My baby is off to the land of our 'Colonial Masters'

Fare well my love as you seek out new adventures

Smile and the world smiles with you

Remember, manners maketh woman

She is all grown up.

## **Stephanie**

This project has birthed deep thought in the partition of my life.

How I see myself moves

from a single human to a teacher human.

That kind of human is different.

That kind of human is changing.

That kind of human cannot be belligerent.

So, my heart needs to be soft, mending.

## **Rainbow Road Haiku**

Like Richard Of York

(by Frost's Yellow Wood), footsteps

Gave Battle In Vain

## **Just Their Teacher**

On to the next lesson!

Let's go!

But I am mourning too don't you know?

Just calculate the hours then you will see why my heart is still aching years after they have been deceased.

I often think of them.

Not only as my kids, my learners, and my players but I think of them as brothers, sisters, nieces, nephews, cousins, grandchildren, and most of all

A child of a mourning mother.

A child of a shuttered father.

I am just the teacher, right?

Time for the next class to enrol.

Having to transfer my love and care unto another soul.

At times I can still hear their laughter.

At times I can still see those eager-for-life eyes.

At times I can still smell their deodorant as a walk down the passages

And I can still feel my heart sink when I think of those messages...

I am just the teacher, right?

Time for the next class to enrol.

Having to transfer my love and care unto another soul.



## Question

How was I hatched?

I raised my wing and waved it and  
my shell was soon dispatched.

From where have I flown?

My fledgling self knew everything and  
now I know I don't.

What have I seen?

Our nestlings chirruping, "Feed us!" while  
we fly as go-betweens.

What have I heard?

The quacks, clucks, coos, caws, hoots, and squawks of  
orchestras of birds.

Who do I guide?

Robins, ibises, eagles, falcons:  
birds from far and wide.

What do I feel?

The energy from beating wings with  
each new flight revealed.

To where will I fly?

Where chickens, eggs, and humans too ask  
who came first... and why?

## Calorie Counting

How many thousand brain calories

would you require to resolve  
the trickiest mystery?

How many thousand muscle calories

would you require to climb  
the tallest and most rugged mountain?

How many thousand wisdom calories

would you require to walk  
across the slipperiest path?

How many thousand loveful, thoughtful, and careful calories

did you employ to reach out to me,  
and call me by name,

And I woke up from my slumber,

and found that there was still enough  
thousand calories of hope left  
to propel my thoughts into the future

## **Life is not a Race.**

Life is a walk in the park.

Others may pass you, as you stop to smell the roses,

But they may have no interest in the roses;

They may have been walking so fast, they missed them;

Or they may have been trying to get to the pond as fast as they could.

You have no interest in the pond,

So, you stroll on by and smile.

There are so many beautiful things to see, places to explore and people  
to meet in the park,

and you have a lifetime to do so.

So go at your own pace.

Stop and smell the roses.

Stop and listen to the birds.

Pass by the pond if you want to.

Life is not race.

Life is a walk in the park.

## **Un-Masked**

Resilient and brave

No need to hide away in a cave

Freedom is a gift

## **Teacher/student relationship**

Little steps approaching,

the beauty of a gesture and the deepness of a glance,

I recognise the Word in it, its laws, its chaos.

I stare in amazement and like a thirsty soul, I long for more.

But there is a pause, a moment full of expectation.

It is my turn to play magic.

Then, a smile, a leap of vivid desire

and we walk together.

## **I am**

I am a teacher,

I actually mean to say

I am an actress

I am a coach

I am a mentor

I am a counsellor

I am a mother

I am a friend

But....

I am also a daughter.

I am a sister.

I am a cousin.

I am a niece.

I am an aunt.

I am a mother.

I am a teacher.

But...

Do you see that I am worth more than what I am earning?

While I am teaching, I am always learning.

Trying my best to make this world a better place

because for this generations it takes more than teaching out of a briefcase.

But...

Yes, I am a teacher that is who I am on paper.

But when I say: "I am a teacher."

I wish you can hear I am out loud...



## **A mirror held up**

To reflect on me, is going to be, the biggest challenge of all

Wider than I should be and only five two tall!

Simplistic as this sounds to read, this description here of me

My point I make, more simply, of deep insecurity.

If I were my friend and me not me, my truths would be more kind

But here I sit and struggle to unpick my complex mind.

So, friend, who are you and who am I? – your values, your beliefs?

And how has this been affected by now interwoven grief?

What have you learnt through your children, diagnosed late with ASD?

Who taught you this, and ADD, is long part of you who's me

And when shielding did you change, or did it intensify who's you?

Do you even recognise who you are now after all you have come through?

Dear friend you are the gold you know, the heart of love and care

Your values remain, in all you do, to please, support, be there.

You care too much and aim to please, yet these quirks are who you are

Reflection good, though harmony and acceptance are, in reach, a bit too far.

Artistic chaos hampers function, where you need an ordered mind,

A constant thread of balancing, a solution you can't find.

It means, in life and poem here, rambling thoughts, attention short

Not how you wish your life to be, nor your lessons to be taught.

A heart so big, the need to do the best that you can be

Is something you can't do otherwise; it is innately you that's me

The flip side is exhaustion, absolute energy deplete

No halfway house, no consistency, "I'm done, am out. Am beat".

You need this need, to care, to be, do something meaningful

To change, rethink, do something else, tis in-conceivable

Just cherish what you do, and love create inspire and share

The need you have to let all know there's someone here who cares.

## **Gifts**

Spring recalls our  
indefatigable gifts  
here freely  
given.

**We are strong, we are crazy, we are free!**

It is overwhelming how hard life can get

You grow up, and adulthood takes your dreams away

But mine are here still fighting to stay

I feel the teacher inside will just not let

My colleagues look at me as if I was crazy

And they start to open, and fear shows

But then freedom fights back and knows

Because inside light is definitely not lazy

And I can see them thinking, eyes get wetter

And you can see their souls bright and pure

They teach and they love, and they feel secure

Because their goal is to make those little lives better

But who are they, is something they don't know

Very different realities appear

And they clash all full of fear

But passion is the one who leads the flow

And they end up collaborating, without thinking, almost blind

Sharing, building, and learning

Talking, crying, and feeling

And they know that teaching is all about the journey behind

And it all wrapped up in those little smiles back full of joy

curiosity triggers hope, power and we enjoy

even when restrictive rules our dreams may destroy

we will not let them because we are strong, we are crazy, we are free!

### **Out of hours**

The Moto GP is here in Jerez

The sound of the bikes all day and all night

I wish they would stop, can't hear myself think

Oh, peace never comes, the buzzing like wasps

What joy! Within a week the fairs do start.

Seville, Jerez, The Port of Saint Mary.

Begin no thought of work, study – not them,

Exams, what's that? Never! Just contrary.

## **Children Still**

They tell me of the stars and mountains.

The tales of their cities

As their student now I listen

We're never too old for stories.

## **10 in a bag**

I will put in my teacher bag

2 full teeth smiles

3 questioning head tilts

4 silent approving nods

5 reasons to hold my response

6 stickers for super students

7 excited “welldones”

8 adult professions

9 lives, and

10 reasons to be grateful to do it all again



## **A whole new game**

Create, fulfil, destroy, undo, and rest.

Divide the space, confirm the time, and think:

Can I engulf the secret path with zest?

You fight, you dance, you bow; you leave the rink.

Divine, ancestral spirit speak to me,

Unravel things, obscure the fake, exclaim:

Untold charades, tales and myths CAN flee!

Recast the spell and start afresh the game.

Your heart, your soul, they inspire me so much.

Invade all spaces and clear your wild mind.

Invade all foreign grounds, love them as such.

Come back again and teach us, be so kind!

Old weaving patterns shall be left aside,

react, rekindle the flame, ignore the tide.

## Hope

Where in this world that oft divides  
Can true compassion show its face,  
I doubted that I'd ever see but I was wrong.  
I've seen its place.  
It's there on every teacher's brow.  
In each and every teacher's eyes.  
Joined by a common foe,  
Defeat is not a word they know.

## ***Extra Baggage***

*When days become too hard for me to bear,  
And ghosts of experiences past haunt present days,  
To those without this weight you do compare;  
Your flaws and insecurities erased.  
But then you are faced with a younger self.  
A lotus struggling to blossom and to bloom.  
Feeling they're going to be left on the shelf.  
They turn themselves into a bomb. Kaboom!  
It's then I realise why I have this baggage;  
It's for students with their own – I can help to manage.*

## **An open window on a rainy day**

I will put in my bag as many question marks as there are.  
So that my students can ask whatever questions,  
And when they run out, they can simply reach into the bag  
and find that more are there still.  
So that they know that I have many questions—like they do,  
and I, like them, are also thinking hard and trying hard  
to find answers.

I will put in my bag blank sketch papers,  
So that we can write and draw and make  
origami with them. So that they always have  
something to fill with laughter, stories,  
wonders, and a different view.

I will put in my bag pads and bandages,  
So that when they fall, they get up quickly,  
and it doesn't hurt so bad. So that they can run  
as fast as they want, and know that there are no  
injuries and mistakes that cannot be patched up.

I will put in my bag a deep breath, so that when the clock says time  
To move on, I can have the confidence to slow down.  
And keep trying to be true to the journey of thoughts, and not to  
Rush to get to the 'right answer', as it kills the spark  
In children's eyes.

My bag is made of indigo and violet.  
It is made of fluffy soft merino.  
It's warm if you hug it, and puzzling to look at.  
It's made of the ups and downs of a busy  
School day. It smells of coffee, plants,  
And an open window on a rainy day.

## **Telling lies**

The emphasis on summative assessment/Encourages submission of excrement/The lies we tell/As we go through Hell/Are to the learners' detriment/You don't fatten a pig by constantly weighing it!

## **Giving all to life**

Life gives back to life.

It is about recreating and building life,

Is life comfortable for you?

Are others at home with life?

Then think of one thing,

Everyone must be safe and happy with themselves.

When we give to life, life gives it back to us.

Give a life to little ones and let them grow,

Grow to appreciate and love life.

Then they in turn give life to others and

Together, a better world is created for all

To live and cherish for this is what we are made for.

How pleasant that would be!

## Ough

letters can be funny things  
squiggles linked to sounds  
each one is distinct and true  
linked ideas abound

o

could be a circle  
an exclamation  
hole  
or whole

u

perhaps is short for you  
a lazy a  
a rounded v  
or potential energy

g

a descender  
an a with a tail  
hard in big and soft in gentle  
and both when engaged

h

a fence in upper case

and just like breathing out

silent when partly honest

dropped so what's heard becomes erred

together these four letters will explore like astronauts

combining with the alphabet they can form all sorts of thoughts

they join to make a range of sounds this quartet and their crew

their language-based adventures will expand as they pass through

they may get stuck from time to time and feel like turning off

but when they scoff no more they could climb right out of this trough

we search for words to make us heard and struggle roundabout

yet if we keep a lookout we'll find harvest after drought

messed up cheered up mixed up cleared up half full half empty cups

bite on a lemon or swallow some sugar when life brings you its hiccoughs

there's lots on show to stunt your growth don't stop when you should go

and and also and nevertheless contend with but and although



two letters get squeezed out a bit, but they're made of awesome stuff  
you'll find them both in every quiz and quartz is abundant enough

it's tough though to pass through and be thorough with our tetragraph  
sisters and brothers

let us smile as we flow with our telegraphed messages within and beyond  
all boroughs

Each of us a letter is -

outlaws, underlings, guardians, herds.

Encouragement can give us fizz -

becoming more as words.

## Acknowledgements

To all the teachers who gave up their time and committed their minds to this project. I appreciate the courage it took to open up your souls and share pieces of yourselves. Thank you for your consistency of spirit and the gift of your words.

A big thank you to my supervisors Amanda Fulford and Jo Albin-Clark for their continuing support of this project.

Alba Newmann's enigmatic exploration of the rhizomatic nature of poetry echoes throughout this collection and through the teachers' poems, we get the distinct feeling of what Newmann meant by the intertextuality of place and importance of naming in their review of Williams Carlos Williams *Paterson* (2006).

Michel Foucault's *The ethics of the concern for self as practice of freedom* (1983/1997) provides a rich exploration on the notion of the self as a creation. My discussion of the created self, as evidenced by the project and in the poems submitted to this collection are inspired by his comments on techniques of the self. These ideas are extended in his discussions on the Greek philosophies of *epimeleia heautou* and *parrhesia* in *Fearless Speech* (2001); both ideologies providing the framework for this project's conception of the philosophy of critical authenticity. The view of the created self is extended by Frederic Gros (2005) to examine the potential of self-articulation in forestalling the apparatuses of power (or knowledge – research/researchers) in determining one's concept of self.

Judson Jerome in *Poetry: Premeditated art* (1968), refers to poetry as the material of life, which underpins its use in empirical research on the self and for this project. There is, of course, the question of truth in such self-articulation, a subject that Adam Vincent (2018) and Carl Leggo (2008) explore in detail. Their conclusion that poetic expression supports the thoughtful deliberation that is necessary in self-exploration and articulation, is something that this collection embodies deeply. Finally, in *Can We Organise Courage?*, Wim Vandekerckhove and Suzan Langenberg's idea of the 'knowledge and power bind' explores the possibility of parrhesia in mitigating the power game

in organisational praxis, allowing me to explore this as it relates to the narrativisation of teacher authenticity and their identities within encroaching neo-liberal processes in education.

## Chapter summary

I am tempted to ask; what emotions have these poems raised in you? What questions have they caused you to ask? And/or what type of witness have they invited you to become? But that might entail another research project and a whole new set of ethics application. Rhetorically then, what thoughts have they caused you?

As stated in the chapter overview, this collection makes a case for poetic inquiry as an experiential methodology and it is hoped that by putting the poems first, you have been given the opportunity to make your own judgement on the data before engaging with my deliberations and analysis.

The following chapter will refocus the thesis toward the reflexive thematic analysis of the poetic data. The analysis will concentrate mainly around themes from the plenary poems, making links between the themes highlighted by teachers in the project plenary workshop with the research questions and aims of the project. Where applicable, the discussion will connect to other poems from the workshop in the appendix.

As stated in session 9 of the methodology chapter, the reflexive thematic analysis, using the philosophical framework of critical authenticity, will explore the teachers' poems within the notion of the self as a political entity, including the intersections of roles, identities, and place. The teachers' poems will also be explored as *parrhesia*, and the analysis will endeavour to explore the function language plays in expressive action.

## Chapter 5: Data Analysis: A Critical Teacher Self

### Overview

I hope that the opportunity to read through the poetry collection, presented before the analysis, has allowed you to experience the poems as they were intended by the participants. This chapter begins the reflexive thematic analysis of the plenary poems, engaging with the themes highlighted by the teachers themselves in the plenary workshop but also exploring individual poems in the poetry collection to examine those liminalities more closely.

To introduce the chapter, I explain how the themes were derived and the motivations behind including participants in the first stage of the thematic analysis. Following this is a section on becoming; which illustrates the process involved in the project, and how teachers arrived at the poems they wrote and how the approach of a critical authenticity supported these processes. The argument that a critical approach to the self is social justice is reiterated here.

Subsequently, each theme is evaluated and analysed in detail and within each analysis are personal reflections of my own readings and the impact the poems have on me. I use quotes and summary poems throughout this chapter – as a way of maintaining that poetic state throughout the thesis (Faulkner, 2020). As a chapter that analyses themes that teachers highlighted and discussed, it demonstrates to us what constitutes the teacher self and it what ways the teacher self operates in the world.

### Introduction

In preparation for the plenary workshop, teachers (participants) were asked to go back to the Google Classroom for the project, to read through the poems they submitted and those of others. At the plenary session, we discussed what the poems reveal and what themes they highlight, followed by another session of poetry writing, where participants wrote their final poems. They were told to ensure their plenary poems encapsulate their self-explorations and discovery and the expressive actions they feel they must make.

The purpose of involving participants in the initial process of analysis foregrounds the ethos of the project and demonstrates to participants that their

opinions matter in how the analysis is shaped. Most importantly, this involvement mitigates the power dynamics between researcher and participant and has allowed me, as the researcher, to imagine what other interpretations the poems may have (Rice, 2015).

Reading and discussing the poems with participants also supports a key stage in reflexive thematic analysis – familiarisation (Braun *et al.*, 2022). Due to the subversive nature of poetry, the individual, followed by the communal reading of the poems and the discussions produced what Coogler *et al* (2021:259) refer to as ‘poetic suturing’. In the plenary session, teachers could discuss their poems and those of others, reviewing the intentions of the writers, the underlying political import of the language and the possibilities offered by the poems. The plenary poems, written after these readings and discussion, illustrate the interconnectedness of the teachers’ ideals, experiences, and self-constructions. Following this, we repeated the same process for the plenary poems, asking similar questions about the poets’ intentions, meaning and the feelings of freedom that writing of this nature allows. At this stage, I asked what particular themes the participants felt were revealed through these summary poems. Participants identified the following themes as being central to the plenary poems:

- The idea that the teacher self is constructed and evolving; -
- The teacher self is an individual evolution/construction/pursuit; -
- There is a strong sense of care of others within teacher self-constructions; -
- This sense of care is evolving not static; -
- The pervasive fear of organisational power and a frustration with the system; -
- Determination to articulate the teacher position is seen as resistance; -
- Articulation is owning – the speaking truth about oneself is liberatory, giving justice to oneself.

The second stage of reflexive thematic analysis involves identifying themes from the dataset. By giving participants the freedom to suggest the themes before engaging in the process myself, I could ensure that I did not assume their intentions and that I then had a set of themes with which to compare my own conclusions with. My own coding processes focused on the research questions and the plenary poems to identify how the poems respond to the research questions and what themes are relevant. Interestingly, the themes identified by teachers in the plenary session overlapped with the themes generated through my own process of selection. We may visualise this overlap, including how the themes identified by the participants are summarised in my own themes in the table below.

Table 5: Intersection Of Themes And Research Questions

Themes (Participants)	Research questions	Themes (Researcher)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The idea that the teacher self is constructed and evolving; - (1)</li> <li>• The teacher self is an individual evolution/construction/pursuit; - (2)</li> <li>• There is a strong sense of care of others within teacher self-constructions; - (3)</li> <li>• This sense of care is evolving not static; - (1/3)</li> <li>• The pervasive fear of organisational power and a</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is teacher authenticity plausible as a concept? What makes up teachers' authenticities?</li> <li>• How can a critical process support teachers in articulating their authenticities?</li> <li>• How can poetry writing and sharing facilitate critical authenticity?</li> <li>• How can poetry workshops provide educative and educational opportunities for teachers to explore their authenticities and professional identities?</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A multifaceted self</li> <li>2. Individuality and uniqueness</li> <li>3. Care and Connectedness</li> <li>4. Resistance to and Critique of power</li> </ol>

<p>frustration with the system; - (4)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Determination to articulate the teacher position is seen as resistance; - (2/4)</li> <li>• Articulation is owning – the speaking truth about oneself is liberatory, giving justice to oneself. (2/4)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How can the sharing of participant-voiced poems contribute to constructive resistance to neo-liberal narrativization of teacher selves?</li> </ul>	
--	---	--

I will use my themes to head the discussions in the analysis in this chapter. The previous chapter responded to the research question ‘what makes up teachers’ authenticities’ in the form of a poetry collection and to a large extent, illustrated how a critical process can support teachers in articulating their authenticities. The poetry collection also illustrates that poetry workshops can provide educative and educational opportunities for teachers to explore their authenticities and professional identities and can yield very insightful reflections on the teacher self. That collection has responded to three of the research questions in many ways. The poetry collection preceded this chapter with the aim of illustrating the function of an experiential methodology in reading research data. By inserting the collection before my analysis, the reader has the option to make up their own minds about what constitutes the teacher self, and to what extent a philosophical idea of authenticity applies to teacher identity. These insights are gleaned from the poems without the benefit of the researcher’s analytical lens.

In this chapter, I will begin to explore the poetic data to interrogate the notion of teacher authenticity as a plausible concept, what teachers say constitutes their authenticity, and if participant-voiced poems can contribute to



constructive resistance to neo-liberal narrativization of teacher selves. The application of reflexive thematic analysis is a deliberate effort to retain the integrity of the participants' poems and to acknowledge the subjectivity of my own reading of the poems.<sup>23</sup>

## Becoming: Context and Process

*We leave our footprints in the sands of time and in the hearts of students/ where they stay/ and some parts are passed from generation to generation/ others blown away/ barely visible/ in the debris and the noise of things.*<sup>24</sup>

This section provides a context for the data analysis, and it is aimed to remind the reader of the main arguments that prompted this project and the key ideas that the analysis will be focusing on. The above quote is a found poem compiled from participants' chat interaction in the third workshop of the project. Although the chat transcripts are not submitted as part of the data in this thesis for the purpose of maintaining the anonymity of the participants, they continue to provide interesting insights into teachers' narrativization of themselves.

The question, whether teacher authenticity is plausible as a concept underscores the research questions of this project and interrogates the notion of a homogenous teacher self. It also questions the commonly accepted notion in the literature on teacher authenticity that a set of values of authenticity, aligned with government policies on teacher identity, can be empirically applied to test teachers' authenticity. It is not that the set of values enumerated by researchers on teacher authenticity and the government's Teacher Standards (DfE, 2021) are not desirable, professional, or even morally germane (researchers like Kreber et al (2010); Johnson and LaBelle (2017); and De Bruyckere and Kirschner (2017); to mention a few). However, the problem with homogenous systems of reference is that they tend to speak for all, 'ignoring the importance of personal impulse and desire' (Dewey 1997:70).

---

<sup>23</sup> See the methodology chapter for an extended explanation of the reflexive thematic analysis, the modes of practice presented by major thinkers in the field and a detailed exploration of why it is applied in the data analysis for this project.

<sup>24</sup> A found poem from participants' poems in workshop 3 chat transcript. A found poem is a poem written from words and phrases from transcripts, field notes *etcetera*.

In the introduction to this thesis, power is defined as communal (Scott, 2001). I also argue that research on teacher authenticity, as well as other representations of teachers as non-embodied selves, contributes to the ideological hegemony that exercises power on the definition of the teacher self. As stated in the introduction, research and narratives that categorise teacher authenticity into dualistic terms (authentic versus inauthentic), can be said to serve the 'good teacher *versus* bad teacher' dictum and can work as part of the 'structural violence' that diminishes and erases the voices of teachers (Edling, 2015: 404). Such simplistic dualism, especially in research, is in itself short-sighted, considering the many layers that contribute to form an individual's self. Many of the studies explored in the literature review on teacher authenticity take for granted this multi-layered self, even when their studies consider the environment as a significant element in self-construction (Plust, *et al.*, 2020).

For instance, Carusetta and Cranton's (2004, 2005b) research into authenticity of faculty members describes authentic teachers as those able to separate themselves from the norms of the institution and to act according to their own values. Individuals who do not seem to be able to do so are said to be towing the line of standardised processes and are therefore inauthentic in their actions. Such summation brings into question the point of standardisation in the first place and the whole narrative on the benefits of organisational culture and the notion of shared values. As the literature review illustrates, there exists contrasting layers of what constitutes teacher authenticity and to what purpose such categorisation serves. Questions abound, such as, can teachers follow due process at work even when they do not believe in them and still retain their authenticity? Can teachers reconstruct themselves to adapt to their working environments or the demands of their roles? Is it possible that what the literature calls 'teacher authenticity' is in fact a roundabout acquiescence to standardised frameworks of accountability and therefore more to do with government policies on teachers' standards instead of the existence of a frameable self for a group of professionals?

As previously stated in the methodology chapter, the aim of the critical authenticity project was to rethink the concept of teacher authenticity and to

create opportunities to reconfigure it philosophically. The project was also designed to give the narrative power back to teachers, by inviting them to interrogate, reimagine and share, in their own words, what the teacher self looks like. Critical authenticity, as a concept, combines the two philosophies of *epimeleia heautou* (care of the self) and *parrhesia* (speaking truth about oneself and to power) (Foucault, 1999). I argue that critical authenticity, combined with poetic inquiry as an empirical method, can create an environment within which the project could engage with teachers and support teachers to conceptualise and articulate their selves. I also argue that, beyond this project, poetic inquiry with teachers can help realise forms of critical authenticity more generally, and I present this in more detail in the conclusion of this thesis. Thus, with the teachers' own words, we could begin to explore what a teacher self might be, how these selves navigate organisational power and expectations and what politics are at play in the homogenous framing of teachers.

The notion of critical authenticity in this project also recognises the political role language plays in the representation of people, as well as the game play that evolves around teachers' identities (Ball, 2016). As stated throughout this thesis, a critical authenticity goes beyond Foucault in that, it summarises the problem of power and its mechanisations within self-politics and returns the power into the hands of the individual. Poetry is used in this project as a highly personalised form of writing, which 'can help us pay attention to ... the quiet work of stitching together everyday life' (Lyon, 2008:81). The work of 'paying attention' is a necessary part of the activity of self-knowledge and self-articulation. Foucault *et al.*, (2021:24) refers to this activity as a 'culture of the self', which involves a refocus to observing the patterns and evolutions of one's beliefs, values, and relationships, then to articulate them (in writing or otherwise form). It is also a way of 'reactivating for oneself the truths one needed' (Foucault *et al.*, 2021: 23).

The exercise of *epimeleia heautou* is not only a pedagogical function, but also a critical one and requires what Foucault (1997) refers to as know-how – *techne*. But how can we facilitate this critical state in individuals who, as they

observed, are surrounded by ‘...debris...’ and ‘... the noise of things’?<sup>25</sup> This is why the philosophical idea of critical authenticity requires poetic inquiry, ‘the use of poetry as/in/for research’ (Faulkner, 2020), to provide the practical techniques for activating this ‘culture of the self’ (Foucault *et al.*, 2021:24). I think of poetic inquiry as an invitation for both researcher and participants. For the teachers who participated in the project, the exercises were not a matter of finding themselves, but of rediscovering themselves amidst the noise of self-doubt and fear and the pressures of neo-liberal workplace culture. For the researcher, the workshops were illuminating and provided insight into how critical methodologies could provide a real space for others, the teachers’ engagement and words were humbling, both in their honesty and modesty.

As the philosophical framework sets out in the methodology chapter, the first stage of the practice of critical authenticity starts with the work of examining what makes up one’s self. Within workshop settings, teachers were supported and encouraged to quieten the noise around them – personally and professionally – so they could concentrate on concerning themselves with themselves, becoming *epimeleisthai*’ (Foucault *et al.*, 2021: 24). The found poem at the beginning of this section summarises the quiet observation of teachers in the third workshop, the impact of their work on students and society but also belies the disillusionment that underscores this work. Critical authenticity is the approach that frames the discussion here. Within the practice of *epimeleia heautou*, we are able to ask questions about process – how teachers arrived at these self-conceptualisations and what the processes allowed them to do.

The second (and more critical) part of critical authenticity lies in the articulation of one’s understanding of self. This calls for teachers to become (*parrhesiastes*), embodying the risks that are associated with the act of speaking the truth about oneself, but doing so nevertheless (Foucault, 1999). Through poetic inquiry, teachers could engage, first, in the critical process of knowing oneself (and others), then of speaking the truth to power.

---

<sup>25</sup> See the found poem at the beginning of this section which summarises the responses in Workshop 3 chat transcript.

We have seen this boldness of spirit exemplified in the poems in the collection. The subsequent sections examine these articulations and explorations of the teacher self within the themes identified with the participants in the plenary session and through my own readings. The analysis includes reflections on the use of language and the importance of context in the conceptualisation of the teacher self.

### Individuality and Uniqueness

To examine how teachers' poems illustrate the idea of the individual and unique teacher self, I will focus on four poems from the collection: *Still Cool*, *Children Still*, *Out of Hours* and *Articulation is Resistance*. Individuality and uniqueness are complex philosophical themes that touch upon questions about the nature of the self, human nature, identity, ethics, epistemology, and the relationship between the individual and society. Within existentialism the individual is seen as a unique and autonomous being and existentialists argue that each person is responsible for creating their own meaning and identity, emphasizing the importance of individuality and self-determination. Two of the most notable proponents of this idea of the self-determined individual are Jean-Paul Sartre and Friedrich Nietzsche, who emphasized the significance of embracing one's uniqueness and making authentic choices in life (Roof, 2014). The question of whether human beings have inherent uniqueness or are shaped by external factors remains a central issue in philosophical inquiry. I provide a more detailed literature review of this in Chapter two. Although this project recognises that the self is relational and agrees with Foucault's (1997a) idea of the constructed self; I recognise in the poems a uniqueness in teachers' conceptualisations of their self. There also exists some act of affirmation, determination in these articulations, which demonstrates the teachers' reactions to power and the ways in which poetry allows them to articulate their autonomies.

For instance, the poem *Articulation is Resistance* opens with a strong assertion of individuality. The declaration in the first line 'I am no one, nothing', challenges the notion of defining oneself solely based on societal roles and expectations. This sets the scene for the teacher to engage in their critique of conformity and the consumerist trends in education, using the imagery of ants

climbing over each other to obtain 'diminishing psychic returns' to reflect their critical observation and understanding and refusal of the status-quo. The overt contemptuous tone which suffuses the poem further demonstrates their resistance to the pervading organisational structure of education, ending with the closing reference to Bartleby's famous quote, 'I'd prefer not to'. Whereas other poems in the collection start from the position that as a teacher, their uniqueness lies here or there, this poem presents a vacuum where the teacher is an individual that could become anyone and anything they want to be, forestalling any suggestion that they may be described by an apparatus of power without their permission.

Are humans inherently good or selfish? The nature of the human being is also a key question within the philosophical inquiry of individuality. For Thomas Hobbes, humans are fundamentally self-interested and driven by a desire for self-preservation, while others, like Jean-Jacques Rousseau, believed that humans are inherently good and authentic in their natural state (Soares, 2018). Ethical theories also support Rousseau's idea of individuality. For instance, Immanuel Kant's deontological ethics emphasizes the inherent worth and dignity of each individual, highlighting the importance of treating others as ends in themselves, not just means to an end (Ibid). There persists a wide assumption that teachers should be generous and self-less (Edling, 2015). The moral directive to care is of course not misplaced and I explore how teachers present this in their poems later on in this chapter. However, understanding one's self-worth and dignity extends to the utilitarian idea of well-being, and we see this also in Mill's political theory on individuality (Lukes, 2006).

Discussions of individuality and uniqueness also have significant social and political implications. Philosophers like John Stuart Mill advocated for individual liberties and the importance of allowing individuals to express their unique perspectives and ideas freely (Soares, 2018). The teacher self as an individual is a significant highlight in the project. Poems from the project that speak to this very clearly do so through a mixed use of metaphors and imageries of place and sound that is both playful yet insistent. As a first of such entry, the Limerick poem *Still Cool* makes use of a combination of

colloquialisms and metaphor to illustrate responsibility and independence. The word 'cool' in the title and poem denotes an individual who is relevant and one who has a contemporary attitude to life. It also speaks to the importance of self-affirmation and the need to maintain a positive self-image amidst various responsibilities. The nouns 'teacher' and 'mum' are juxtaposed here with the idea of a rum drinking woman. This individual is presented as equally exciting, similarly relevant, infused with music ('sang') and games ('dumb'). The final line, 'She said to herself while pouring some rum,' adds an element of relaxation or indulgence to the narrative.

The act of pouring rum may symbolize a moment of unwinding and letting go of the day's stress, further humanizing the teacher-mother-individual figure and revealing her vulnerabilities. This reference to 'rum' is a metaphor for relaxation and implies an individual with autonomy and sense of ownership of their time. It also invites reflections about the complexities of life's various roles and the need for self-acceptance and self-care. There is a sense of the human as one that engages in the practices of freedom (Foucault, 1997). In separating work from home, one may indulge in activities that are expressions of one's autonomy and that bring them a sense of joy and self-possession. The utilitarian perspective, which focuses on maximizing overall happiness, has raised questions about how to balance individual needs with the greater good (Lukes, 2006). The poems in the collection illustrate that for some teachers, balancing their own happiness and self-worth, supports the work they do. A holiday is a necessary departure from the hard work of teaching, the rest and entertainment serving to inspire and reinvigorate the teacher for when they get back to work.

