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Pedagogues of Possibility? The politics, policies and practice of curriculum reform in post-conflict Timor-Leste

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A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Education
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Abstract

Following independence in 2002, Timor-Leste quickly embarked on a process of curriculum reform. Reform was predicated on three main goals: (1) improving the quality and relevance of schooling; (2) assisting the state in achieving long-term development goals; and (3) acculturating future generations into a new socially cohesive national identity. Yet, a long line of research indicates the translation from *curriculum intentions to changed practices* is ridden with interpretation and contestation. School-based actors are often the key intermediaries in negotiating the uncertainties, paradoxes or dilemmas embedded in such reforms, and as such have a large part to play in what results.

These actors, as the thesis identifies, are influenced by and are influencing a set of material, cultural and social conditions that are the product of the country’s colonial past and current status as a conflict-affected and fragile state (CAFS). Following independence, they (re)entered the workforce complete with antecedent beliefs, paradigms and discourses on what ‘good teaching’ represents, and on the broader purpose and role of schooling in society. They were differentially motivated by a variety of factors—economic, political and professional in nature—to become and remain teachers. Almost immediately, they were confronted with a rapid succession of new policy statements on what constituted appropriate knowledge, teaching and pedagogy in the new Timor-Leste. While such statements were rich in their symbolic promise of a schooling experience that was distinct and disconnected from the past, a combination of inconsistent political will, strong external involvement/influence, and insufficient internal capacity has led to the implementation of reforms that are discursively rich but substantively poor.

Founded on a critical realist ontological and epistemological research approach, and supported through critical ethnographic research methods, this thesis explores the ways in which school actors in Timor-Leste position themselves and act on their beliefs, motivations and tendencies in light of current structural conditions and constraints. What this thesis finds is that the outcomes and practices produced are neither a straightforward reproduction of the prior colonial education system, nor the aspirational goals of current reform agendas. They represent a creative mediation of personal and political, past and present.
Acknowledgements

I have come to realise that completing the PhD requires a certain level of commitment and enthusiasm from those who sit alongside you in the research journey—professional colleagues and friends, your supervisors, and most importantly your family—and who see you through the ebbs and flows that mark this endeavour. They have frequently reminded of the significance, importance and worth of this study, and kept me motivated and enthused about what is quite honestly, an often difficult and arduous journey.

I would like to acknowledge the unwavering support, sage advice, and gentle persistence of my two supervisors, Associate Professor Eve Coxon and Dr. Allen Bartley. Eve and Allen were generously patient with the numerous swings, roundabouts and tangents that marked my personal, academic and professional life over the four years we worked together, and afforded me the time, intellectual space, and flexibility I needed. Their collective wisdom and experience have contributed substantially to this piece of scholarship, namely in the nuanced understanding of the research context and the study’s research participants that I believe is reflected in the final product.

A number of academic and professional colleagues, both near and far, were instrumental to this study. Fellow PhD students, and professional and academic staff within the Faculty of Education have been supportive throughout on both pragmatic and intellectual matters. Outside the university, Marie Quinn and Lotte Renault have served as role models to me in terms of their commitment and passion to improving education for the children of Timor-Leste and elsewhere, and for the wealth of information, advice and assistance they provided while I was in the country. Mieke Lopes Cardozo introduced me at an early stage in the research process to critical realism and the Strategic Relational Approach, and in our regular meetings at conferences in various parts of the world, continues to inspire my intellectual evolution. In Timor-Leste, members of the New Zealand Aid Programme Capacity Building team facilitated introductions with key individuals within the Ministry and development partner community that paved the way for much of the empirical work that followed. Br. Bill Tynan and Therese Curran grounded my research in the realities of classroom practice, and helped me to understand this context through their own experiences. My two Timorese research assistants, Thomas and Simoa, were vital to navigating the complex linguistic terrain of the country.

This study would not have been possible without the generous financial support of the New Zealand Aid Programme and the School of Critical Studies in Education Research Committee whose contributions supported my fieldwork in Timor-Leste. I must also acknowledge and thank all the research participants who were part of this study and whom were generous with both their time and honesty.

Most importantly, a big obrigadu barak to my family! My daughter Amara arrived on the scene as I was attempting to wrap up the PhD, and her daily smiles and boundless energy was all the encouragement I needed to complete the thesis. I could not have done this without the support of my partner in crime and life, Cassie, who has had the fortitude and generosity of heart to see me through a process that has been both trying and testing. I hope you will continue to cherish and remember our time together in Timor-Leste, and the stories, people and places we experienced both jointly and apart, as we grow old together. I cannot wait to revisit this special place in our hearts with you and Amara one day soon.
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Glossary

EFA
Education for All

EGMA
Early Grades Mathematics Assessment

EGRA
Early Grades Reading Assessment

EMIS
Education Management Information System

ETAN
East Timor Action Network

FRETLIN
Revolutionary Front for the Independence of East Timor

FTI
Fast Track Initiative

HDI
Human Development Index

IBEE
Integrated Basic Education Establishments

INEE
International Network of Education in Emergencies

INFCP
Institute for Continuing Teacher Development

IPAD
Portuguese Institute for Development Support

ISF
International Stabilization Force

LCP
Learner-centred pedagogy

MDGs
Millennium Development Goals

MoE/Ministry/MEC/MECYS
Ministry of Education, Timor-Leste

MoF
Ministry of Finance, Timor-Leste

NQSS
National Quality School Standards

NRC
Norwegian Refugee Council

NZAID/NZAP
New Zealand Aid Programme

RDTL
Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste

SABER
System Assessment and Benchmarking for Results

SRA
Strategic Relational Approach

TFET
Trust Fund for East Timor

UAHPEC
University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee

UN
United Nations

UNDP
United Nations Development Programme

UNESCO
United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

UNICEF
United Nations Children’s Fund

UNMISET
United Nations Mission of Support in East Timor

UNMIT
United Nations Integrated Mission for East Timor

UNTAET
United Nations Transition Administration of East Timor

USD
US Dollars

WFP
World Food Programme
1. Introduction

In 2007, I sat in a darkened movie theatre in Auckland, New Zealand and watched a documentary film, *Children of a Nation* (Marra, 2007). The film chronicles the story of a five-year old East Timorese girl, Tercia, who commences her first day of school against a backdrop of poverty and ill health, only to be caught up in the violence of the 2006 Dili riots when her family’s house is burnt to the ground. As the storyline unfolds, another key protagonist enters onto the screen. Her name is Sister Aurora. She is a Timorese teacher who protects, shields and nurtures Tercia and other children in her school through the difficulties of those months in 2006, often with great personal risks to herself. Sister Aurora later explains her selfless and heroic actions as a duty and obligation to the new nation. She argues that children like Tercia will shape the conflict-affected nation’s future and see it to a better place.

The film piqued my interest in the story of Timor-Leste’s ascendency as a sovereign nation and, within this broad narrative, the role of education, and specifically educators’ purpose and agency, in building a new nation out of the ashes of colonialism and conflict. While I have no personal stake in or connection to the country, its unique history as well as the dynamics of its contemporary political economy are of immense interest to me as an international development and education scholar based in New Zealand—particularly given the extensive peacekeeping and development-related operations in Timor-Leste that my government has supported since the country’s 1999 vote for independence.

For Timor-Leste, education’s reconstructive and transformative qualities were defined early on in the process of nation-building. Even before independence was actually voted for by the Timorese, a new development plan was drafted by resistance leaders (CNRT, 1999) with the vision that a “new East Timor would aspire to have an education system that enhances the development of our national identity, based on our selective cultural and universal human values.” When independence was finally achieved in 2002, a large

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1 The official name of the country is the República Democrática de Timor-Leste (RDTL) in Portuguese, or Democratic Republic of East Timor in English. Although in the past, it was commonly referred to as East Timor for short—specifically during the Indonesian occupation and under UN transitional authority—since 2002, the government has requested that the short form Timor-Leste be used internationally. In this thesis, I use Timor-Leste in deference to this.
In March 2009, my PhD journey began with receipt of a three-year scholarship from the Tertiary Education Commission’s Top Achiever Doctoral Award. In early September 2009, I visited Timor-Leste for the first time to assess the feasibility of my intended research design and approach. Walking down the streets of Dili on that visit, I could not help but notice the crisp, newly-printed banners draped across roads and government buildings with the ubiquitous slogan “Goodbye Conflict, Welcome Development” written in Portuguese. These banners were meant to symbolise the nation’s rapid, but not always smooth journey from a war-torn and splintered society in 1999, to a state judged stable enough by the international community to (once again) stand on its own two feet.

2 Recent scholarship argues that the real utility of the term “social cohesion” is that it can function as a framing concept for thinking through the complexity of policy issues. As Tawil and Harley (2004, p. 9) note, “Social cohesion, in other words, is neither a given entity nor a thing in itself. The way it is perceived translates into the way it is defined. The way it is defined, in turn, determines the types of indicators used for the assessment that serves to inform policy formulation.”

3 In line with evolving thinking on the labelling of nation-states as fragile (Tawil & Harley, 2004), this thesis considers fragility as a set of conditions, typified by: deficits in governance, an inability to maintain security, an inability to meet essential needs of citizens, polarisation of identities, high aid dependency, a lack of transparency in decision-making; and perhaps most critically, a lack of will and/or capacity on the part of the state. It is however acknowledged that labelling a state as fragile, does not assume that all or most of these conditions are prevalent at any one time, but rather vary at particular junctures of time, space and place (see for example Davies, 2009, p. 11). Similar comments can be made about the term ‘post-conflict’ and for this reason the term conflict-affected is preferred, as it suggests that violent conflict has, is or has the potential to impact on the activities of the state (Bengtsson, 2011). The state refers to the executive, legislative and judiciary arms of the central government.

4 This scholarship was granted twice annually to the top 1% of New Zealand doctoral candidates for study in either a New Zealand or overseas based university. The scholarship scheme was disbanded later in 2009, and I was one of the last recipients of this award.
When I began to visit schools, however, it became quickly apparent that a significant gulf existed between the vision of education serving a transformative function in society, and the actual practices and activities that occur within the walls of Timorese classrooms. Whilst it is easy to blame teachers for the failures of aspirational and ambitious policy to be effectively translated into practice, the landscape within which their work occurs suggests a much more complex story; one that I endeavour to tell in the pages of this thesis.