The sense of joy in one's individuality is also echoed in *Out of Hours*. For this teacher, an annual motoring event signals the end of the school term and the beginning of the summer holidays. The complaint in the third and fourth lines is antiphrastic when contrasted with the lines after. The stress, however, is on 'joy' and 'Never!', to illustrate the intention of thinking of nothing work-related, but concerning themselves with their own personal pursuits. *Out of Hours* exudes a sense of freedom and spontaneity and invites readers to consider their desires for rest and balance and moments of liberation from routine and

responsibilities. It prompts contemplation of the balance between leisure and obligations, as well as the importance of embracing joyful moments, linking to the utilitarian ideas of individualism as maximising happiness (Lukes, 2006). In utilitarian philosophy, joy plays a significant role in understanding individuality and well-being. Mill (1975, in McCombs, 1991) posits that the right action is the one that maximizes overall happiness or pleasure and minimizes suffering or pain. Individuality, in the context of utilitarianism, is considered essential because each person's happiness and well-being are crucial components in the overall calculus of maximizing happiness in society.

*Children Still* reminds the reader of the humanity of the teacher, emphasising the teachers' capacity to learn and to be equally inspired by others. The imagery of stars and mountains speak to the exciting world of others, emphasising the sense of wonder that is present in everyone irrespective of their age. This idea of the ageless teacher is also evident in the phrase 'never too old for stories'. This line illustrates the child/learner that is present in everyone, even teachers, and reflects the idea that storytelling is a universal and ageless form of learning, as well as the value of being open to learning from others, regardless of their age. I think the fundamental message here is that everyone needs inspiration and that an inspired individual is one that can inspire others. Beyond the simplicity of the poem is the understanding that leisure is an optimal opportunity to reset and to exercise one's autonomy. It is not selfish to want to be the one to listen (instead of the one telling stories), but, listening to stories may help us engage more with others, learn about them and share our lives.

Epistemological debates involve questions about how we come to know ourselves and the external world. Philosophers like René Descartes and his famous phrase "Cogito, ergo sum" (I think, therefore I am) underscore the importance of individual consciousness as the foundation for knowledge and existence. Philosophers like John Locke and David Hume explored the concept of personal identity and the self and while Locke posited that personal identity is based on consciousness and memory, Hume challenged the notion of a continuous and unchanging self (Soares, 2018). This project submits to Foucault's (1983b) idea of the aesthetic self and follows the understanding



that in the absence of a primordial self, the individual is free to create and re-create themselves. I understand that poetry is one such creative activity and that it can link the individual to their ethos and present the opportunities for 'practices of freedom' (Foucault, 1997b: 284).

In the workshops, one of the recurring conflicts in the teacher self that teachers spoke about was around agency. Teachers said they felt that although their decisions to become teachers were intrinsically motivated, they felt that the system and society in general, do not see them as individuals. The poems speak to a teacher self who possesses individual inclinations – to enjoy their free time, experience joy, learn about others and be supported by others. Such vulnerability of spirit or vitality towards personal pursuits is hardly seen in the literature or media representations of teachers (Edling, 2015). The poems also demonstrate that teachers are more than caretakers or surrogate parents without intellectual import (Shannon *et al.*, 1998) and call for teachers to be seen as also having ambitions and pursuits that extend beyond the workplace. Agamben (2009:17), in examining how educational institutions act as Foucault's apparatus of power states that:

At the foot of each apparatus lies an all-too-human desire for happiness. The capture and subjectification of this desire in a separate sphere constitutes the specific power of the apparatus.

The poems engage with the narrative around work/life balance and teachers' growing agitation for personal growth (Williams, 2017). The idea of personal growth and wellbeing beyond what work offers is central in happiness and wellbeing, seeing oneself as a 'work of art' (Foucault, 1983b:237), having something which brings pleasure and a sense of gratification in one's toil. Joy is a manifestation of pleasure and positive experiences; be they summer fiestas in Spanish cities<sup>26</sup> or listening to children's stories<sup>27</sup>.

The teacher as an individual is a key argument in literature on teacher development, teacher shortages and teacher retention (Sutcher et al, 2019). Poems from the project situate the individual teacher self amid the issues

---

<sup>26</sup> *Out of Hours* (poem no. 20 in the poetry collection)

<sup>27</sup> *Children Still* (poem no. 21 in the poetry collection)

surrounding teacher attrition and the various strike actions by teaching unions in many countries. Availability of personal time is aligned with issues relating to workload and class sizes and the idea that the teacher should be always available. References to personal activities and leisure links to the demands for higher pay, which highlight the concerns that many teachers have about being able to afford a living and one that affords them personal joys.

The poems also highlight the individual teacher self as, though relevant, and capable, still deserving of the support and encouragement of their managers and colleagues. This speaks to issues around senior leadership and management and dignity in the workplace, which is one of the main reasons teachers leave the profession (Sutcher *et al.*, 2019). The poems demonstrate that teachers are individuals with personal dreams, hopes and aspirations and that they are professionals who expect to have personal and leisure time and to be able to afford them. The poems illustrate that a work of art takes time and often-times, money. Both of which teachers feel they do not have enough of (Williams, 2017). There is a sense of determination in these articulations, almost as if, faced with crippling workload and non-competitive pay, teachers will not give up their individual enthusiasm to make life pleasurable for themselves.

I find it interesting that the poems explored in this section ask political and economic questions about personal time and money allocated to teachers yet also illustrate how teachers continue to install their individuality within the complex structures of economic restrictions and workload. The act of focusing solely on one's enjoyment of their free time might seem selfish, but it is in this selfish preoccupation that teachers may renew their sense of self and altruism when they return to work. I find the quiet anger in *Articulation is Resistance* liberating; almost as if the poem gives one permission to refuse to conform to the competitiveness of the system and their 'diminishing returns'. The exuberance of *Out of Hours* makes me want to book a holiday and/or at least plan to take some time off the reading and writing for a while. It promises rest, inspiration and excitement and I get the feeling that a holiday will support my work further, instead of being a waste of time. I have a complete collection of Ursula K. Le Guin's *Earth Sea* stories on my bedside table that I have not

touched in weeks, the poems *Still Cool* and *Children Still* make me want to pour a glass of wine, light some candles, and escape into the mysterious worlds of magicians, mountains, and mystical lands. I believe that for the teachers who wrote these poems, the poems were not only illustrative tropes but a way of giving themselves permission to be individuals and a way of showing determination to remain free of the constraining (and encroaching) demands of power (Ball, 2016).

### A Multi-faceted Self

A multifaceted self refers to the idea that individuals are complex beings with multiple aspects, identities, and dimensions. The concept of a multifaceted self is a rich and multidimensional philosophical idea that challenges traditional notions of identity, consciousness, and human existence (Thagard, 2012). It invites individuals to explore and embrace the diverse aspects of their being, fostering self-discovery, authenticity, and a deeper understanding of what it means to be a complex and unique individual. Within critical authenticity, the idea of the multi-faceted self-responds to the aesthetic practice of the created self (Foucault, 1983). Some of the key philosophical areas where this notion is pervasive include identity and personal identity, existentialism, ethics, and theories on virtue.

The notion of a multifaceted self challenges traditional conceptions of identity as a fixed, singular entity. For philosophers like John Locke and Derek Parfit, the nature of personal identity, and whether identity is based on continuity of consciousness, memory, or some other criteria is a question of debate (Beck, 2006). The idea of a multifaceted self also suggests that identity is not limited to one essential core, but rather, it encompasses various roles, traits, and experiences that make up a person's sense of self. As stated in detail in the literature review, existentialist philosophers, such as Sartre, emphasise the complexity and freedom of individual existence (Schroeder, 2019). They argue that individuals are constantly evolving and defining themselves through their choices and actions. Acknowledging a multifaceted self involves embracing the diversity of one's desires, values, and roles and making choices that align with one's unique individuality. A multifaceted self challenges the notion of essentialism and fixed social categories. Embracing a multifaceted self can

lead to a more inclusive and nuanced understanding of teacher identities within education and how prescriptive framework on the teacher self could be viewed as essentialist and therefore, discriminatory.

An understanding of the idea of a multifaceted self encourages individuals to engage in self-discovery and self-expression. It recognizes that people may have different personas, interests, and talents, which may emerge in various contexts. The importance of self-overcoming and self-affirmation as individuals explore and embrace their multifaceted nature is prevalent in Nietzsche's work (Roof, 2014). One of the main understanding within critical authenticity is that self-expression should follow self-discovery and the poems examined in this section explore this idea of a self with multiple iterations in various ways.

Philosophical discussions about ethics and virtue also intersect with the concept of a multifaceted self. Virtue ethicists, such as Aristotle, highlight the cultivation of various virtues that harmonize with different aspects of the self (Kitcher, 2021). Emphasising a multifaceted self may lead to a more holistic and balanced ethical framework that considers the diverse dimensions of human experience. Themes on care and connectedness later in this chapter extends the discussion on how ethics and virtue demonstrate themselves in the different iterations of teachers' roles and identities. Philosophical inquiries into consciousness and phenomenology explore how individuals experience the world and themselves. The multifaceted self acknowledges the rich tapestry of subjective experiences, thoughts, and emotions that constitute human consciousness. Within this project, this understanding as part of critical authenticity, gives permission to teachers to explore the idea of a teacher self that is constructed, either within the work of teaching or through the process of adapting to everyday demands of students and the workplace. To illustrate how teachers navigate this in their articulations, I focus on five poems from the collection: *The Living Soul of Things*, *Stephanie*, *Paddling in New Waters*, *Question*, and *I am*.

*The Living soul of Things* begins the poetry collection, and the idea of the constructed and evolving teacher self is immediately introduced here. Imagery

of stillness, juxtaposed with motion, is presented as a metaphor for the different periods of the teacher self-development – from a teacher-in-training, when the slow introduction to teaching and the classroom environment may seem slow, ‘desired’ then ‘despised’ to the excited early career teacher then on to a more experienced one. The need for continuous self-development is seen in the repetition of the verbs ‘redefining’, ‘reflecting’, ‘repurposing’, ‘recalibrating’ later on in the poem. There is optimism in this self-exploration, the repetition of ‘living’ throughout the poems gives one a sense that this is a self with a purpose. The dichotomy between stillness and motion reflects on the changing phases of the self – stillness highlighting the slow process of learning and growth and motion as a metaphor for action, practice.

Throughout the poem, there is a sense of reflection and introspection. Here, the teacher contemplates the experiences of control, relaxation, anguish, and action. Nature’s dynamism is used as imagery to relate to the inner changes that an openness to new possibilities brings. Also present is the timelessness of growth, which is reinforced in the metaphor of ‘intoxicated little souls/singing the song fashioned a long time ago’. We see an exploration of the enduring significance of the role of others in one’s personal development in the lines ‘travelling together through time and space/leaving their mark and changing the other along the way’. A steady exploration of time and movement, *The Living Soul of Things* is the poem that forces the reader to stop to listen and one cannot ignore the significance of the recurring phrases:

redefining  
reflecting  
repurposing  
recalibrating  
reposing.

The lines are purposely indented in the poem to emphasise the actions which appears to encapsulate the essence of what growth entails or ‘The living soul of things’. There is a sense that the last four lines are somewhat connected, where ‘Teaching/Learning/Living/Life’ are activated by the processes described above. The interplay of stillness and motion can be felt in the

rhythmic cadence of the poem as well – the ebb and flow of self-development and the promise that change brings.

This recurring sense of optimism and purpose can also be seen in the poem *Stephanie* and *Question*. The poem *Stephanie* is concerned with self-discovery, personal growth, and the shift from being an individual to becoming a teacher. Like the teacher in *Living soul of things*, *Stephanie* presents a teacher at the end of the beginning of becoming a teacher. They recognise and accept the inevitability of the transformation – ‘so, my heart needs to be soft, mending’ – and accepts, almost joyfully, the responsibility, as if, it is better to be two things than one – ‘from a single human to a teacher human’. *Question* uses the imagery of the bird and flying to explore the teacher self that is both exploratory and guiding. The tone is enthusiastic, giving the reader the impression of freedom and motion in the changing identity of the teacher who might be a guide, nurturer, mediator, and/or cheerleader. The evolving self is exemplified in the freedom of the movement of the poem, and the imagery of flight and its emphasis on acceptance – softening and mending.

*Paddling in New Waters* is a reflective and introspective poem that delves into emotions and experiences of the teacher. The poem uses vivid imagery of water, nature, and birds to illustrate the teacher’s feelings of uncertainty, discovery, and perseverance in their role as an educator. The phrase ‘mapping unknown territories’ deepens the sense of uncertainty and discovery and highlights the continuous learning processes inherent in teaching and the need to be willing to embrace the uncertainties that the role brings. Nature imagery, such as launching a canoe on lapping water or observing a kingfisher and its chicks, is used to symbolise the challenges as well as the wonders of the classroom. A bird’s tenacity in learning to fly offers valuable lessons in determination and resilience. There is a delicate balance in the belying confidence and self-assurance of an experienced teacher is juxtaposed with the sense of foreboding that accompanies the responsibility of caring for others. The complex nature of the subjectiveness of a moment in one teacher’s experience is laid bare in this poem, both in its honesty and luminosity.

The bird imagery continues in *Question*. The multiplicity of the teacher self is embodied in the journeys that one might take, starting with one's origins. 'How was I hatched?.../To where will I fly?' The various iterations of the teacher self are wound up in questions about the mysteries of life and existence. The interconnectedness of life is purposely emphasised to illustrate the responsibility that the role of teacher involves – nurturers to '...nestlings chirruping, "Feed us"!', a 'go-between' to others requiring mediation. It is interesting that this poem, in stating the multiplicity of identities that teachers evolve through also illustrates that this is to support an equally diverse group of students – one teacher many selves – as myriad as the students one has to support. From an experienced teacher who has guided 'Robins, ibises, eagles, falcons' and acted as 'go-between' for 'orchestras of birds', the journey of self-knowledge, of self-development is unending, for as the poem states, there is still that place to go 'Where chickens, eggs, and humans too ask/who came first... and why?' This last line makes me quiet, mainly because it asks a question that hangs in the periphery of my mind, the question of purpose and why what we do as teachers is important.

In *I am*, negative adjectives and a plaintiveness in the repetition of the refrain 'I am' introduces a certain level of tension in the multifaceted teacher self. Unlike the tension with power discussed later on, this tension has to do with the doubts associated with the changing environment of new terms and new or different roles which require new or different self-constructions. While *Paddling in New Waters* is concerned with the self-evolution meeting the needs of the new set of students and their expectations, the insistent repetition of 'I am' in this poem belies a frustration with the lack of recognition for the expanding self that is the teacher self. The poem begins by listing various roles that the teacher embodies, including actress, coach, mentor, counsellor, mother, and friend and in doing so highlights how the teacher self goes beyond the job description. The repetition of 'But...' at the beginning of the second stanza, introduces a shift in the poem, where the teacher presents their worth and the value of their lives beyond the classroom. The 'But...' in the third and fourth stanzas begins the direct address to power and other social apparatuses that judge the work of teachers. The call for recognition is more

than just a longing, in the insistent tone of the poem is an underlying frustration – ‘Do you see that I am worth more than what I am earning? ... /because for this generation it takes more than teaching out of a suitcase’. The depth and complexity of the teacher self is presented here as something that is not appreciated and the teacher’s frustration can be sensed throughout the poem.

The optimism and confidence expressed in *The Living Soul of Things* come from the passion and belief in the teaching profession as an opportunity to contribute to the lives of others. The poem speaks to one of the main reasons individuals become teachers and celebrates the process of the evolution from an individual to teacher, where ‘little souls align... / [together] travelling through time and space’. The enthusiasm to create a better world by teaching others, supporting others in learning and/or inspiring a future generation remains one of the main reasons people become teachers (Alexander *et al.*, 1994; Perryman and Calvert, 2020).

This altruism and enthusiasm is echoed in *Stephanie* and *Question*. In *Stephanie*, to become a teacher is adding value to who one was – ‘from a single human to a teacher human’, and in *Question*, the ‘fledgling self [who thought they] knew everything’ evolves to understand that there is a lot more to learn in life when one becomes a teacher. The freeing potential of knowledge is emphasised in the flying/bird imagery, further supporting the idea of teaching, and learning as an altruistic endeavour (Perryman and Calvert, 2020).

The sense of doubt in self-construction introduced in *Paddling in New Waters* and *I am* highlights the tensions in teacher-self-formations. Since the teacher-self is the ‘meaning *maker*’ (Rodgers and Scott, 2008:739, emphasis in the original), these tensions question the individual’s sense of autonomy and agency (and capabilities). The two poems respond to the idea that ‘our work as teachers shapes and is shaped by the very mode of our being’ (Clarke, 2009:186). We see this more clearly in the insistent listing of the multiple teacher self in *I am*, furthering the idea of the self as bound to experience and its interaction with the world (Foucault, 2001b). This idea of the constructed and evolving teacher self draws attention to the work involved in teacher-self-



formation. To construct such a self requires a set of tasks and a commitment to build oneself into an entity that is capable of supporting others in their own journey. The poems demonstrate that it is not an easy task. The idea of the multiplicity of the teacher self speaks against the ‘those who can’t do, teach’ adage and media representations of teachers as binary actors – good *versus* bad (Edling, 2015).

Poems in this section also illustrate how teachers’ activities cannot be standardized. The altruistic motivation for becoming a teacher creates a multiplicity of teacher self that evolves to meet the needs of their students – actress, coach, mentor, counsellor, mother, and friend’. Since students’ needs are diverse, evolving, and non-conforming, ‘quacks, clucks, coos, caws, hoots, and squawks’; the neo-liberal accountability culture of the homogenisation of teachers’ work is therefore ill-applied (Ball, 2016). The poems speak against a homogenous approach to teacher work as well as teacher identity and calls instead for existential sensitivity in the discourses on teacher authenticity.

### Care and Connectedness

The theme of care and connectedness in authenticity reflects the deep interplay between individuals’ genuine selves and their relationships with others and the world. Authenticity, thus, is not merely an individual pursuit, but a relational and ethical endeavour that encompasses care for oneself and others. Existentialist philosophers argue that authenticity involves living in an engaged and responsible manner. Care and connectedness play essential roles in this framework. For Heidegger, authenticity entails caring for one’s existence and engaging with the world and others genuinely (Wrathhall, 2014). Sartre’s concept of an authentic project involves making choices that consider both individual freedom and responsibility towards others (Ifeakor, 2023). The ethics of care emphasises the importance of interpersonal relationships and interconnectedness (Gilligan, 2014). In this perspective, authenticity involves acknowledging and valuing the needs and perspectives of others, fostering empathy, and promoting mutual well-being. Authentic care entails genuine concern for the welfare of others without sacrificing one’s own needs. The notion of a relational self, popularized by feminist philosophers like Nel Noddings and Sara Ruddick, posits that identity and authenticity are shaped

through relationships and caring connections with others. Authenticity, in this context, arises from the recognition of our interconnectedness with others and the acknowledgment of the influence that relationships have on our sense of self.

Care and connectedness is also intertwined with moral development. The significance of empathy is highlighted as a significant human capacity and significant in fostering moral growth (Gilligan, 2014). The genuine and caring development of one's moral conscience and the ability to consider the well-being of others is of significant in the work of teachers and these are clearly illustrated in the poems I will be discussing in this section. The idea of care and connectedness extends to communication and dialogue. The importance of genuine and open dialogues with others are emphasised in the poems to illustrate how they foster mutual understanding and interconnectedness. Teacher self-constructions around care is evident in almost all of the poems in the project, especially in workshops two and three, where teachers started to explore deeper into their motivations and motivators in the workplace. The list poems in the first workshops consisted mainly of items teachers thoughtfully select for their students – 'Buttons in a jar', 'knock-knock jokes', 'A pack of crazy stickers', 'pads and bandages'. There is a strong sense that for teachers, the students are the main reason they stay as teachers. For this section, I will focus on seven poems from the poetry collection: *Growing Up*, *Just their Teacher*, *Life is not a Race*, *Teacher/Student Relationship*, *Shirt Signing*, *A Whole New Game*, *10 in a Bag*, *Hope*, *An Open Window on a Rainy Day*, and *Giving all to Life*.

*Growing Up* illustrates the protectiveness that teachers develop towards their wards through the story of one particular student – from an adventurous toddler to a young independent woman going abroad on their own. The words 'my baby, my love' denotes a relationship akin to that of a mother and child and heartwarming observations and pride in the child's growth and personality underscore the love and attachment between them. The poem progresses to acknowledge the child's growth through adolescence to (young) adulthood. The imagery of flight to denote growth and a transition, is compounded by a mood of prideful desolation, and the refrain 'manners maketh a woman', a

reiteration of the training that the child has received, emphasises the mother-daughter image. There is a sense of the carefulness with which this child was raised and the care that was taken to prepare the child for a future where the teacher will no longer be able to mediate for them.

The mood of prideful desolation is expanded in *Just Their Teacher*. Here, the teacher focuses more on the grief that a teacher experiences when they lose their students. We get a sense of the unique bond between teachers and their students, and the understanding that for teachers, students are not merely individuals that pass through classrooms – they are also ‘brothers, sisters, nieces, nephews, cousins, grandchildren, ... child...’. The repetition of ‘having to...’ is used to emphasise the distress caused by the forceful separation of the yearly move of students and change of groups. These yearly changes take for granted the unavoidable feelings of connectedness in the care of others and the degree of love and care that is expended on each student, and the difficulty of having to disregard that individual so quickly to move on to another. The weight of the responsibility that teachers feel for their students is illustrated in the sarcasm in the repetition ‘I am just their teacher, right?’ Throughout the poem, the imagery of mourning is used to illustrate this loss, the premature separation, and its attendant distress that the education system rarely considers in the relationships between teachers and students (Hitz *et al.*, 2007). The impact that a strong relationship between teachers and students carry is explored in this poem. The loss of a student is like a death, the teacher mourns as they would the passing of a loved one, because, invariably, the transition (whether to a new class or stage in life), means that the relationship is ended. I am prompted to reflect on the complexities of grief here, and the profound emotional impact that students have on their teachers.

*Life is not a Race* gives the reader a sense of watchful care and play, and there is an imagery of a parent and child walking in a park – the parent following slowly, protective while the child explores. The metaphor of life as ‘a walk in the park’ is strengthened by the use of the words ‘stroll, stop, pass’. The repetition of ‘may’ signifies permission and extends the imagery of play and exploration. As a poem that focuses on the teacher-student relationship, this one invites the reader to contemplate the teacher’s role as that of a parent

and to understand the patience that goes into the careful nurturing of an individual. There is a subversive message to the performance driven attitude of education systems here, the title and the line 'Life is not a race', repeated throughout the poem, points to the need for a more relaxed exploration of life and its lessons as opposed to the pressure to constantly compete, achieve, and rush through life's learning stages.

*Teacher/student Relationship* explores the dynamic and transformative nature of the connection between teachers and students. The poems examine the understanding, recognition, mutual learning, and the element of exploration as bound up in teaching with care is presented as magical. The opening lines of the poem describe 'little steps approaching' and 'the beauty of a gesture and the deepness of a glance' to highlight the subtle ways in which students and teachers recognise and understand each other. The stress on 'Word' implies that the teacher here is bound by their commitment to their student and there is a reciprocal recognition of this commitment and an expectation. The mutual understanding that learning is a two-way experience is emphasised in the lines 'like a thirsty soul, I long for more .../Then, a smile, a leap of vivid desire/ and we walk together'. The use of words like 'laws, chaos, vivid desire' creates and emphasises the sense of excitement and expectation that such nurturing relationships allow. The transformative power of education and the teacher's role in guiding students through moments of growth and self-discovery is explored in the idea of magic. The poem asks us to consider the profound impact that meaningful connections and guidance can have and the teachers' role in securing this for students.

*Shirt Signing* is a poignant and reflective poem that captures the significant moment between a teacher and a student leaving school at the end of their compulsory years. The emotional connections teachers have with their wards are also explored in this poem and the reader is asked to consider the feelings of loss, mixed with pride and nostalgia. The sense of the passage of time, highlighted by the lines 'The last few years have raced by', also implies the relationship that has been built in that period and the work that has gone into doing so. The act of signing the shirt is itself a metaphor for a last imprint of evidence of the relationship between the teacher and the student. The

inadequacy of the moment to provide an opportunity for more learning illustrates the same helplessness parents feel when their children become adults, a feeling underpinned by the metaphor of racing into the distance and the transfer of responsibility.

In *10 in a Bag*, we encounter a list of profound attentiveness to the needs of students. There is a great sense of joy and satisfaction and a continuing sense that it is the connection that teachers have with students that drive their work – ‘10 reasons to be grateful to do it all over again’. The first three items on the list are a description of the students – ‘2 full teeth smiles / 3 questioning head tilts / 4 silent approving nods’. This is a joyous acknowledgement of the complexity of the students’ personalities, attributes the teacher recognises and understands through their knowledge of their students. The teacher’s thoughtful approach to their interaction with the students continue the list – ‘5 reasons to hold my response / 6 stickers for super students / 7 excited “welldones”’ illustrates the recognition and encouragement that is required to support students and the power of positive reinforcement. We get a sense of dedication, gratitude, and renewed resolve to continue in their commitment to their students.

The idea of the teacher as nurturer is one that is pervasive in literature as well as in social expectations of teachers (Ellis *et al.*, 2020; Gordon, 2020). This was a constant theme in every session, with teachers linking their motivations to teach with their capacity to care. The poems here do not only support this notion of the teacher as carer, but also emphasis the degree of care that is expended on each student. In *Growing Up* and *Just their teacher*, the quiet desolation that teachers experience when their students leave speaks to the humanity of teachers, to the commitment to care that teachers have, calling for sensitivity in the discourses on teacher/student relationships. The idea of teaching as caring is very much explored in these poems, bringing to mind the works of Nel Noddings (1984, 1992, 2001, 2002a, 2002b).

*Life is not a Race* and *Teacher/student Relationship* brings to bear the concept of care as play in teaching and learning. The two poems connect with discourses on the teacher as a guide and the light-heartedness of the poems

speak to a level of protectiveness yet distance (to allow for exploration) that is often seen in the care of very young learners (Aljabreen, 2020). Some of the teachers on the project came from Early childhood and Primary education. Although most of the teachers came from Further education, it was interesting to note that the poems portrayed all students as within the care of the teacher, age notwithstanding. Although the poems support the idea of teachers as surrogate parents, they draw attention to the reductive attitude to teachers' care by education management and policy makers (O'Connor, 2008), calling for recognition of the degree to which teachers expend themselves in their care for students. *Just their teacher*, introduces the question of whether students might benefit from staying with the same teacher throughout a particular stage in their education (Wedenoja *et al.*, 2022). The poem implies that this might benefit teachers as well.

The iterative nature of teaching and learning and also the academic year creates a significant layer on the teacher self, meaning that teachers must develop a capacity to evolve in their sense of care. This evolution is seen in both their capacity to support students' differing need while in the classroom and also the ability to evolve when students leave, and new groups arrive. In *Shirt signing*, the passing of time is illustrated by the metaphors 'last years have raced by' and 'once blank canvas'; the repetition of the word 'no' signifying the finality of association. Although the reader gets a sense of an ending, there is also a promise of continuity, but this time, the student taking on the role of the teacher (for themselves and/or others) – 'took the baton.../race into the distance.'

One of my favourite poems in the collection is *An open window on a rainy day*. The poem vividly captures the essence of teachers' supportive roles in the lives of students. The writer chose to use the list form to respond to the plenary workshop, using the poem to summarise and highlight how their teacher self is bound up in their care for their students. The poem begins with the permission to ask questions, and the value of a blank page, as a way of presenting the various ways in which the teacher fosters and supports their students' curiosity and creativity. A bag of 'indigo and violet', made of 'fluffy, soft merino', is the environment where the students may strive and 'pads and

bandages' for mistakes and errors to allow for exploration and adventure. There is the 'deep breath' of patience to support slow or wrong starts and the overall sense of support and encouragement. The metaphor of an open window on a rainy day may be seen as a purposeful subversion of the idea that rain means a stop to activity but where, in this case, is an opportunity for adventure. The metaphor may also imply the role of the teacher in providing inclusive and exploratory opportunities for students. I find the idea of an open window on a rainy day comforting, and full of curiosity and adventure.

*Giving All to Life* reiterates the cyclical nature of teachers' work that *Just their teacher* introduces in the collection. Unlike the latter poem, *Giving all to Life* examines the benefits of the care we model, implying that when done consistently, the ones we nurture then grow to nurture others. Interconnectedness here is explored with an understanding of the purpose of education in nurturing future teachers (and other professionals) capable of caring.

*A Whole New Game* uses re+verbs to illustrate the cyclical nature of the teacher self-evolution in caring for their students. The engagement with new groups is 'recast' and the commitment to students 'rekindle[d]'. The process of 'creat[ing], fulfil[ing], destroy[ing], undo[ing] .../fight[ing], danc[ing], bow[ing]' is repeated every year after a 'rest', so is the commitment to 'invade', to apply the same levels of energy and motivation in their relationship with the new group of students. The stress on 'CAN' also expresses this commitment. *10 in a bag* also presents the idea of cycles in the teacher's care. The nine items in the bag that helps them care for their students become the ten reasons to 'do it all again'.

The implications of the cyclical nature of teachers' work is hardly explored in the literature on teacher identity or addressed in policy documents (Chen *et al.*, 2020). In *Just their Teacher*, the revolving door of the academic year means grief without the time and space to actually work through it. In the workshops, the teachers identified this as a problem but one that they have come to expect, and the attitude of an evolving caring practice has been used to support them in continuing to care for students. The poems for this theme

illustrate that teachers manage these revolving doors by transferring the sense of care through reflective practice – ‘old weaving patterns ...left aside’ as in the poem *A Whole New Game*, and a commitment to care through choice (O’Connor, 2008). The poems point to teachers’ self-practices as selfless and to a developed understanding of the needs of their students.

*Hope* highlights this selflessness in teachers’ sense of care in a recounting sonnet. The rarity of true compassion is juxtaposed with a divided world, emphasising the unwavering spirit of teachers in fostering positive connections with students despite the challenges in the education system. The sense of defiance provides insight into the barriers teachers sometimes face and how a connection with others can support resilience. For the first time in the collection, we have an explicit reference to the relationship between teachers, in the lines ‘Joined by a common foe’, the poem recognises the commonality of the struggles teachers have and the need for solidarity.

The benefit of solidarity is reiterated in *Calorie Counting*. The sense of vulnerability in the work of teachers is emphasised by the repetition of the word ‘calories’ to demonstrate the amount of effort that is often required to inspire and ‘propel’ others to action and self-development. Emphasising the significance of effort, determination, and mental agility in addressing life’s mysteries and challenges, the poem invites the reader to consider how meaningful connections with others could support daily trials. The line ‘loved, thoughtful, and careful calories’ further emphasises the importance of human relationships. The references to the significance of relationships illustrate the idea of the self as relational and that the resolve necessary for successful self-understanding and self-determination is supported by others. References to ‘wisdom calories’ and ‘slipperiest path’ emphasise the precariousness of personal growth and discovery, one that becomes possible with the support of others. Thus the caring and connected teacher equally benefits from the care and connection with others.

Themes of the teacher self as bound by care and connectedness contribute to raise questions around how governments and institutions measure teachers’ work. Although a lot of research support the idea that caring teachers



contribute to positive student outcomes (Havik and Westergård, 2020), it is in research looking at burnout in teachers, that explores to some extent, the degree to which teachers care for students and the effects of such caring practice on a large scale on the individual (Madigan and Kim, 2021). Teachers are increasingly drawn into governments' agendas on safeguarding, crime, and radicalisation, extending the caring roles of teachers and sometimes causing what Colnerud (2015) describes as moral stress. The fact that teachers already perform these roles without the checks and balancing systems of the inspectorate and that they often perform these in more supportive and intuitive ways, is often ignored (Colnerud, 2015). The poems draw attention to teachers as unique, both in their capacity to care continually and their commitment to their students, not 'a technical workforce to be managed and controlled...' (Tomlinson, 2001:36).

### Resistance to and critique of power

Philosophical ideas around resistance and critique of power in authenticity delves into how individuals, in their pursuit of authentic living, may confront and challenge oppressive systems of power and authority. Sartre's authenticity, for instance, emphasises the importance of individual freedom and responsibility (Shroeder, 2019). Authenticity, in this context, involves acknowledging one's agency and the power to resist external pressures and societal norms that may constrain authentic self-expression. Resistance is seen as an essential aspect of living authentically, as individuals assert their autonomy and refuse to conform to oppressive expectations. Foucault's work on power highlights how power operates in various social institutions and shapes individual subjectivity (Foucault, 1984a). Authenticity, in this context, may involve a critical examination of how power dynamics influence one's self-concept and behaviour. Resistance to power can be an act of asserting one's identity and agency, challenging oppressive norms, and promoting authentic self-expression. I explore this in detail in the literature review and examine how it links to critical authenticity.

As stated in the philosophical framework, the act of articulation is central to critical authenticity and the poems that teachers submitted were intended, in many ways, to subvert the existing narrative framework on teacher authenticity. The poems in the collection present teachers as individuals, with their own dreams, cares and individuals that find joy in leisure. The idea of the multi-faceted teacher self presents a view of teachers that illustrates their capacity to withhold, adapt and/or subvert themselves to be able to do their jobs effectively and to support their students. There is also present in the idea of the multifaceted teacher self, the notion of intersectionality. The poems explore the various underlying aspects of teachers' identities and the different forms of oppression they experience and their resistance. The poems illustrate that for teachers, authenticity is a tool to assert their agency, critique dominant power structures, and strive for more inclusive and just social arrangements. The pursuit of authenticity for teachers, therefore, is not merely an individualistic endeavour but can contribute to broader societal transformation and the dismantling of oppressive systems. For this section, I will be focusing on a number of poems from the collection, including *Articulation is resistance*, *Rainbow Road Haiku*, *Just their Teacher*, *Telling Lies*, *Gifts*, to mention a few.

The most combative poem of the collection is *Articulation is resistance*. Although I have analysed it earlier within the theme of individuality, the poem is in itself an articulation of resistance. In its listing of all the conditions of negative affect on the teacher self, the poem presents the arena of practice of which to say, 'I'd prefer not to'. The use of words like 'existence', 'freedom', 'cherishing', 'pleasures', 'free', emphasises the humanity of the teacher and their presence in the space of education. The decision and stressed 'I'd prefer not to' at the end comes after a list of the conditions and options to illustrate a critical consideration and the choice they have made.

*Gifts* continues the idea of choice. The teacher is a gift in itself – 'freely given' to students and their endeavours. The contextualisation of the period of the school year 'Spring' is not accidental, this being the most challenging period of the academic year for teachers (Madigan and Kim, 2021).

*We are strong, we are crazy, we are free!* underscores the freedom and power in the teachers' articulation of themselves in the joy and exuberance of its presentation. The restrictive conditions of the teacher's work is juxtaposed by their enthusiastic and defiant response – '...fear shows/but then freedom fights back and knows', 'And they clash all full of fear/But passion is the one who leads the flow' and so forth. The use of the personification 'curiosity triggers hope, power...' humanises the energy that motivates this determination to continue to enjoy the work teachers do.

*Ough* is a play on the word ending ...ough. The teacher uses the individual letters to present metaphors for the teacher self – 'hole' or 'whole', 'lazy' or 'energ[etic]', 'hard' or 'soft' or 'both', 'silent'. These metaphors go ahead to 'explore like astronauts' and to find ways to 'find harvest after drought'. The poem is subversive in its use of metaphors that imply hardship and triumph in the juxtaposition of 'outlaws' with 'guardians', 'underlings' with 'herd'. The ending, implies a revelation, 'becoming more as words', but what words? I understand this to imply that the teachers' self-articulation go on to become evidence of themselves, that words become actions that may be able to influence the way we live and work.

Teachers on the project said the workshops provided them with the opportunity and the process to find the words to speak for themselves. As stated in the introduction, teachers felt that the noise and debris that surrounds their work often makes it difficult for them to reflect on who they are, as individuals and teachers, and to articulate this in any intelligible form. The poems in this section demonstrate that teachers used the workshops to quieten the noise around them, clear the debris and thus able to reflect and express themselves (Lyon, 2008). This can be seen the progressive cadence of *Articulation is resistance*, *We are strong, we are crazy, we are free!* and *Ough*.

The progression in these poems serve to signal that the listing is an exploration of possibilities and issues and that the ending is a decision made by the individual to live otherwise. It does so by demonstrating a critical engagement with the conditions of being and teaching rather than a reactionary decision to problems, emphasising intelligibility in approach and the decision that has

been made (Butler, 2004). Writing of this nature illustrates that poetry can provide the space for the 'clarification and magnification of being' (Hirshfield, 1997:5), allowing teachers to stitch together the tapestries of their lives, to make sense of who they are and to articulate these clearly (Lyon, 2008). This process of questioning, interrogating the issues that impound on one's identity and how they react to them is important in self-articulation (Foucault, 2001b). As Rose (1996:7) points out: 'precise ways of inspecting oneself, accounting for oneself and working on oneself (are demanded) in order to realise one's potential'. At the end of the poems, teachers' acknowledgement of their potential becomes a political statement in themselves.

In *Gifts*, we see a reiteration of this idea of a critical consideration of the situation. The spring term is the most challenging of the academic year, where teachers, although already exhausted, continue to motivate students and support them, through examinations for some, to the end of the school year. That the teacher self, at this crucial point, is a gift, 'given freely' to students (and the education system as a whole) is an articulation of the importance of teachers. This poem seems to me to say – 'make no mistake, the work I do, I do so because I believe in its purpose'. We see this subversiveness in the message in *Ough* as well. The metaphors point to a resilient group of individuals who 'keep a lookout', 'bite on a lemon', and are 'made of awesome stuff'. These individuals, in writing about themselves, become 'more as words', they become visible. Through writing poetry about themselves, the teachers practise what Foucault (1990:238) calls an 'art of existence'.

An exhibition of joy and exuberance in *We are strong, we are crazy, we are free!* is itself a celebration of the teacher self that counts as a 'practice of freedom' (Foucault, 1997b:284). The poem explores the liminal areas that make the teachers' work enjoyable and concludes in a defiant refusal to be pushed to despair 'we will not let them...'. These poems, particularly, *We are strong, we are crazy, we are free!* reiterates the point made by Parkinson (2008:59), who suggests that when teachers present articulations of themselves, 'the space within which teachers develop their identity opens'. It is within this space opening, that the poems start to engage with the politics of the narrativisation of teachers. In constructing their own stories of who they

are – strong, resilient, outlaws, guardians, who exist fully in themselves and their practice – the poems allow teachers to practice the freedom of speaking for themselves, ‘taking up the tools (of power) where they lie’ (Butler, 1990:145).

The subversiveness that is present in the poems in this section suggests that the teachers are beyond what is discursively accepted as teacher-like. The power structures that provide a frame of reference for the teacher self (teacher standards, teacher authenticity measurement tools), are questioned here and teachers present themselves as active agents who can and are prepared to interrogate ‘the meaning and enactment of policy’ and to decide if to engage or not (Ball and Olmedo, 2013:92). Foucault (1997b:212) refers to ‘writing as an act of disparate truth’, the poems here do not only present resistance to the encroaching despair of neo-liberal accountability culture but also to the narrativisation of the teacher self. In speaking for themselves, and presenting their own standpoints, feelings, values and beliefs, the teachers give themselves justice.

Amid the frustration and despondency present in many of the poems is a clear sense of determination. The poems so far discussed explain this more visibly in their use of language illustrating value and freedom and we see these enactments of self-possession all through the poetry collection. *A couplet* reminds the reader of the purpose of education in the word ‘enlightenment’ and the value of a good education in the phrase ‘being well taught’. The metaphor ‘a thing not easily bought’, and the stress on ‘not easily’, emphasise that education is not value-free and requires determination and hard work on all sides. In *Un-masked*, the teacher self is presented as both ‘freedom’ and a ‘gift’. The teacher’s capacity to negotiate the pressures and frustrations of their profession successfully is captured in the words ‘resilient and brave’.

*A Mirror Held Up* and *Extra Baggage* explores the reasons teachers enter the profession with reference to supporting students ‘to care, ... cherish’, ‘help’. The two poems also examine the factors that help them to stay in their jobs despite the challenges at work. The metaphor ‘a constant thread of balancing’ reiterates the resilience in *A couplet*. References to youth and the need to

support them can be seen in the use of the metaphors 'Younger self, .../ a lotus struggling to blossom'. The litotes in the word 'baggage' is interesting – what could weigh the teacher down now functions as a motivation to support students and guide them through similar life experiences.

Teachers on the project felt that they had to continue to remind themselves what the purpose of education is and why they joined the profession in the first place. They felt this is necessary to push against the existential ennui that threatens their motivation and the accountability measures that frustrate their altruistic endeavours (Ball, 2016). The poetry workshops served as the space where teachers could remind themselves and each other. Reflecting on their initial reasons for becoming teachers, on the values they bring to their work and the individuals they have become since.

The poems also engage with the idea that writing is a 'practice of freedom' (Foucault, 1997b:284). Teachers used the opportunity provided by the project to explore what factors support them in resisting the encroaching despondency at work and how they could continue to articulate their motivations as a way of forestalling the disillusionment. The emphasis on value and freedom is presented in the poems as expressions of resistance to the homogenising narratives on teacher authenticity.

There is a determination in the poems that seems to imply that those who chose to stay in teaching have to find reasons to keep them there. The resilience referred to in *Un-masked* is different from that in the policy documents and teacher development framework. In the poem, resilience is a personal determination to continue to do the right thing for students despite the conditions of their work. The commitment to articulating this position is seen as a way of maintaining a stance against disillusionment. The poems here act as 'a political statement' (Sullivan, 2000:220), pushing against the encroachment of despair and the possible abandonment of their roles as teachers.

According to *A Mirror Held Up* and *A Baggage*, empathy underpins teachers' work. This position continues to reiterate that teachers' work is shaped by the teacher self, (Clarke, 2009) and that teachers are 'entrepreneurs of the self in

order to maximise their own power and happiness' (Rose, 1996: 158). This determination to continue to care, despite the increasingly hostile environment and the 'constant thread of balancing' that teachers have to do, is articulated as resistance to the existential ennui that threatens teachers.

The combinations of words, phrases, stress, repetition, and figurative language combine to explore tension and conflict in teacher self-articulations in the plenary poems. They make references to different and various levels of conflict, frustration, and disillusionment. We first come across this very clearly in the poem *Articulation is resistance*. The whole poem is a metaphoric exploration of invisibility, frustration, despondency, anger, and resistance. The teacher as 'An ant in a colony' refers to the homogenisation of the teacher self, the 'nothingness' of teachers' endeavours are bound in 'labyrinths of bureaucracy' and 'rigidity' being a reference to the lack of recognition for the profession. The passion and ideals that teachers brought into the profession becomes 'strangled' leading to a 'growing derision', a sense of frustration that forces one to decide whether to join in the game playing 'of ants climbing over other ants' and continue in the profession or leave.

*Rainbow Road Haiku* introduces an element of struggle through the reference to the battle at Wakefield where Richard the 3<sup>rd</sup> was defeated. The metaphor reiterates the feeling that teachers' endeavours to instil a measure of individuality into their work is fruitless. The reference to 'footsteps' signifies the numbers of teachers as well as the strengths of their character. But of course, these are all 'in vain'.

*Telling Lies* demonstrates the anger and frustration among teachers regarding their role in perpetuating the accountability processes that do not necessarily support their students growth and development. The use of the idiom 'you don't fatten a pig by constantly weighing it' is directed at the insufficiency of exam systems to determine students' capabilities, and the incongruity between excessive evaluation and meaningful learning. The superficiality of assessment and the workload it carries is what drives the frustration teachers feel, a feeling emphasised by the line 'encourages submission of excrement'. The lie is also a matter of frustration, which causes moral stress among

teachers since they feel they have to lie to encourage students to conform to the system, even when it may not benefit students.

In *Just their teacher*, this frustration is presented as grief. There is a similar reference to time, but instead of the repetitiousness of endeavours, the sense of time here is that it is insufficient and reductive. The first line 'On to the next lesson! /Let's go!' refers to the lack of attention given to the relationship teachers have with students. Throughout the poem, phrases like 'time for...', 'having to...' gives the reader a feeling of the pressures teachers feel.

The workshop sessions served as a space where teachers felt safe to share their frustrations about their identities and roles in the work they do. Since teachers came from a variety of sectors and geographical locations, there were comparisons around how they were viewed in their various communities, and how government policies and processes contributed to how they are managed. There were also engaging discussions on the roles they played for government apparatuses and their frustrations with these. The pervading mood in the poems in this section is that of frustration. This tension engages with issues around the nature of teachers' work and the alignment of the work with teachers' personal ideals.

Time is a major point in the discourses around teachers' work and workloads and the poems refer to this, not only regarding how much time is expended but also, how much of themselves is lost in the process (Santoro, 2018). *Just their teacher* captures this sense of defeat deeply in its mournful exploration of grief in the teacher self-understanding. The repetition of 'Just' throughout the poem challenges the reductive narratives around teacher identity and speaks to the physical and emotional expansiveness of teachers' endeavours. The poems speak to the issues where teachers' sense of value and altruism is pitted against rigid systems of education reforms that homogenise teachers (Clarke and Moore, 2013). That these reforms create tension in teacher identities is visible in the poems.

The landscape of teaching is definitely evolved towards performance and accountability (Ball, 2013, 2016). The poems question what teachers feel to be an erosion of their professional autonomies and a disregard for the personal



ideals that support them in motivating and inspiring students. The reference to examination systems criticise the various education reforms that purport to produce critical workforces yet create an atmosphere of stress and frustration among school and college management, teachers, and students (Poppleton and Williamson, 2004; Santoro, 2018). The poems ask the question of what it is to be a teacher at this time and provides some insight into why teachers leave the profession.

## Chapter Summary

In this chapter, teachers' plenary poems have been analysed in the form of reflexive thematic analysis. The reflexive thematic analysis has provided insight into teachers' self-constructions and the processes through which they apply to arrive at these. Through these self-presentations, we can understand what makes up teachers' authenticities and that teachers do not possess a homogenous authenticity, demonstrating that the notion of a homogenous teacher authenticity is not only implausible but difficult to attain. The analysis demonstrates that the teachers can be said to present themselves as a critical bricolage, fragmented along the realities of individual lives, reflecting the intersections of identities, ideologies, and the environment (Foucault, 2001b). The needs of students remain central to teacher self-constructions and articulations and this sense of care forms both a basis for their evolution and resistance to oppressive working conditions and power structures. Although there is a strong presentation of the teacher as an individual, with personal ambitions and pursuits, this is articulated through the resistance to being marginalised as merely a 'technical workforce to be managed and controlled' (Tomlinson, 2001:36) or surrogate gatekeepers for the state (Shannon et al., 1998). The poems illustrate that the teacher self is:

oriented in moral space, a space which questions arise of what is good or bad, what is worth doing and what is not, what has meaning and importance for [them] and what is trivial and secondary (Taylor, 1989:28).

The notion of critical authenticity provided the ideological basis for teachers to practice *epimeleia heautou* (care of the self) and the workshops provided the

physical space to write and share. The writing of poems facilitated teachers' engagement with themselves and reading and listening to each other's poems supported teachers to continue to engage with the reflection and writing of poems about themselves. The *parrhesiastic* activities that yielded these articulations were supported by an atmosphere that encouraged *epimeleia heautou* (care of the self). This care is observable in the plenary poems that make visible the teacher self, not only the vulnerabilities of teachers but also their strengths and defiance. As Taylor (1989:415) suggests, 'by turning inwards, [teachers] can also turn upwards' and engage more fully with the world about their self-conceptualisations. This responds to the question that poetry writing can facilitate conditions for critical reflection and critical articulation of self.

This chapter is followed by two reflective chapters where I further interrogate the idea of the teacher self and what constitutes resistance and *parrhesia* through poetic inquiry. Chapter 6 looks more closely at the significance of the ordinary teacher self, through some of the iterations that have presented themselves in the poems and my reflections continue to tell the story of the poems in the collection and the project (as a whole). Chapter 7 explores the notion of critical authenticity through poetic inquiry as a possible methodology to engage with teacher identity and reflective practice, further responding to the research question: How can poetry workshops provide educative and educational opportunities for teachers to explore their authenticities and professional identities? The conclusion summarises the project in poetic form, engaging with the liminal representations shared in the poems and the processes that supported these articulations.

## Chapter 6: Reflections 1: The significance of the ordinary (teacher) self

### Overview

What is the teacher self?

A witch, wizard, wise and worn.

A womb that holds dreams and fosters...

A hug that says 'I know the road is rigged,  
but here's a hand over the steppingstones'.

An ear that listens, just there....

A friend that follows beyond, just as here.<sup>28</sup>

This chapter continues my reflections on the teacher self as presented in the poems submitted to the project. I use the opportunity here to also examine some of the poems in the workshops and to continue to give voice to those teachers on the project. To get the most out of this chapter and the following reflective chapters, I suggest having the poetry collection to refer to separately and perhaps, the workshop poems in the appendix also.

Critical authenticity presents the self as relational, as well as evolving. In this way, it incorporates Sartre's (2014) view on the communal and social aspect of the self with Foucault's (1997) idea of the created self. As stated in the previous chapter, teachers' self-methodologies<sup>29</sup> within the project aligned with these ideas of the interpersonal and the created self. There is a pervading sense of a movement back and forth in all twenty-nine plenary poems – teachers reaching behind and ahead, from their present towards their perceived pasts to explore what values and beliefs they still hold or have discarded. For example, the poem, *Paddling in New Waters* takes the reader through a scenery of fear and steadfastness in the teacher's life. We get the sense that no matter how experienced the teacher is, a new school year

---

<sup>28</sup> A summary poem introducing the different teacher selves presented by the poems in the poetry collection.

<sup>29</sup> Ways of navigating the self, exploring, and articulating the self

presents the challenge of revalidating oneself and finding that equilibrium that allows them to do their jobs effectively. *Articulation is Resistance* is a feisty expression of frustration and ethical struggle in the work of the teacher. The poem questions the status quo, and we get a sense of the struggle to find a balance between established structures and personal values. *Just their teacher* and *Rainbow Road Haiku* present similar frustrations in metaphors and subverted insinuations to grief and battles. In *Hope*, we find a quiet statement of the significance of the teacher self and *Gifts* reminds the reader that the care teachers expend towards their students, are freely given. These movements demonstrate that the self, or in fact, the process of self-exploration, is not an arbitrary invention but one possessing 'subjective energy' (Sparby *et al*, 2019:3).

*Epimeleia heautou* highlights the interconnectedness of the self – that in our own self-explorations and care, we acknowledge our care of others and engage in a careful consideration of the needs of others connected to us (Kelly, 2013). The poem *The living soul of things* is a good illustration of this movement and its interconnectedness. Further in the poem it states:

Let my soul go back to my childhood innocent years;  
Oh, my dear little souls, look at my inner child!

Here, we see that not only does the teacher reflect on the changes and evolution in themselves, but invites those connected to them (their students, the reader), to feel this state also (Valery, 1954). The teacher self as a constructed entity is a well-articulated idea throughout the poetry collection. In *I am*, the poem lists all the various ways in which the teacher self evolves. It does not do so to bemoan the fact, but to state it. In *Still Cool*, we encounter the teacher/mother, whose rum drinking after school belies a self that is open, free, and adventurous, whether at home or at work. The poems take us, like a guide, through the different iterations of the teacher self.

## The Magician-teacher-self

Magic has the unique and universal appeal to captivate. A magician arouses curiosity and must have the capacity to sustain the interest of the audience throughout the act. The same can be said of the teacher. In the previous chapter, we have seen how teachers articulate themselves as individuals who, although careful of their own autonomies, also care deeply for the work they do and the students they teach. We see this ineluctable relationship between the teacher and the student throughout the poems through imageries of birds, gifts, mirrors – students waiting, teachers performing or directing and facilitating performances.

One of the three main principles of *Epimeleia heautou* involves understanding of the self as primarily focused on the activities which supports its adaptations, constructions, definitions, and the different ways in which it develops as a subject (Foucault, 2006). In facilitating a critical authenticity within *epimeleia heautou*, teachers' self-articulations focused on self-evolution as a necessary activity in their person-teacher-self-identity. These changes in self-construction are not chimeral but rather a studied resolution to adapt aspects of the self to the needs and situations of their work. One of such adaptations is that of the magician.

The poem *Teacher/student relationship* explores this clearly in both its cadence and its metaphoric illustration of the moment of connection and development from individual (person) to teacher-magician:

But there is a pause, a moment full of expectation.

It is my turn to play magic.

The line, 'Little steps approaching, ...' at the beginning of the poem signals a moment of pause, where the teacher knows the time is imminent when they will need to become themselves in a different capacity. We feel this pause, as the teacher does, and recognise the expectation even before the poem tells us. The prospect is not considered a trifling nuisance, but one backed by 'its laws and chaos'. The juxtaposition of law with chaos is in itself an interesting pattern. On one hand, we get a sense of the audience that the teacher works with – an audience with clear expectations of what their teacher is to them –

and on the other hand, we are introduced to the possibility of a lack of consensus in these expectations. Law and chaos are the tools of the magician, and the metaphor is extended to illustrate an atmosphere of anticipation and glee. The introduction of '*The Word*' signifies the request and moment of transformation and the teacher knows the time has come for them to become magicians for their students' edification.

The metaphor of the teacher as magician and in fact the idea of the magical is reflected in several poems in the collection and the workshop poems in the appendix. In *A whole New Game*, the teacher calls on the forces of magic itself to lend its power to the purpose of teaching.

Divine, ancestral spirit speak to me,

...

Recast the spell and start afresh the game.

In this paradoxical poem, the teacher self weaves around, almost like in a trance, between casting magic and being in the centre of something magical. When it feels like the spell is somewhat diminished, it is recast, and the magic continues. Demonstrating the different elements of the teaching process – from curiosity, bewilderment to purpose – the various elements of the teacher's work combine together to illustrate the teacher-magician-self (Adams, in Underwood, 2009). In this poem, there is a strong sense that the magical is not only something that the teacher alone invokes but something that they too are subjected to. The magic that is woven may also exist externally, and students may, in turn, join in the magic making.

In the list poems of the first workshop, we see various items listed that are the magician's wares in themselves: 'string'<sup>30</sup>, 'large puppets and stages and little toy cars'<sup>31</sup>, 'fairy dust'<sup>32</sup>, 'old dog hair/belly button lint'<sup>33</sup> to mention a few. The metaphor of the magician/magical is used to both describe the teacher self and their work. Through some of these list poems, we understand that the magician self is a necessary part of the teacher self-construction, without

---

<sup>30</sup> Appendix F: Poem 12

<sup>31</sup> Appendix F: Poem 27

<sup>32</sup> Appendix F: Poem 18

<sup>33</sup> Appendix F: Poem 1

which it is difficult to arouse a sense of curiosity in their students and/or give them permission ‘to dream.../unknown, unknowns past academe’<sup>34</sup>. The lists give the reader a sense of one collecting their wares, putting together the items that help them transform from one thing to another – from teacher to magician.

The magician-teacher self would count as an example of dissimulation and thus fall under undesirable attributes in teacher authenticity as listed by Kreber, McCune, and Klampfleitner (2010), Johnson and LaBelle (2017), and De Bruyckere and Kirschner (2017) etc. Such subterfuge can be viewed as dishonest, if to be an authentic teacher is to be honest. The teacher-magician self goes against an ethic of truthfulness as the current literature on teacher authenticity presents. Hathaway (2013) abhors this idea that dissimulation is needed in teaching and suggests that teachers should be guided more by their students’ needs. This criticism is contradictory in that, if students need a magician, what then should the teacher become? Hathaway’s (2013) comparison of the student-teacher relationship to dancing suggests what the list poems illustrate that teachers, in responding to their students’ needs for magic, embrace a self that could perform such magic and become magicians.

The list poems push back at this idea that the teacher must remain professionally distant and logical in their relationship with students. The poems suggest rather, a unity of spirit, an understanding that students’ need may be fused to the teacher self in a metaphysical display of illusion. There is an innate sense of the show person in the list poems – just like all magicians, the ‘sense of humour’, ‘sprinklings of fairy dust’ and ‘flair pens’ are a part of the (teacher-self) package (Norton, 2015).

---

<sup>34</sup> Appendix F: Poem 30

## The nurturer/caretaker-teacher-self

A number of attributes describes a nurturer: they are people who foster, care, support, educate and/or train. The nurturer is a common identity ascribed to teachers, either by themselves or within the literature of teacher development and identity (Ellis *et al.*, 2020; Gordon, 2020). Many of the teachers on the project discussed this idea of the teacher as a nurturer and they agreed that idealistically, one of the reasons they joined the profession was the belief that they would foster the future; creating a better world. The nurturer self is not something the teachers felt they were imbued with, many talked about having to learn how to grow the minds of others. In *Paddling in New Waters*, we encounter an experienced teacher who still experiences trepidation when starting a new school year with a different group of students-:

After years, I still walk into the classroom feeling  
As if I were mapping unknown territories  
From the riverbank, into the uncertain, ...

The nurturer-self is not one that once created, can be carried through the professional life without recalibration or reassessment. In the plenary poems, we understand that each new set of students require a different approach, a different formula in the nurturer, making a recreation necessary. In *Paddling in New Waters*, the metaphor of the bird who, having learnt to fly, must still contend with the dangers each day brings and learn to adapt to those too, is used to reinforce this idea of re-evaluation of self. Giving up is not an option for the teacher - nurturer, for how else are their students expected to navigate the school year without the teachers' care? The teacher, like the bird, must press on, against the 'current' and 'venture with them into invisible, new waters'. In this poem, the idea that the teacher self is an individual pursuit is interwoven with the strong sense of a care of others. The struggle to adapt and evolve is something the teacher has to work through by themselves, even if this evolution is made necessary by the needs of others – their students.

In *Just Their Teacher*, a melancholic tone introduces us to a teacher-nurturer who struggles with the constant separation they encounter in the school system.



I am just the teacher, right?

Time for the next class to enrol.

Having to transfer my love and care unto another soul.

Like *Paddling in New Waters*, this teacher-self is situated at the start of a new academic year, yet still emotionally connected to the students who had passed through their care. *Just their teacher* tells us a different story of the teacher-self; it exposes the undersides of what it means to nurture others and that the care of others is not something that can be switched on and off, from one academic year to another. Like all nurturers, there is a sense of loss when their students leave their care. This demonstrates the extent to which the teacher self is linked to their student needs, in ways in which brings to question the idea of professional distance in teacher authenticity as the literature presents. As Clarke (2009:186) states: 'the commitment to identity is not just a metaphysical proposition but a serious recognition that our work as teachers shapes and is shaped by the very mode of our being'. The repetition of the question *I am just the teacher, right?* Is an invitation to the reader to think if the teacher identity that is generally presented (professionally distant, uninvolved) is the accurate way to describe teacher selves. This refrain also brings into question the tick-box accountability culture of neo-liberal education; suggesting that a more humanistic approach may be preferable – where teachers stay with the same group of students through the years (Wedenoja *et al.*, 2022).

The literal use of the word 'mourn' illustrates the anguish and sense of loss that teachers experience when a group of students leave. Yet, unlike other situations of loss, there is no time for teachers to grieve these passings, and they are expected to get on to another group of students, get on with the work, without the grieving period necessary to process their loss and come to terms with the students they have sent off.

*Let's go!*

*But I am mourning too don't you know?*

The rebuke in this line is clear and pushes against the assumption that professional distance is unfeeling and cold. The vulnerability exposed in this

poem is a reprimand of a system that diminishes the work teachers do (Rose, 1996). Where Cranton (2010) calls for flexibility and adaptability as indicative of an authentic teacher, this poem renounces this position that teachers who had so laboriously cared for their students should be able to immediately jump to another student group, to apply themselves equally, without difficulty.

The nurturer/caretaker – teacher- self is an insightful poetic study of carefulness, vulnerability, and perseverance. Poem number 18 in the appendix, simply titled *Poem 2*, illustrates this very clearly in the items that go in their teacher bag: soothing music, humour, a listening ear, an open mind, and a compassionate heart; sugar and spices, tape, and glue to keep things together. The metaphor of things that keep things together resonates through many of the poems, both in the collection and the workshop poems in the appendix. There are strings, wires, bandages, glue. to soothe and coax and support whatever processes students need supporting. The list poems expose the attention to detail that teachers have in ensuring they have the tools to support and encourage their students. *Poem 2* illustrates this creative iteration, both in the order in which the items are listed and in their uses. In *An Open Window on a Rainy Day*, the teacher's bag contains 'pads and bandages', not merely to patch things up, but so their students 'know that there are no/injuries and mistakes that cannot be patched up'. In these poems, we come to understand that a teacher self is one that is oriented to the needs of their students, beyond the expectations of policy or place.

## The cheerleader-teacher self

The teacher as a cheerleader is an underappreciated phenomenon in teacher identity studies. I also believe that the concept of the self that is dedicated to the encouragement and appreciation of others is also an under-researched subject of discussion in education. Although studies like that of Tokan and Immakulata (2019) in student motivation often cite teacher-student relationships and praise as being an instrumental factor in student motivation and success, they often ignore the fact that this requires a persistent belief in the capability of others and consistent encouragement. Within the critical authenticity workshops, teachers commented widely on their self-evolution as cheerleaders, and why it is important to be able to not only motivate students in the ways that teacher training provision recommends (engaging activities, clear outcomes etc) but to be able to honestly cheer students on. The teacher-cheerleader is a peer and an active and enthusiastic agent in their students' progress. They are able to trust their students to navigate the learning process independently, and they respond to today's pluralist student identity and are positioned as supporters rather than leaders in students' learning (Rose, 1994).

We encounter the teacher-cheerleader self mostly in the poems that speak to the students directly or lists that include this as part of the teacher self. For instance, *Growing Up* is a sentimental poem about a student. The poem purposely progresses from the baby student to the adult student who finally becomes independent from the teacher's direct care. The repetition of the word 'adventure' gives the reader the understanding that the child's inevitable growth is welcomed and encouraged by the teacher, and we get the feeling that the teacher is on the side-lines of this development, cheering and motivating the student in their endeavours. The tone of the poem is light, and matter of fact. The teacher-cheerleader is excited, as much for the student's progress as they are of their potential. The refrain 'manners maketh woman' is a reminder to the student to maintain the values that they have been taught. For the teacher in *10 in a Bag*, there are cheers reserved in the teacher bag for their students: '6 stickers.../7 excited "welldones"'.

The cheerleader-teacher self is not an easily constructed self. As well as being situational, it is constructed within an evolving sense of care of others. We see this consideration in the way the lists are made up in the list poems; as if anticipating situations and slowly ensuring there is a self that can fit the occasion for students, according to each teacher's values and beliefs.

Of all the poems in the collection, *Calorie Counting* is slightly different in that it addresses the cheerleader-teacher self instead of the general reader or student.

How many thousand loveful, thoughtful, and careful calories  
did you employ to reach out to me,  
and call me by name, ...

The counting of the calories needed to exercise the cheerleader-teacher self, points to the idea stated above that self-construction is not only situational but requires effort. The poem highlights the difficult work teachers have to do in motivating their students, especially those struggling to keep up with the expectations of academic endeavours as well as other life's challenges. Like the cheerleader in American sports, the student is called by name, their potential enumerated. Their names are chanted, loud enough to awaken the student and to spur them forward. The passion exhibited here is not that of the subject matter or for working with students as enumerated in the research on teacher authenticity (Plust *et al.*, 2020). This type of passion is faith – the belief in the potential of students with or without proof. Interestingly, faith is not mentioned across any of the literature on teacher authenticity. The research on teacher authenticity concentrates mainly on the passion of the teacher for the subject (Plust *et al.*, 2020).

The cheer-leader-teacher is one viewed suspiciously by Stanulis *et al.*, (2019). In their discussion of mentoring, the teacher must apply more strategic approaches to supporting and motivating students than merely cheering them on. This criticism undermines the labour that cheerleading involves – knowledge of students, faith, passion, and the commitment to navigating the

'slipperiest path[s]'<sup>35</sup> with students or cheering them through 'the highest mountains'. The cheerleader-teacher is a constructed self, and one carefully put together in the care of others. In *I am*, the teacher is everything the student needs – 'coach, mentor, mother, friend, aunt' etcetera; there to motivate, encourage, to remind the student of the goal and to help them believe they can succeed.

## The guide-teacher-self

### A couplet

*The enlightenment of being well taught  
Is a thing that is not easily bought.*<sup>36</sup>

This is the most frequently occurring articulation of self in the plenary poems. Embedded in the magician, nurturer, and cheerleader teacher self, is the guide. In some poems, the guide is self-assured, confident, while in others, like *Paddling in New Waters*, there is an overwhelming sense of doubt and some trepidation. These iterations support the themes of the constructed yet evolving self and also the evolving sense of care in teacher authenticity. The identity of the teacher as a guide is a well-established one in education, and in the Montessori system, the teacher is actually called a guide (Aljabreen, 2020). The teacher's role as a guide is not restricted to content or methodology, but also moral and ethical values (Waterson, 2009). This is evident in the poem *Growing Up*, 'remember, manners maketh a woman', the teacher tells the student leaving their care.