From the outset of this study, I have been aware of issues of power, position and privilege that are part of any cross-cultural research project, particularly when researchers from the Global North use sites in the Global South⁵ as their location of enquiry (Scheyvens & Storey, 2005). Important to me was a need to avoid ‘academic tourism’ or ‘helicopter research’, terms given to situations when researchers do not adequately explore the “power relations, inequalities and injustices upon which differences between ourselves and those we research are based” (Madge, 1997, p. 297). Accordingly, researchers working in cross-cultural settings need to maintain accountable and reflexive interactions with research participants throughout all stages of research. Reflexivity required me as the researcher to recognise and openly discuss how the research ‘problem’ was arrived at, the terms of how I engaged with this problem, and how increased understanding of the causal mechanisms at hand shaped the knowledge construction process. This reflexivity helps to facilitate rigour in that it provides the audience of this ethnographic account with the ability to self-assess the validity within which knowledge is constructed (Salzman, 2003). Such a discussion is interlaced throughout the thesis, in the field notes presented in the analysis and the chapter narratives. Embedded in this reflexivity is recognition of my own positionality, by critically examining and articulating how my location within the study impacted on the empirical work and analysis conducted. Specifically, it was recognised early on that the cross-cultural differences one might expect between myself and my participants—on matters of language, conceptions of “quality teaching and learning”, educational experiences and qualifications, and forms of capital (cultural, social and material), to name a few—would have a bearing on how I was viewed by them, and how I would perceive their actions and words. Thus when presenting and analysing the data

⁵ The Global South is used as a metaphor for a social, economic and geopolitical space where oppressed peoples are creating alternative theoretical projects that counter European and western hegemony and, regardless of geographical location, as a space inhabited by those suffering from (and resisting) global capitalism (Novelli, 2006; Mathers & Novelli, 2007).
collected, I was mindful of the need to not, “transcend experience, but re-envision [it]...bring[ing] fragments of fieldwork time, context and mood together in a colloquy of the author's several selves—reflecting, witnessing, wondering, accepting—all at once” (Charmaz and Miller, 1996 quoted in Mills, Bonner, & Francis, 2006, p. 32).

1.1. A brief introduction to the context and case

In 2002, Timor-Leste emerged as the first nation to be born into the 21st century after centuries of colonisation, two decades of illegal occupation and several years of transitional UN governance. Its history is unique to the region insofar as it was colonised by the Portuguese, rather than the Dutch who occupied the remainder of the Indonesian archipelago for hundreds of years. While initially colonised in 1512, for the first two hundred years, Portuguese interest was maintained through Catholic missionaries rather than a separate civilian administration (Hill, 2002), and full control over the territory was not achieved until the early 1900s. As is detailed more fully in Chapter Four, educational provision was not a key concern of Portugal's administration and much of this responsibility fell onto the shoulders of the church.

It is important to note that despite the relatively 'hands-off' rule of the Portuguese, this period of colonisation had a distinct impact on Timorese identity and sense of belonging, in terms of language, administration, culture and religion, particularly for the Timorese elite who had access to the schooling that was provided by the civilian administration (B. Anderson, 1993). When the colony was formally recognised as part of Portugal, full citizenship rights were extended to the Timorese elite, and intermarriage between Portuguese and this elite was commonplace and accepted (Odling-Smee, 1999). The formal and informal links that were established between the Timorese and Portugal over this extended period profoundly affected attempts to reintegrate the territory with the rest of Indonesia after the departure of the Portuguese in 1975 and, as specified later in the thesis, on perceptions of Timor-Leste's place in the world following independence.

Following Portugal's Carnation Revolution in 1975, Timorese intellectuals and elites returning from study in Portugal banded together to form FRETLIN (Revolutionary Front for the Independence of East Timor). These revolutionaries were inspired by popular education movements occurring in colonies in Africa (influenced by the scholarship of Paolo Freire), and quickly adapted these ideas to their own struggle for decolonisation through the establishment of literacy classes, health clinics and agriculture cooperatives across the country (Cabral & Martin-Jones, 2008). As
FRETLIN’s support grew throughout the country, pressure mounted on Portugal to end its colonial reign. FRETLIN declared independence from Portugal on November 28, 1975, but nine days later, the Indonesian army invaded the newly independent country.

Indonesia’s occupation of Timor-Leste was founded on claims promoted by the country’s political leadership and in particular its president at the time, General Soeharto, that because of geographical, historical, and cultural factors the territory was their country’s ‘27th province’ (Cribb, 1997). Following its December 1975 invasion, the Jakarta-based Indonesian government aimed to legitimise and strengthen its occupation through large-scale military operations that focussed on eliminating FRETLIN strongholds throughout the country. Civilians deemed to be sympathetic to the resistance were often tortured, raped and/or killed, with casualties from this violence reported in the tens of thousands. Conservative estimates are that over 100,000 Timorese died from malnutrition or starvation during this period due to forced migration schemes and the destruction of crops by Indonesian forces (CAVR, 2005).

Teachers and their families were not immune to the insecurity, violence and destruction of this period. Education served an important ideological and indoctrinating role for Indonesia in its relationship with the Timorese, as Chapter Four details. While on one hand, teachers and school directors6 were generally perceived to be sympathetic or compliant to this mandate, many Timorese-born teachers continued to overtly teach students about the uniqueness of Timorese history and culture and promote a message of resistance to future generations (Arenas, 1998). Thus, as is well documented in the education and conflict literature (c.f. Bush & Saltarelli, 2000; Davies, 2010), schooling during the 24 years of occupation was a key site of conflict itself, as well as a trigger for ongoing conflict and unrest through the messages it promoted.

Although Indonesia claimed Timor-Leste to be ‘pacified’ by the early 1980s the resistance movement continued on through guerrilla warfare, clandestine social movements, and diplomatic efforts abroad. Mass demonstrations and protests continued, with the Indonesians often responding through violent action.7 During this

---

6 This was particularly true at the secondary level where the majority of teachers were brought in from other parts of Indonesia as transmigrants. Most of this part of the workforce left when Timor-Leste became independent in 1999.

7 This included the well-documented and internationally publicised action in 1991, where hundreds of unarmed Timorese protestors were shot dead at the Santa Cruz cemetery in
period, the Catholic Church emerged as serving a vital role in the resistance movement and the number of Timorese affiliating with Catholicism greatly increased (C. Hughes, 2009). As time went on the Church assumed a more activist stance in advancing the Timorese independence cause with many Timorese priests acting as vital conduits of information or sources of funding for resistance fighters.

By the mid 1990s, Indonesia’s hold on Timor-Leste was quickly crumbling. Increasing publicity of the repression and brutality carried out by Indonesian security forces led to mounting international condemnation of Indonesia’s illegal occupation of the territory (L. Jones, 2010). In Indonesia, widespread unrest arising from economic decline associated with the 1997 Asian financial crisis, helped to topple President Soeharto’s dictatorship. His successor accepted calls for a UN supervised referendum on Timor-Leste’s future, in which its inhabitants would decide whether to become an independent state or gain greater autonomy but remain part of Indonesia.

Just prior to the the 1999 vote for independence, the exiled Timorese leadership met in Australia and drafted a national development plan with the vision that “a new East Timor would aspire to have an education system that enhances the development of our national identity, based on our selective cultural and universal human values” (CNRT, 1999). It called for attention to and focus on transforming the teaching-learning process, by introducing critical thinking skills and methods, and promoting indigenous forms of learning (Millo, 2002).

In August 1999, the Timorese voted overwhelmingly for independence from Indonesia. As the occupying force withdrew in late 1999, it embarked on a Sapu Rata (or scorched earth) policy which aimed to inflict maximum damage to the infrastructure (roads, schools, hospitals, transmission lines) of Timor-Leste. The attitude was “if it was valuable and could be dismantled, it was shipped back to Jakarta; if not, it was destroyed” (Caroll & Kupczyk-Romanczuk, 2007, p. 67). By the time a UN sanctioned

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8 Timorese flocked to the church because of its open criticism of the Indonesians and support of the national language, Tetum. The increase in religious affiliation was also a response to an Indonesian policy that required all citizens to affiliate with a recognised religion (C. Hughes, 2009).

9 Bishop Belo shared the Nobel Peace Prize in 1996 with Jose Ramos-Horta for their outspoken criticism of the Indonesian regime and their efforts at maintaining the Timorese independence cause at a diplomatic level.
peacekeeping force arrived in late September 1999 to restore order, little was left of the education system in terms of both infrastructure and personnel. 24 years of active and passive violence, of which education was both a victim and a perpetrator, continues to present significant challenges in (re) building a post-independence schooling system as later chapters suggest.

From October 1999 until May 2002, Timor-Leste was governed directly by the United Nations Transition Administration of East Timor (UNTAET) as an International Territorial Administration. The World Bank and Asian Development Bank (ADB) were given responsibility for administering and allocating funding provided by the international community to establish the new state and restore basic services. These actors perceived the project of state building in Timor-Leste as starting with a *tabla rasa* and began to import a liberal democratic version of state, which they believed would promote development and democracy for the long-term (C. Hughes, 2009). They failed to recognise the traditional forms of authority and community leadership prevalent within the country, as well as long established structures and systems that had been institutionalised during Portuguese colonisation (L. Jones, 2010). UNTAET was widely seen as an undemocratic, exclusive authority with little concern for consultation about decisions and actions that would set the foundation of the state for the long-term (Neves, 2006; Richmond & Franks, 2008).

Efforts in the education sector during this period were funded by the World Bank, and executed in partnership with UNTAET and other donors. Activities often occurred without sufficient concern regarding accountability to local citizens. The focus instead was on reporting achievements “to foreign stakeholders and the UN in New York,”

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10 Under Resolution 1271/1999, UNTAET was delegated transitional authority for Timor-Leste’s judicial, executive and legislative systems by the General Assembly of the UN. A peacekeeping force of approximately 9,000 troops and military observers had the task of establishing security, protecting individuals working within the mission, and facilitating humanitarian operations. The mission was tasked with engineering the foundations of the new state. This included: humanitarian, rehabilitation and development assistance; security and judicial services; support to civil and social services; building capacity for self-government and the establishment of an effective state administration; and assisting in creating conditions that would support the country’s sustainable development (Molnar, 2010).