*Question* explores the question of what makes the teacher self. It endeavours to trace the origins of a teacher, clearly stating the teacher's identity as a guide:

Who do I guide?  
Robins, ibises, eagles, falcons:  
birds from far and wide.

---

<sup>35</sup> Plenary poems: Calorie Counting

<sup>36</sup> Plenary poem no. 6

The enduring metaphor of the bird in teacher self-articulation in the poems is an interesting one. Bird metaphors are not unusual in education and can sometimes illustrate tensions as well as freedom (Demir, 2007; Leitch, & Mitchell, 2007). In *Question*, the bird metaphor is used to illustrate the diversity of the students the teacher teaches, the work that is involved in guiding a group of curious and distinct individuals and the vulnerability that being a teacher-guide entails – ‘my fledgling self knew everything/now I know I don’t’. The sense of freedom for inquiry is established through the sense of curiosity that the last line of the poem introduces. Teacher-guides are presented here as birds, equally flying alongside their students, equal in inquiry and sense of purpose.

The partnership in inquiry is further elaborated in *Life is not a Race*. Again, we encounter the freedom in inquiry, the teacher, walking alongside the student, observing, steering, encouraging, directing:

Stop and smell the roses.

Stop and listen to the birds.

Pass by the pond if you want to.

The teacher self here is patient, quiet, observant but present. There is permission given to the student to explore yet we get the sense that should the student stumble, or become unsure, the teacher is at hand. ‘So go..., pass by...’; the idea of permission inherent in these lines resolves Gregory’s (2003:407) problem of the tension in ‘leading too strongly, so that students abdicate their own intelligence, and leading too lightly, so that students’ growth is left undirected and their intelligence undisciplined’.

There’s a nostalgia in *Shirt Signing* that is both elating and illustrative of the teacher-guide-student relationship. It is the story of the teacher-guide when they have reached the end of the tour and all that is left is for the student to continue the journey ‘tak[ing] the baton/firmly in [] hand/.../rac[ing] into the distance’. The sense of care here is clearly evolved, the teacher does not seem worried for the student’s future, there is ‘no final lesson’ left to teach, only a simple wish of luck. Linking to *A Couplet*, the poem that begins this

section, *Shirt Signing* implies that the teacher is satisfied that the student will carry on the baton, despite their implied tardiness in lessons.

The guide-teacher can be seen as an expanded self, situated in the work rather than in the base identity of the teacher. Unlike the nurturer-teacher self, there is a sense that the connection between the teacher and student is not embryonic, but that the teacher-guide self evolves according to the particulars of the journey the student/s travel and that the journey is different at the beginning and the end.

There is an implied understanding in the poems that guiding others is not a passive, one-way activity. In the guide-teacher self, we encounter the imagery of the teacher who walks side by the side with their students. Here, the teacher is the guide and although there is a sense of partnership in the relationship, it is clear from these poems that the teachers feels a large degree of responsibility to navigate their students and support them on their journeys. On the other hand, a successful guide is one who listens and learns about the direction where their wards want to travel; who knows where their students have come from and why they might want to travel in a different direction. The poems that illustrate this about the guide-teacher provide an imagery that is both endearing and humble. Very little is written about the teacher who learns from their students, except in literature around developing differentiated learning tools and/or the benefits of students' questions (Reeve and Shin, 2020; Commeyras, 1995). The guide-teacher as a mutual learner is a concrete example of one who does not merely learn from their students in order to improve learning processes and outcomes for the students but one who is immersed in the students' knowledge as much as they are immersed in theirs. We first encounter this imagery in *The living soul of things*. Here, the living soul of things is the fact that life is circuitous – the teacher learns as much from the students as they do from her:

The living soul of things;  
what an inspiring image.  
Stillness, motion;  
interchangeable ideals.

Teaching.

Learning.

Living.

Life.

In *Children Still*, the teacher leads the reader through what it feels like to pay close attention to the stories students tell, implying that teachers, like students, are directed by learning from their students, 'We're never too old for stories'. Poem 15 in the appendix refers to these stories as gifts, that give the teacher the confidence and creativity to carry on with their work and in Poem 23 in the appendix, the teacher clearly calls their students their guide.

### The mediator-teacher-self

What have I seen?

Our nestlings chirruping, "Feed us!" while  
we fly as go-betweens<sup>37</sup>.

The imagery above of the teacher as mediator reflects the Vygotskian (1978) philosophy of teaching as mediation. The teacher-mediator self is a significant imagery in teachers' portrayal of constructivist learning situations. As mediators, teachers place themselves between the learning environment and the learner – selecting, amplifying, interpreting the learning items and processes for the learner (Kozulin and Presseisen, 1995). According to Feuerstein (1991), students' learning is shaped by the intervention of adults who are mediators. The poems illustrate that teachers mediate for students in three key ways: through the use of their own experiences (sharing themselves), learning materials that they introduce into their lessons and through psychologically balancing students' emotions in the classroom (Vygotsky and Luria, 1994).

In *Extra Baggage*, the teacher's experience of adverse childhood trauma forms a basis on which they can empathise with students. This experience is also what supports them in being able to psychologically balance their

---

<sup>37</sup> Poem: Question from the poetry collection



students. The poem rationalises their own trauma, concluding that they suffered so they could understand what their students go through. The nurturer-teacher is different from the mediator-teacher here. A mediator is a go-between, one who intercedes in the place of others. Although, like the nurturer teacher, mediator-teachers also have to work out what students need in order to support them better, in mediating, the teacher is able to intercede for students, helping them understand the relevance of activities and events and supporting them in relating to others and situations.

Empathy is a key feature of the mediator-teacher self. The ability to resonate with others, either through experience of similar situations or consideration of another's perspective. As a mediator, teachers apply empathy to navigate their students' feelings and emotions and to support them in equally steering their way through the educational environment. In *An open window on a rainy day*, the teacher's bag includes questions, so that students could see that teachers are not infallible and like them, struggle in some aspects of their lives. This teacher-self underscores the research that teachers who are able to mediate for their students, by demonstrating affective or cognitive understanding of the students, form more positive relationships with their students and support them to achieving better outcomes (Wink *et al.*, 2021; Abacioglu *et al.*, 2020). *A mirror held up* illustrates this very keenly – the teacher mirrored in the students. There is a keen sense of care in the teachers' poems that demonstrates that as mediators, their work is to ensure that students do not feel alone. As go-betweens, teachers support students in accessing learning as well as navigating the emotional aspect of being human.

Empathy and mediatorship brings to focus the issue of self-disclosure in teaching and learning. The benefits of self-disclosure are innumerable, and the literature discusses these alongside their risks (Henry & Thorsen, 2021). In the literature on teacher authenticity, self-disclosure is a demonstration of authenticity (Plust *et al.*, 2020). For teachers on the project, self-disclosure is their communication of their empathy and their communication to students of their capacity as mediators. Poem 28 in workshop 1 openly states 'My students, yes they see me/ Warts and all, you see', and later on 'My heart is full on my sleeve'. Although most of the teachers on the project stated that

self-disclosure was important in fostering open relationships with their students, there were others who felt that they needed masks to be able to keep from telling students the truth about the failures of their institutions or at times, the futility of certain processes. One teacher spoke about this difficulty when working in secure facilities (like the prisons) and another, poem 25 of workshop 1, implies a feeling of anger at the system, checked through a mask. Although none of these actually came through in the plenary poems, this reticence is well illustrated in poem 25 of workshop 1 and the workshop chat transcript, which is not submitted here.

Irrespective of the reservations around self-disclosure, teachers' poems, both in the workshops and the plenary collection, demonstrates a clear commitment to mediating for students.

## Chapter summary

These iterations of the teacher-self speak to, among other things, the divergence in teacher identity, as well as the understanding that authenticity is relative and evolutionary. From the poems, we can see that not all teachers consider themselves magicians, while others feel this to be a significant aspect of their teacher self. Mediator- teachers are interspaced with teachers with masks and teachers who guide students, profess to be followers in the same lines. In the introduction to this chapter, I talk about this back-and-forth movement in self-iterations in the poems. Rather than act as contradictions in self-articulations, the poems serve to illustrate the multi-faceted nature of professional lives and the need for the construction of an equally multi-faceted self.

The next chapter returns to the philosophical framework to continue to examine the significance of what the teachers on this project did. I delve deeper into the idea of *parrhesia* as an instrument (or opportunity) for courage, and to the idea that the teachers who participated in this project did something that challenged the system and that required courage. I also examine how this philosophy of a critical authenticity may better support reflective practice in traditional teacher development sessions and why the articulation of oneself, in whatever creative form, can in itself become an act of defiance, and/or of ownership.

## Chapter 7: Reflections 2: Can we facilitate courage?

### Overview

As the deadlock between teacher unions and the government drags on, the focus turns to the work teachers do in a very public way. Parents try not to complain about having to care for their children when not in school, and higher education students complain openly that their education somehow will lose its value if their lecturers do not teach sessions or mark their work (The Guardian, 2023). Interestingly, none of the media outlets that cover striking teachers and academics mention the fact that many striking academics and teachers are parents, students (continuing their education in different ways), care givers and citizens of an economy that is strangling their home budgets. No news broadcasts ruminate on the lost income – some teachers losing 100% of their earnings whenever they go on strike. There are no deliberations around the quality of life for teachers, and no documentaries that seek to highlight the depth of the despair that make workers prefer to lose pay to make a point about pay and working conditions than continue to suffer in silence and anonymity. To the government and some parents, the on-going strike actions are merely a nuisance, the drop in teacher retention also merely a problem with training and provision, not of comparative poor quality of life the profession promises.

In this chapter, I continue my reflections on the research question of the authenticity of teachers and the possibility of a critical process supporting teachers in navigating and articulating their authenticities. I also continue my reflections on the role of poetry in supporting such a process. For this section of the thesis, I approach the capacity to articulate oneself, (and to express one's position in a revolving profession amidst the politics of professional homogeneity and continuous invisibility) as courage. I continue to argue here also, that teachers' self-narrations, are the *status quo* on which to measure teacher authenticity, each, singularly, not homogenously. I explore this through the concept of critique and language in *parrhesia* and the function of *epimeleia heautou* as the active mechanism (techne) to facilitate *parrhesia*, a combination of techniques that this project calls critical authenticity. I also

recommend critical authenticity as an engaging approach to reflective practice in teacher development and continuing professional development. I use the opportunity here to summarise the discussions from the critical authenticity project which saw 53 teachers from many parts of the world share their understanding of what it means to be human and teacher and most importantly, reflect on my role as researcher.

### A critical authenticity

In that hour, I spent holding myself  
Closely, tightly.  
Knowing, as if for the first time where it bent  
And buckled and straightened out.  
In that hour, I listened, I heard, I knew myself  
better  
and I shared... myself.

The above poem is untitled, and it is a found poem created from the chat room of one of the six poetry workshops that was run as part of the critical authenticity project. As presented in detail in the methodology chapter, but also summarised in every chapter in this thesis, the idea of critical authenticity is foregrounded by discourses around self-exploration and self-articulation. It is posited in this thesis to create a space for discussion around the possibility of an ongoing narrative construction of the self and the articulation of self-reactions to constraints and pressures that we may feel (whether systematically imposed or internally constructed). The term seeks to encapsulate both our embryonic reactions to the idea of ourselves and our constructed ideologies through our relationships with our environment and others. It is designed to go beyond the binary definitions of self that underpins many self-discourses (Degenhardt, 2003; Varga, 2012); allowing individuals (teachers in this case) the possibility of entering into what Foucault (1997) calls the games of truth.

I think we all wonder at some stage in our lives (if not obsessively always), who we are and what our purpose in life ought to be. If we have somehow

forgotten to ask this pertinent question, a myriad of people, adverts, friends, family, will remind us – to be ourselves, live our truths, speak our truths. (Potter, 2010). This might often lead to one asking oneself the question, who is the self that is me? What is my truth? From a precocious black female child to a quietly determined black, female, adult, I grew up straddling a world where my parents fought to find their places and I observed them pay the prices that a liberal, progressive, Christian life within a conservative, politically charged society forced them to pay (both in the United Kingdom and in Nigeria). I grew up determined not to be swallowed up, made invisible, by that world. This single determination forced and still forces me to pay close attention to my environment but particularly, to how it influences my self-construction, my responses, and my reactions (Foucault, 2001a). In my personal deliberations on the notion of critical authenticity, I find that the possibility to understand that I may evolve, both in my personality and my ontology; that I may adapt or dissolve; that I may articulate these as a way of entering into a dialogue about what it is to be human, is very empowering. In a profession where one is expected to be either/or (authentic or inauthentic, for instance), the notion that one could articulate a (teacher) self that is varied (as the chapters before this one illustrate), responsive to its environment and others and also articulate that one is perhaps unsure, evolving, is cathartic. For teachers on the project, this space to question, both their own ontologies and their responses to it, and to articulate the confusion that surrounds the conflicting feelings of professional responsibility, compassion, passion, stress and (un)worthiness, was what they found most liberating. The poems from the project explore the existential landscape of teacher-hood and teacher-ness, questioning, negotiating, stating. As a witness to this existential over-flow, I resonated with some of their articulations and understood that for many teachers, a critical space, was necessary.

## A whole new game

Poems are such strange creatures

Because they are truth and fiction, at once.<sup>38</sup>

I take this sub-heading from one of the poems in the poetry collection. It is a poem whose basic principle calls for a re-writing of the status-quo. A lyrical invitation to a new order of things, the first lines beckon the reader to: 'create, fulfil, destroy, undo and rest'. Oxymoronic in presentation – create/destroy, fulfil/undo; the rest of the poem continues this way. We are given permission to 'fight/dance/bow/leave the rink', 'react' or 'ignore the tide'. As a plenary poem, it summarises the understanding that teachers came to have regarding their authenticity – that they do not have to have proof of what they conceive themselves to be or who they are, to be relevant or visible, that it is enough to speak it. Within critical authenticity, the connection between *parrhesia* and critique is revived. Self-critique as a precondition for *parrhesia* requires a moral attitude, and a state of honesty with oneself (Foucault, 2001b), and this was something I had to think very hard about how to create within the workshops.

To critique oneself so as to acquire self-knowledge and then to go further to critique the existing status-quo and to submit one's voice as an authority into that space, also requires courage. Courage can be defined as an individual and philosophical act of balancing good and evil in society (Faulkner, 2016) or in the more traditional sense, as an act of orienting oneself to one's understanding, to see things differently and to commit oneself to the freedom of action (Ruda, 2017).<sup>39</sup> Courage, within critical authenticity straddles Machiavelli's understanding of recognising political tensions and acting on it and the Augustinian idea of acting impulsively – breaking free of whatever constraints to enact one's will (Berns *et al.*, 2010). Foucault's (2001b) discussion on *parrhesia* introduces the speech element to these definitions of courage. For teachers whose daily lives are a constant 'noise' (as they called it in the workshops) and whose work is overseen by apparatuses that

---

<sup>38</sup> A reflective poem to begin this section.

<sup>39</sup> Plato's (1997) *Laches* provides an engaging discussion on what courage is and how it applies to society. I used the translation by Rosamond Kent Sprague, in *Complete Works* (Indianapolis & Cambridge: Hackett Publishing).

narrativises what it means to be a teacher (Rose, 1996), to allow themselves the opportunity to awaken to the possibilities of seeing things differently, and speaking of them openly, is in itself transgressive – it is an act of courage.

In Foucault's (2001b) deliberations on the political act of speaking the truth to power, critique is reintroduced into the discourse on *parrhesia*. This definition of critique requires that participants are awakened to the possibilities of change (Foucault, 1997); and to the understanding that they need to disengage from the dominant narrative to be able to create their own. Thus creating 'a whole new game'. Here personal truths interact with the dominant truths to disrupt, pervade, and/or interrupt it (Foucault, 1984). There is a moral motivation for the participants to see their articulations as justice (Foucault, 2001a) and to pursue the opportunity presented by the workshops diligently – observing, reflecting, speaking (writing). The truth is present in the intentions of the poems, not only in the poems themselves. The teachers intend to shift the narrative power back to themselves and to create the space where they become visible interlocutors of their own narratives. This allows the poems to exist as evidence of the space they have taken and to articulate the truths they wish to tell. The truths here require no proof, since it is more about the articulated act – what has been said cannot be taken back and exists as proof of the speaker's position. It is why Foucault (2001) calls this an act or a practice of freedom.

The combination of practices of *epimeleia heautou* and *parrhesia* creates the action where the issue and self is found. The anxiety we feel about our identities are compounded by environmental (social practices and narratives) factors that cause us to feel we should be either/or. What a critical authenticity permits is the ability to say: it is not the issue of 'me' or 'this' but 'me saying this'. The truth being not only the problem of the speaker, but what connects the speaker to the issue (Foucault, 2001b).

Take for instance, the poem *Articulation is Resistance* (in the poetry collection). It starts by admitting 'I am no one, nothing...' as a precursor to admitting the despair that pervades their working life. A few lines down, it asks, 'What value lies in nothingness?'. Opening, as if from a blank slate, this



question demonstrates the self-critique that is necessary to begin the work of telling the truth and extends the permission to remain honest throughout the truth-telling process. Critical authenticity allows for this type of existential response, an overflow which may or may not be conclusive, that emanates from ones' confrontation with the tensions in the relationship between oneself and ones' world. To endeavour a critical authenticity as a personal pursuit has been an interesting exercise for me and the project presented me with an opportunity to see how I could facilitate the same in others. The ability to explore the many layers that makes oneself requires courage, so does the articulation of same.

## Courage as craftsmanship

### **Stephanie**

This project has birthed deep thought in the partition of my life.

How I see myself moves

from a single human to a teacher human.

That kind of human is different.

That kind of human is changing.

That kind of human cannot be belligerent.

So, my heart needs to be soft, mending.

The above poem was submitted as a plenary poem responding to what participants thought the project has given them and what main themes they thought the poems explored. It captures the general responses in the chatrooms of all five workshops – that the project has given them a space to refocus their gazes to themselves and to begin the work of first, understanding who they may conceive themselves to be, then thinking of how they articulate these meanings as a way of inserting their voices into the narratives about teachers. When I imagined an empirical study that engages with philosophical inquiry, it is because I believe philosophy to be a way of life. The main challenge was how to create the enabling environment where participants could find the confidence to explore themselves and the willingness to share.

I came to the idea of using poetry as the technique for critical authenticity vis-à-vis my own practice. For me, poetry is how I make sense of the world around me. It is how I record my observations – of my experiences, my interactions, assumptions and other complex identities, emotions and reactions that combine to form the person that I am. It is how I articulate my struggles with the tensions around me and how I respond to them – making my voice heard. In reading the works of other poetic inquirers, like Sandra Faulkner, Monica Prendergast, Carl Leggo, Adam Vincent, to mention a few; I have come to understand the various ways poetry can be used as an empirical tool. At a recent conference on poetic inquiry (where I was a presenter), I had the privilege of hearing how other researchers use poetry in research and how it helps to enhance participant involvement and bring community subjectivity to research. Much philosophy on the self also advocates the use of poetry as a tool for engaging with the self – Emerson (1950), Dewey (1987), (Lorde) 2017 – and supports its function in enhancing self-knowledge and self-articulation. Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) idea of the rhizomatic self resonates with the underpinning principle of the self as a multiple representation that critical authenticity posits.

As 'an effective tool to talk back to power' (Prendergast, 2009: xxxviii), the use of poetry in empirical studies allows participants to enter the games of representation, challenge the boundaries of definition, 'expose, highlight and undermine power' (Leavy, 2010:240). This positions the form well within the notion of critical authenticity and presents a good argument for its use as an empirical tool. One of poetry's strengths is its insistence on noticing – of paying attention. Metaphor, is, after all the ability to make connections with things that might not readily or necessarily connect. Since poetry responds to this desire to share what is innermost in us (Behar, 2008) and can function as a powerful form of expression in the politics of representation, I understood that it would help participants to perceive, construct and carry their conceptions of the self to utterance.

The first step towards courage is responding to the call, wherever it may come from (Vandekerckhove and Langenberg, 2012). In the case of this project, it was, first of all, the call to participate in a series of workshops whose main aim

was to explore what teachers conceived themselves to be. There were participants who responded to my emails but refrained from joining the project, because they were afraid of being found out either by their institutions or by their governments. The risk was not worth the opportunity to disrupt a narrative or the personal development. For those that responded, the next courageous act was to be honest, both in their approach to themselves and their articulations. As someone at a conference observed, a critical authenticity requires a suspension of the ego, so that the truth one speaks, may be the truth they believe in. This, again, takes courage. The final act of courage, after honest explorations and articulations in writing, is the act of sharing and giving permission for those articulations to be shared further. At this point, what has been said (or shared) becomes irreversible, even if participants were to withdraw their poems from the project, I, and the other participants, would have already read or heard them. It is precisely this irreversibility that makes their actions risky.

The poetry workshops were the sites where teachers came to work through their self-conceptions and to decide how to submit their voices to the project. This poem *Haiku* was submitted to the first workshop and for this teacher, they recognised the enigmatic nature of their identity and the importance of sharing what they believe.

### **Haiku**

Clarity and fog

Blended arbitrarily.

Fleeting idea of self

And yet I am here,

Assured and unflinching

Me a paradox.

To get to this point, where the teachers could submit a fully written poem (some in the session, and others, later on, to the Google classroom), the workshop sessions were designed to create a sense of possibility (Foucault 1997) through reading of poems that I felt would create these feelings in participants.

A meditation on Khalil Gibran's (1923) *On Self-Knowledge* from the collection, *The Prophet*, introduced the first workshop and the idea of the self as a boundless and measureless sea gave participants the permission to consider themselves beyond the binary definitions of teacherhood/ness that they may be used to. Thus, when they came to articulating themselves, they could admit to being a 'paradox', and 'blended arbitrarily'.

In workshop 2, the meditation focused on Mei Chuc's (2018) set of haikus titled *Scent of Orange Blossoms* from *Invisible Lights*. The possibility of dragons, a blooming primrose as a force of nature, the consciousness of an atom, provides the basis for participants to ask themselves questions of their own [im]possibilities. For the first part of workshop 3, I used Dorothy Parker's (1928) poem *But Not Forgotten* from the collection *Sunset Gun*, as an example of rhyming couplets but also to illustrate for participants how emotions of loss could be expressed in poetry. This gave space for poems like *Shirt Signing* and *Just their teacher* in the poetry collection. With the introduction of Limericks in the second part of workshop 3, the teachers were given the space to explore the subversiveness that the form is well-known for (Weissmann, 2008). I was not quite prepared for the enthusiasm with which the session was received and the level of hilarity that was induced by the teachers' experimentations with the form. I did, however, hope for honesty in the transgressiveness of the poems and I was not disappointed. It took multiple readings of some of the teachers' limericks to uncover some of the meanings, even though I was in the session, and therefore privy to the commentaries and explanations of parts of the poems. The teachers took full advantage of the transgressive opportunity of the poetic form and produced poems that both mocked their working situations and their self-conflicts. The set of two limericks below, are written by the same teacher, who stated in the session that she would never have imagined to be able to write so boldly, if not for the project.

There was a teacher from training  
Who couldn't stop ever complaining  
She forgot that her job  
Was t'have a positive gob  
So put on her mask, start refraining

There was a "young" teacher from Poole  
Who worked in a College not School  
The kids hated maths  
Did not attend class  
She's expected to do "Miracools!"

I went back to the quiet meditation of Gibran's (1923) *On Self-knowledge* in the fourth workshop as a way of closing the loop (so to speak). By this point in the project (May), teachers were already beginning to feel the strain of the academic year, although, interestingly, their interest in the project had not lapsed. Teachers were neither daunted by the task of writing a sonnet and by now, all the participants were returning for the second or third time and this shows in the expansiveness of poems from that session. There is a haunting presence in the sonnet below, that belies both the spirituality of the teacher's philosophical musing on the life story of one of their students as well as their own. I find it curious and have wondered several times the dual meanings in the metaphors of the poem.

### **the fall**

This tree bore blossom; fruited long before  
a bullied boy with bruises breathed its bough.  
In school, hit back and shone though premature.  
Then Cambridge - which would soon be disavowed.

Here, geocentric teachings left him bored -  
espaliered and bound up in the past.  
As plague bore down, he sought familiar core -  
returned to Woolsthorpe orchard and learned fast.

A year of wonder followed; questions rose.  
With observation, ignorance then fell.  
In darkness, bore a hole: the light exposed.

An apple dropped to weak, familiar spell...

Earth's gravity in time will take us all.

For now? We reach for fruit before the fall<sup>40</sup>.

I wonder what questions this poem asks beyond its literal meanings. Is Education still what we expect it to be? Is the work of the teacher still relevant in today's neo-liberal, capitalist imaginations of the value of life? All 29 poems in the poetry collection, and the 81 poems that were submitted to the poetry workshops articulates something of the teacher self that connects the person and the work and that tenders a viewpoint that is both a personal observation of the teacher self and an observation of their ontology and the world within which their work is done. The truth in the poems, thus spoken and inserted as a contrasting piece of evidence to research on teacher authenticity, opens up the space for debate. This is the freedom from historicisation that Foucault (2001a) refers to. For many of the teachers, finding within themselves the feelings and understanding and the words to express their self-conceptualisations, would not have been possible outside the workshops. For those who already wrote poetry or engaged in expressive resistance of one kind or the other, the workshops contextualised their thoughts more coherently, situating their existential struggle more precisely within their self-understanding and their views of their own authenticities.

---

<sup>40</sup> Poem no. 61 in the appendix

## Implications for teacher professional development

One of the aims of this project was to determine if the notion of a critical authenticity, when applied through poetry workshops, could support reflective practice in teacher professional development. Since critical authenticity requires that teachers look beyond the binary principles of what works, or does not work, to examine the liminal aspects of their own identities *vis-à-vis* their roles as teachers and their environments, reflective practice here looks very different, or perhaps, looks like it is supposed to do. Within critical authenticity, the discussion teachers enter into with themselves is understood to be without judgement, rather, they should be considered as an opportunity to exercise justice for themselves (Foucault, 2001). This allows teachers to understand that they can imagine themselves and articulate their understandings beyond the demands of existing knowledge and authority (Westerink, 2020).

My initial motivation for using poetry writing workshops was mainly to create a community of teachers and the space for teachers to explore together. Learning poetic forms and how to write in them helped to ensure rigour in the application of poetic inquiry and to create an opportunity for learning (Cutts and Waters, 2019). I realised through the project that without the opportunity to share ideas, process one's thinking in the community of others, the reflective process can be a lonely one and one that does not yield much insight beyond one's own immediate thinking. It is possible that reading might support this process in the way a community of practice might – serving to expand one's thought and to challenge one's immediate reactions to one's judgement. For this project, the poetry workshops served all of the above: successful in providing a community of practice, creating a supportive atmosphere, encouraging meditation in the way we live our lives, our values, and motivations and in allowing teachers to participate in their own meaning-making and in articulating them.

In teacher professional development, poetry is used mostly to foster a sense of teacher identity and to facilitate reflective skills among teachers in training. Studies conducted by Ingram, (2000), Gay and Kirkland, (2003), Clark, (2009) and Cowin, (2012) demonstrate how poetry functions as both a useful tool for student teachers to explore their identities as teachers, engage in reflective

activities, process those experiences, and record them. Spear and Henshall (2014) illustrate in their research the importance of poetry in establishing reflective protocols with trainee teachers. Hassler *et al.*'s (2020) study exploring the use of digital poetry to support teachers' professional development during the Covid-19 pandemic found that teachers engage very willingly in these types of activities. This project was interested in exploring the ways in which a more embedded form of critical engagement, where the teacher self is positioned within the power dynamics that orchestrate teachers' work and their relationships both at work and outside it. If in two 75 minutes' workshops (on average), each teacher was able to produce an extended body of writing that captures their self-exploration, development, and understanding, it would be interesting to see what a more embedded practice of critical authenticity may produce. In future critical authenticity projects, the aim will be to examine how teachers' self-articulations may contribute to school cultures, teaching and learning policies and language policies. It will also look to use teachers' self-articulations to contribute to government proposals to teachers' work, their relationships with students, and policies on professional attributes.

With senior managers, the idea of critical authenticity through poetic inquiry can support engagement with reflective practice in leadership and management and encourage a more deliberate approach in the articulation of their relationship with teachers. Poetry is understood to facilitate leaders' understanding of themselves and to expand their ability to interpret their interaction with their environments and to communicate their intentions clearly (Richardson, 2002). Concern with funding drives the motivations of educational leaders, not without cause understandably. Leaders in education are oriented to be concerned about money, status, and validations, but inherently, money. In 'Can Poetry Matter?: Essays on Poetry and American Culture', Gioia (1992) refers to money as the ultimate metaphor. Within a critical authenticity, education leaders may be facilitated to revisit their inherent values, the core beliefs of their intrinsic motivations and to explore how these intersect with their identities as leaders. The articulation thereof would be



beneficial to both the leadership and those that depend on them for direction and support.

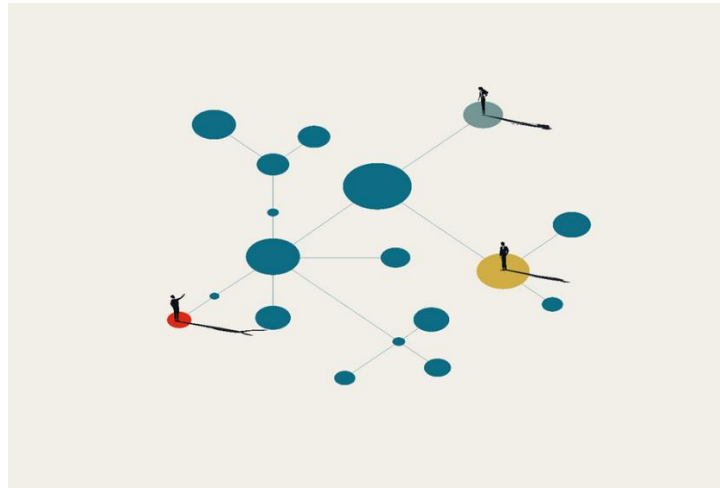
Applying a critical authenticity within leadership responds to the understanding that leadership is a complex endeavour of self, work and serving others. It acknowledges that leadership roles are intermediaries in power relationships and that critical leaders can alter power relations – seeing ‘ethics as an aesthetic practice’ (Foucault, 1984a:6). As stated earlier in this chapter, a critical authenticity involves a suspension of ego, an understanding of the role of the leader in the care of others and their ability to articulate their truth with conviction.

For teachers who may wish to use the approach with students, Certo *et al.*'s (2012:111) work with pre-service teachers in the United States found that as an aesthetic experience, poetry ‘ask[ed] students to feel and surrender’. This approach may be used to create links between students’ lives, their beliefs and values and the work they do in the classroom. The requirement in critical authenticity to come to an understanding of oneself, to see it as an evolving entity, to acknowledge its journeys and questions and to see the process of articulation as a part of the craftsmanship of oneself, supports students evolving sense of self and reinforces the understanding that learning contributes to self-development.

This project has illustrated how a poetic method could be applied to the concept of a critical authenticity to engage with teachers’ self-exploration, understanding and articulation; responding to the research question of how poetry workshops can provide educative and educational opportunities for teachers to explore their authenticities and professional identities. Below is a toolkit which could be used in running a critical authenticity workshop, using poetry as a method for engagement, participation, reflection, and articulation of teachers’ work and those of others, either in training, teaching, or conversation. The *techne* is not restricted to poetry workshops, I imagine that other story-telling methods may apply equally successfully, and teachers may be given the choice of what methods give them the most creative freedom. For those interested in using poetic inquiry to facilitate critical authenticity, the

following toolkit might be useful and adapted to use to work with teachers, students, those in leadership and even individuals.

## The Critical Authenticity Toolkit



### What This Toolkit Is For (And How To Use It)

The aim of this toolkit is to provide you with resources and ideas for how you might run your own critical authenticity workshop. Whether it is to engage teachers in thinking about themselves as teachers going into the profession, supporting experienced teachers to reconnect with their motivations and intentions in teaching and learning; or facilitating discussions with senior education management on why and how personal values can support successful outcomes in education, the resources here will inspire you. The materials and ideas presented here have been tested out with a group of experienced teachers internationally. Those that took part said they enjoyed the experience and described the workshops as ‘nourishing’, ‘fun’, ‘relaxing’, and ‘inspiring’. They also reported feeling ‘reconnected’ with their inner selves and feeling ‘emboldened’ towards either going back to their altruistic motivations for entering the teaching profession, or continuing in their work with students, even when that is to subvert the powers of authority. All said they really valued the reflective and creative space that the workshops created and connections they were able to make with other teachers. For the most part, those who took part spoke about themes relevant to them as people and individuals first and foremost, although sometimes examples and dilemmas from teaching were uppermost in their minds and were reflected in the poems.