11 A variety of funding streams were established after the assumption of UNTAET as the governing authority. This included the Consolidated Fund for East Timor (CFET), Trust Fund for East Timor (TFET), and funds that established and maintained the mission itself. These pooled funds were supported mainly through contributions of various donors, but also included domestic revenue from the exploration of petroleum reserves in the Timor Sea.

On May 20, 2002, governance authority was handed over to a democratically elected Timorese government. Donor interest and involvement remained high, with the United Nations transitioning to a mission (UNMISET) focussed on promoting development, with particular focus given to building state institutions and their capacity given the embryonic stage that the state was in. The concern of the international community was to ensure that Timor-Leste avoided falling into a 'resource-cursed' economy where rampant public expenditure occurred with little oversight (Neves, 2006). Capacity development was founded on instilling practices of fiscal responsibility, transparency, and accountability in all government agencies through the establishment of a complex set of rules and bureaucratic norms. Embedded social conflicts within such institutions over power and resources were ignored, and instead technocratic solutions were prescribed (Moxham, 2008; C. Hughes, 2009).

During this transitional period, interest and attention shifted to qualitative dimensions of the education system, including the content, pedagogy and forms of assessment underpinning it (i.e. the curriculum). In 2003, with significant donor assistance, the Ministry of Education commenced the process of designing and implementing a new curriculum for the country’s primary schools; one better aligned with Timorese aspirations as a state and nation, and more inclusive and relevant to its citizens.

By 2005, the international community heralded Timor-Leste as a successful example of multilateral interventionism leading to the establishment of a sustainable state, and the UN missions and peacekeeping forces that been in the country since 1999 made a hasty departure (Ballard, 2008). Shortly after, the country was plunged back into violence and

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12 According to Sachs and Warner (2001), the potential curse of large-scale exploitation of valuable natural resources in states such as Timor-Leste is that it can undermine economic and political institutions by creating: (1) the potential for large fluctuations in revenue, and national budgets; and (2) a political environment where elites, motivated by the profits that such resources generate, engage in rent-seeking and undemocratic practices.

13 The Ministry of Education (MoE or Ministry) has evolved as an institution since national sovereignty in 2002. Originally, it was the Ministry of Education, Culture, Youth and Sport (MECYS), but evolved into the Ministry of Education and Culture (MEC) by 2005. Since 2008, it has generally been referred to as the Ministry of Education, although culture remains an aspect of the Ministry’s mandate.
conflict. In May 2006, tensions within the army spilled into the streets of Dili leading to what would later be popularly referred to as the 2006 'crisis'. Protesting soldiers in Dili were joined by thousands of Timorese who were dissatisfied with the government's perceived unresponsiveness to the acute needs of its citizens. As the police force and army splintered into factions and attacked each other, youth gangs seized the vacuum in security to loot shops and destroy personal property in Dili (M. A. Brown, 2009; Harris & Goldsmith, 2009; Scambary, 2009). Violence quickly spread beyond Dili to other parts of the country as underlying social and political tensions that remained unresolved after the end of the Indonesian occupation, and largely founded on perceptions of loyalty to the resistance cause, quickly resurfaced. In the ensuing six months, 6,000 homes and buildings were destroyed and 150,000 people displaced from their homes (Taylor, 2011). During this period, schools shut down and, due to more pressing concerns such as restoring educational provision, curriculum reform was put on the backburner.

International intervention in Timor-Leste rapidly increased as the country grappled with a large number of internally displaced peoples (IDPs), security challenges brought about by the collapse of the police and army, and economic stagnation. Through the United Nations Integrated Mission for East Timor (UNMIT), the international community provided a mandate to the UN to support the government in restoring stability, enhancing a culture of democratic governance, and fostering greater social cohesion amongst citizens. An International Stabilisation Force (ISF) that included a large contingent of troops from Australia and New Zealand joined UNMIT in assuming control for law, order and security.

The ensuing years saw significant improvements to the security situation in the country, with the national government gradually assuming responsibility again for most core state functions. By the end of the decade, strong economic growth had returned.

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14 By 2006, the Timorese economy had stagnated, unemployment and underemployment were on the increase, and many human development indicators in arenas such as health and education remained low (UNDP, 2006). Some of the blame for this slow progress was directed at the “good governance agenda” of donors, whom had created a situation where the state was quite tightly prescribed in using its resources to boost the economy (C. Hughes, 2009). The withdrawal of the United Nations mission in 2005 and reduced donor presence had also led to the inflated economy of Dili bursting, increasing poverty and unemployment in the capital where much of the unrest of 2006 began (Moxham, 2008).
averaging approximately 12% per annum (Taylor, 2011). With a return to stability, the process of curriculum reform continued. By 2008, the government had claimed ‘success’ in introducing the new primary curriculum throughout the country. Late in 2010, the Prime Minister revealed a strategic plan for development focussed on human resource development and infrastructure improvements. The 20-year plan was written on the premise that, “Timor-Leste has entered a period of rapid double-digit growth, extended stability, and growing confidence,” allowing the country to declare, “Adeus Conflito, Benvindo Desenvolvimento (Good Bye Conflict, Welcome Development)” (RDTL, 2011c, p. 6). At the end of 2012, after a peaceful set of presidential and parliamentary elections, both the ISF presence and UNMIT mission were withdrawn from the country.

Despite the significant oil and natural gas wealth in its territorial waters, Timor-Leste’s development indicators remain well below those of its regional neighbours, making it one of the poorest nations in Asia. The majority of the country’s one million inhabitants are under the age of 18, with this trend not expected to change owing to high population growth (UNDP, 2006, 2009; Taylor, 2011). Malnutrition remains an acute concern for a large segment of the population, and poverty is endemic throughout the country and worsening in rural areas (Boughton, 2011). At the moment a rapid process of urbanisation is occurring as people flock to Dili, the nation’s capital, for often non-existent opportunities within the city’s economy (Taylor, 2011). The combination of a youthful population, rapid urbanisation, and endemic poverty have fuelled concerns about a recurrence of tension, particularly amongst martial arts gangs to which many of these youth, particularly males, belong; as well as between an urban minority elite and rural majority (Moxham, 2008; M. A. Brown, 2009; Scambary, 2009; BELUN, 2010; Molnar, 2010).

Recent education data make it clear that the system is still failing the majority of children in terms of the outcomes it produces. It still takes children an average of 11.2 years to complete six years of primary schooling (Ministry of Education, 2010a). A recent study revealed that 70% of Grade One students fail to read a single word in Tetum, the national language (World Bank, 2009a). The National Strategic Plan for Education maintains that despite policy interventions thus far, “teachers need further

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15 By 2011, the national budget had grown exponentially from $328.6 Million USD in 2006/07, to $1.3 Billion USD, largely by utilising a greater share of the country’s petrochemical extraction revenues (MoF, 2011).

16 In 2011, Timor-Leste’s HDI rank was 147 out of 187 countries, well below that of most other countries in the East Asia and Pacific region (UNDP, 2012).
support to fully implement the curriculum”, and continue to struggle with both the content and teaching practices the new curriculum espouses (Ministry of Education, 2010a, pp. 28-29). Nonetheless, perceptions of the important role that curriculum reform serves in the nation’s aspirations to say goodbye to conflict, and hello to development are undiminished. As claimed by the Prime Minister in a recent speech to the United Nations in New York, “Education not only changes the lives of people...it drives the future of nations” (ETAN, 2012). Thus the country continues to grapple with how to ensure that reform aspirations are more adequately realised.

1.2. A conceptual and methodological starting point

Out of the ashes of post-WWII reconstruction efforts in Europe, modernisation theory emerged as an explanation for how countries in the Third World could catch up economically to those in the First World (Rostow, 1960). ‘Development’ was viewed through a series of stages that occurred in a linear fashion, with mass education seen as a vital sector of state-led investment under the premise that it would improve a nation’s stock of “human capital” (Schultz, 1961; Becker, 1964). Schooling was argued to have an instrumental role in inculcating technical and cultural skills in its citizens that would then drive economic development. Informed by this logic, national planners and development partners assumed that national education systems needed to move through an evolutionary process of state-led reform. This was typified by scholarship such as Beeby’s (1966) where schooling systems and curricula globally were categorised and placed into a teleological line of progress. For the field of comparative and international education this led to a body of scholarship founded on “assumptions about causal relationships, objectivity, research technology and techniques, and the primacy of the scientific world view,” ideas which would later be heavily critiqued (Foley, 1977, p. 313). Educational development became a technical question—namely identifying what was the necessary state-orchestrated reform package to modernise countries throughout what was at that time labelled the “Third World” (Popkewitz & Pereya, 1993). Traditional and localised cultures, beliefs and identities were seen as parochial and antithetical to this goal, with educational modernisation broadly equated with “westernisation” or the inculcation of values such as liberal democracy and free-market principles (Escobar, 1995).

While modernisation theory within development circles has been heavily critiqued and its stature was somewhat diminished in the 1970s as education failed to deliver its promised economic gains, modernist and teleological approaches to global education
reform regained traction with the rise of global education blueprints such as EFA, the MDGs, and the World Bank’s recently released education strategy, Learning for All (c.f. Mundy, 2006; Coxon & Munce, 2008; Robertson, 2012b).

A goal of Learning for All is to assess the performance of countries’ education systems against global standards and best practices, through its SABER (System Assessment and Benchmarking for Results) approach. The intent is to then apply “world class expertise” to help policymakers identify “leverage points” to improve system performance and results (World Bank, 2011, pp. 1-2). The core of this new strategy is the development of a common conceptual and results framework across the Global South on matters such as educational assessment, finance, quality assurance, and teacher management (c.f. Cooper & Alvarado, 2006; Bruns, Filmer, & Patrinos, 2011). In establishing particular benchmarks and standards in these domains, it makes heavy reference to a specific domain of educational research—that of school effectiveness—which claims to identify the traits of ‘what makes schools work’ (c.f. Heneveld & Craig, 1996; Boissiere, 2004; McKinsey and Company, 2007; Riddell, 2008; McKinsey and Company, 2010). School effectiveness research suggests that particular practices, policies, and activities within schools and classrooms can lead to improvements in educational quality and equity. What is often observed in such research is a focus on mathematical modelling and correlates to provide a simplistic, reductionist, and deterministic understanding of the educational processes and outcomes. Effectively, it attempts to minimise the impact that context, history and societal norms have in influencing educational outcomes.

The Bank’s strategy suggests that intractable education dilemmas, and more broadly development challenges facing the nation-state, can be addressed through a problem solving theoretical approach. This approach views educational problems—be it poor student outcomes, high teacher absenteeism, or the gap between curriculum intent and

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17 Within the New Zealand context, the most recent manifestation of this is John Hattie’s (2009) much-lauded book titled Visible Learning. Through a synthesis of more than 800 meta-analysis comprising more than 50,000 studies, the aim of the book is to determine the effect sizes, or statistical impact, of various actions and interventions to improve student learning and outcomes in the classroom. This research has been critiqued as only examining learning effects that are visible and existent in the world of the empirical. It is also strongly prescribes to a “flat world ontology” where outcomes are associated with particular inputs devoid of any consideration of context. While it has piqued the interest of policymakers and certain circles of educational practitioners, there is real concern that it is promoting an ideology of individualism where actions and consequences for such action are located at the level of the student, school or teacher with no consideration of the overriding structural constraints within which action is located (Morgan, 2012; Snook, Clark, Harker, O’Neill, & O’Neill, 2012).
outcomes—as located within the boundaries of educational policy and practice. In what Dale and Robertson (2009) identify as educationism, the objective is to isolate the problem from the broader social context it is located within, with the aim of fixing the problem to make a policy or programme run more smoothly. In studies of curriculum implementation, this is reflected in a line of inquiry that explores the fidelity between curriculum intent and teacher practice, and identify factors that aid in rectifying errant conditions and achieving desired outcomes (Snyder, Bolin, & Zumwalt, 1992). Underlying this can be the presumption that curriculum change is a fairly linear process, which moves from the centre (policymakers) to the periphery, with agency of teachers limited to that of adherence or resistance to intended delivery goals. Resistance to reform is rectified through an appropriate array of policy measures that individually sanction or reward individuals for compliance (Willmott, 2002; Vongalis-Macrow, 2006; Al-Daami & Wallace, 2007).

This paradigm has pervaded educational policymaking and research in CAFS. Policymaking in such settings is often driven by the acute, immediate and pragmatic demands of practitioners and institutions situated within CAFS environments, where a desire for building a quick peace dividend and restoring ‘normalcy’ takes priority over concerns for a lasting peace. Decisions and action tend to ignore the interrelationships between micro/mesoscale action and macro-systemic issues that may have led or could lead to a return to conflict (Novelli & Lopes-Cardozo, 2008). This occurs despite growing and ample evidence that educational projects that are founded on ambitions such as fostering social cohesion, economic opportunity, or equity, are deeply impacted by existing and historical power relations, and the broader political economy within which such activity occurs (INEE, 2011; Novelli & Smith, 2011). Today, given the melding of agendas of diplomacy, defence and development in CAFS (Novelli, 2010), reform is often located within a “complex and highly unequal system of local, national, regional and global actors, institutions and practices” (Novelli & Lopes-Cardozo, 2008, p. 483). Failure to acknowledge both of these important issues may explain why so many well-intentioned education reforms in CAFS fall short of their aspirations. The danger,

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18 Some of this logic will later be critically explored through an examination of how the implementation process is viewed by donors and policymakers in Timor-Leste.

19 In CAFS, research and policy initiatives have focussed on improving working conditions, levels of resourcing, or salaries for teachers, in an attempt to raise morale, and indirectly ensure the outcomes of quality-focused reforms are met. Whilst important, these efforts have failed to “demonstrate a direct causal link between teacher motivation, performance and quality education” (Fry, 2002, p. 22).
and one that has been well documented in the literature, is that instead of promoting peace, myopic actions can maintain the status quo at best, or exacerbate conflict/fragility at worst (Salmi, 1999; Bush & Saltarelli, 2000; Smith & Vaux, 2003; Davies, 2004; Tawil & Harley, 2004; Davies, 2010).

This thesis explicitly rejects technical-rational, apolitical, and ahistorical research approaches that focus on making reform agendas work better. Instead, it deploys a critical theoretical lens to the case under study—that of curriculum reform in Timor-Leste. Critical theory provides a lens to understanding what Dale (1994) labels as the *politics of education*, specifically how the agenda for education in the CAFS setting of Timor-Leste came to be; as well as the *educational politics* behind this, namely the processes by which this agenda was then translated into problems and issues for schools, and the ways in which agents at all levels respond to this agenda. Central to the account that unfolds in subsequent pages is a connection of the part, in this case curriculum reform and the work of teachers, to the larger whole (i.e. the wider political settlement and institutions within such action occurred). In doing so, it acknowledges that education is part of a larger economic and ideological configuration, in which reproduction and contestation make the institutionalisation of particular educational practices a site of ongoing struggle and negotiation (Apple, 1979; Dale, 1989; Giroux & McLaren, 1989; Apple, Au, & Gandin, 2011).

A key argument of this study is that educational policy production, reproduction, modification and adaptation in Timor-Leste are located within highly contested projects of state and nation building. Drawing on a cultural political economy of education (CPE/E) framework, the research identifies the interrelationship between particular structural conditions\textsuperscript{20}, institutional arrangements\textsuperscript{21}, and actors/agents\textsuperscript{22}, as a way of understanding the strategic context within which reform outcomes take shape. Analysis

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{20} Structures are broadly understood as long-term factors in society (historical settlements, economic relations, gender expectations, population demographics) that shape the environment in which actors make strategic choices. It is important to note that structures are not assumed to be static, but rather evolve over time in a dialectic relationship with institutions and actors. This is particularly true in a dynamically changing environment such as Timor-Leste.
  \item \textsuperscript{21} Institutions include both formal (legal statues, policies, and governance arrangements) and informal (political, social, religious) norms that frame the work of various actors.
  \item \textsuperscript{22} In the case of this thesis, this includes national policymakers, government bureaucrats within the Ministry of Education, teachers, school directors, parents of children attending school, and the development partner community in Timor-Leste (multilateral, bilateral and INGO partners).
\end{itemize}
shifts the focus away from what Dale and Robertson (2009) call *methodological nationalism*—a tendency to frame educational politics and the politics of education solely at the level of the nation-state—and instead, locates reform in agendas and forces that operate above (supra-national) and below (sub-national) through multi-scalar enquiry. What is presented in ensuing chapters is a case study of how the current ambition of transforming society through schooling is situated within structural, institutional and agential dynamics functioning at a number of scales (local, sectoral, national, international), in which social relations and power dynamics remain unequal. Using CPE/E the research explores: (1) the complex governance arrangements that have and continue to exist in Timor-Leste as the result of colonialism and conflict; (2) the key interrelationships education has had and continues to have with legitimating and/or contesting particular political, social and economic orders within society, and (3) the role, intentions, and outcomes of development partner assistance to education reform agendas.

Conceptually, the research also draws on ideas embedded in the Strategic Relational Approach (SRA) (Hay, 2002b, 2002a; B. Jessop, 2005). What SRA explicitly acknowledges is that the strategically-selective context within which actors operate is based on structural and institutional conditions, and can reinforce the motivations, actions or strategies of particular actors, and work against others—thus creating both opportunities and constraints for specific courses of action. In response, actors at the various scales make strategic calculations based on the knowledge they hold of this context to realise particular outcomes or objectives. A significant point of SRA is that in any moment the way in which actors understand and respond to their environment can greatly vary, as can their motivations and intentions for action, leading to a plethora of potential outcomes. Thus, both the structured context within which reform occurs, and the types of agency which actors exhibit have a bearing on the trajectory of reform and the potential it has to contribute effectively to sustainable development and a lasting peace.

Bringing these ideas together, and adapting Dale’s (2006) three levels of educational questioning, the thesis responds to the following key questions:

1. In whose interests and for what aims was curriculum reform carried out?

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23 These questions are outlined in Chapter Two
2. By whom, at what scale, and with what intent was such reform legitimated, coordinated, administered, and operationalised?

3. In what ways has such reform interacted with the agency, beliefs and values of actors to produce a contingently situated set of outcomes in classrooms?

1.3. Research relevance

**Relevance to the research community**

Recent authors contend that what is needed from scholarship located in settings such as Timor-Leste are more nuanced understandings of the complex function and role of education in bringing about societal transformation and conditions of ‘turnaround’\(^\text{24}\) (Bakarat, Karpinska, & Paulson, 2008; Paulson, 2008; Tebbe, 2009; INEE, 2011). Likewise, development practitioners and academics have advocated for more research in areas of the world where they identify a geographic gap\(^\text{25}\) in the literature on the effects of education on fragility; and for more research on qualitative aspects of education provision such as the quality and relevance of the content delivered (INEE, 2009).

According to Tawil and Harley (2004, p. 5), “understanding the role...of curriculum policy, in particular, in their capacity to erode or reinforce social cohesion in conflict-affected societies, is relevant to efforts at peacebuilding education in all societies.” However, as Weinstein, Freedman, & Hughson (2007) note, the research community still remains at the beginning of understanding this process. There remains a paucity of theory on how, whether and under what conditions education effectively contributes to peacebuilding efforts (Novelli, 2011). It is hoped that this research contributes to a greater understanding of the complexities, challenges and possibilities inherent in curriculum reform within the post-conflict/post-colonial window.