It is possible to use the poetry (or storytelling) workshops to explore, reflect and articulate themes relating to the self, choosing themes, or allowing themes

to emerge from the exploratory exercises that might be specific to the groups you are working with more explicitly. This was something the critical authenticity project did, and which was itself very surprising and enriching in the way teachers developed their own themes. However, the focus of this toolkit on the self means that I was much more interested in how the workshops would support teachers in exploring, understanding, and articulating what it means to them to be an authentic teacher and to question if such a notion were plausible and to contribute to the tapestry of what makes up the teacher self.

Teachers who participated wrote a lot about their own conceptions of themselves, how their personal ideologies influence their teacher selves and how neoliberal processes impact on these personal ideologies. I feel that the workshops gave teachers a chance to not only articulate who they are but to tell stories of the landscape of their lives and their lives as teachers. Poetry is the place where we tell our stories, and where we learn to also mediate our knowledge of who we are, the world that surrounds us and our relationship with it (Humphreys, 2021). Poetry supports the exploration and understanding of ourselves both in new and old ways and wrestling with knowing, unknowing and not knowing. It can help teachers to find community and connection. As Carl Leggo (2008:92) said, through poetry, we 'learn to appreciate the significance of our lived experiences'. Writing poetry can help us on the path to understanding and confidence in who we are.

I hope these toolkit resources will open up new pathways for those who use them. I hope you will refine them and add to them. You may replace any of the poetry sections with other forms of creative genre – short stories, painting, slow-stitching, photo-voice etcetera. You may mix and match the activities, overlaying poetry with stitching, creating two levels of stories, facilitating that self-articulation with teachers.

For leaders in Education, this toolkit may also be used to facilitate discussions on leadership, authenticity, and identity. It presents opportunities for leaders to question their motivations, explore the possibilities that exist in their roles to work on the side of justice and to articulate these to others (and themselves).

## Rationale for A Critical Authenticity Through Poetic Inquiry Toolkit

Poetry is the way we help give name to nameless so it can be thought. The furthest horizons of our hopes and fears are cobbled by our poems, carved from the rock experiences of our daily lives. As they become known to us and accepted by us, our feelings, and the honest exploration of them become sanctuaries and spawning grounds for the most radical and daring of ideas... and the conceptualisation of any meaningful action (Lorde, 2017:8-9).

A critical authenticity is a conceptual framework where we could view the self as an on-going creative process, a way of seeing how we continue to become who we are, and that we have creative responsibility for who we become. Our life's experiences, interactions and understanding combine to form the individual we become and that this becoming is not static or fixed but evolving. A critical authenticity asks us to view ourselves as existing in a world where power is enacted constantly and to exist in the knowledge that we can alter how power is enacted towards us by inserting our own narratives and doing so insistently.

This concept is underpinned by two great Greek philosophies, *Epimeleia heautou*, or care of the self (and others) and *parrhesia* or speaking truth to power and oneself. *Epimeleia heautou* is the practice of self-knowledge and mastery (Kelly, 2013). Here, teachers create a space to reflect and examine the knowledge they have of themselves and their relationships with others. In doing so, they may start to accept the knowledge and prepare to articulate themselves, inserting their narratives in discourses concerning themselves. *Parrhesia* is the expressive act which sets the groundwork for change, and which helps teachers to rid themselves of the perception that change is impossible and enables teachers to enter the practice of liberative actions, poetry writing in this instance (Foucault, 1997b). First, to know yourself, and then, to articulate this knowledge with the aim of affirming, negotiating, and/or dismantling the status-quo.

Poetry is one of the many ways where we may create and articulate ourselves. Poetry responds to our desire to share what is innermost in us (Behar, 2008), our most profound truths. As Prendergast (2009: xxxviii) observes, poetry can

also act as ‘an effective tool to talk back to power’, helping to ‘expose, highlight and undermine power’ (Leavy, 2010:240). The ideas and approach of this toolkit is supported by a growing evidence base of the value of poetry for teaching, training, and reflection across a range of groups (McCulliss, 2013; Kleppe and Sorby 2018; Faulkner, 2020).

This toolkit will support teacher educators, trainers that deliver continuing professional development to teachers, researchers in areas of teacher identity, reflective practice and teacher identity development, senior leadership as well as other individuals who facilitate self-development training to groups and individuals in other sectors. Individuals may use this toolkit for their growth and development and to extend their own reflective practice in teaching, training, and leadership. Below is a series of steps you may want to take and which this project did.

#### 1. Decide on a theme and aims of the session



The theme of the session determines the choice of poetic form, the poem for meditation and the introductory questions that is used to centre the group. Themes may focus on the self, our relationship with others, our roles as leaders and facilitators of the learning and experiences of others, masks, and the ways in which we navigate the world, our relationship with nature and our environment etcetera. Having a theme ensures that the session is focused, and that participants’ responses are directed towards the aims of the session. For the project, I chose themes to specifically get teachers to write about their authenticities, as a way to create a tapestry of teachers’ norms, values, and beliefs. Since teachers were only required to attend two workshops each (although some attended all), the themes were designed to allow me to ask

the same questions twice without seeming repetitive. If you have a recurring workshop with the possibility of the same participants attending more than once, consider doing this but also planning additional questions to vary the process. Themes were underpinned by a selection of poems and a particular poetic form:

**Session 1: The self** (who we are and where we are in the world around us). This session should consider the ontologies of the participants and encourage them to ask questions about their relationships to the human as well as the non-human world.

**Poetic form:** haiku, Question and List poems

**Session 2: Masks** (How we navigate otherly situations and the purpose of masks, – if we use them or not; including a discussion on the self). The idea of masks considers what we hide of ourselves, to whom we reveal ourselves, in what situations, contexts and for what reasons.

**Poetic form:** Rhyming poems (The Sonnet and couplets)

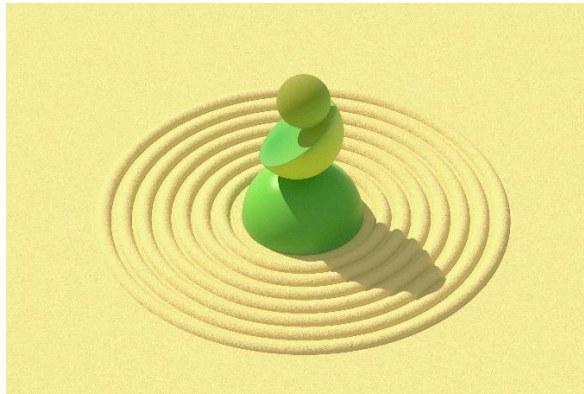
**Session 3: Care** (our understanding of care of self and how we navigate the care of others, including how this affects our understanding of ourselves). Participants may explore this literally and figuratively.

**Poetic form:** The free verse and Limerick

**Session 4: The self in the world** (power and its activities on the self, how we navigate the apparatuses of power or how we do not, including a discussion on the self and how we navigate the world around us).

**Poetic form:** Guided free verse and rhyming verses

## 2. Centre the Group



This is about creating a thinking space and a space that is oriented to the aim of the session. It is important for participants to feel that they made the choice to join the session and that they do feel bound to it. Free-will in the exploration of oneself is important within critical authenticity. To speak to power requires a measure of understanding that the beginning of the journey is a response to an invitation, not a duty. Here, I suggest the use of questions that orient the group to themselves – where people are from, what do they teach, where do they live, how their weeks have been, what is significant about the day and so on. Often, these questions start a conversation about the nature of people's lives, and their values. This stage is about deepening the bonds of the group and giving the opportunity to get to know each other, encouraging empathy, openness, honesty and sharedness. According to Certo et al, (2012), this ensures participants are committed to the process of the workshops, and to the demands of reflection rather than rumination. You want to create a community of individuals who feel responsive towards themselves.



### 3. Create a personal space



A piece of poetry is introduced at this stage. Read this with the group and pause to give each person time to reflect on the poem. The purpose of using a poem to create a personal space allows the facilitator to do some form of directed reflection. The poem should reflect the aims of the session and should focus participants' reflections on the questions asked earlier as well as preparing them for the questions to follow. I found that the group benefited from a discussion of the poem, its intention, tone, and mood. By identifying with aspects of the poet's work, participants were also able to see how they could express themselves similarly.

Some of the poems used in the project included:

- Self-Knowledge by Khalil Gibran
- Fog by Carl Sandburg
- Harlem by Langston Hughes
- Be Not Forgotten by Dorothy Parker
- The Magic Box by Kit Wright
- The Sound Collector by Roger McGough
- There was an Old Man with a Beard by Edward Lear
- Sonnet 18: Shall I compare thee to a summer's day? By William Shakespeare

To extend reflection and further avoid rumination as Lengelle *et al.* (2019) recommends, follow up with some questions. Keep the mood low, contemplative, quiet. This allows for participants to remain focused

on themselves, to concentrate on exploring what these questions mean to them and for them and to respond honestly. Questions like the ones below may be used:

- Who are you? As human and an individual?
- How do your beliefs and values influence who you are as teachers? How do they evolve?
- What constitutes your many paths and what choices do you make?
- What are the 'masks' you wear to class and to the world? Are they different masks? Why are they necessary? What do they say about you?
- What is it about you that your students/colleagues/management will not forget?

#### 4. Teach the craft



How words and thoughts get woven into poetry involves skill. Asking participants to use a form they are unfamiliar with may create anxieties and tensions that inhibit their expression. Teaching a poetic form creates confidence and presents participants with the technical knowledge of poetry writing as well as the elements that allow creative freedom. I recommend that poems used to create a personal space also reflect the poetic form(s) participants will be asked to learn and reproduce. After a period of meditating on the form, language, mood and cadence of the reflection poem(s), participants are often reminded of these when writing. Mirroring the resources provides some level of scaffolding and demonstration for participants. As

Curtis and Watts (2019) caution, there needs to be a level of artistic quality in the work participants produce, either as demonstrations of their own engagement or for use of as poetic data.

## 5. Articulate



This is the most important stage of the workshop. What participants produce at the stage is what they take away with them, and remains a reminder of the time spent in the session and provides the facilitator with feedback on the success of the session. Create a space for participants to write. The facilitator should consider using this time to write also. The writing space should be quiet and free of conversation. You may scaffold the writing stages: two minutes of jotting down ideas and making word clouds, then five minutes to start to structure sentences then a longer period of time to create a poetic piece. This may allow the facilitator to make suggestions, and sign-post participants to responses they have given which may be relevant.

Participants may be encouraged to submit a finished verse or the whole poem in the session. Flexibility around what participants should be able to have written by the end of the time set is recommended. It is also important to have a deadline for when a final piece is submitted, especially when participants go away to write.

## 6. Endings that are middles



Have a plenary. Consider how the groups should be closed and how to capture the sessions – for both the facilitator and the participants. Where participants have produced a lot of poems, it is useful to document these somehow. Also, think about how to summarise all the ideas and responses participants have shared in the session (I created found<sup>41</sup> poems out of responses and conversations I have recorded), share with the group and invite participants to summarise the journey themselves. This should be planned to allow group members to acknowledge each other and the journey together, look back on highlights from the sessions – including the takeaways, provide some reflection and feedback to the facilitator and say goodbye. At this point, it is always useful to provide the opportunity for participants to share contact information and the facilitator to share future plans and information regarding what will happen to the poems they wrote. Recommendations about what participants could do independently with furthering the critical work may be shared here. This might include sharing their work in public – performances, groups readings, or publications.

---

<sup>41</sup> A poem made of words and expressions from non-poetic texts and arranged and given poetic form. Often useful for summarising events or conversations and field notes or providing an accessible format for data presentation.

## Resources

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/> This is the online home of Poetry magazine, which has been in continuous publication for more than 100 years (making it the oldest monthly magazine devoted to verse in the English language). It is a brilliant resource for searchable poems, but it also has many interesting articles on writing, form, ideas, and thoughts about poetry in all senses. They additionally produce really good podcasts. They have lovely collections of poems on different themes - see, for example: <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/collections/142028/poemsof-hope-and-resilience>

<https://poetrysociety.org.uk/> The Poetry Society runs myriad workshops and competitions and has a focus on promoting books and events from all over the UK. An excellent website to lose yourself in.

<https://onbeing.org/series/poetry-unbound/> The On Being 'Poetry Unbound' podcast is also a wonderful source of poetry inspiration on a range of topics relevant to mental health and wellbeing.

<http://www.pbs.org/newshour/extra/tag/arts-culture/> Videos of poets reading and discussing their work, segments on poetry and contemporary culture, poet profiles, and teaching tips.

<http://www.poems.com/> Anthology features one new contemporary poem each day, selected from current journals and books. Includes an archive of past selections.

<https://poetryinternational.org/> International poets searchable by country or name. Poems in original language and translation, biographies, articles, and recordings.

<http://www.theotherpages.org/poems/> Includes work by roughly 800 poets. Individual poems and a selection of book-length collections, including anthologies.

<https://www.facinghistory.org/ideas-week/poetry-identity/> A website with ideas and resources to support the teaching of poetry and identity

## Conclusion

### Contribution to Knowledge

When I set out to respond to Bialystok's (2015) call for a study that questions the concept of a teacher authenticity, I knew that I had to ask the questions very differently to existing literature on the subject. I could not use the framework created by Kreber (2007), nor the arbitrary modes of exploration by their contemporaries which take for granted the plausibility of the notion of teacher authenticity (Cranton, 2001/2010; Johnson and Labelle, 2017; Cross *et al.*, 2018; *etcetera*). I needed the questions to interrogate the notion of a teacher authenticity and to give voice to the teachers whose voices are undermined by the concept. This meant, I needed to conduct an empirical study and to invite teachers to drive the discussion. I also needed a philosophy, an ethical direction for my thinking and the empirical direction of the project – a way of anchoring the politics of the narrativisation of teacher self with a critical pedagogy that responds to those politics and that dismantles them. The idea of critical authenticity was created to serve this purpose. It is my believe that this project met all of its aims and objectives, responding to its research question in the following ways:

1. The notion of critical authenticity, which underpins the work of this thesis, is an original contribution to knowledge. It provides a conceptual framework within which the power play that surrounds the teacher self is recognised, isolated, and responded to. Critical authenticity, in borrowing the understanding that a *techne* (Foucault, 2006) is required for the practice of the articulated self, responds to Foucault's (1983a: 237) idea of the self 'as a work of art'. As a framework, it brings together Foucault's ideas on power and subjectivity and the self as an aesthetic practice but goes beyond these to provide an articulated space, a technology (through poetic inquiry), where teachers may apply to negotiate power and self (Leavy, 2010). The teacher selves in this project are conceived with the understanding of how the mechanisations of power work in their lives, in their poems, they isolate

these apparatuses and respond to them. Their expressions acts as 'an art of disparate truth' (Foucault, 1997b: 212).

2. A second original contribution to knowledge is the response to Bialystok's (2015) call for research that interrogates the concept of teacher authenticity. This project set out to question the notion and to dismantle it. By conducting an empirical study, the project ensures that teachers, who are the ones narrativised by the notion of teacher authenticity, are the ones to examine the concept and to present for the record, a response, of what constitutes their authenticities. As demonstrated in the literature review, other research on teacher authenticity perpetuates the notion and does not acknowledge the problems inherent in it. The response to the research question examining the plausibility of teacher authenticity as a concept is that there is no such thing as authenticity that could be described as purely teacherly or one that all teachers should possess. The poems illustrate that the teacher self is multifaceted, oriented towards the individual and their responses to their environment. That these responses are not always the same, even in similar contexts, that each teacher, is their own multifaceted self. That at best, a simplified conclusion would be that the teacher self is:

oriented in moral space, a space which questions arise of what is good or bad, what is worth doing and what is not, what has meaning and importance for [them and their students] and what is trivial and secondary (Taylor, 1989:28).

3. A technology requires practical tools. Poetic inquiry is the tool used in this project to facilitate that critical process within critical authenticity. Through reading, learning how to and writing of poetry, participants were presented with the skills to imagine themselves and the power mechanisms that operate around them and which they operate within. Poetry also supported them in imagining the ways which they could disrupt the power game, to enter into them and to articulate themselves. In this way, this project contributes to research using poetic inquiry in general as well as research using poetic inquiry in teacher identity

studies and teacher professional development. The project itself demonstrates how a critical approach underpinning the use of poetic inquiry, could be both educative and educational within teacher professional development. The toolkit at the end of the last chapter is a practical suggestion, a how-to do critical authenticity toolkit for educators who might wish to apply this approach.

4. By presenting the problems inherent in the notion of teacher authenticity, I have demonstrated how the narrativisation of the teacher self becomes part of the injustices perpetuated on teachers. This thesis performs the political act of demonstrating how the narrative power of teacher authenticity works in the subjectification of the teacher self (Foucault, 1884a). The literature review sets out how research work on teacher authenticity aligns with government policies and how in so doing, perpetuates the mechanisations of power that performative economies use to tyrannise their subjects (Ball, 2016). By doing so, this thesis contributes to research and discourses on the effects of neo-liberalism on teacher self and teacher identity.
5. One way of altering power relations is to speak to it. The sharing of participant-voiced poems in this project contributes to constructive resistance to neo-liberal narrativisation of teacher selves. By writing poems about their lives, truths, hopes, values, and dreams; teachers on the project spoke beyond the demands of power and existing narratives of the teacher self. By sharing their work in this thesis, at conferences, in blogs and articles and books which I hope to write, I will continue to extend their power and their words will continue to disrupt those power relations that threaten the authenticity of the teacher self.



## My Critical Authenticity: A Summary in Verse

I came to this project,

Hesitant, tentative;

Almost unseeing – neither the way nor the direction.

The questions whirled around, mixed

With my own frustrations speaking, often too loudly

Yet, to work in the service of others,

One must quieten the roar of one's own frustrations

And listen.

The

Broken

Strands of

Thoughts

And ideas

Borrowed

Made

A

Path.

So, build the space and decorate it

With words and music and proverbs old

Invite friends, sit in a circle, and make a pit

Tell the stories and strengthen the fold.

Here I kept time with them  
feeling the restraint, hearing the doubts, and listening,  
listening...  
The slow hand-reaching to touch the inner sides of what was,  
Is...  
has always been them... me... us...  
then the dance – the head nodding of 'I know'  
'I recognise'...  
That rapid ascendance into acceptance,  
the outpouring of all that was held, once so tightly  
now laid bare and nothing exists anymore except  
the pages, the sounds, the words...  
the slow tapping of the heart that says  
'say it, again and again and again and again'  
Say it, infinitely...

We came together so we could know, practice, be...  
and knowing,  
the in-betweens become at-tweens and to-tweens  
and maybe, just maybe  
we'll find us again, somewhere else, within, without.

Poetry captures the mysteries and paradoxes  
... the broken shell of an unwanted egg ...  
... the means to keep despair at bay ...

To dance?

To sing?

To share?

And as a last resort, ...

To fight?

In the final days of checking what it all means

I find the truth to be somewhere in the spaces

Not so visible, not so clearly felt, or told

And in fact, had to peel the layers back slowly so

As not to jump to conclusions so quickly about what is meant

But to feel the state of what was said: -

What could be meant, in a small voice at the end of the sentence

Hiding in the taste of spring.

There was once a teacher

Who wrote in meter

She met with the others in the land of zoom

And agreed they were all different kinds of bloom.

The Limerick is the court jester, speaking truth to power;

The sonnet, a determined exploration of intention and freewill.

The free verses made tapestries of the pain and pleasure,

Weaving the stories, of journeys begun and never-ending.

Haikus made short thrift of motivations

and dreams,

Wrapped in flowers and the smell of spring –

They made couplets rhyme to September's new songs,

Burying their fears in the smiles of their wards.

They carried bags made of silk

Yarns of love and bows of care

They put in them the wares of their heart

To soothe and guide and cater and cheer.

Existential ennui, yapping at their heels

Pushing still against the rising tide

Their altruism a shield against the fear,

The battle must not be lost, they all agreed.

So, what then is an authentic teacher?

You might as well ask:

What is the measure of a piece a string?

Is it one that feeds the curiosities of their wards

Spending 'calories' to bridge the distance between life

and a child's bewildered face?

Is it one that confronts the edges of immutable ignorance,

And wages war on it with kindness and perseverance?

Is it the magician, mercurial yet sure,

Brandishing a wand, making fairies real,

Turning a shrew into dubitable fun?

Is it the line toeing, I better just be that

Or the revolutionary who would rather not?

Is it all, yet none and none ever at the same time?

My role was to tell the truth as they said it

Simply, without elaboration

Or pride or conceit.

So here it is, as I know how

So here it is, as they told it

Read, listen, bear witness.

## References

- ABACIOGLU, C. S., VOLMAN, M., and FISCHER, A. H., 2020. Teachers' multicultural attitudes and perspective taking abilities as factors in culturally responsive teaching. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 90(3), pp. 736–752.
- ABDEL-HALIM, R. and ALKATTAN, K., 2012. Introducing medical humanities in the medical curriculum in Saudi Arabia: A pedagogical experiment. *Urology annals* [online]. 4, pp. 73-9.
- ADORNO, T. W., 1973. *The jargon of authenticity*. K. Tarnowski & F. Will, Trans. Evanston, IL: Northwestern UP.
- AGAMBEN, G., 2009. *What is an apparatus?* (D. Kishik and S. Pedatella, Trans.). Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- ALEXANDER, D., CHANT, D., and COX, B., 1994. What Motivates People to Become Teachers. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 19(2).
- ALJABREEN, H., 2020. Montessori, Waldorf, and Reggio Emilia: A comparative analysis of alternative models of early childhood education. *International Journal of Early Childhood*, 52, pp. 337-353.
- ANDERSSON, S. B., and ANDERSSON, I. A., 2005. Authentic learning in a sociocultural framework: A case study on non-formal learning. *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research*, 49, pp.419–436.
- ANDERSON, C., 2010. Presenting and evaluating qualitative research. *American Journal of Pharmaceutical Education*, 74 (8), pp. 1-7.
- ANDERSON, A. 2019. Parrhesia: Accounting for different contemporary relations between risk and politics. *Journal of Sociology*, 55(3), pp. 495–510.
- APPIAH, K. 2006. The politics of identity. *Daedalus*, 135 (4), pp. 15–22.
- ARCHIBALD, M. M., AMBAGTSHEER, R. C., CASEY, M. G., and LAWLESS, M., 2019. Using Zoom Videoconferencing for Qualitative Data Collection: Perceptions and Experiences of Researchers and Participants. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*.
- ARISTOTLE., 1961. Aristotle's poetics. New York: Hill and Wang.
- ASHTON, S., 2010. Authenticity in adult learning, *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, 29 (1), pp. 3-19.
- ASPERS, P. and CORTE, U., 2019. What is Qualitative in Qualitative Research. *Qual Sociol* [online]. 42, pp. 139–160.
- BALL, S. J., 2003. The teacher's soul and the terrors of performativity, *Journal of Education Policy* [online] 18 (2), pp. 215–288.
- BALL, S. J., 2005. *Education Policy and Social Class. The Selected Works of Stephen J. Ball*. London. Routledge.
- BALL, S. J., 2008. *The Education Debate*. Bristol. Policy Press.
- BALL, S. J., 2013. *Foucault, Power and Education*. Oxon. Routledge.

- BALL, S. J., 2016. Subjectivity as a site of struggle: refusing neoliberalism? *British Journal of Sociology of Education* [online]. 37 (8), pp.1129-1146
- BARONE, T., 2001. *Touching eternity: The enduring outcomes of teaching*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- BARONE, T. and EISNER, E. W., 2012. *Arts Based Research*. Los Angeles: SAGE.
- BAUDRILLARD, J., 2001. *Jean Baudrillard: selected writings*. Stanford University Press.
- BAUDRILLARD, J., 1988. The hyper-realism of simulation. *Jean Baudrillard: selected writings*, 143, p.147.
- BAUER, K., 2017. To be or Not to be Authentic. A Defense of Authenticity as an Ethical Ideal, *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice*, 20 (3), pp. 567–580.
- BEAUCHAMP, C. and THOMAS, L., 2009. Understanding teacher identity: an overview of issues in the literature and implications for teacher education, *Cambridge Journal of Education* [online]. 39 (2), pp. 175-189.
- BECK, S., 2006. Fiction and Fictions: On Ricoeur on the route to the self. *South African journal of philosophy*, 25(4), pp.329-335.
- BECK, C., KOSNIK, C., and ROSALES, E., 2017. Longitudinal Study of Teachers. *Oxford Research Encyclopaedia of Education*. [online]. 117.
- BEHAR, R., 2008. Between poetry and anthropology: Searching for languages of home. In M. CAHNMANN-TAYLOR and R. SIEGSMUND eds., *Arts-Based research in education: Foundations for Foundations for practice*. Routledge. pp. 55–71
- BELLAH, R. N., MADSEN, R., SULLIVAN, W. M., SWIDLER, A., and TIPTON, S. M., 2008. *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- BERRYHILL, J., LINNEY, J. A., and FROMEWICK, J. T., 2009. The effects of education accountability on teachers: Are policies too stress provoking for their own good? *International Journal of Education Policy and Leadership* 4(5), pp.1–14.
- BIALYSTOK, L., 2014. "Authenticity and the Limits of Philosophy." *Dialogue* 53 (2), pp. 271–298.
- BIALYSTOK, L., 2015. Should teachers be authentic? *Ethics and Education*, 10 (3), pp. 313-326.
- BIESTA, G., PRIESTLEY, M., and ROBINSON, S., 2015. The role of beliefs in teacher agency, *Teachers and Teaching* [online], 21(6), pp. 624-640.
- BRESLIN, T., 2002 Chasing the wrong dream; the quest for teacher professionalism in the age of the citizenship school. In M. JOHNSON and J. HALLGARTEN eds. *From Victims of Change to Agents of Change: The Future of the Teaching Profession*. London, IPPR, pp.194–219.
- BROOKS, C., 2021. The Core Content Framework and the fallacy of a teacher training 'curriculum'. Available at: <https://blogs.ucl.ac.uk/ioe/2021/09/02/the->

[core-content-framework-and-the-fallacy-of-a-teacher-training-curriculum/](#).  
[Accessed: 02 December 2023].

- BROOKFIELD, S., 1990. *The skilful teacher*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- BUCHANAN, R. 2015. Teacher identity and agency in an era of accountability, *Teachers and Teaching*, 21 (6): pp. 700-719.
- BURCHELL, H. 2010. "Poetic Expression and Poetic Form in Practitioner Research." *Educational Action Research* 18 (3): pp. 389–400.
- BUTLER, J., 1990. *Gender trouble: Feminism and the subversion of identity*. Routledge
- BUTLER-KISBER, L., 2018. *Qualitative Inquiry: Thematic, Narrative and Arts-Based Perspectives*. 2nd ed. London: SAGE Publications Ltd. [online] Available from: <https://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781526417978> & gt; [Accessed 7 Apr 2022].
- CAHNMANN, M., 2003. 'The Craft, Practice, and Possibility of Poetry in Educational Research', *Educational Researcher*, 32 (3), pp. 29–36.
- CARETTA, M. A., and RIANO, Y., 2016. Feminist participatory methodologies in geography: Creating spaces of inclusion. *Qualitative Research*, [online]. 16(3), pp. 258–266. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794116629575>. [Accessed: 27 April 2021].
- CARR, J. M., 2003. Poetic expressions of vigilance. *Qualitative Health Research*, 13(9), pp.1324-1331.
- CARTER, K., 1993. "The Place of Story in the Study of Teaching and Teacher Education," *Educational Researcher*. 22 (11), pp. 5-12.
- CARUSETTA, E., and CRANTON, P., 2005a. Nurturing authenticity: A conversation with teachers. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 10 (3) pp. 285–297.
- CARUSETTA, E., and CRANTON, P., 2005b. Nurturing authenticity through faculty development. *Journal of Faculty Development*, 20 (2) pp. 79–85.
- CERTO, J., APOL, L., WIBBENS, E., and HAWKINS, L., 2012. Living the Poet's Life: Using an Aesthetic Approach to Poetry to Enhance Preservice Teachers' Poetry Experiences and Dispositions. *English Education*, 44 (2), 102-146.
- CHAN, Z. C. Y., 2003. Poetry writing: A therapeutic means for a social work doctoral student in the process of study. *Journal of Poetry Therapy* [online] 16, pp. 5–17. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1080/0889367031000147995>. [Accessed: 9 September 2020]
- CHEN J, YIN H, and FRENZEL, A. C., 2020. Teacher Emotions Matter-Nature, Antecedents, and Effects. Editorial: *Front Psychol*. [online] 17(11) Available from: <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.605389>. [Accessed: 20 February 2023]
- CHICKERING, A. W., DALTON, J. and STAMM. L. 2006. *Encouraging Authenticity and Spirituality in Higher Education*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- CHUC T. M., 2018. *Invisible Lights*. Many Voices Press.



- CLANDININ, J. and CONNELLY, M., 1995. *Teachers' Professional Knowledge Landscapes*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- CLANDININ, J. and CONNELLY, M., 1998. Stories to Live by: Narrative Understandings of School Reform, *Curriculum Inquiry*, 28 (1) pp. 149-164.
- CLANDININ, J. and CONNELLY, M., 1999. *Shaping a Professional Identity: Stories of Educational Practice*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- CLANDININ, D. J., and CONNELLY, F. M., 2000. *Narrative inquiry: Experience and story in qualitative research*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Inc.
- CLARK, A.M., 2009. When privilege meets poverty: Using poetry in the process of reflection. *Journal on Excellence in College Teaching*, 20(2), pp. 125–142.
- CLARKE M., 2009. The Ethico-politics of Teacher Identity, *Educational Philosophy and Theory* [online]. 41 (2) pp. 185-200. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1469-5812.2008.00420.x>. [Accessed: 22 March 2021].
- CLARKE, M., and MOORE, A., 2013. Professional standards, teacher identities and an ethics of singularity. *Cambridge Journal of Education*. 43.
- CLEMENT, C., and PRENDERGAST, M., 2012. Poetic inquiry: An annotated bibliography: Updated, 2007–2012 (595-page bibliography). Victoria, British Columbia, Canada: Department of Curriculum & Instruction, University of Victoria.
- COLNERUD, G., 2015. Moral stress in teaching practice. *Teachers and Teaching*, 21(3), pp. 346-360.
- COOGLER, C. H., MELCHIOR S., and SHELTON, S. A., 2022. Poetic Suturing: The Value of Communal Reflexion in Self-Study of Teaching Experiences, *Studying Teacher Education*, 18:3, pp. 258-275
- COOK, A. S., 1891. *Shelley. A Defense of Poetry*. Boston: Ginn & Company.
- COOK, R. L., 1968. *The dimensions of Robert Frost*. New York. Barnes & Noble.
- COMMEYRAS, M., 1995. What can we learn from students' questions?, *Theory Into Practice*, 34(2) pp. 101-106.
- COWIN, K., 2012. Enhancing Student Teacher Reflective Practice Through Poetry, *The New Educator*, 8 (4), pp. 308-320.
- CÔTÉ, L. and TURGEON, J., 2005. Appraising qualitative research articles in medicine and medical education. *Medical Teacher* [online]. 27(1), pp. 76-80. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1080/01421590400016415>. [Accessed: 9 September 2020]
- CRANTON, P. A., 2001. *Becoming an authentic teacher in higher education*. Malabar, FL: Krieger.
- CRANTON, P., 2010. Becoming an authentic community college teacher. *International Journal of Adult Vocational Education and Technology*, 1 (3) pp. 1–13.