By situating an agenda of conflict-mitigation through curriculum reform inside schools and centres of practice, the aim of this thesis is to move away from a state-centric account to acknowledge the important role and function that local actors, institutions and structures have in efforts to build a lasting peace. Recent scholars have suggested that teachers’ roles be more critically examined in post-conflict settings, particularly if

\(^{24}\) “Turnaround” is identified in the literature as conditions that reduce state fragility, and are typified by: (1) a lasting cessation of violent conflict; (2) sustained economic growth; and (3) sustained improvements in human development indicators (Institute of Development Studies, 2006).

\(^{25}\) The assertion in this report is that “certain geographical areas tend to be more researched than others.” The Pacific region and parts of South East Asia are identified as one region where there is insufficient research on education’s relationship to conflict, with Timor-Leste named as a country where “more research needed to be conducted” (pp. 14-15).
the aim is to ensure an experience of schooling which is protective, promotes student well-being, and supports processes of conflict amelioration and long term national reconstruction (Shriberg, Kirk, & Winthrop, 2007; Davies & Talbot, 2008; Tebbe, 2009).

To date there is little understanding of teachers' own self-perceptions in such times; namely of their hopes and expectations in reshaping the future, and of the possible supports and constraints they face in such moments. Teacher self-image and agency play an important role in delivering an education that is transformative (Kirk & Winthrop, 2007; Winthrop & Kirk, 2007; Kirk, 2008). The goal of this study is to show that in spaces of “social groundlessness”, where state capacity is quite weak, and political will and motivations greatly vary at the level of the politics of education, teachers have an important role to play in societal transformation. Similar to the work of Vongalis-Macrow (2006) and Weinstein et. al (2007) the aim is to facilitate the understanding, articulation and contribution of ‘unofficial’ viewpoints and concerns into an ongoing process of societal transformation in Timor-Leste.

Relevance to national policymakers and development agencies

Reform of the primary curriculum has been a critical aspect of the government’s strategic plan for achieving universal primary education by 2015 by improving both the quality and relevance of what is taught (MEC, 2005b). The implementation plan outlines that evaluation is to be guided by 10 essential objectives, and a set of guiding questions (MECS, 2004, p. 25). The connection of this research to some of these objectives is outlined in Table 1-1. As suggested in the table, there are several domains in which the research questions posed in this study will provide data to assess whether and how the new curriculum is living up to these objectives.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Curriculum principle(s)</th>
<th>Evaluation objective</th>
<th>Alignment with this research</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accredited</td>
<td>Evaluation assesses the extent to which the curriculum meets the needs of students, teachers and goals of the MEYCS</td>
<td>This thesis analyses the extent to which the new curriculum is perceived to meet such needs from all perspectives through critical policy analysis as well as empirical data collected from teachers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child-centred</td>
<td>Evaluation assesses the extent to which children are engaged</td>
<td>Based on classroom observations and teacher perceptions of what student engagement means in practice, the thesis critically examines the relevance and application of this goal, in particular the promotion of learner-centred pedagogy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democratic</td>
<td>Evaluation assesses the extent to which activities meet the needs of the majority</td>
<td>Conceptually, this thesis critically dissects the basis upon which the curriculum was symbolically presented as representative of Timor-Leste’s democratic aspirations and critiques the substantive mechanisms that were put in play to ensure this democratic agenda.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexibility and locally-based</td>
<td>Evaluation assesses the extent to which the curriculum allowed for flexibility at the local level</td>
<td>The degree to which the curriculum creates such spaces, as well as the capacity and willingness for teachers to exercise such flexibility is interrogated in subsequent chapters and contextualised in historical conceptions of student learning and teachers’ work in Timor-Leste.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inclusive</td>
<td>Evaluation assess the extent to which everyone had fair access to developing the curriculum</td>
<td>This thesis critically examines the conceptualisation, rationalisation and development of the curriculum as well as its subsequent implementation as part of an explicit focus on the politics of education.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Needs-based</td>
<td>Evaluation assess the extent to which the curriculum is based on the needs of the local community</td>
<td>Based on classroom observations and teacher perceptions of this concept, the research assesses the extent to which teacher perceive the curriculum being of relevance to their students and local community context, as well as whether this is a necessary or relevant goal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supported</td>
<td>Evaluation assess the extent to which implementation and learning has been enhanced by the quality of support materials</td>
<td>Using Jansen’s concept of political symbolism as policy craft, Chapter Six questions the authenticity of political will for concerns of implementation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team-based</td>
<td>Evaluation assesses the extent to which the curriculum encourages teamwork and collaboration</td>
<td>The fashion in which school actors are both able and willing to support each other in questions surrounding implementation is explored in Chapter Six.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **Table 1-1: Curriculum principles and alignment to research areas**

Until now, there has been little qualitative data accessible to the Ministry on the perceptions that teachers hold and the challenges they face in changing the content they teach and the pedagogy that underpins this delivery. This research complements the limited empirical research that exists on classroom conditions and practices in Timor-Leste since the process of reform began (Quinn, 2008; Taylor-Leech, 2008; Quinn, 2010); and supplements the quantitative quality indicators that the Ministry has on hand in its Education Management Information System (EMIS). It is hoped that the data will provide information policymakers need to move towards more evidence-based decision-making. Ultimately key conclusions that are reached in these chapters aim to, “develop a critically informed yet policy-oriented approach,” as part of the thesis’ theoretical lens (Novelli & Lopes-Cardozo, 2008, p. 483).
Specific to the work of the international community in Timor-Leste, an implicit rationale for their high level of assistance is that the provision of quality and relevant education is an important aspect of reconstructing the legitimacy of state institutions and reconstituting a new socially cohesive national identity—which in the long term leads to a lasting peace (see for example UNICEF, 2005; NZAID, 2009). To that end, this research critically explores this logic of intervention to question whether assistance within the curriculum reform agenda does indeed complement efforts at state and nation building.

1.4. Overview of the chapters

The next two chapters elucidate the ontological, epistemological, and methodological anchors of the study, founded on the critical research foundations outlined in this introduction. The argument put forth in Chapter Two is that a critical realist ontological and epistemological anchor helps to acknowledge that education does not occur within a completely fixed and known reality, but rather is influenced by forces that may be apparent or not. While they may not be outwardly visible, these forces have real impact on actions that are visible and take shape, and thus research enquiry must be attuned to the dialectic between action and the (often invisible but real) mechanisms that drive such action. Analytically, the Strategic Relational Approach and Cultural Political Economy Analysis are shown to be concrete ways of thinking about this and approaching the three key research questions indicated in Section 1.3. Using this framework the empirical work of this thesis explores how discourses, beliefs and values of education have been produced, contested, modified and promoted by actors at various scales; and concurrently the relationship they have with material practices vis-à-vis teachers and learners (P. Jones, 2010). Chapter Three suggests that a multi-scalar ethnographic research approach allows for an understanding of (1) the structures and institutions that exist and affect the conceptualisation, implementation and actualisation of reform agendas; and (2) the agency that actors at different levels (school-based, Ministry of Education, national policymaker, and external development partners) have within this process. In a similar vein, the chapter argues that critical ethnographic methods provide a clear framework for being reflexive and inductive with the data.

The thesis then moves to analysis and presentation of empirical work. Chapters Four and Five make explicit the issues surrounding the politics of curriculum reform in Timor-Leste, namely how reform was legitimated, coordinated, administered, and operationalised, and critically explores the implicit and explicit aims and interest that
have underpinned this process. Chapter Four details how the function and purpose of schooling during Portuguese and Indonesian occupation was strongly shaped by a discourse of legitimating outside control, and how citizens were shaped by the way in which schooling was administered, organised and delivered. Following the Timorese vote for independence in 1999, the chapter then demonstrates how education’s function and purpose were redefined in the economic, political and social upheaval that marked the end of colonial occupation. Chapter Five argues that curriculum reform, as part of the wider societal shift, was largely responsive to a modernisation imperative, which then influenced how new teaching and learning approaches and policies were appropriated and rationalised following independence. The chapter contends that while symbolising Timor-Leste's entry into the ‘21st century knowledge economy’, many aspects of the curriculum lack the necessary legitimacy or broad social consensus of its population in terms of reflecting the country’s current identity.

The final three empirical chapters then move to broadly explore the issue of educational politics, specifically how reform has been interpreted and enacted, and how it has evolved over time in response to the context within which implementation has occurred. A significant focus of attention is given in Chapter Six to specific conditions of Timor-Leste at the time that reform implementation began, namely a severe lack of government capacity coupled with high levels of external involvement. The argument presented in this chapter is that whilst symbolically rich, the implementation process has been far from effective, and largely insufficient to the demands such reform places on teachers. The chapter questions the sincerity of political will for substantive changes to teacher practice, and suggests that reform may be a prime example of how external policies are borrowed or appropriated for symbolic value, rather than substantive change.

Chapter Seven examines how school-based actors, namely school directors and teachers, understand reform agendas, in line with their professional and personal motivations, identities and beliefs as an educator. Aligned with the SRA, the argument made in this chapter is that the personal and professional convictions that stand behind teachers’ work signal the preferences and tendencies that they then choose or hope to employ in their actions. However, the chapter suggests that such tendencies and preferences are not immutable and are informed by the structures and discourses that guide their work.
Reflecting on these tendencies and preferences, and acting within a strategically selective context of reform, teachers make strategic calculations of how they will employ their agency. Chapter Eight looks closely at a key component of the reform agenda in regards to pedagogy—namely a shift to what is broadly identified as ‘learner-centred’ approaches. Empirical data collected as part of this study suggest that teachers are largely ‘resistant’ to this approach to teaching and learning. In exploring why this might be, the chapter contends that teachers’ exercise of agency is based on an interpretation of and critical reflection on their context, counterbalanced by their own value commitments, personal background and sense of professional expertise (Jansen, 2001). The argument put forth in the chapter is that whereas discourses may be quick to change, the power and material resources afforded to teachers may provoke particular types of pedagogical decisions and action. As the chapter identifies, some actions and forms of resistance are intuitive26 and other explicit27 in nature (Hay, 2002b). In most circumstances, responses combine both intuitive and explicit actions, sometimes with students’ best interests at play regardless of reform discourse, and other times with deleterious consequences on learning outcomes for the children of Timor-Leste.

Noted here is that although the next two chapters establish a conceptual framework in terms of my approach to the research topic and three key research questions, they do not explicitly outline the multiple theoretical frameworks through which I understand and analyse the data. Instead each of the analytical chapters (Chapter Four through Eight) commences with the presentation of a brief theoretical framework that builds off the conceptual frames I establish in these next two chapters (Chapters Two and Three). Relevant literature and theory is embedded in these chapters and interlaced as appropriate throughout the text.

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26 Intuitive strategies and actions are those that are routine, habitual, and generally unreflexive, but yet contain a strategic component of ‘practical consciousness.’

27 Explicit actions are conscious attempts to identify and enact options that will bring about individual and collective intentions and objectives by identifying the opportunities and constraints the strategically selective context provides.
2. **Metatheoretical underpinnings**

“There should always be a clear connection between the ontological and epistemological starting points and the practical research work.”

(Danermark, Ekstrom, Jakobsen, & Karlsson, 2002, p. 4)

Very rarely are epistemological and ontological standpoints defended with the same rigour that choices of method are, despite the fact that accounts of reality and the validity of forms of knowledge continue to be heavily debated. In comparative education scholarship, researchers often fail at the outset of their enquiry to ask, “what is the nature of the phenomenon to be studied and what are the implications of that nature for both the way it can be studied and what shall count as knowledge about it” (Heyman, 1979, p. 243). This is unfortunate given that, “[i]f the researcher, by definition, engages with the world and provides a description of it, then philosophical issues, even if they are not explicitly acknowledged, underpin the methodological decisions that are then made” (Scott, 2010, p. 11). Thus the chapter begins with the premise proposed by Scott (2010, p. 11) that, “an ontological theory presupposes an epistemological theory; and further to this, that this meta-theory influences the way data are collected and analysed about the social world.” The core argument is that ontology and epistemology must be seen as distinct entities if it is accepted that there are significant differences between the intransitive world of being and the transitive world of knowing.

The objective of this chapter is to provide a foundation for the analysis that is presented in later chapters, and provide a clear sense of the metatheoretical foundation upon which such an analysis has been made. This chapter briefly presents dilemmas that have posed longstanding challenges to comparative and international education scholarship, to then suggest that a philosophy of critical realism provides a useful way to move forward from these dilemmas. Within this, conceptual tools such as the Strategic Relational Approach (SRA) and Cultural Political Economy (CPE) analysis, when applied to education, provide a mechanism for articulating how actors are both influenced by and influence the context in which they work at scales from the global to the local in a process of “globalised localism” and “localised globalism” (Jenson & de Sousa Santos, 2000).

2.1. **Moving beyond epistemological and ontological dualisms**

A longstanding and frequent debate in the social sciences regards the choices the researcher makes in terms of approaches and methodologies. Often these debates have
been marked by an either/or approach to questions of how best to understand, study and represent reality. On one hand, research enquiry has been guided by a quest for a universal theory of knowledge that could be seen as absolute and certain. Based on logical positivism, knowledge, specifically scientific knowledge, is founded on what can be empirically experienced, measured and tested. The aim is to gain a general and objective knowledge of an activity’s existence and reality, as an object, through systematic and neutral empirical observation. Such deductive models of reasoning presuppose explanation built on empirical correlation and testing. This empiricist ideal is "very influential in practical research activity; it also corresponds well with our everyday understanding of how we attain knowledge and 'how we can know'” (Danemark et al., 2002, p. 16).

Positivist forms of ontological and epistemological certainty came under increasing scrutiny with the rise of postmodernism and poststructuralism. Postmodernism suggests that reality is only a social construct, and is founded on language, power relations and motivations in the formation of ideas and beliefs about what is true and real. Epistemologically it challenges modernity’s foundation of grand narratives, and instead emphasises the contingency of meaning and the subjective nature of language and discourse. The argument is that positivist knowledge claims lock society into logocentric thought systems that are restrictive, and totalitarian in nature (Lyotard, 1984). The idea of an objective truth is seen as fictitious given that all observation is made from the particular lens of the researcher. Knowledge, therefore, cannot be separated from its context and the individuals by whom it is produced, implying that there is no such thing as a set of universal scientific laws (Jenks, 1987). An approach often used by postcolonial and feminist scholars, this provides a way to demonstrate the multiple readings of a text and undermine the binaries traditionally presented within them. Foucault describes the postmodern project as the “insurrection of subjugated knowledges”, an epistemological liberation of sorts, which allows individuals to move beyond “fixed referents” and “terroristic universals” (Foucault, 1980). These ideas have been important to unpacking the politics of knowledge, the dilemmas of representation, and the role of discourses in constructing the social world (Ninnes & Mehta, 2004).

Rust (1991, p. 616) argues that, in light of the postmodern turn, what is needed in comparative education research is a way to determine “which approach to knowing is appropriate to specific interests and needs rather than argue some universal application and validity”, while at the same time maintain a way of judging amongst competing
theories/ideas. In essence he is calling for a way to move beyond the “epistemic fallacy” that the nature of reality and our knowledge of reality are one and the same. Ontology and epistemology must be seen as distinct entities, if it is accepted that there are significant differences between the intransitive world of being and the transitive world of knowing. Critical realism and the analytical tools following from this conceptual framework begin to fill this gap.

2.2. Unpacking critical realism

As an explanatory framework, critical realism acknowledges that despite the constructed and contested nature of the social world which humans inhabit, there is an independent reality which is structured, stratified, differentiated and emerging. It critiques the assumption that such knowledge can only be gained through empirical means, instead arguing that such reality is not always immediately observable or empirically accessible (Danermark et al., 2002, p. 10). And while knowledge of this reality is quite likely to be fallible, it is possible to use theory and method to discriminate amongst various and competing theories. Ontologically, critical realism departs from social constructivism in asserting that social conditions exist outside of individuals and are a necessary condition of their activity, but concurrently social forms do not exist apart from individuals’ conceptions of what they are doing. For this reason, reality is understood as stratified and composed of:

(1) The real, or the structures, mechanisms and powers that exist by virtue of an object’s nature but that may or may not be activated;

(2) The actual, which are the potential range of events and outcomes that could occur if and when particular powers and mechanisms are activated, and which happen continuously whether we experience them or not; and

(3) The empirical, which is what we experience and observe of the world, either directly or indirectly. The empirical—in scientific circles the ‘data’ and ‘facts’—is understood as always imbued with theory, despite the claims of positivists that we can separate ourselves from our theoretical conceptions (Pawson, Greenhalgh, Harvey, & Walshe, 2005).

As Sayer (2000, p. 15) describes, “critical realism acknowledges that social phenomena are intrinsically meaningful and hence that meaning is not only externally descriptive of them but constitutive of them.” Significant about critical realist epistemology is that it remains grounded in a constructivist approach to research inquiry but allows for the extraction of more generalisable claims about the social phenomena under
investigation. The role of the researcher is to “investigate and identify relationships and non-relationships, respectively, between what we experience, what actually happens, and the underlying mechanisms that produce the events in the world”, through what is labelled a process of *retroduction* (Danermark et al., 2002, p. 21). Critical realism differs from positivist forms of enquiry in its explicit focus on how objects work in relation to their context, acknowledging that structures and institutions of society do in fact matter. Actions are both triggering factors and effects of the generative mechanisms of social structures. Ultimately, a simple cause and effect is made more complex by the interrelationship between structures and agents, a point that the Strategic Relational Approach (SRA) further elucidates.

### 2.3. The Strategic Relational Approach (SRA)

Critical realist ontology acknowledges the interdependence between structures and agents in that neither operates in isolation from the other in terms of the intentions and actions (also called tendencies) of actors and the potential outcomes that can ensue. This relationship is seen as mutually constitutive, in that, “society is an ensemble of structures, practices and conventions with their own emergent properties and own material effects,” but that “their distinctive properties and effects are impermanent and their reproduction (or transformation) requires the performance of appropriate practices” (B. Jessop, 2005, p. 47). Trends and tendencies of actors depend on the overall reproduction of social relations and processes that generate them, but reproduction cannot be taken for granted as it depends on other social relations and processes. Thus, how far specific trends and tendencies operate depends on the degree to which their own conditions of existence can be reproduced. The contingent nature of such interaction leads to constraining/enabling powers on structure and the reproductive/transformative power of agency. Specific events are “contingently necessary” in that a particular combination of tendencies and countertendencies in specific historical conditions can favour a particular set of outcomes over another. But events and outcomes are also “necessarily contingent” in that if particular structural and institutional conditions were to shift, then another set of events and outcomes may become favoured (B. Jessop, 2005, p. 43).

The Strategic Relational Approach (SRA) provides a useful framework for understanding this dynamic relationship, and moves away from the upward or downward conflation
that prior sociological models have struggled to overcome. In the Strategic Relational Approach (SRA) model, structures and agents are treated analytically as separate entities, but a contingent and dialectical relationship between structures, agents and the agency they employ is clearly articulated (Hay, 2002b; B. Jessop, 2005). Specifically, structures are seen as strategically-selective. Within the confines of particular temporal periods and spaces, specific structures and structural configurations can selectively reinforce the action, tactics, activities and strategies of actors, and discourage others. All actors have tendencies, or preferences for action, but the structural spaces they operate within may allow only certain tendencies to be realised. The social, economic and political spaces in which actors operate are “densely structured and highly contoured” which presents an “unevenly distributed configuration of opportunity and constraint to actors” (Hay, 2002a, p. 381). A key aspect of structures being strategically selective is that resource and knowledge-rich actors may be well capable of achieving their tendencies, while those without such endowments are likely to view these structures as an obstacle.

Actors respond to these conditions by being “reflective... reformulating within limits their own identities, and... engage[ing] in strategic calculation about the ‘objective’ interests that flow from these alternative identities in particular juctions.” Thus, action is framed by a constant engagement of actors within their environment, and can lead to the pursuit of different strategies and tactics in different conjectures (B. Jessop, 2005, pp. 48-49). The idea of strategy is an essential concept of the SRA, in the belief that actors have “intentional conduct oriented towards the environment...to realize certain outcomes and objectives which motivate action” (Hay, 2002b, p. 129).