- CRANTON, P., and CARUSETTA, E. 2004. Perspectives on authenticity in teaching. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 55 (1) pp. 5–22.
- CROSS, S. B., DUNN, A. H., and DOTSON, E. K., 2018. The intersections of selves and policies: A poetic inquiry into the hydra of teacher education. *Education Policy Analysis Archives* [online] 26 (29). Available from: <http://dx.doi.org/10.14507/epaa.26.2813>. [Accessed: 10 February 2021]
- CUDDAPAH, J. L., BEATY-O'FERRALL, M. E., MASCI, F. J. and HETRICK, M., 2011. Exploring why career changers leave teaching, *The New Educator*, 7 (2), pp.114–130.
- CUMMINGS, E. E. 1965. *A Miscellany Revised*. G. J. Firmage ed., New York: October House.
- CUTTS, Q. M., and WATERS, M. B. S., 2019. "Poetic Approaches to Qualitative Data Analysis". *Education Publications*. 145.
- DAY, C., KINGTON, A., STOBART, G. and SAMMONS, P., 2006. The personal and professional selves of teachers: stable and unstable identities, *British Educational Research Journal*. 32 (4), pp. 601–616.
- DE BRUYCKERE, P., and KIRSCHNER, P. A. 2016. Authentic teachers: Student criteria perceiving authenticity of teachers. *Cogent Education*, (3) 1247609.
- DE BRUYCKERE P., and KIRSCHNER, P. A. 2017. Measuring teacher authenticity: Criteria students use in their perception of teacher authenticity, *Cogent Education* (4) 1354573.
- DEGENHARDT, M. A. B., 2003. Should Philosophy Express the Self? *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 37 (1): pp. 35–51.
- DEN BROK, P., WUBBELS, T. and VAN TARTWIJK, J., 2017. Exploring beginning teachers' attrition in the Netherlands. *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice*. 23 (8) pp. 881–895.
- DENZIN, N. K. and LINCOLN, Y. S., eds. 2018. *The sage handbook of qualitative research*. 5<sup>th</sup> ed. Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE.
- DEMIR, C. E., 2007. Metaphors as a reflection of middle school students' perceptions of school: A cross-cultural analysis, *Educational Research and Evaluation*, 13(2), pp. 89-107.
- DES., 1989. Initial teacher training: Approval of courses. Circular 24/89, London: DES.
- DES., 1984. Initial teacher training: Approval of courses. Circular 3/84, London: DES.
- DES., 1983. Teaching Quality. Cm3390. London: DES.
- DEWEY, J., 1997. *Experience and education*. West Lafayette, Ind.: Kappa Delta Pi.
- DEWEY, J., 1987. Art as experience. In J.A. BOYUSTON. *John Dewey: the later works*, Vol. 10. Carbondale and Edwardsville, Southern Illinois University Press.
- DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION. 2019a. *ITT core content framework*. Available at : <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/initial-teacher-training-itt-core-content-framework>. [Accessed: 20 September 2022].

- DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION. 2019b. *Early career framework*. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-career-framework>. [Accessed: 20 September 2022].
- DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION. 2016. *School workforce in England*. London: DfE.
- DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION. 2011. *The Teachers' Standards*. London: DfE.
- DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION. 2010. *The importance of teaching*. Cm7980. London: DfE
- DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION 2003. *Every Child Matters*. Norwich: The Stationery Office (Cm5860).
- DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION 1997. *Requirements for courses of initial teacher training*. Circular 10/97, London: DfEE.
- DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION 1993. *The Initial Training of Primary School Teachers: new criteria for courses*, Circular 14/93. London: DfE.
- DILLARD, C. B., 2006. *On Spiritual Strivings: Transforming an African American Woman's Academic Life*. New York: State University of New York Press.
- DIMITRIADIS, G., 2016. 'Reading Qualitative Inquiry through Critical Pedagogy: Some Reflections', *International Review of Qualitative Research*, 9(2), pp. 140–146.
- DIRKX, J. M. 2000. Transformative learning and the journey of individuation. *ERIC Digest 223*. ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Career and Vocation Education.
- DOYLE, W., 2000. Authenticity. American Educational Research Association (AERA) Annual Meeting, New Orleans, FL. (4) pp. 24–28.
- DREHER, M., 1994. Qualitative research methods from the reviewer's perspective. In J. MORSE ed., *Critical issues in qualitative research methods*. pp. 281–297. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- EDLING, S., 2015. Between curriculum complexity and stereotypes: exploring stereotypes of teachers and education in media as a question of structural violence, *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 47 (3), pp. 399-415.
- EDUCATION SUPPORT. 2020. *Teacher Wellbeing Index*. London. Education Support. Available from: [https://www.educationsupport.org.uk/sites/default/files/teacher\\_wellbeing\\_index\\_2020.pdf](https://www.educationsupport.org.uk/sites/default/files/teacher_wellbeing_index_2020.pdf) (Accessed 07 March 2021)
- EKPO, V., 2023. *Ask For Wings That Fly*. BookLeaf Publishing.
- ELBELAZI, S. A. and ALHARBI, L., 2020. 'The "Exotic Other": A Poetic Autoethnography of Two Muslim Teachers in Higher Education', *Qualitative Inquiry*, 26(6), pp. 661–666.
- ELLIS, C., 2007. Telling secrets, revealing lives: Relational ethics in research with intimate others. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 13, pp. 3-29.
- EMERSON, R. W., 1940/1950. *The Complete Essays and Other Writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson*. B. ATKINSON ed., New York: Random House.

- ELLIS, C., 2007. Telling secrets, revealing lives: Relational ethics in research with intimate others. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 13, pp. 3-29.
- ELLIS, N., ALONSO, D., and NGUYEN, H., 2020. Elements of a quality pre-service teacher mentor: A literature review. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 92.
- ELLIOTT, C., 2012. *Poetic inquiry* (PhD diss.). University of Pittsburgh. [online] Available from: [http://www.awesomeyourlife.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/PoeticInquiryAprilETD24\\_May-21.pdf](http://www.awesomeyourlife.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/PoeticInquiryAprilETD24_May-21.pdf). [Accessed: 27 April 2022]
- ELIOT, T. S., 1943. *Four quartets*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co.
- FAIRCHILD, B. H., 2003, June. The motions of being: On the Intersections of lyric and narrative (a work in progress). Paper presented at the West Chester University Poetry Conference on Form and Narrative. West Chester, PA.
- FARINDE, A. A., ALLEN, A., and LEWIS, C.W., 2016. Retaining black teachers: an examination of black female teachers' intentions to remain in K-12 classrooms. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 49 (1), pp. 115–127.
- FARRELL, F. and LANDER, V., 2019. "We're not British values teachers are we?": Muslim teachers' subjectivity and the governmentality of unease. *Educational Review*. 71(4), pp. 466-482.
- FAULKNER S. L., 2007. Concern with craft: Using ars poetica as criteria for reading research poetry. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 13 (2), pp. 218-234.
- FAULKNER, S. L., 2009. *Poetry as method: Reporting research through verse*. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press.
- FAULKNER, S. L., 2012a. Frogging it: A poetic analysis of relationship dissolution. *Qualitative Research in Education*, [online]. 1, pp. 202–227. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.4471/qre.2012.10>. [Accessed: 20 September 2020]
- FAULKNER, S. L., 2012b. *Hello Kitty goes to college: Poems*. Chicago, IL: dancing girl press.
- FAULKNER, S. L., 2012c. Poetry as/in research: Connections between poets and qualitative researchers. In S. THOMAS, A. L. COLE, and S. Stewart eds., *The art of poetic inquiry*. pp. 310–313. Big Tancook Island, Canada: Backalong Books.
- FAULKNER, S. L., 2014. *Family stories, poetry, and women's work: Knit four, frog one* (poems). Rotterdam, Netherlands: Sense.
- FAULKNER, S. L., 2015a. *Knit four, make one: Poems* [chapbook]. Somerville, MA: Kattywompus Press.
- FAULKNER, S. L., 2015b. The interview. *Pine Hills Review*. [online]. Available from: <http://pinehillsreview.strose.edu/sandrafaulkner/>. [Accessed: 20 September 2020]
- FAULKNER, S. L., 2016. Postkarten aus Deutschland: A chapbook of ethnographic poetry. *Liminalities*, [online]. 12 (1). Available from: <http://liminalities.net/12-1/postkarten.html>. [Accessed: 22 September 2020]

- FAULKNER, S. L., 2017. Poetry is Politics: An Autoethnographic Poetry Manifesto, *International Review of Qualitative Research*, [online]. 10(1), pp. 89–96. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1525/irqr.2017.10.1.89>. [Accessed: 22 September 2020]
- FAULKNER, S., 2020. *Poetic Inquiry: Craft, Method and Practice*. New York: Routledge.
- FERNÁNDEZ-GIMÉNEZ, M. E., JENNINGS, L. B., and WILMER, H., 2019. “Poetic Inquiry as a Research and Engagement Method in Natural Resource Science.” *Society & Natural Resources* 32 (10): pp.1080–109.
- FEUERVERGER, G., 1997. On the Edges of the Map: A Study of Heritage Language Teachers in Toronto. *Teaching and Teacher Education*. 13. pp. 39-53.
- FINE, M., WEIS, L., WESEEN, S. and WONG, L., 2000. For whom? Qualitative research, representations, and social responsibilities. In: N. K. Denzin and Y. S. Lincoln. *Handbook of qualitative research*. 2nd ed., Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. pp.107-131.
- FOSTER, W. and FREEMAN, E., 2008. Poetry in general practice education: perceptions of learners. *Family Practice*, [online]. 25(4) pp. 294-303. Available from: <http://www.fampra.oxfordjournals.org>. doi:10.1093/fampra/cmn034. [Accessed: 22 March 2021]
- FOUCAULT, M. 1972. *The archaeology of knowledge and the discourse on language*. New York: Pantheon.
- FOUCAULT, M. 1980a. *The History of Sexuality*, Vol. I. New York, Vintage.
- FOUCAULT, M., 1980b. *Power/Knowledge: selected interviews and other writings 1972–1977*. In: C. GORDON. London: Harvester.
- FOUCAULT, M., 1982. The subject and power. *Critical Inquiry*, 8(4), pp. 777– 795.
- FOUCAULT, M., 1983a. The Subject and Power, in *Michel Foucault Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics* by H. L. DREYFUS AND P. RABINOW, ed, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- FOUCAULT, M. 1983b. On the genealogy of ethics: an overview of work in progress (an interview conducted in April 1983), in: H.L. DREYFUS and P. RABINOW. *Michel Foucault: beyond structuralism and hermeneutics*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- FOUCAULT, M., 1984a. *The Foucault Reader*, P. RABINOW, ed. New York, Pantheon Books.
- FOUCAULT, M. 1984b. ‘L’éthique du souci de soi comme pratique de la liberté’. *Dits et écrits IV*, nr. 356. Paris, Gallimard.
- FOUCAULT, M., 1985. *The Use of Pleasure: the history of sexuality*, Vol. II. New York, Vintage.
- FOUCAULT, M. 1990. *The care of the self: The history of sexuality* (Vol. 3). Penguin
- FOUCAULT, M., 1994. ‘Omnes et Singulatem: vers une critique de la raison politique’. *Dits et écrits IV*, nr. 291. Paris : Gallimard.

- FOUCAULT, M. 1997a. *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*. London: Penguin.
- FOUCAULT, M., 1997b. The ethics of the concern for self as practice of freedom. In P. RABINOW, ed., *Michel Foucault: Ethics: Subjectivity and truth*. 1, pp. 281-302. New York: The New Press.
- FOUCAULT, M., 1999. *Discourse and Truth: the problematization of Parrhesia*. Six lectures given by Michel Foucault at the University of California at Berkeley, October– November 1983 J. PEARSON ed. 1985, compiled from tape-recordings and re-edited in 1999. [online]. Available from: <http://foucault.info/documents/parrhesia/>. [Accessed: 01 April 2021]
- FOUCAULT, M., 2001a. *Michel Foucault: Power. The essential works of Michel Foucault 1954–1984*, Vol 1. P. RABINOW ed. London, The Penguin Press.
- FOUCAULT, M., 2001b. *Fearless Speech*. J. PEARSON ed. LA, Semiotext(e).
- FOUCAULT, M., 2006. *The hermeneutics of the subject: Lectures at the College de France, 1981–1982*. New York: Picador.
- FOUCAULT, M., FRUCHAUD, H. and LORENZINI, D. 2021. *Speaking the Truth about Oneself: Lectures at Victoria University, Toronto, 1982*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- FREESE, A., 2006. Reframing one's teaching: Discovering our teacher selves through reflection and inquiry. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 22, pp. 110–119.
- FREIRE, P. 1971. *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York: Continuum.
- FROST, R., 2007. The constant symbol. In M. RICHARDSON ed., *The collected prose of Robert Frost*. The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.
- FURLONG, J., 2005. 'New Labour and teacher education: the end of an era,' *Oxford Review of Education*, 35(1), pp.119-134.
- FURLONG, J., BARTON, L., MILES, S., WHITING, C. and WHITTY, G., 2000. *Teacher education in transition: Reforming professionalism?* Buckingham: Open University Press.
- FURLONG, J., MCNAMARA, O., CAMPBELL, A. HOWSON, J. and LEWIS, S., 2008. 'Partnership, policy and politics: Initial teacher education in England under New Labour,' *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice*, 14 (4), pp.307-318.
- FURMAN, R., 2003. Exploring step-fatherhood through poetry. *Journal of Poetry Therapy*, [online] 16(2), pp. 91-96. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/0889-3670310001596284>. [Accessed: 10 October 2020]
- FURMAN, R., 2004a. Using poetry and narrative as qualitative data: Exploring a father's cancer through poetry. *Families, Systems, & Health*, [online] 22 (2), pp. 162-170. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1037/1091-7527.22.2.162110>. [Accessed: 01 April 2021]
- FURMAN, R., 2004b. The prose poem as a means of exploring friendship: Pathways to reflection. *Journal of Poetry Therapy*, [online]. 17(2), pp. 91-100. Available

from: <https://doi.org/10.1080/08893670412331296567>. [Accessed: 10 October 2020].

- FURMAN, R., and CAVERS, S., 2005. A narrative poem as a source of qualitative data. *The Arts in Psychotherapy*, [online] 32(4), pp. 313-317. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.aip.2005.02.004>. [Accessed: 12 October 2020]
- FURMAN, R., SZTO, P., and LANGER, C., 2008. Using poetry and photography as qualitative data: A study of a psychiatric hospital in China. *Journal of Poetry Therapy*, 21(1), pp. 23-37.
- GAIR, S. AND VAN LUYN, A., 2016. *Sharing Qualitative Research: Showing Lived Experience and Community Narratives*. London: Routledge.
- GALLARDO, H. L., FURMAN, R. and KULKARNI, S., 2009. Explorations of depression: Poetry and narrative in autoethnographic qualitative research. *Qualitative Social Work*, (3), pp. 287- 304.
- GARRISON, J., 1998. Foucault, Dewey, and Self-creation, *Educational Philosophy and Theory* [online]. 30 (2), pp.111-134, Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1469-5812.1998.tb00319>. [Accessed: 29 March 2021]
- GAUTHIER, J.D., 1988. The ethic of the care of the self as a practice of freedom: an interview J.D. GAUTHIER trans., In: J. BERNAUER and D. RASMUSSEN. *The Final Foucault*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press
- GAY, G., and KIRKLAND, K., 2003. Developing Cultural Critical Consciousness and Self Reflection In Preservice Teacher Education. *Theory Into Practice*, 42(3), pp. 181–187.
- GEE, J. P., 2005. *An introduction to discourse analysis: theory and method*. New York: Routledge.
- GERBER, P. L., 1966. *Robert Frost*. Farmington Hills, MI. Twayne Publishers.
- GEWIRTZ, S., 2002. *The managerial school*. London: Routledge.
- GIDDENS, A., 2000. *The third way and its critics*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.
- GIBRAN, K., 1995. *The prophet*. Pocket ed. New York: Knopf
- GILLIGAN, C., 2014. Moral injury and the ethic of care: Reframing the conversation about differences. *Journal of social philosophy*, 45(1), pp.89-106.
- GLESNE, C., 2010. Disappearing into another's words through poetry in research and education. *Online Learning Landscapes*, [online]. 4(1), pp. 29-39. Available from: <http://www.learninglandscapes.ca/images/documents/ll-no7-v-final-lr-links.pdf>. [Accessed 2 February 2021]
- GORDON, A. L., 2020. Educate – mentor – nurture: improving the transition from initial teacher education to qualified teacher status and beyond, *Journal of Education for Teaching*, 46(5), pp. 664-675.
- GREGORY, M., 2003. Constructivism, standards and the classroom community of inquiry. *Educational Theory*, 52: 397–408

- GRIMMET, P., and NEUFELD, J. (ed) 1994. *Teacher development and the struggle for authenticity. Professional growth and restructuring in the context of change.* Teacher College, Columbia University, NY: Teachers College Press.
- GROS, F., 2005. *Course Context*, in M. Foucault, *The hermeneutics of the subject: Lectures at the College De France, 1981-1982.* Trans., G. BURCHELL. New York: Picador.
- GUIGNON, C., 2004. *On being authentic.* London: Routledge
- HALLIWELL, S., 1987. *The Poetics of Aristotle: Translation and Commentary.* London: Duckworth.
- HAMACHEK, D., 1999. *Effective teachers: What they do, how they do it, and the importance of self-knowledge.* In R. LIPKA and T. BRINTHAUPT. *The role of self in teacher development*, pp. 189–228. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- HAMMERSLEY, M., 2008. *Questioning Qualitative Inquiry.* London: SAGE Publications, Ltd. [online] Available from: <https://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9780857024565> & qt; [Accessed 7 April 2022].
- HAN, B., 2022. *Foucault's Critical Project: Between the transcendental and the historical.* Trans. E. PILE. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- HANAUER, D., 2010. *Poetry as research: Exploring second language poetry writing.* Amsterdam: John Benjamin.
- HASSLER, D., PYTASH, K.E., FERDIG, R.E., MUCHA, N. and GANDOLFI, E., 2020. *The Use of Digital Poetry to Inform Preservice Teacher Education and In-Service Teacher Professional Development during COVID-19.* *Journal of Technology and Teacher Education*, 28(2), pp. 403-413.
- HATHAWAY, N. E. 2013. *Smoke and Mirrors: Art Teacher as Magician.* *Art Education*, 66 (3). pp. 9-15.
- HAVIK, T. and WESTERGÅRD, E., 2020. *Do teachers matter? Students' perceptions of classroom interactions and student engagement.* *Scandinavian journal of educational research*, 64(4), pp. 488-507.
- HEIDEGGER, M., 1962 [1927]. *Being and Time*, J. Macquarrie & E. Robinson, Trans., New York: Harper & Row.
- HENINK, M., HUTTER, I. and BAILEY, A., 2020. *Qualitative Research Methods.* London: Sage Publications.
- HENLEY, W., 1900. *Poems.* 4th ed., London: David Nutt. p. 119
- HENRY, A., and THORSEN, C., 2021. *Teachers' self-disclosures and influences on students' motivation: A relational perspective,* *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 24(1), pp. 1-15.
- HERON, J. and REASON, P. 1997. *'A Participatory Inquiry Paradigm',* *Qualitative Inquiry*, 3(3), pp. 274–294.



- HIPPLE, T. W., 1986. The Wave, Educational Reform, and Teachers as Cheerleaders, *The Clearing House: A Journal of Educational Strategies, Issues and Ideas*, 59(9) pp. 387-389
- HITZ, M.M., SOMERS, M.C. and JENLINK, C.L., 2007. The looping classroom: Benefits for children, families, and teachers. *YC Young Children*, 62(2), p.80.
- HORDEN, J. and BROOKS, C., 2023. The core content framework and the 'new science' of educational research, *Oxford Review of Education*, 49:6, pp. 800-818.
- HOUSEMAN, A. E., 1993. *The Name and Nature of Poetry*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- HOUSE OF COMMONS EDUCATION COMMITTEE. 2019 *Recruitment and Retention of Teachers* London, House of Commons. Available from: <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-7222/>. [Accessed 4 March 2021].
- HUMPHREYS, I. (Ed.) 2021. *Why I write Poetry*. London: Nine Arches.
- HUSTON, P. and ROWAN, M., 1998. Qualitative studies: Their role in medical research. *Canadian Family Physician* [online]. 44, pp. 2453-2458. Available from: <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2277956/>. [Accessed: 2 April 2021]
- IFEAKOR, C., 2023. A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF JEAN-PAUL SARTRE'S ETHICAL THEORY OF FREEDOM. *Nnadiiebube Journal of Philosophy*, 6(1).
- INGERSOLL, R., MERRILL, L. and HENRY, M., 2016. Do accountability policies push teachers out? *The Working Lives of Educators*. 73 (8), pp. 44–49.
- INGRAM, M. A., 2003. When I dream of Paris: How sociocultural poetry can assist psychotherapy practitioners to understand and affirm the lived experiences of members of oppressed groups. *Journal of Poetry Therapy* [online] 16, pp. 221–227. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1080/0889367042000197358>. [Accessed: 30 September 2020].
- JAMES, E.J.F.J.B., 1972. *Teacher education and training*. London: HM Stationery Office
- JEROME, J., 1968. *Poetry: Premeditated art*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- JOHNSON, Z. D., AND LABELLE, S., 2016. Student-to-student confirmation in the college classroom: An initial investigation of the dimensions and outcomes of students' confirming messages. *Communication Education*, 65, pp. 44–63.
- JOHNSON, D., and LABELLE, S., 2017. An examination of teacher authenticity in the college classroom, *Communication Education*, 66, (4), pp. 423-439.
- JOHNSON, S.M., 2020. *Where Teachers Thrive: Organising Schools for Success*. United States: Harvard Education Press.
- JUNG, C. G., 1973. On the nature of the psyche. R. F. C. Hull, Trans. In *The Collected Works of C. G. Jung* Vol. 8. pp. 159-234. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

- KELLY, M.G.E., 2013. Foucault, Subjectivity, and Technologies of the Self. In: C. FALZON, T. O'LEARY, and J. SAWICK. *A Companion to Foucault, First Edition*. Blackwell Publishing Ltd. pp. 510-525.
- KIERKEGAARD, S., 1992 [1846], *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to "Philosophical Fragments", Vol. 1*, Princeton: Princeton University Press
- KITCHER, P., ed. 2021. *The Self: A History*. New York, Oxford Academic.
- KNIGHT, B., 2017. The evolving codification of teachers' work: Policy, politics and the consequences of pursuing quality control in Initial Teacher Education. *Teacher Education Advancement Network Journal (TEAN)*, 9(1), pp.4-13.
- KOOSER, T., 2005. *The poetry home repair manual*. Lincoln, NE: The University of Nebraska Press.
- KREBER, C., 2009. Academics' teacher identities, authenticity and pedagogy. *Studies in Higher Education*, 35 (2), pp. 171–194.
- KREBER, C., 2013. *Authenticity in and through teaching: The transformative potential of the scholarship of university teaching*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- KREBER, C., KLAMPFLEITNER, M., MCCUNE, V., and KNOWTTENBELT, M., 2007. What do you mean by 'authentic'? A comparative review of the literature on conceptions of authenticity in teaching. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 58(1), pp. 22–43.
- KREBER, C., MCCUNE, V., and KLAMPFLEITNER, M., 2010. Formal and implicit conceptions of authenticity in teaching. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 15(4), pp. 383–397.
- KREBER, C., and KLAMPFLEITNER, M., 2013. Lecturers' and Students' Conceptions of Authenticity in Teaching and Actual Teacher Actions and Attributes Students Perceive as Helpful. *Higher Education*. 66 (4) pp. 463–487.
- LABELLE, S., and JOHNSON, Z. D., 2015. 'How do teachers help students feel connected to their peers?': The influence of teacher authenticity on classroom connectedness. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Eastern Communication Association, Philadelphia, PA. (4)
- LAHMAN, M. K., and RICHARD, V.M., 2014. Appropriated poetry: Archival poetry in research. *Qual Inquiry*. 20 pp.344–55.
- LAHMAN, M. K. E., RODRIGUEZ, K. L., RICHARD, V. M., GEIST, M. R., SCHENDEL, R. K., and GRAGLIA, P. E., 2011. (Re)forming research poetry. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 17(9), pp. 887- 896.
- LANGER, C. and FURMAN, R., 2004. Exploring identity and assimilation: Research and interpretive poems. *Forum Qualitative Social Research* [online] 5(2), Art. 5. Available from: <http://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/609/1320>. [Accessed: 23 February 2021]

- LARSON, M., 2009. 'Troubling the discourse of teacher centrality: A comparative perspective'. *Journal of Education Policy*, 25 (2), pp. 207-231.
- LAURIALA, A., and KUKKONEN, M., 2005. Teacher and student identities as situated cognitions. In P. DENICOLA and M. KOMPFF eds., *Connecting policy and practice: Challenges for teaching and learning in schools and universities*. pp. 199–208. Oxford: Routledge.
- LEAVY, P., 2009. *Method meets art: arts-based research practice*. New York: Guilford Press.
- LEAVY, P., 2010. A/r/t: A poetic montage. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 16(4), pp. 240–243.
- LEAVY, P., 2015. *Method meets art: Arts-based research practice*. 2nd ed. New York: Guilford Press.
- LEAVY, P., 2020. *Method Meets Art: Arts-Based Research Practice*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. New York: Guildford Press.
- LEGGO, C. and RASBERRY, G. W., 1995. Naming wounds-healing wounds: Working with wounded writers. *Textual Studies in Canada*, 7, pp. 86-95.
- LEGGO, C., 2008. Astonishing silence: Knowing in poetry. In J. G. Knowles & A. L. Cole, *Handbook of the arts in qualitative research: Perspectives, methodologies, examples, and issues*. pp. 166-175. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications Ltd.
- LEGGO, C., 2012. *Sailing in a Concrete Boat: A Teacher's Journey*. Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.
- LEITCH, R. and DAY, C., 2000. Action research and reflective practice: towards a holistic view, *Educational Action Research*, 8:1, pp. 179-193.
- LEITCH, R., and MITCHELL, S., 2007. Caged birds and cloning machines: how student imagery 'speaks' to us about cultures of schooling and student participation. *Improving Schools*, 10(1), pp. 53–71.
- LENGELLE, R., LUKEN, T. and MEIJERS, F., 2016. Is self-reflection dangerous? Preventing rumination in career learning. *Australian Journal of Career Development*. 25. pp. 99-109.
- LICHTERMAN, P., 2021. "Qualitative Research" Is a Moving Target. *Qual Sociol* 44, pp. 583–590.
- LINDQVIST, P., NORDANGER, U. K. and CARLSSON, R., 2014. Teacher attrition the first five years – a multifaceted image. *Teaching and Teacher Education*. 40 (1), pp. 94–103.
- LISMORE, W. 2019. Three Ways to be a better teacher – by using magic. <https://www.tes.com/magazine/archive/three-ways-be-better-teacher-using-magic>
- LORDE, A., 2017. *Your Silence Will Not Protect You*. Silver Press.
- LURY, C, and WAKEFORD, N., 2012. *Inventive Methods: The Happening of the Social*. New York: Routledge

- LYNCH, S., WORTH, J., BAMFORD, S. and WESPIESER, K., 2016. *Engaging Teachers: NFER Analysis of Teacher Retention*. Slough. NFER.
- LYONS, K., 2008. Understanding and writing the world. In M. CAHNMANN-TAYLOR and R. SIEGESMUND, *Arts-based research in education: Foundations for practice*. Routledge, pp. 79–82.
- LUKES, S., 2006. *Individualism*. ECPs Press.
- MADIGAN, D.J. and KIM, L.E., 2021. Towards an understanding of teacher attrition: A meta-analysis of burnout, job satisfaction, and teachers' intentions to quit. *Teaching and teacher education*, 105, p.103425.
- MALM, B., 2008. Authenticity in teachers' lives and work: Some philosophical and empirical considerations. *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research*, 52 (4), pp. 373–386.
- HEXTALL, I., and MAHONY, P., 2000. *Reconstructing Teaching: Standards, Performance and Accountability* (1st ed.). Routledge.
- MAKELA, K., HIRVENSALO, M. and WHIPP, P. R., 2014. Should I stay or should I go? Physical education teachers' career intentions. *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport*. 85 (2), pp. 234–244.
- MALM, B., 2008. Authenticity in teachers' lives and work: Some philosophical and empirical considerations. *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research*, 52(4), pp. 373–386.
- MAZZA, N., 2003. *Poetry therapy: Theory and practice*, New York: Brunner-Routledge.
- MCAULEY, J., 2003. *An introduction to politics, state and society*. London: Sage Publications
- MCCOMBS, M. D., 1991. "The Moral Philosophy of Individualism: Its History and Relationship with Collectivism," *Draftings In*: 6 (2), Article 6.
- MCCULLISS, D., 2013. Poetic inquiry and multidisciplinary qualitative research, *Journal of Poetry Therapy* [online] 26 (2), pp. 83-114. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1080/08893675.2013.794536>. [Accessed: 13 November 2020].
- MENTER, I., 2010. *Teachers - formation, training and identity*. Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Creativity, Culture and Education.
- MEZIRROW, J. ed., 2000. *Learning as transformation: Critical perspectives on a theory in progress*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.
- MILL, J.S. 1975. *Three Essays: On Liberty, Representative Government, The Subjection of Women*. London: Oxford U Press.
- MILLER, D. K., 1978. Poetry therapy with psychotic patients. *Journal of Contemporary Psychotherapy*. 9 (2), pp. 135-138.
- MOHAMMADIAN, Y., SHAHIDI, S., MAHAKI, B., MOHAMMADI, A. Z., BAGHBAN, A. A. and ZAYERI, F., 2011. Evaluating the use of poetry to reduce signs of depression, anxiety and stress in Iranian female students. *The Arts in*

*Psychotherapy* [online]. 38, pp. 59–63. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.aip.2010.12.002>. [Accessed: 12 October 2020]

- MORAN, D., 2009. The Phenomenology of Personhood: Charles Taylor and Edmund Husserl. In *FEU Colloquium*. 3, (1), pp. 80-104.
- MORETTINI, B., 2021. Forms of resistance: Insights into beginning teacher development. *International Journal of Educational Research Open*. [online] 2. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedro.2021.100041>. [Accessed: 27 March 2022]
- MOSER, A. and KORSTJENS, I., 2018. Series: Practical guidance to qualitative research. Part 3: Sampling, data collection and analysis, *European Journal of General Practice* [online] 24 (1), pp. 9-18. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13814788.2017.1375091>. [Accessed: 26 April 2021]
- MOSS, P. and ROBERTS-HOLMES, G., 2021. 'Now is the time! Confronting neo-liberalism in early childhood', *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood* [online]. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1463949121995917>. [Accessed: 05 May 2021].
- NEHAMAS, A., 1999. *Virtues of authenticity: Essays on Plato and Socrates*. Princeton University Press.
- NEWMAN, J., 2001. *Modernising governance: New Labour, policy and society*. London: Sage.
- NEWMAN, G.E., and SMITH, R.K., 2016. Kinds of Authenticity, *Philosophy Compass*, 11(10): pp. 609–618.
- NEWMANN, A., 2006. *Paterson: Poem as Rhizome*. *William Carlos Williams Review*, 26(1), pp. 51–73.
- NODDINGS, N., 1984. *Caring: A feminine approach to ethics & moral education*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- NODDINGS, N., 1992. *The challenge to care in schools: An alternative approach to education*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- NODDINGS, N., 2001. The caring teacher. In V. Richardson (Ed.), *Handbook of research on teaching*, 4th 99-105. NY (AERA): Macmillan.
- NODDINGS, N., 2002a. *Educating moral people*. New York; London: Teachers College
- NODDINGS, N., 2002b. *Starting at home: Caring and social policy*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- NORTON, S. 2015. *Teachers with the Magic: Great Teachers Change Students' Lives*. Lanham, Maryland. Rowman and Littlefield.
- NOVAK, J., 2011. *Live Poetry: An Integrated Approach to Poetry in Performance*. Netherlands: Brill.
- O'CONNOR, K. E., 2008. "You choose to care": teachers, emotions and professional identity *Teach. Teach. Educ.*, 24. pp. 117-126

- OILER, C., 1983. Nursing reality as reflected in nurses' poetry. *Perspectives in Psychiatric Care* [online]. 21(3), pp. 81-89. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1744-6163.1983.tb00180.x>. [Accessed: 28 October 2020]
- OLSEN, B., 2012. Identity theory, teacher education, and diversity. Thousand Oaks; CA: Sage Publications.
- ØRNGREEN, R. and LEVINSEN K., 2017. "Workshops as a Research Methodology" *The Electronic Journal of eLearning*.15 (1) pp. 70-81.
- ORR, D., 2008. The Politics of Poetry. *Poetry*. 192 (4). pp. 409-418.
- PALMER, P., 1998. The courage to teach. Exploring the inner landscape of a teacher's life. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- PARINI, J. 2008. Why Poetry Matters. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- PARKINSON, P. 2008. Space for performing teacher identity: Through the lens of Kafka and Hegel. *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice*, 14(1), pp. 51–60
- PELIAS, R. J., 2004. A Methodology of the Heart: Evoking Academic and Daily Life. Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira
- PERCER, L. H., 2002. Going beyond the demonstrable range in educational scholarship: Exploring the intersections of poetry and research. *The Qualitative Report*. [online]. 7(2). Available from: <http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR7-2/hayespercer.html>. [Accessed: 28 October 2020]
- PERRYMAN, J. and CALVERT, G., 2020. WHAT MOTIVATES PEOPLE TO TEACH, AND WHY DO THEY LEAVE? ACCOUNTABILITY, PERFORMATIVITY AND TEACHER RETENTION, *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 68 (1), pp. 3-23.
- PHILLIPS, D. C., 1995. The good, the bad, and the ugly: The many faces of constructivism. *Educational Researcher*, 24(7), pp. 5–12.
- PIETRZYK, S., 2009. Artistic activities and cultural activism as responses to HIV/AIDS in Harare, Zimbabwe. *Africa Journal of AIDS Research* [online]. 8(4), pp. 481-490. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.2989/AJAR.2009.8.4.12.1049>. [Accessed: 28 October 2020]
- PIIRTO, J., 2002. The question of quality and qualifications: Writing inferior poems as qualitative research. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 15(4), pp. 431-445.
- PLATO., 1943. Plato's The Republic. New York: Books, Inc.,
- POINDEXTER, C. C., 2002a. Meaning from methods: Re-presenting narratives of an HIV-affected caregiver. *Qualitative Social Work* [online] 1(1), pp. 59-78. Available from: [http://qsw.sagepub.com/content/1/1/59.full.pdf\\_html](http://qsw.sagepub.com/content/1/1/59.full.pdf_html). [Accessed: 28 October 2020]

- POINDEXTER, C. C., 2002b. Research as poetry: A couple experience HIV. *Qualitative Inquiry* [online] 8(6), pp. 707 - 714. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800402238075>. [Accessed: 28 October 2020]
- POPPLINGTON, P. and WILLIAMSON, J., eds. 2004. *New Realities of Secondary Teachers' Work Lives*. Oxford, Symposium Books.
- PRENDERGAST, M., 2009a. Introduction: The phenomena of poetry in research. In M. PRENDERGAST, C. LEGGO, and P. SAMESHIMA, *Poetic inquiry: Vibrant voices in the social sciences*. Rotterdam: Sense. pp. xxxv-xxxvii.
- PRENDERGAST, M., 2009b. "Poem is what?" Poetic inquiry in qualitative social science research. *International Review of Qualitative Research*, 1(4), pp. 541-568.
- PRENDERGAST, M., 2015. Poetic inquiry, 2007–2012: A surrender and catch found poem. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 21(8), pp. 687-685.
- PRENDERGAST, M., and GALVIN, K. T., 2012. Editorial: Naming and expanding the borders of practice in poetic inquiry. *Creative Approaches to Research*, 5(2), pp. 5-8.
- PRIEST, S. and SARTRE, J.P., 2002. *Jean-Paul Sartre: Basic Writings*. Routledge.
- RABIN, C., 2013. Care through authenticity: Teacher preparation for an ethic of care in an age of accountability. *The Educational Forum*, 77(3), pp. 242–255.
- RAMEZANZADEH, A., 2017. Language educators' understanding of authenticity in teaching and its impacts on their practices. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 67 (4), pp. 286–301.
- RAMEZANZADEH, A., ADEL, S. M. R., and ZAREIAN, G., 2016a. Authenticity in teaching and teachers' emotions: A hermeneutic phenomenological study of the classroom reality. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 21 (7), pp. 807–824.
- RAMEZANZADEH, A., ZAREIAN, G., ADEL, S. M. R., and RAMEZANZADEH, R., 2016b. Authenticity in teaching: A constant process of becoming. *Higher Education: The International Journal of Higher Education Research*, 73 (2), pp. 299–315.
- RAPPEL, L. J., 2015. Integrating the personal and the professional: Marking the career paths of adult language educators. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 65(4), pp. 313–325.
- RATHUNDE, K., 2010. Experiential wisdom and optimal experience: Interviews with three distinguished lifelong learners. *Journal of Adult Development*, 17(2), pp. 81–93.
- RAY, P., and ANDERSON, S., 2000. *The cultural creatives*. New York: Three Rivers Press.
- REEVE, J., and SHIN, S.H., 2020. How teachers can support students' agentic engagement. *Theory Into Practice*, 59(2), pp.150-161.
- REVELEY, J., 2015. Foucauldian critique of positive education and related self-technologies: Some problems and new directions. *Open Review of Educational Research*, 2(1), pp.78-93.