Giddens (1984) through his structuration model notes that structures do not exist separately from individuals and are the medium and outcome of social action. Action or agency is the product of individuals acting on intentions or goals. Social structures cannot set up goals and act independent of agents, thus human action is the effective cause of society (Danermark et al., 2002). Bhaskar (1998, p. 215) added to this model by introducing the concept of “contingent mediation”—which argues that society is the condition and continually produced outcome of human agency, and that praxis is the conscious production or (normally unconscious) reproduction of the conditions of society. Thus society’s distinct properties and effects are impermanent, requiring the performance of “appropriate practices”, and actors’ capacity to act, and the impact of their actions depends on the positions they occupy within particular structures, the resources they control, their capacity to monitor actions and outcomes. Archer (1995) adds to these earlier models by introducing the concept of morphogenesis. She posits that structure and agency emerge, intertwine, and redefine within distinct temporal moments. Yet all three of these models fail to appropriately distinguish the role of structure and agents, and have been criticised for their continued conflation of the two.
Emergence and transformation come about from the ability of actors to respond to and alter the structures governing them. SRA acknowledges that different individuals and groups may have varying opportunities and constraints to do so due to their levels of access to particular strategic resources (social, political, cultural, economic capital). And actors may be differentially motivated in a desire to alter such structures, acting in ways that consciously and unconsciously serve to reproduce/transform existing conditions. Structured coherence “is a structurally-inscribed strategic selectivity that rewards actions compatible with the recursive reproduction of the structure(s) in question.”

However, as Jessop (2005, p. 51) notes, this reproduction is not inevitable but only tendential given that institutions often “embody structural contradictions and create strategic dilemmas”, and that actors “are never fully equipped to realize their preferred strategies, and always face possible opposition from actors pursuing other strategies or tactics.” Actors often lack perfect information of their context, and “their knowledge of their terrain and its strategic selectively is partial, at worst it is demonstrably false.” Imperfect information leads to false assumptions and actions that may appear unintentional, but are responding to a set of perceived structural constraints, which are in fact not perceived correctly (Hay, 2002a, pp. 381-383). Additionally, it might be assumed that over time actors would come to better understand and respond in kind to their context through the routine monitoring of the consequences of their action. However, very rarely do the environments in which these actors act remain unchanging. This is particularly true in the changing environment of Timor-Leste, where a density of existing institutions and practices, and a proliferation of strategic actors and new discourses lead to the possibility of a given structure’s strategic selectivities evolving as well.

In sum, using the conceptual framework of the SRA allows one to understand that:

- Teacher actions are grounded in explicit or implicit theories of change driven by broader political, cultural and economic forces at work;
- “Outcomes” observed are the result of the active employment of agency by teachers through a process of reasoning and the personal choices afforded to them within a strategically selective context;
- Implementation of reform is non-linear, and power/authority in accessing strategic resources is significant in terms of the influence individuals and/or institutions have in affecting and directing reform agendas;
- The actions of policymakers and teachers are embedded in multiple and simultaneous social realities, thus theorising must be contextualised within its historical, temporal and spatial location (i.e. policy timing,
organizational culture, resource allocation, capabilities of various parties, competing local priorities and influences). Thus, similar actions in different contexts will result in starkly different outcomes shaped by refinement, reinvention and adaptation to local circumstances.

- Actors operate dialectically with the conditions in which they operate, and can end up structuring such conditions in novel and unpredictable directions (Pawson et al., 2005, pp. 21-23)

Thus, teachers are indeed actors who "are conscious, reflexive and strategic" with specific intentions and preferences. These may not be static, however, but actively formed in coupling relations with the economic, cultural and political worlds in which they work (P. Jones, 2010, pp. 29-30). Prior studies suggest that: (1) teachers, as individuals and as a profession, need to believe that reform is necessary and that proposed changes would address perceived needs of students and schools; (2) teachers need to be confident in their own ability to undertake such reform, particularly in terms of the knowledge, skills and disposition that it demands of them; (3) external contextual factors or expectations may influence the willingness and belief systems of teachers (Bandura, 1977; Weatherley & Lipsky, 1977; Coladarci, 1992; Ford, 1992; Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk-Hoy, 2001; Friedman & Kass, 2002). Related to the last point, heterogeneous policy and professional environments afford varying degrees of authority, autonomy, and voice to teachers, and have an impact on the choices that teachers make when confronted with reform messages (Achinstein & Ogawa, 2006). Teachers "make specific choices based on their own histories and their evolving professional lives," all the while being "constrained or shaped" by their surrounding context (Delany-Barmann, 2010, p. 184). They also have different levels of access to strategic resources such as economic, social, political, cultural and political capital. This provides them with variable scope to act on their tendencies and preferences (Weinstein et al., 2007; Murray, 2008; Woo & Simmons, 2008). For that reason, the employment of agency must be understood as strategic and selective in response to specific structural and material constraints (Hay, 2002b; Vongalis-Macrow, 2008). As Lopes-Cardozo (2009, p. 412) contends, while teachers may act according to their reflexivity, rationality and motivations, their actions are embedded in a strategically selective context that creates both opportunities for and constraints to teachers’ level of agency and the choices they make.

Specific to the case presented in this thesis, Timorese teachers are working within a rapidly changing and evolving institutional environment made more complex by a state apparatus still in its infancy, and a donor community that has had strong influence over
the trajectory of reform. Competing imperatives within policy discourses and implementation strategies create particular dilemmas, struggles and challenges for the front line actors caught up in the middle of significant educational reform. In periods of reform, teachers are actively engaged in processes of sense making and will choose courses of action which suit particular purposes informed by personal, professional, political and social motivations and expectations (Hargreaves, 1997). This process of sense-making is critical to understanding the mechanisms which drive particular outcomes and phenomena observed in the world of the actual (Tao, 2008), and is a key conceptual concern of this research inquiry.

2.4. Cultural Political Economy Analysis and its implications for understanding education reform

CPE (Cultural Political Economy) analysis can help to understand the dynamics and constitution of the strategically selective context that influences the choices of actors. It complements critical realist ontology and the SRA in acknowledging that: (1) history and institutions matter in economic and political dynamics occurring at present; (2) a complex relationship exists between meanings and practice, and (3) the strategic selectivity of this relationship leads to a process of variation, selection and retention of particular meanings and practices which over time leads to the production of particular hegemonic conditions (B. Jessop, 2004, p. 2). In CPE, the role of culture is brought into understandings of political economy, as a constitutive element of structural forces and as a contingent factor in the actions of actors. At a constitutive level, it acknowledges that cultural processes help to produce the actors and objects in economic and political relationships, and in defining their relationships to one another. And, at a contingent level, the cultural domain interacts with economic, political and social mechanisms to lead to empirical outcomes observed (Best & Paterson, 2010). Social processes are a related set of "moments" between the cultural (discourse, language, beliefs, and values), the political (power and institutions) and economic (the practices in which social relations are produced and articulated). The open nature of social processes is made visible through CPE analysis in that discourse and language are understood as mediated and transformed through “specific social forces acting in specific institutional contexts or conjunctures” (B. Jessop, 2001, p. 283). By drawing in the role of the cultural in state and state-like projects of development and reform, discourses, values and beliefs come

29 Culture is understood in its broadest terms, namely the meanings given to social life and material objects and the concrete practices they enable and depend on for their continuance/transformation.
to occupy a more central role in understanding the ways in which “the meanings and significance of circumstances and the past are always both culturally and politically mediated [by agents and institutions]” (Ibid).

What it offers is a way of understanding the constitution and mediation of structures in which the sorts of people that inhabit and produce it (the culture), and the forms of power embedded within it (economic and political) work together to produce particular hegemonies. The key issue in CPE analysis is on understanding how particular discourses, amongst the many that are circulated, become selected and institutionalised, and form particular forms of hegemony, in a process known as discursive selectivity. Discourses, according to Fairclough (2005), help us to understand the politics of knowledge production and its dissemination within society. They construct ‘truths’ about the social and natural world with the aim of becoming taken for granted definitions and categories, legitimating power structures and the position of individuals within society (Luke, 1996, p. 10). Through a process of selection, networks of actors seek to remake structural constraints and opportunities to better serve their tendencies and preferences. In doing so, particular discourses are selected to interpret events, legitimate action and represent the social phenomena occurring. This type of discursive and institutional selectivity continues in so far as procedural devices continue to exist that privilege such discourses and institutions, and the associated practices that go alongside them, and work to effectively filter out contrary discourses and practices (Fairclough, Jessop, & Sayer, 2004; Sum, 2004; Fairclough, 2005; B. Jessop & Oosterlynck, 2008). Yet, reproduction of these conditions is not inevitable but is always contingent on continual “social repair work” (B. Jessop & Oosterlynck, 2008, p. 1157). In periods of “profound disorientation due to rapid social change and/or crises that trigger major semiotic and material innovations in the social world,” previously dominant discourses and social practices can be undermined, and opportunities for new

30 The concept of discursive selectivity (Hay, 1996) relates to how particular ideas, narratives and paradigms serve as filters or explanatory frames for the current hegemonic order. These discourses must retain resonance through actors’ direct and mediated experiences. In this way, “the discursive or ideational is only ever relatively autonomous of the material”, which means that context is also discursively selective in that it “select[s] for, but never ultimately determin[es], the discourses through which it may be appropriated.” Understanding this discursive selectivity is significant to understanding how crises, in particular state crises, can be used to strategically select particular courses of actions, ideologies and policies over others.
discourses, and/or practices to be retained, arise (B. Jessop & Oosterlynck, 2008, p. 1159).

Discourses that become institutionalised and situated within societal structures afford a field of opportunity and constraints within which individuals, as actors, can manoeuvre and exercise agency (Jessop quoted in Jones 2010, p. 29). According to Jones (2010, p. 29),

The question of structure/agency therefore becomes an empirical question and allows a focus on the role of actors in the production and reproduction of discourse and practice, their agency in relation to the structures of political institutions and in relation to the economic objects that their discourses and practices seek to influence and form. In this sense, the structural is always in part cultural, understanding of the social world is always only ever partial, the structural as a field of opportunity and constraint is never fully known, and therefore understanding plays a key role in determining the conditions for agency.