- RICHARDSON, L., 1993. Poetics, dramatics, and transgressive validity: The case of the skipped line. *Sociological Quarterly*, 34(4), pp. 695-710.
- RICHARDSON, L. M., 2002. The Relevance of Poetry in School Leadership Today. *The Journal of Educational Thought (JET) / Revue de La Pensée Éducative*, 36(3), pp. 263–281.
- RICHARDSON, P. W. and WATT, H. M. G., 2005. 'I've decided to become a teacher': influences on career change. *Teaching and Teacher Education*. 21 (5), pp. 475–489.
- RIDE, A., 2015. Involving participants in data analysis. In *Methodologies in Peace Psychology: Peace Research by Peaceful Means*. pp. 199-221. Cham: Springer International Publishing.
- RINGS, M., 2017, "Authenticity, Self-fulfillment, and Self-acknowledgment", *The Journal of Value Inquiry*, 51(3): pp. 475–489.
- ROBERT, V., BULLOUGH J. R. and KNOWLES, J. G., 1991. Teaching and nurturing: changing conceptions of self as teacher in a case study of becoming a teacher, *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 4(2), pp. 121-140.
- RODGERS, C., and SCOTT, K., 2008. The development of the personal self and professional identity in learning to teach. In M. COCHRAN-SMITH, S. FEIMAN-NEMSER, D.J. MCINTYRE and K.E. DEMERS EDS. *Handbook of research on teacher education: Enduring questions and changing contexts* pp. 732–755. New York: Routledge.
- ROOF, D., 2014. The Ethical Domains of Individualism: Nietzsche and Emerson's Pedagogic Vision. *Philosophical Studies in Education*, 45, pp.168-178.
- ROSAEN, C., 2003. Preparing teachers for diverse classrooms: Creating public and private spaces to explore culture through poetry writing. *Teachers College Record*, 105, pp. 1437-1485.
- ROSE, M. M., 1994. Coach or Cheerleader: Contrasting Classroom Metaphors. *Feminist Teacher*, 8(3), pp. 140–144.
- ROSE, N., 1996a. Governing 'Advanced' Liberal Democracies. In: A. BARRY, T. OSBORNE, and N. ROSE. *Foucault and Political Reason*. London: UCL Press.
- ROSE, N. 1996b. *Inventing ourselves, psychology, power and personhood*. Cambridge University Press.
- ROSS, K., 2017. Making Empowering Choices: How Methodology Matters for Empowering Research Participants [36 paragraphs]. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 18(3), Art. 12.
- ROSE, J., and JOHNSON, C.W., 2020. Contextualizing reliability and validity in qualitative research: toward more rigorous and trustworthy qualitative social science in leisure research, *Journal of Leisure Research* [online]. 51 (4), pp. 432-451. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1080/00222216.2020.1722042>. [Accessed: 29 April 2021].



- ROTHENBERG, J., 1994. Je est un qutre: Ethnopoetics and the poet as other. *American Anthropologist*, 96(3), pp. 523-524.
- ROUSSEAU, J. J., 1992 [1754], *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*, D. A. Cress, Trans. Indianapolis: Hackett.
- RUDA, F., 2017. Philosophy and Courage. *PROBLEMI INTERNATIONAL*, Society for Theoretical Psychoanalysis. [online]. 1 (1), 33-54. Available from: [https://problemi.si/issues/p2017-1/problemi\\_international\\_2017\\_01.pdf](https://problemi.si/issues/p2017-1/problemi_international_2017_01.pdf). [Accessed: 30 May 2023].
- SANTORO, D. A., 2018. *Demoralized: Why Teachers Leave the Profession They Love and How They Can Stay*. Harvard Education Press.
- SARTRE, J.P., 1984 [1943]. *Being and Nothingness*. Trans. HAZEL BARNES. New York: Washington Square.
- SARTRE, J. P., 2014. *Notebook for an ethics*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- SCOTT, J. 2001. *Power*. Cambridge: Polity
- SCHROEDER, W.R., 2019. *Sartre and his Predecessors: the Self and the Other*. Routledge.
- SHAKESPEARE, W. 1979. *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. *The Arden Shakespeare*. H. F. BROOKS ed. London: Methuen & Co.
- SILVERMAN, D. ed., 1997. *Qualitative research: Theory, method and practice*. Sage Publications: IN
- SISK, J. P., 1973, On being an object, *Harper's*, 247: pp. 60–64.
- SHARP, D., 1995. *Who am I really? Personality, soul and individuation*. Toronto, Ontario, Canada: Inner City Books.
- SHAPIRO, J., 2004. Can poetry be data? Potential relationships between poetry and research. *Families, Systems, & Health*, 22 (2), pp. 171-177.
- SISK, J. P., 1973, *On being an object*, *Harper's*, 247: pp. 60–64.
- SJOLLEMA S, HORDYK S, WALSH C, HANLEY J, and IVES N., 2012. Found poetry – finding home: a qualitative study of homeless immigrant women. *J Poet Ther.*; 25 pp. 205–217.
- SLATER, P. E., 1970. *The pursuit of loneliness: American culture at the breaking point*, Boston: Beacon Press.
- SLAVKIN, M. L., 2004. *Authentic Learning*. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Education.
- SMITH, D.C., 1996. The ethics of teaching. *New Directions for Teaching and Learning*, 66, pp 5-14
- SOARES, C., 2018. The philosophy of individualism: a critical perspective. *International Journal of Philosophy and Social Values*, 1(1), pp.11-34.
- SPARBY, T., EDELHÄUSER, F. and WEGER U. W., 2019. The True Self. Critique, Nature, and Method. *Front. Psychol.* [online]. 10:2250. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.02250>. [Accessed: 07 July 2022]

- SPRINGER, W., 2006. Poetry in therapy: A way to heal for trauma survivors and clients in recovery from addiction. *Journal of Poetry Therapy*, 19, pp. 69–81.
- STAUFENBERG, J., 2021. 'A community of equals': the private school with no fees, set up by a south London teacher. *The Guardian*. 13 March. Available from: <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2021/mar/13/a-community-of-equals-the-private-school-with-no-fees-set-up-by-a-south-london-teacher>. [Accessed 20 March 2021]
- STILLWAGGON J., 2008. Performing for the students: Teaching identity and the pedagogical relationship. *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 42(1) pp.67–83.
- STRONACH, I., CORBIN, B., MCNAMARA, O., STARK, S., and WARNE, T., 2002. Towards an uncertain politics of professionalism: Teacher and nurse identities in flux. *Journal of Education Policy*, 17, pp.109–138.
- SUKLA, A.C., and GURNAH, A. R. ed. 2009. 'The Cambridge Companion to Salman Rushdie', *Journal of Comparative Literature and Aesthetics*, 32(1-2), p. 100
- SPEARE, J., and HENSHALL, A., 2014. 'Did anyone think the trees were students?' Using poetry as a tool for critical reflection, *Reflective Practice*, 15:6, pp. 807-820.
- STANULIS, R. N., WEXLER, L. J., PYLMAN, S., GUENTHER, A., FARVER, S., WARD, A., CROEL-PERRIEN, A., and WHITE, K., 2019. Mentoring as More Than “Cheerleading”: Looking at Educative Mentoring Practices Through Mentors’ Eyes. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 70(5), pp. 567–580
- STATHAM, S., 2022. CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS. A Practical Introduction to Language. Abingdon: Routledge
- SUTCHER, L., DARLING-HAMMOND, L., and CARVER-THOMAS, D., 2019. Understanding teacher shortages: An analysis of teacher supply and demand in the United States. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, [online]. 27(35). Available from: <http://dx.doi.org/10.14507/epaa.27.3696>. Accessed: [26 February 2023]
- TAYLOR, C., 1989. *Sources of the Self*. Cambridge: Harvard UP.
- TAYLOR, L. P., and NEWBERRY, N. 2018. Self-study of a teacher's practices of and experience with emotion regulation: Being and becoming through reflection and engagement. *Studying Teacher Education*. *Studying Teacher Education*, [online]. 14(3), pp. 296–307. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1080/17425964.2018.1541276> . [Accessed: 13 February 2023]
- TDA., 2007. Professional standards for teachers: Core. London: TDA.
- THAGARD, P., 2014. The self as a system of multilevel interacting mechanisms. *Philosophical Psychology*, 27(2), pp.145-163.
- THE GUARDIAN LABS. 2021. 100 teachers, 100 passions, 100 ways to shape lives. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/100-teachers>. [Accessed 10 March 2021]

- TISDELL, E., 2003. *Exploring spirituality and culture in adult and higher education*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- TOKAN, M.K. and IMAKULATA, M.M., 2019. The effect of motivation and learning behaviour on student achievement. *South African Journal of Education*, 39(1).
- TOMLINSON, S., 2001. *Education in a post-welfare society*. Buckingham. OUP.
- TYSON, E. H. and BAFFOUR, T. D., 2004. Arts-based strengths: A solution focused intervention with adolescents in an acute-care psychiatric setting. *The Arts in Psychotherapy*, 31(4), pp. 213-227.
- VALERY, P., 1959. Poetry and Abstract Thought. C. Guenther trans. *The Kenyon Review*. 16, (2) pp. 208-233.
- VAN DIJK, T., 2008. *Discourse and power*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan.
- VAN LIER, L., 1996. *Interaction in the language curriculum. awareness, autonomy and authenticity*. New York: Addison Wesley Longman.
- VAN LUYN A, GAIR S, and SAUNDERS V., 2016. 'Transcending the limits of logic': poetic inquiry as a qualitative research method for working with vulnerable communities. In: GAIR S, VAN LUYN A. *Sharing qualitative research: showing lived experience and community narratives*. New York: Routledge; pp. 95–111.
- VAN VEEN, K., and SLEEGERS, P., 2006. How does it feel? Teachers' emotions in a context of change. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 38(1), pp. 85–111.
- VANNINI, P., 2007. The changing meanings of authenticity: An interpretive biography of professors' work experiences. *Studies in Symbolic Interaction*, 29, pp. 63–90.
- VARGA, S., 2012. *Authenticity as an Ethical Ideal*. New York: Routledge.
- VIDLER, D. C.; and LEVINE, J. 1981. CURIOSITY, MAGIC, AND THE TEACHER. *Education*. 81, 101 (3) 273.
- VINCENT, A., 2018. Is There a Definition? Ruminating on Poetic Inquiry, Strawberries and the Continued Growth of the Field. *Art/Research International: A Transdisciplinary Journal*, 3 (2), pp. 48–76.
- WARREN, R. P., 1975. *Democracy and Poetry*. Harvard: Harvard University Press.
- WATERSON, R. A., 2009. What is the Role of the Teacher? To Guide the Studies of Others, *Journal of College and Character*. 10 (6).
- WEBBER-RITCHEY, K. J. AQUINO, E., PONDER, T. N., LATTNER, C., SOCO, C., SPURLARK, R., and SIMONOVICH, S. D., 2021. 'Recruitment Strategies to Optimize Participation by Diverse Populations', *Nursing Science Quarterly*, 34(3), pp. 235–243.
- WEDENOJA, L., PAPAY, J., and KRAFT, M. A., 2022. "Second Time's a Charm? How Sustained Relationships from Repeat Student-Teacher Matches Build Academic and Behavioral Skill," *EdWorking Paper*: pp. 22-590.
- WEISSMANN, G., 2008. Writing Science: The Abstract is Poetry, the Paper is Prose. *Faceb* [online] 22. Available from:

<https://faseb.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdf/10.1096/fj.08-0801ufm>.  
[Accessed: 11 June 2023]

- WESTERINK, H., 2020. The obligation to truth and the care of the self: Michel Foucault on scientific discipline and on philosophy as spiritual self-practice, *International Journal of Philosophy and Theology* [online]. 81(3), pp. 246-259. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/21692327.2020.1749871>. [Accessed: 2 April 2021]
- WHITE, R., 2014. Foucault on the Care of the Self as an Ethical Project and a Spiritual Goal. *Hum Stud* 37, pp. 489–504.
- WHITE, R.T. and ARZI, H.J., 2005. Longitudinal Studies: Designs, Validity, Practicality, and Value. *Res Sci Educ* [online]. 35, pp. 137–149. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11165-004-3437-y>. [Accessed: 6 April 2021]
- WILLIAMS, Y., 2017. Rather than Asking Why Teachers Leave the Profession, we Should Wonder that they Remain. *Times Education Supplement*. [Online] May 2. Available from: <https://www.tes.com/news/school-news/breaking-views/rather-asking-why-teachers-leaveprofession-we-should-wonder-they> (Accessed 5 March 2021).
- WILLIS, K. and BISHOP, E., 2014. “Hope is that fiery feeling”: using poetry as data to explore the meanings of hope for young people. *Forum Qual Soc Res*. 15:9.
- WINK, M. N., LARUSSO, M. D., and SMITH, R. L., 2021. Teacher empathy and students with problem behaviors: Examining teachers’ perceptions, responses, relationships, and burnout. *Psychology in the Schools*, 58(8), pp. 1575–1596.
- WOOFFITT, R., 1992. *Telling Tales of the Unexpected: Organization of Factual Discourse*. Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf.
- WRATHALL, M.A., 2014. Autonomy, authenticity, and the self. In *Heidegger, authenticity and the self*. pp. 193-214. Routledge.
- YANKELOVICH, D., 1981. *New Rules: Searching for Self-Fulfillment in a World Turned Upside Down*, New York: Random House.
- ZEMBYLAS, M. 2003. INTERROGATING "TEACHER IDENTITY": EMOTION, RESISTANCE, AND SELF-FORMATION. *Educational Theory*, 53 (1), pp. 107–127.

## Appendixes

### Appendix A: Participant Information Sheets

#### Participant Information Sheet

**Study Title:** A Measure of Ourselves: Facilitating Teacher Critical Authenticity through Poetic Inquiry

**Principal Researcher:**

Victoria Inyang-Talbot

Email:

Phone:

**Introduction:**

I am a post-graduate researcher studying for a PhD in Education at Edge Hill University, Ormskirk, United Kingdom, under the Graduate teaching assistantship. I am a qualified teacher in English and Literature and have been teaching for over 18 years. For the last 7 years, I have been working on teacher education programmes and continue to do so under the GTA. I am a published poet, a writer, a keen hiker, and an avid reader.

**Supervisors:**

Prof. Amanda Fulford

Email:

Dr. Jo Albin-Clark

Email:

**Ethics number:** ETH2021-0253

**Invitation:**

This project is informed by over 7 years of working in teacher education – listening, observing, and experiencing the ways in which definitions of teacher identities and subjectivities can impact education policy and expectations of teachers. Your participation in this project will contribute to ongoing research and discussions on teacher identity and subjectivity, and your contributions will be greatly appreciated. If you require any further clarification or information, please do not hesitate to contact me. You may also want to discuss the details with your colleagues, friends. If you need to discuss the research with my supervisors, their details are above.

Please read the information below carefully before deciding to take part in this research. If you are happy to participate, you will be asked to sign a consent form. Thank you very much for your consideration.

### **What is the purpose of the study?**

This study aims to use poetry workshops to engage teachers (like you) in discussion about teacher self and self-definition and in articulating it. It hopes to explore how you define your sense of self as a teacher and in what ways other aspects of you inter-relate and intertwine to produce, enhance, and/or afflict your sense of self as an individual and as a member of the society and the profession.

Poetry writing will be used to provide a space for teachers to express themselves creatively and to articulate their sense of self. In collating and engaging with these definitions, this study aims to use the voices of teachers to resist the homogenisation of identity in the profession and to make sure that it is teachers who define who they are within the profession, thus challenging normative representations of teacher subjectivities and disrupting the politics of representation of and about teachers.

### **Why have I been invited?**

You have been chosen because you are a teacher and have worked as a teacher for more than 2 years. You have also been chosen because your voice matters and matters even more in defining who you are as a teacher.

### **Consent**

You do not have to take part in this study, and you may withdraw your consent at any time. Consent will be sought through email and a completed and signed consent form will be required. Your consent will be required for the following:

- Permission to use your poems for research purposes (you retain the authorship and may submit or use your poems in any other way you like).
- Permission to use your poems (anonymously) in discussions in the public domain on teacher identity/authenticity: (poetry/literary reading groups, blogs, journal articles, book chapters, conference papers, seminar etc.). as part of the activities of the project.
- Permission to use (anonymised) information about your race, gender, age, ethnicity, nationality, country of work, type of institution, level/age group you teach etc., for research purposes. This is to engage with the understanding that there are intersectional elements that may relate to our identities and this information will be very useful in the data analysis.

Your personal information will not be shared anywhere or with anyone and only serves to provide context when I come to analyse your poems. Your

personal information will be deleted once they are no longer required, up to 10 years from collection and in case you need to be reached for further consent to do with your poems or personal details.

Your poems will form the main data required by the study. These will always be anonymised in the study and its activities. If you publish or share your poems elsewhere, please understand that the researcher will no longer be liable to maintaining your anonymity in the use of your poems within the project and that others may be able to link the data used in this project to your work and to yourself.

### **Data protection legislation & the lawful basis for processing personal data**

Information about you will be treated in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and will be stored securely and backed-up safely.

The University is committed to ensuring compliance with current data protection legislation and confirms that all data collected is used fairly, stored safely, and not disclosed to any other person unlawfully. The University is a data controller and, in some instances, may be a data processor of this data.

*At Edge Hill, we are committed to respecting and protecting your personal information. To find ways in which we use your data, please see [edgehill.ac.uk/about/legal/privacy](http://edgehill.ac.uk/about/legal/privacy).*

### **Can I withdraw Consent?**

You may withdraw your consent at any time. A withdrawal form will be sent to you in the event of this. Please indicate that you wish to withdraw by email or text message. All personal information relating to you will be deleted. Anonymised poetic data that have already been collated may still be used for the purpose of the study.

### **Will my participation be confidential?**

Yes. All identifiable information about you will remain confidential, with access limited to myself. These will be stored on the University's OneDrive as directed by the University's ethics conventions. All poems will be anonymised, and no identifiable information will be published with the research. Personal data and poems will be stored for up to 10 years after the degree has been awarded to support any further research carried out. No information will be passed on to third parties without permission from you has been sought and provided.

### **What will happen to the results of the research study?**

The poems will be analysed and written up as part of the thesis of the project. They will also inform research articles, conference papers, book chapters, blogs etc. All data will be anonymised for these purposes and presented within the larger discussion as teachers' views of themselves.

If you publish your work independently, please inform me immediately so I may reference it accordingly.

### **Who has reviewed the study?**

The study has been reviewed by Education Research Ethics Committee (EREC).

### **What will I be asked to do?**

The study will run four workshops over a 12-month period, you will be asked to attend only two of the workshops, but you are also welcomed to attend all four. Each workshop will run for no longer than 2 hours. Days and times to be negotiated with you. Extra workshops will be available for those who cannot attend the standard sessions. All workshops will be run online on Zoom, and poems submitted online to a dedicated Google Classroom for each session.

The workshops will run in the following format:

- Respond to invitation to attend a particular session.
- Check out the resources in Google classroom ahead of the session if you wish.
- Attend a session and discuss with others.
- Learn how to write in a particular poetic form (or two).
- Articulate your definitions in poetic form.
- Submit poem or poems to Google classroom (you have up to 1 week after the workshop if you need time to think)
- Respond to invitation to attend your second session and repeat the process
- Respond to invitation to a debrief session (at the end of the project); you will need to indicate if you would like a 1-1 or a group debrief.

\*You may attend two or all four sessions if you wish to. Each session will focus on a different poetic form.

\*You may share your poems elsewhere (if you so wish), but please inform me so I am aware.

### **What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?**

It is possible that you may find some of the discussion or poems sensitive, embarrassing or upsetting:

- If exiting the study at this stage is what you need, you will be supported to do so, or to re-join another group at another time or not at all.
- If you need to speak to someone about it, we could talk about it within the group. I will also be prepared to talk through the issues you feel and



where necessary refer you to someone who might help (if you need a referral).

All your poems will be anonymised, and participants will not be personally identified at any time.

### **What are the possible benefits of taking part?**

One of the benefits of taking part will be the opportunity:

- to share your views,
- help redefine a key concept that relates to teacher identity and subjectivity and
- set the parameters for future discussions on the subject.
- Learn how to write about yourself in poetic form if you do not already know how to!

### **Is there someone independent I can talk to about the research?**

Please contact me if you need further clarification.

If you would like to speak to someone else about the study, you may contact my main supervisor Amanda Fulford (details on the first page of this document).

Amanda is also the chairman for the Education Research Ethics Committee, so will be happy to engage with ethical concerns you may have.

If you need to make a complaint about the study, please contact **Phil Bentley**, the secretary to university ethics research sub-committee (UERSC) at [research@edgehill.ac.uk](mailto:research@edgehill.ac.uk)

### **Support**

A global list of mental health organisations that you may contact is available here:

<https://checkpointorg.com/global/> and  
<https://www.thecalmzone.net/2019/10/international-mental-health-charities/>

## Appendix B: Consent Form

### CONSENT FORM

Date: 23/06/2021

**Study title:** A Measure of Ourselves: Facilitating Teacher Critical Authenticity through Poetic Inquiry

**Researcher name:** VICTORIA INYANG-TALBOT

**Ethics reference:** ETH2021-0253

*Please initial the box(es) if you agree with the statement(s):*

I have read and understood the information sheet and have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study.

I agree to take part in this research project and agree for my data to be used for the purpose of this study.

I understand my participation is voluntary and I may withdraw at any time without my legal rights being affected.

I understand that if I disclose my identity in relation to the poems submitted for this project (by sharing or publishing in the public domain), the researcher will not be expected to maintain my anonymity within their work.

### **Data Protection**

*I understand that information collected about me during my participation in this study will be stored on OneDrive and that this information will only be used for the purpose of this study. All files containing any personal data will be made anonymous and deleted when no longer necessary.*

Name of participant (print name): .....

Signature of participant: .....

Date: .....

## Appendix C: Withdrawal Form

**Withdrawal FORM**

**Date: 23/06/2021**

**Study title:**

A Measure of Ourselves: Facilitating Teacher Critical Authenticity through Poetic Inquiry

**Researcher name:** VICTORIA INYANG-TALBOT

**Ethics reference:** ETH2021-0253

*Please initial the box(es):*

I wish to withdraw from the project, and I am aware that all my personal information will be deleted.

I am aware that my poetic data that has already been anonymised might not be deleted and may be used as part of the data for the project.

### **Data Protection**

*I understand that information collected about me during my participation in this study will be stored on OneDrive and that this information will only be used for the purpose of this study. All files containing any personal data will be made anonymous and deleted when no longer necessary.*

Name of participant (print name): .....

Signature of participant: .....

Date: .....

## Appendix D: Invitation Letter and Workshop Schedule



**Study Title:** A Measure of Ourselves: Facilitating Teacher Critical Authenticity through Poetic Inquiry

**Letter of Invitation and workshop schedule**

Dear teacher,

Thank you for accepting to participate in this project. I hope you will have an enjoyable and productive experience and I hope the experience sustains you beyond this project. Please find the workshop schedules below, including links to the Google Classroom and Zoom room.

You are only required to attend two workshops in total, and these will be kept to a minimum of no longer than an hour and half each.

The table below sets out the dates and times of the four workshops that will run. You are all invited to the first workshop. Please reply to this email acknowledging receipt and indicating if these dates (and times) are not suitable.

Please if you have any questions, concerns, or suggestions, do not hesitate to email me.

I look forward to seeing you and to hearing and reading your wonderful poems.

Kind regards,

Victoria Inyang-Talbot



**Study Title:** A Measure of Ourselves: Facilitating Teacher Critical Authenticity through Poetic Inquiry

**Letter of Invitation and workshop schedule**

Workshop	Workshop 1	Workshop 2	Make Up Session 1	Workshop 3	Workshop 4	Make up Workshop 2	Exit – Debrief
Date and Time	Saturday 23 <sup>rd</sup> January 2022 12:00 GMT	Saturday 26 <sup>th</sup> February 2022 12:00 GMT	Saturday 26 <sup>th</sup> March 2022 12:00 GMT	Saturday 23 <sup>rd</sup> April 2022 12:00 GMT	Saturday 28 May 2022 12:00 BST	Saturday 11 June 2022 12:00 BST	Saturday, June 25 <sup>th</sup> / Saturday, July 23 <sup>rd</sup> , 2022.
Zoom Links	<a href="https://kaplanopenlearning.zoom.us/j/6609217986">https://kaplanopenlearning.zoom.us/j/6609217986</a> (Same for the rest of the workshops)						
Google Classroom Link	<a href="https://classroom.google.com/c/NDQzNzkxwNDM1Miqx?cjc=tbfp4mb">https://classroom.google.com/c/NDQzNzkxwNDM1Miqx?cjc=tbfp4mb</a> Class code: tbfp4mb (Same for the rest of the workshops)						

## Appendix E: Scheme of Work



Study Title: A Measure of Ourselves: Facilitating Teacher Critical Authenticity through Poetic Inquiry

### Scheme of Work for Poetry Workshops

<b>VLE information</b>	Google Classroom, Zoom
<b>Assessment Structure</b>	Formative – data collection
<b>Total number of contact hours</b>	4
<b>Further Information</b>	Exit task to be done at participant's time and pace

Sessions	Topic	Learning Outcomes /Objectives	Knowledge/ Understanding	Activities and interaction patterns	Resources	Assessment
Session 1	Who are we? And who are we as teachers? Short poetic forms – Haiku, Question and List poems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Discuss and examine the concept of self</li> <li>Produce a haiku, Question and List poems that responds to the question.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ideas of autonomy and individual norms, values and beliefs</li> <li>Poetic forms – Question and List poems</li> </ul>	<p>Discuss: who are we and who are we as teachers? Make a list of words and phrases to define who you are as teachers.</p> <p>How do our beliefs and values influence who we are as teachers?</p> <p>Look at the sample of a haiku, question and List poems: using your</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>An example of a Question and List poems</li> <li>Writing frames</li> </ul>	<i>Formative</i>

Sessions	Topic	Learning Outcomes /Objectives	Knowledge/ Understanding	Activities and interaction patterns	Resources	Assessment
				brainstorm words, create one of yours.		
Session 2	Who are we? And who are we as teachers? Rhyming poems – The Sonnet and couplets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Discuss and examine the concept of self</li> <li>Produce a sonnet or rhyming couplets that respond to the question.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ideas of autonomy and individual norms, values and beliefs</li> <li>Poetic forms – sonnet and couplets</li> </ul>	<p>Discuss: who are we and who are we as teachers? Make a list of words and phrases to define who you are as teachers.</p> <p>How do our beliefs and values influence who we are as teachers?</p> <p>Look at the sample of a sonnet/couplet: using your brainstorm words, create one of yours.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>An example of a sonnet/couplet</li> <li>Writing frames</li> </ul>	<i>Formative</i>

Sessions	Topic	Learning Outcomes /Objectives	Knowledge/ Understanding	Activities and interaction patterns	Resources	Assessment
Session 3	Who are we? And who are we as teachers? The free verse and Limerick	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Discuss and examine the concept of self</li> <li>Produce a poem in free verse or a limerick that responds to the question.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ideas of autonomy and individual norms, values and beliefs</li> <li>Poetic forms – free verse/limerick</li> </ul>	<p>Discuss: who are we and who are we as teachers? Make a list of words and phrases to define who you are as teachers.</p> <p>How do our beliefs and values influence who we are as teachers?</p> <p>Look at the sample of a free verse/ode: using your brainstorm words, create one of yours.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>An example of a free verse/limerick.</li> <li>Writing frames</li> </ul>	Formative
Session 4	Who are we? And who are we as teachers? Guided free verse and rhyming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Discuss and examine the concept of self</li> <li>Produce a poem</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ideas of autonomy and individual norms, values, and beliefs</li> </ul>	<p>Discuss: who are we and who are we as teachers? Make a list of words and phrases to define</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>An example of a free verse/sonnet and couplets</li> <li>Writing frames</li> </ul>	Formative

Sessions	Topic	Learning Outcomes /Objectives	Knowledge/ Understanding	Activities and interaction patterns	Resources	Assessment
	verses	in free verse or any rhyming verses that responds to the question.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Poetic forms – free verse and poems that rhyme (sonnet and couplets)</li> </ul>	<p>who you are as teachers.</p> <p>How do our beliefs and values influence who we are as teachers?</p> <p>Look at the sample of a free verse/rhyming poems: using your brainstorm words, create one of yours.</p>		
Exit Task	How was it? Any form at all	Provide a summary of your experience as a participant – comments - recommendations, commendations in a poetic format of your choice.				

## Appendix F: Workshop Poems

### Workshop 1 Poems

#### 1. Selection

Buttons in a jar

Songs in my head

Knock Knock jokes

Rocks (all red)

Long pencil shavings

Old dog hair

Bellybutton lint

Ribbons from the fair

Prickly pinecones

Autographs too

Pearly swirly seashells

Friends like you

Words in a note book

Leaves from my tree

#### 2. World hope

Where in this world that oft divides

Can true compassion show its face,

I doubted that I'd ever see but I was wrong→

I've seen its place.

It's there on every teacher's brow

In each and every doctors' eyes.

Joined by a common foe,

Defeat is not a word they know.

### 3.

My bag is so small;  
a wonder how I fit all these treasures in it.  
It's made of silk; not always soft though.  
It's so colourful, and yet so plain.  
My bag is a wonder!

In my bag I put all my little treasures.  
My pencil case; never a red pen in it.  
A bottle of water; so many times am I short of breath.

In my bag I put all my little treasures.  
A pack of crazy stickers; my little ones love a reward.  
love seeing their glowing faces; peace and serenity in my heart.

In my bag I put all my little treasures.  
My treasured agenda; feel naked without it.  
An apple, some almonds, some chocolate, some power food of sorts.

In my bag I put all my little treasures.  
The hundreds of books I've already read.  
The myriads of books I hope I'll read; Images, ideas, perceptions and light.

In my bag I put all my little treasures.  
The time which is never enough.  
Elevating emotions, disillusion, remembrances and hope.

My bag is a wonder; such a small wonder.  
A personal song;  
A personal mystery.



4.

Flying and then some more flying toward my Ithaca.

But where have I flown from?

No remembrance there.

Oh, really?

No lying allowed.

Multiple origins, multiple selves;

all entangled into this perpetual game of merging and disengagement.

Have I seen or heard enough?

Oh, yes!

When I lie in my bed exhausted and drained,

I think I have heard and seen more than enough.

Next morning, though, is a different story altogether.

Here we go again, my Ithaca.

Am I a guide?

Oh, no! (Oh, yes, why not?)

A conduit for knowledge; I give and receive.

Myriads of images and sounds creating and receiving.

What an exhilarating trip is my trip to Ithaca!

Will I forever be trying to reach my Ithaca or an Ithaca?

This is yet to be answered.

Change is the prerequisite, a wish, a desire, some hunting, some chasing.

Stopping, relaxing, resuming. Just let me sing my song.

## 5. (The Haiku)

Present state of me  
Essence of tomorrow  
Where am I to be?

Define and change  
Specters of myself and thy  
Give, share, and fulfill

Clarity and fog  
Blended arbitrarily  
Fleeting idea of self

And yet I am here  
Assured and unflinching  
Me a paradox

## 6. Believe

If you had a minute to call heaven today.

What would you say?

What would you say?

I know it isn't easy

It's not getting better with time.

All that the clock is doing is make you wish you can turn back his hands.

What is it that you want to say?

Do believe it would have made a difference if you could ask her to stay.

I 'm not writing this to make you feel sad.

I need to tell you that you have been brave and no need to worry you little sister is safe.

I don't know the story.

But to God be the glory.

For he has done great things.

I do pray that you won't forever be a strayed.

And when joy comes in the morning

that it will turn all life's grieve into believe.

## **7. Locking down dates.**

What time are you out?

Morning?

Afternoon?

Evening?

For how long can you be out?

How can this be our new normal?

When will we be free?

Long gone are the memories of the days we went on  
brunches,  
lunches  
and dancing with the bunches.

## **8. Toddler**

Your little cringing face.

Do not worry all will be okay.

Come, hold my hand child.

Today is your first step.

There is no need to be afraid.

Come, hold my hand child.

There are much to explore.

Right this way, right through that door.

Come, hold my hand child

## **9. A Haiku**

Sent from the heaven,  
The lovely cherry blossoms,  
Bloom with dignity

## **10. A Teacher's Baggage**

Monday:

My bag has that 'new' scent  
Carefully packed with a fresh salad for lunch  
A sealed pack of pens  
And an organised planner for the term ahead.

Tuesday:

My bag has started to fray  
Hastily packed with a ham sandwich  
Half a pack of pens  
And minutes from meetings about meetings on: initiatives, curriculum reviews,  
pastoral concerns...

Wednesday:

My bag is scuffed and battered  
Packed with a half eaten stale sandwich  
A solitary pen  
And a stack of tests to mark

Thursday:

My bag has a broken strap  
Packed with a forgotten overripe banana  
A solitary pen lid  
And another stack of tests to mark, student reports to write, an inbox to check..

Friday:

My bag has a hole in it.

Packed with chocolate, biscuits, cake.

No pens; could I borrow one please?

And a 'thank you' card.

### **11. Question Poem**

I was hatched from a family of teachers

I have flown from a home of certainty to an unknown of possibility

I seen dedication and joy, burnout and exhaustion

I guide young minds whose experiences teach me

I stay because I believe in my students

I feel tired but encouraged

I will fly toward inquiry and constant learning

### **12. List Poem**

I will put in my bag

a slice of humble pie,

patience and

corny dad jokes

I will put in my bag

A questioning spirit

Flexibility

And my flair pens

I will leave out of my bag

Prideful perfection

And a harsh tongue

My bag is made from  
A well meaning heart  
Bits of mismatched experience  
And string  
I will carry my bag into every classroom  
And use it to help my students

### **13. Comprehension Questions**

- 1) Who are you? Looking at me with a frown.
- 2) What's the point of reading this? It's bringing me down.
- 3) When will this lesson end? It's such a waste of time.
- 4) Where are you from? Your accent doesn't sound like mine.
- 5) Why do I need to know about poetry or Shakespeare?
- 6) How should I know the answer? Isn't that why you're here?
- 7) Who would've thought I'd ever enjoy this subject?
- 8) What are we doing today? Some kind of project?
- 9) When are we going to the theatre on the school trip?
- 10) Where did the Bard get the idea to write this? It's sick!
- 11) Why did Elizabethans believe in the supernatural and magic?
- 12) How can I improve my grade, sir? Am I missing a trick?

#### **14. My questions**

1. Am I in the right profession?
2. What skills do I possess in order to be able to perform my duties as a teacher?
3. Am I prepared to shoulder the challenges and frustrations that come with being a teacher?
4. Have I given much thought to the kind of knowledge that needs to have in order for them to be able to succeed in life?
5. What is the best strategy to use to help all learners explore the content with satisfaction?
6. Have I been fair with my assessments and judgements?
7. Am I able to see things from the students' point of view?
8. How can I improve the way that I teach and how students learn?
9. Am I open-minded enough to share my practice with other teachers?
10. Am I supportive of my colleagues when they are facing professional challenges?
11. How can I make learning exciting for my students?
12. How am I incorporating new technologies in my practice?



## 15. Question Poem

This person now, this teacher, may  
have been hatched some ten years ago,  
Where the sky hang grey and low,  
Feeling somewhat a queasy dismay

At a start of a journey, the destination  
unknown. From there I have travelled,  
And my inexperience became more filled  
With awe, to what I do, and a realisation,

For I have seen wonders from youthful  
Minds that inspire me, and heard laughter  
And songs from inquisitive eyes after  
Some rare miracle of being accepted.

For it is a marvel that these teens, a scary  
Word to me in the past, with all their different  
aspirations and worries, should be vibrant  
Together, by doing something I have built.

It is their trust in me that makes me stay,  
And urges me to keeping doing better  
For they have shown me, this traveller,  
That by staying, I can gain so much in return.

And in this place I may tarry, or nonetheless  
Think of flying somewhere else. But I will  
Carry their gifts with me. Gifts that grant endless

Confidence and creativity, thanks to their

Trust in me, ceaselessly gratifying and replenishing—

## **16. List Poem**

I will put in my bag as many question marks as there are.  
So that my students can ask whatever questions,  
And when they run out, they can simply reach into the bag  
and find that more are there still.  
So that they know that I have many questions—like they do,  
and I, like them, are also thinking hard and trying hard  
to find answers.

I will put in my bag blank sketch papers,  
So that we can write and draw and make  
origami with them. So that they always have  
something to fill with laughters, stories,  
wonders, and a different view.

I will put in my bag pads and bandages,  
So that when they fall, they get up quickly,  
and it doesn't hurt so bad. So that they can run  
as fast as they want, and know that there are no  
injuries and mistakes that cannot be patched up.

I will put in my bag a deep breath, so that when the clock says time  
To move on, I can have the confidence to slow down.  
And keep trying to be true to the journey of thoughts, and not to  
Rush to get to the 'right answer', as it kills the spark

In children's eyes.

My bag is made of indigo and violet.

It is made of fluffy soft marino.

It's warm if you hug it, and puzzling to look at.

It's made of the ups and downs of a busy

School day. It smells of coffee, plants,

And an open window on a rainy day.

**17. Poem 1:**

*Who are you, to tell me what to do?*

*What is the point? It's not going to help me.*

*Where are you from? You're not like me.*

*Why do you keep pushing me? Get off my back!*

*How do you do it? I couldn't do that.*

*I may not have walked in your shoes, but mine are not too dissimilar.*

*I've sat where you are and carved my own path.*

*You can't make assumptions. Everyone is carrying a load.*

*I see the potential in you and don't want you to waste it.*

*If not me, then who?*

**18. Poem 2:**

*I will put in my bag music to sooth the soul.*

*I will put in my bag an eraser to wipe the slate clean.*

*I will put in my bag a sense of humour to lighten the mood.*

*I will put in my bag a listening ear, a compassionate heart and an open mind.*

*My bag is made from sugar and spice and all things nice,*

*sprinklings of fairy dust,  
with tape and glue and staples  
to try to keep it all together.*

## **19. My Teachers Bag**

I will put in my bag:

A hand for each child to hold

Words of encouragement when they need to be bold

A bandage for their knee when they fall

Recognition for when they are feeling small

I will put in my bag:

A friendship that will never break

A deep breath to breathe when they make a mistake

Smiles for the rainy days

Understanding for each child's different ways

My bag is made from:

The laughs we have shared through the years

The pride I felt when they overcame their fears

The many memories that were made right here

The tears when I say "Keep up the good work next year"

## **20. How I become a teacher**

How was I hatched?

Children loved me before I loved them

I was a troubled teen, always rebellious

Yet young children always took an interest in me

Begging me to babysit, the parents would hand me their key

Later this led to working in a day-care

How was I deemed responsible enough, were they even aware?

I was full of self-doubt, why do these mothers and children see me as good

When I see myself as bad

Their cute smiling faces, how could I let them down?

Perhaps it was this motivation, the only love I felt at this time

Since then, I have always worked with children

It was how the children saw me

Which made me enter this career

### **21. What did I find?**

How did you get here, weed?

Who brought your seed?

Did it lift

On the wind and Sail and drift from far and yellow field?

Were your seed a burr,

A sticky burr that clung to a fox Furry Tail?

Did it fly with a bird who liked to feed on

the tasty seed of the yellow weed?

How did you come?

### **22. Signs Of Springs**

The Days are longer,

The Sun is brighter,

Everywhere are

Sign of Spring

Crocuses peeking,

Tightly wrapped

daffodils,

New Leaves starting,

Coats

unzipped

Mitten-less fingers,

Bugs being busy

Swollen robins,

Muddy Earth.

***23. As a human? As a teacher? When I'm authentically me?***

By looking at my teacher father's eyes,

I travelled from naivety to knowledge.

The future brightens with my sight.

My voices are clear, my thoughts encouraged.

In turn, I tell my students, my guide

That for them I stay

Their future, mine to provide

What I feel is gold at the end of my rainbow

Where we'll fly to, heaven or other I do not know

#### **24. My Authentic Teacher Bag**

I will put in my teacher bag

2 full teeth smiles

3 questioning head tilts

4 silent approving nods

5 reasons to hold my response

6 stickers for super students

7 excited "welldones"

8 adult professions

9 lives, and

10 reasons to be grateful to do it all again

#### **25. Haiku**

My eyes are widening

The students know its enough

Can they see it's me

Through this mask I wear?

Anger and others I bear

I hope they forgive



**26. As a human? As a teacher? When I'm authentically me?**

How was I hatched?

In the Power of Christ

From where have I flown?

From a sea full of corn, that wasn't that nice...

And what have I seen?

Thai beaches, the Wats, J-temples, male twats

And what have I heard?

Such lies, bribes and 'musts'

A sea of 'musts' causing so much disgust

Why, who do I guide?

The insecure mob, whose weakness and sadness pulsatingly throbs

But why do I stay?

I've nowhere to go

And what do I feel?

Deep hollowness, oh!

To where might I fly?

I know not yet where

Yet far from the nest that caused my despair

## **27. My Authentic Teacher Bag**

I will put in my bag my beat-up guitar

Large puppets and stages and little toy cars

I will put in my bag some musical vids

To choreograph, block and entertain kids

I will put in my bag my biggest fake smile

To deal with tough parents who make me taste bile

My bag is made from the laughs of the youth

That wriggle and giggle, and show lots of tooth

I'll dance and sing loud

and bobble about, and trick them to learning

then leave with a shout!

## **28.**

Vulnerable me

My students, yes they see me

Warts and all, you see

Perform and enchant

Find joy in every face

True learning opens

Do you feel me, kids?

My heart is full on my sleeve

Choice is up to you

Don't dominate me

Just go and teach your classes

Colleagues be a pain

## 29. My Teacher Bag

Within my teacher bag, I place  
a range of items to embark  
on ways and paths to learn and grow  
with minds and hearts to light and spark.

Rulers, pens and pencils, too  
are necessary accessories.  
I'm moved to prime and hone these tools -  
this stationery's not stationary.

A4 paper - plain and lined -  
for workings, drafts and work refined...  
...plus making swans and paper planes  
to take flights yonder, undetained.

Hundred squares bring dancing eyes.  
When timesing tables, patterns rise:  
diagonals - elevens, nines;  
the twos and tens form even lines.

Picture books with magic lands  
whose pages act as open doors  
will help our hearts and minds expand  
and venture beyond daily chores

A book of poems, broad in forms -  
like riddles, kennings, couplets, lists.  
Wide in subjects, objects, verbs

to strike a chord and coexist.

A pocket notebook that's for me  
to list things chronologically  
check in, check out, and words between  
to work and play with, heard and seen.

The one thing that I always pack,  
if my bag lacks it, I'm off track -  
the something that I've not yet shown...  
...is empty space for known unknowns.

These known unknowns are precious gifts:  
anecdotes, incidents - they can lift.  
The empty space? A place to dream -  
unknown unknowns past academe

A place to dream, a place to question,  
a case renewed for every session.  
Lessons lightened seldom sag.  
Let some of you become your bag.

### 30. Question Poem

How was I hatched?

I raised my wing and waved it and  
my shell was soon dispatched.

From where have I flown?

My fledgling self knew everything and  
now I know I don't.

What have I seen?

Our nestlings chirruping, "Feed us!" while  
we fly as go-betweens.

What have I heard?

The quacks, clucks, coos, caws, hoots and squawks of  
orchestras of birds.

Who do I guide?

Robins, ibises, eagles, falcons:  
birds from far and wide.

What do I feel?

The energy from beating wings with  
each new flight revealed.

To where will I fly?

Where chickens, eggs, and humans too ask  
who came first... and why?

### **31. Rainbow Road Haiku**

like Richard Of York  
(by Frost's Yellow Wood), footsteps  
Gave Battle In Vain

### **Workshop 2 - Poems**

#### **32. (Rhyming Couplets)**

Observe, love and be resilient,  
See, know and be patient.

Stage the play in real terms;  
She is not alone, she brings the gems.

Her familiar tool is just a perception.  
It needs no rush, it runs on inspiration.

Sometimes she shudders at the exhilarating contentment,  
She wants to pause but she loves the movement.

She likes to find creativity.  
especially in times of negativity.

But sometimes she can't see the stage,  
overshadowed by an impressive wave.

### 33.

Create, fulfill, destroy, undo, and rest.

Divide the space, confirm the time, and think:

Can I engulf the secret path with zest?

You fight, you dance, you bow; you leave the rink.

Divine, ancestral spirit speak to me,

Unravel things, obscure the fake, exclaim:

Untold charades, tales and myths CAN flee!

Recast the spell and start afresh the game.

Your heart, your soul, they inspire me so much.

Invade all spaces and clear your wild mind.

Invade all foreign grounds, love them as such.

Come back again and teach us, be so kind!

Old weaving patterns shall be left aside,

react, rekindle the flame, ignore the tide.

### **34.**

Your heart, your soul, they inspire me so much.  
Invade all spaces and clear your wild mind.  
Invade all foreign grounds, love them as such.  
Come back again and teach us, be so kind!

### **35.      Doors**

Opening the door to welcome in the class  
Rawness of naive youth is palpable  
Teachers guide and cajole each to surpass  
The limits of what they are capable

More doors open within and without  
Horizons broaden beyond the confines  
Of circumstances, setbacks or self doubt  
Of screens, books, exams, or even the mind

Knowledge and nurture help them to believe  
That when they stand on the daunting threshold  
Of adulthood, confident they can leave  
Through the door and their wide futures behold

And later, if they're bound by a locked door  
They have the key to open it once more



### **36. Wait for me**

Spring please wait for me.

Soon I will sit beneath your beautiful blossom tree.

They say I need to stay inside.

So, please will you go hide?

Just for a little while,

I beg of you please.

Can't you see me by the window on my knees.

I see the bees as they visit me by my window.

I hear the birds singing their song of freedom.

I smell the fresh air and it makes me grin.

I feel the rays of the sun penetrating through my skin.

All these things I experience yet spring you leaving a bitter taste...

So, I implore you to take your time.

Please, Summer can wait.

Me and you still need to go on a couple of dates.

**37.**

They give me their heart even when feeling low,  
I know they struggle a lot but for a moment they let go.  
What a great feeling it is to look at them smiling,  
It just makes me want to help them keep shining.

**38.**

There was a teacher who was also a mum,  
So she went home, and sang and was dumb,  
I am not a school,  
But I am still cool,  
She said to herself while pouring some rum

**39.**

Wait for me,  
Oh, you young master of laugh,  
Don't rush to be,  
I know the journey is tough,  
Wait for me.

Wait for me, don't jump,  
I'm still following you my child,  
Struggling with life's bump,  
I'm not as young, I'm not as wild.

Wait for me, my little boy  
Open your eyes and just share your joy  
Wait for me.

**40. Am I with you?**

I like pickles, that's my thing  
But if I have too many, it makes my stomach sting  
I am a silly kid, that's who I am  
And without that, I'd be a piece of ham  
I have four sisters, I know it's a mob  
Though they're annoying, without them I'd be a blob  
So now you know, that's where I'm from  
Add this all up, you get me as a sum.

**41. love is ours**

pick up a pebble for peace if you please and  
see how its sides have been smoothed by the seas  
and the sand and the swirls and the hands before yours  
and the beach we beseech to bring peace after wars

as you gaze at the stars with your life near its end  
this gull now circles for evermore friends  
a signal that reception's near  
follow the forager coast is clear

when you etch in your arm what cannot be erased  
in a language of shapes in an ink that is raised  
GOD HELP ME in capital scars  
black wing pink wing love is ours

pick up a pebble and consider its past  
turned by the tides until now, at last  
it's warmed by the flow of the blood from you palm  
hear myr mir here shalom salaam

**42.**

I walk these streets of Shanghai at night.

With no fear insight.

Believe me it is not just the intoxication.

It is Monday 10pm and I am standing alone at the bus station.

This bus I do wish can take me on a drive to my own nation.

### **Workshop 3 - Poems**

**43.**

Come autumn and spring,

inspire the youth to transcend.

Who can invite us to this eternal feast

of change, rhythm and fulfillment?

Can we just be and experience our own existence lead the way?

Experience and knowledge can be the muse,

Mnemosyne and oblivion can work just fine together.

Remember and forget; intertwine everything into a new,  
uncharted path.

No vain colours, no unnecessary sounds.

Just the essence of our souls

stripped and ready to get transformed.

#### **44. (Free verse)**

Raising questions to be answered  
the inquisitive nature of a studious mind  
sometimes entrapped in a pedantic system  
waiting for a figure to set it. free  
    talking and talking and talking  
about all the exceptions to the rules  
    just let it be!

How can you create something different and innovative?  
Can you actually do it  
    or is everything just ruminations?

Being authentic, autonomous, transparent  
That could lead a change.  
Colourful, imaginative places of real creatures coming together,  
Striving to create, to reimagine, to reencapsulate.

#### **45. A woman called Jo**

There was a woman called Jo,  
She said she was to know.  
That was rather true,  
But she let it brew.  
She just couldn't say no to the flow.

## 46. Just their teacher

On to the next lesson!

Let's go!

But I am mourning too don't you know?

Just calculate the hours then you will see why my heart is still aching years after they have been deceased.

I often think of them.

Not only as my kids, my learners, and my players but I think of them as brothers, sisters, nieces, nephews, cousins, grandchildren, and most of all

A child of a mourning mother.

A child of a shuttered father.

I am just the teacher, right?

Time for the next class to enroll.

Having to transfer my love and care unto another soul.

At times I can still hear their laughter.

At times I can still see those eager-for-life eyes.

At times I can still smell their deodorant as a walk down the passages

And I can still feel my heart sink when I think of those messages...

I am just the teacher, right?

Time for the next class to enroll.

Having to transfer my love and care unto another soul.

**47.**

The emphasis on summative assessment/Encourages submission of excrement/The lies we tell/As we go through Hell/Are to the learner's detriment

A pint of Beamish!

**48. Giving all to life.**

Life gives back to life.

It is about recreating and building life,

Is life comfortable for you?

Are others at home with life?

Then think of one thing,

Everyone must be safe and happy with themselves.

When we give to life, life gives it back to us.

Give a life to little ones and let them grow,

Grow to appreciate and love life.

Then they in turn give life to others and

Together, a better world is created for all

To live and cherish for this is what we are made for.

How pleasant that would be!

#### **49. From nothing to something**

How plain, clean and fresh, you are,  
looking so vulnerable and fragile.  
Anyone can do anything with you,  
You are open to all kinds of images drawn on you with different colors,  
Yet, you neither complain nor resist any.  
Some stains can be erased while others leave permanent marks on you.  
Those marks are what adds quality to what you are.  
This is the fate of a PLANE SHEET OF PAPER.  
Our experiences in Life's journey leave marks on us that we carry along.  
And those marks add quality to our life.  
We come into life plain, but we leave this world with a wealth of experience.  
Appreciate your experiences!

#### **50.**

*There was a lil boy, a lil wriggler  
Keep still, be quiet, what a giggler  
Repeat it again, deep sigh, oh why?  
It's all because I love those lil wrigglers*

*Looking at me with longing in their eyes  
Longing to learn, longing to rise  
Pick me please!  
You can do it!  
Everyday is a learning surprise..*



## 51.

The Moto GP is here in Jerez  
The sound of the bikes all day and all night  
I wish they would stop, can't hear myself think  
Oh peace never comes, the buzzing like wasps  
What joy! Within a week the fairs do start.  
Seville, Jerez, The Port of Saint Mary.  
Begin no thought of work, study – not them,  
Exams, what's that? Never! Just contrary.

## 52. Progress

A year ten student  
Achieved a grade 9 today  
On their mock exam

An shy anxious child  
Volunteered to read today  
A whole page aloud

A volatile teen  
Was able to regulate  
Their anger today

A school refuser  
Returned to their class today  
And didn't abscond

Many ways progress is made  
Not all will receive a grade

**53. Limerick**

There was a young girl in the tower  
Who looked just as fresh as a flower.  
Her hair was like silk,  
Her skin as smooth as milk,  
But her breath made the strongest knight cower.

**54. Sitting on a rock**

I watched the tall grass blow slow  
And birds faintly sing

Swirling and twirling  
slashing, splashing and crashing  
All wrinkling with fish

**55. Overloaded mask**

Vermin taking over  
Let's stop it, work together  
no more consumption  
Vermin has gone to waste  
The consumed mask of regret

has taken over  
Vermin destroys us all  
long dark days may call a fall  
and our race will cry.

We buy each other gifts  
new things wrapped in paper  
Later passed to landfills.

**56. Free Verse**

I've finally come to realise  
This chosen occupation I perform  
Has clearly been co-opted  
Into reinforcing caste division

What of the canon? Who  
Does it represent? Who  
Benefits from labelling right and wrong  
In ways protecting the dominant?

In public schools that teach  
The basics of the factory mind  
To private schools, or "institutions"  
Protecting status quo

I wonder why I ever chose  
To play a part, to fill the role  
And then recall Platonic caves  
Which helps assuage my guilt

**57.**

They tell me of the stars and mountains  
The tales of their cities  
As their student now I listen  
We're never too old for stories

**58.**

The man said he's a bat  
Wouldn't stop it with that black hat  
Turns out he's named Bruce  
And got many a bruise  
His head wrapped around a cat

**59.       Inklings Limerick**

there once taught a particular teacher  
explored extra-curricular features  
and with inklings pursued  
they found learning anew  
in a class full of curious creatures

**60.       opening doors**

Mohamad opens doors in Norris Green  
with stomach rumbling as this day is long  
he longs to learn and see ambitions seen  
to Maths we move his concentration strong

his sister then Maria who is drained  
supplies supplied to her today in class  
we flip between arithmetic and games  
to break the focus but not yet the fast

their father Ala showers me with gifts  
of olive and of laurel - Aleppo soap  
and sweets and smiles a smorgasbord that lifts

our senses and our spirits and our hopes  
as Ramadan will turn and soon to Eid  
these lessons learned in Liverpool are seeds

## **61.        the fall**

This tree bore blossom; fruited long before  
a bullied boy with bruises breathed its bough.  
In school, hit back and shone though premature.  
Then Cambridge - which would soon be disavowed.

Here, geocentric teachings left him bored -  
espaliered and bound up in the past.  
As plague bore down, he sought familiar core -  
returned to Woolsthorpe orchard and learned fast.

A year of wonder followed, questions rose.  
With observation, ignorance then fell.  
In darkness, bore a hole: the light exposed.  
An apple dropped to weak, familiar spell...

Earth's gravity in time will take us all.  
For now? We reach for fruit before the fall.

**62.**

I'm sat here on a sunny day

I think about my teaching way  
Heart and care my values be  
For students to gain trust in me  
The barriers in FE are high  
The challenge every day is mine  
Grow confidence and self belief  
The primary step in how I teach

**63.**

There was a "young" teacher from Poole  
Who worked in a College not School  
The kids hated maths  
Did not attend class  
She's expected to do "Miracools!"

**64.**

There was teacher from training  
Who couldn't stop ever complaining  
She forgot that her job  
Was t'have a positive gob  
So put on her mask, start refraining

**65.**

One little kid went to school for knowledge,  
Where she was taught not to be a baggage,  
To those who score much higher,  
Or she would be called little lair.  
'Now sit down and answer this test on Leverage.'

**66.**

There was a workshop on Saturday  
I started this with a flat battery  
But once we begun  
This is such great fun  
I now continue my day so happily

#### **Workshop 4 – Poems**

**67. My American Boy**

From crying and screaming that no one understood.  
Now stands an independent boy,  
that overall filled my days with so much joy

I wiped your tears  
held you, whispering that there is nothing to fear.

I encourage you to share  
and to show others that you care.

When it was time to nap,  
we will play tickle monster until you jumped on my lap.  
I stroked your curly hair  
and your smile filled the air.

Whenever I asked you: "Close your eyes Julèn."  
With the response: "okay Miss Laverne".  
You were the first to fall asleep  
and the last to awake.

Believe me at first it wasn't a piece of cake!

I will miss you hugs and kisses  
but wish you well for all your future wishes.

In years to come you probably won't remember me  
But you will always be my sweet American Boy.  
So, when you can read this remember to always be the best that you can be!

**68. She couldn't wait**

I am not mad at you.  
How could you avoid the course of nature?  
There is no way that you knew.  
I am just frustrated with this legislature.

How could it be that I missed you again.  
You are the most beautiful out of the four!  
Don't worry, soon I will break out of this chain,  
and proof to you, you the one I adore.

But for now, this is the life I choose.  
In all of the madness it does pay well.  
Even if the currency is currently in blues,  
I cling on to my imagination of the stories you have yet to tell.

So, for as long as I am here, I won't be able to embrace you.  
Therefore, in my heart I know what I am supposed to do.



**69. Poem 1-**

All the beings are interconnected  
the net is the soul that lands are connected  
But some hearts are misconnected  
While I am sitting here unconnected

**70. Poem 2-**

Moon goes down and sun comes up  
Here I hear the alarm goes up  
I find myself doing some pushups  
To get my figure into a nice shape up

**71. Poem 3-**

The people can live without everything they own  
But they couldn't survive without their phone  
Everybody search the reason but still its unknown  
But I think I know, because it has overgrown

**72. Poem 1:**

*When days become too hard for me to bare,  
And ghosts of experiences past haunt present days,  
To those without this weight you do compare;  
Your flaws and insecurities erased.  
But then you are faced with a younger self.  
A lotus struggling to blossom and to bloom.  
Feeling they're going to be left on the shelf.  
They turn themselves into a bomb. Kaboom!  
It's then I realise why I have this baggage;  
It's for students with their own – I can help to manage.*

**73. Poem 2:**

*A big head carried on tiny shoulders.*

*An old soul trapped in tiny bones.*

*Innocence lost before its time.*

*Eyes have seen too much.*

*Ears have heard too much.*

*Skin has touched too much.*

*You take back the helm to weather the storm*

*the only way you know how.*

*You say too much.*

*You consume too much.*

*You love too much.*

**74. If the sun had never risen.**

*What if the sun had never risen?*

*To leave now and sail across the horizon to chase the sunset,*

*Would leave a ghost walking the mother's halls,*

*Would cause a father's heart to break,*

*And a sister to loose a piece of herself.*

*But what if the sun had never risen?*

*There would be no memory to leave a dark shadow,*

*The heart would still be full of love*

*And the whole would be complete,*

*If the sun had never risen.*

## **75. Most imperative**

Good morning, come on in

Take a seat, open your books

Write the title, write the date

Start task one

Settle down, everyone

That's a good answer, but do check

Punctuation, spelling

Revise the phrasing

Move on to task two

Settle down now, will you?

Work in pairs

Or small groups

Discuss the topic at hand

Not what's for lunch, pay attention

Settle down or you're on detention

Hold on now

Don't be upset

Make a plan, organise your time

Remember to revise Macbeth

Settle down, take deep breaths

Mobiles off, silence please

Now turn over

And begin

Read the question, try your best

Settle down, it's a test!

Don't call me a narc

A moan or a pest

But believe me when I say

You'll act the same should you

Settle down and have kids too

## **76. Progress (v2)**

A girl on her test

Achieved a top exam grade

Stood out as the best

A shy child was proud

For volunteering to read

A whole page aloud

A boy known as rude

Was able to self-manage

His volatile mood

A girl who refused

To attend school this whole year

Returned and improved

Examples of progress made

But not all receive a grade

**77. listen speak read write**

listen speak

speak listen

meaning sows its seeds

read me

as I read you

our language is a breeze

write me

as I write you

our worlds will dance and meet

listen speak

speak listen

the dance and breeze complete

**78. peace acrostic**

Peace is a garden and so must be tended

Each planted seed is unique and yet blended

Attend with a water, a talk and the sun

Contend with the weeds, know the deed's never done

End with beginnings, ascend what's begun

**79. A New Day**

Like dawn, rising slowly with the golden sun  
A new day brings life  
Like the daisy, unfolding under the gaze of the joyful sun  
A new day brings hope  
Like the luxurious dark green foliage

Sparkling with silver droplets of the morning dew  
A new day brings desire, and love and beauty and pain  
Like the restless and quiet brook  
gliding joyfully to unknown destinations,  
A new day is full of uncertain vitality  
Yeah, that's why it's a new day  
For, you never know where it is headed and what you will encounter along it's  
course

## 80.

I don't want to learn,

No quiero, no quiero,

Why should I try?

It's all about me

Not you

All the time in the world

That's what I've got

You're old, you fool

I'll never be like you

I'll always be free

You'll never be me

I'll never be you.

## **81.**

A big head carried on tiny shoulders. / An old soul trapped in tiny bones. / Innocence lost before its time. // Eyes have seen too much. / Ears have heard too much. / Skin has felt too much. // You take back the helm to weather the storm the only way you know how. // You say too much. / You consume too much. / You love too much.