A CPE analysis of education (CPE/E) locates educational policy production, reproduction, modification and adaptation within the aspiration of legitimating a particular social, political and economic order (c.f. B. Jessop, 2004; P. Jones, 2010; Robertson, 2012a). CPE/E allows one to make explicit the struggles and conflicts between discourses, practices and institutions of schooling, and the impact these have on the ongoing social contract (Robertson, 2012a). Using this analytical lens, scrutiny can be given to how problems and solutions in education have been conceptualised in policy discourse and reflected in the structures that assemble from them. That which is empirically observed in schools is understood as connected to a particular conceptualisation and rationalisation of political, economic and social relationships in society at a particular time, space and place (Robertson, 2000, pp. 8-9). When applied to the subject of curriculum reform in Timor-Leste, CPE/E can help to,

...unravel and reveal the complex (and contradictory) ways in which discourses/ideas (such as growth, development, knowledge) actors/institutions (such as the World Bank, OECD, nation states) and material capabilities/power (resources, aid) are being mobilised to strategically and selectively advance an imagined, new, knowledge-based economy and its material re/production, within which education is now being re/constituted in particular ways. (Roberston 2009 cited in P. Jones, 2010, p. 45)

Research enquiry becomes attuned to the discourses surrounding policy, critically analysing the projects it attempts to advance and the power relationships underpinning them.
Dale’s (2006, p. 190) three levels of education questions prove useful in making these broad issues concrete. His first set of questions focuses on the level of practice, or educational politics, and includes questions such as who is taught, by whom, where and when, under what circumstances and with what results? These questions are framed by the idea that practices, beliefs and outcomes observed in education are the result of an ongoing dialectic between politically, historically, economically, socially and culturally constructed structural conditions; and strategically selective actors who navigate this context. Thus in understanding what is observed in educational politics, it must be understood that discourses, structures and institutions of schooling, historically and at present in Timor-Leste, continue to constrain and privilege the particular practices and beliefs of actors at all levels. What is of empirical interest in this research is understanding how or if, “actors (individual and/or collective) take account of this differential privileging through 'strategic-context' analysis when choosing a course of action” (B. Jessop, 2004, p. 162).

Dale’s second and third set of questions engage more specifically with the politics of education to ask how, by whom and at what scale are issues in education problematised, determined, coordinated, governed, administered and managed, and in whose interest are these practices and policies carried out; what is the scope of education and what are its relations to other sectors/scales? These questions prove critical to a central issue within CPE of “tracing the flows and linkages in the production, distribution and consumption of education,” with particular attention to “how particular configurations work in the interests of some groups and not others” (Robertson, 2006, p. 307).

Scholarship on the politics of policy borrowing and lending prove especially useful in thinking concretely about the conceptualisation of educational discourse within these power relations, and its subsequent translation into policy measures and mechanisms that the latter two questions highlight. The argument is that educational policies are borrowed strategically to help legitimate a new constellation of political, social and economic order as part of a broader project of creating or restoring a social contract between citizen and the state (Schriewer, 2000). Frequently this comes about in times of rapid social, economic or political change, where the internal reference points to school traditions, beliefs and modes of organisation fail and the state seeks new educational policy symbols that are deemed to be reflective of this new order.
Often, the reliance on discourses, policies and practices from outside to symbolise a new internal order, remains just that, a symbolic gesture rather than any desire at substantive structural change. Jansen’s (2000, 2001, 2002) concept of political symbolism as policy craft, suggests that in many education systems in transition, what often occurs is the “borrowing” of symbols and images of reform—new textbooks, a new curriculum, promotion of new teaching pedagogy—without real consideration for what is needed to support teachers and students. He argues that political elites (and external actors) use policy production to lend credence to a new cultural or economic paradigm and demonstrate accountability to particular constituencies. Less political will exists for actual implementation of such policies, due to ongoing macro-economic, political, social and material conditions and tensions. Conditions which typify this are: (1) a proliferation of new policy statements in quick succession; (2) a lack of policy coherence across various policy statements; (3) the invocation of international precedent and participants in the development of various education policies; (4) the adoption of discourses that were intimately and directly linked to current developments elsewhere in the international environment (i.e. citing major international trends and issues in policy), and (5) preoccupation with inclusiveness in the policy-making process rather than its implementation and outcomes. Important to this study is how teachers respond to an environment where policy production serves a symbolic rather than substantive fashion. Jansen (2001), in his own research, suggests that rarely does political symbolism as policy craft translate into new forms of teaching and learning in classrooms, often because compelling images in the political realm have no bearing or relation to the pragmatic reality of teachers’ work, values, beliefs and practices. Nonetheless, these new political discourses can and do leave traces on particular institutions and structures of schooling, and have real impacts on the agency of actors at all levels. As noted by Carney (2008, p. 46) , “the room for manoeuvre [by actors] is not unlimited,” and policy scripts, whether symbolic or real, are an important part of the strategically selective context that teachers operate within.

2.5. Conclusion

This chapter has suggested that in light of the need for comparative and international research to move away from universalist ways of knowing, and towards ones that are grounded in context and a specific set of semiotic, discursive and agential conditions, critical realist enquiry demonstrates itself to be a relevant and valid way forward. The critical component of critical realism allows for acknowledgement of the importance of power, discourse, language and existing social relations within this process, whilst the
realist position allows us to distinguish between competing knowledge constructions and interpretations of this event, and a reality that is independent of this. Specific to this research study, the conceptual tools of CPE analysis and the SRA are useful heuristics in conceptualising and articulating the dialectic relationship between structures and agents, in which both are mediated by the other. Both modes of analysis help to unpack the relationship between educational politics and the politics of education, and provide a more appropriate way of seeing and understanding the work and actions of teachers within a context of reform. Moving forward, the next chapter links the study’s chosen methodology and methods to these ontological and epistemological anchors.
3. Methodology

This chapter moves to substantiate and defend the methodology and methods that were chosen to explore the key research questions identified in Chapter One. Methodology was considered from three different demands: (1) carefully theorising the interplay between structures, formal and informal institutions, and the agency and actions of actors involved in curriculum reform; (2) a commitment to ensuring that theorising remained grounded in the data; and (3) ensuring that all research approaches were ethically appropriate for the sites of study.

3.1. A critical ethnographic approach

Using the case study

A methodology informed by ethnographic approaches, and in particular case study design, has several important qualities that lends itself to the epistemological and ontological position of a critical realist approach. First, such a technique is particularistic, allowing for data to demonstrate how individuals, as the unit of analysis, cope with specific problems and dilemmas within their unique context (Merriam, 1998). As the focus for this study is to ascertain how teachers respond to, act on and shape reforms to teaching and learning in Timor-Leste, these particularistic accounts are critical to forming such an understanding. It allows for individual experiences to form the core of analysis and theory making, rather than to start from a series of hypothesised “truths.” Second, case studies are descriptive, providing what Geertz (1973) has labelled as “thick descriptions” of social settings, events and individuals. In line with the SRA, the placement and description of teachers into the social settings they find themselves in, as well as their own personal circumstances, is an important element of understanding how agency and contestation is employed as they confront reform. Third, case studies are explanatory; they seek meaning from data grounded in local contexts. The behaviours, attitudes and actions that are witnessed in each school setting can be understood in the context of the layers of relationships and networks individual teachers hold. This provides a useful foundation on which to then begin an exploration of causal mechanisms. By employing an inductive approach to the data collected, meaning is sought from the individual cases to construct theory (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Finally, case studies are heuristic, as the aim is to make the reader understand the complexity of the situation. This research is aimed at elucidating the uniqueness of particular cases, and the complexities embedded in each circumstance. To do so requires such an ideographic approach, which can be achieved through case study techniques (Bryman, 2004).
While it was believed that the questions of this enquiry were suited to ethnographic approaches, there was also cognisance of the critiques that have been directed at case study accounts of teacher practice throughout the Global South. Historically, many studies of micro-level practices failed to link local level conflicts, practices and beliefs to macro-level policies, institutions and structures, making generalisation almost impossible. Broad structural constraints rarely appeared in analysis. Or conversely, when they did, they often viewed historical, cultural and social forces as complete explanations based on theories of social reproduction and/or correspondence theory, rather than as contexts for action (Masemann, 1982). For that reason, critical theorists felt that classic ethnography was too atheoretical and ‘neutral’ in its epistemological/ontological anchors, and ethnographers criticised critical theory as privileging theoretical, structuralist positions at the expense of grounded experience (G. Anderson, 1989).

The application of critical ethnography to interpretations and understandings of the micro-macro relationship in education provides a way of reconciling these dichotomies. Critical ethnography understands social interaction as a process of negotiated meaning in a particular context and set of structures. According to Carspecken (1996) it locates ‘culture’ as a complex circuit of production comprising routines, rituals and conditions for action that are located within systems, relations and conditions external to the actor. This analysis of culture as both discursive and material is tightly aligned with CPE, in that social processes and practices are thoroughly grounded in material social relations composed of economic, political and cultural structures and discourses. Arising out of the work of cultural anthropology, and developed in educational research approaches informed by neo-Marxist and feminist theories of schooling and social change, critical ethnography acknowledges the conflict and contradiction within and between various social actors and structural forms (Anderson-Levitt, 2003). Epistemologically, it has contributed to “a critical, reflexive way of knowing”, and a “philosophical and politically critical social science focused on human subjectivity as a creative, historical force.” This has enabled better understandings of the “important role that schools play in mediating structural...effects on students...[and] the role of school systems in cultural evolution” (Foley, 1977, pp. 313-319).

Using such a methodology, recent comparative and international education studies have refocussed attention on local cultural understandings of broad national and/or
international ideas and concepts to demonstrate ways in which they are indigenised, reappropriated and challenged through the exercise of active human agency (c.f. Anderson-Levitt, 2003; Steiner-Khamisi, 2004; Vavrus & Barlett, 2009). Such research has found that, “administrators, teachers and students create within the roughly common structure, very different lived experiences...in part because there are different actors at different levels with different agendas”, and “there are inevitably gaps between model and practice” (Anderson-Levitt, 2003, p. 27). This notion of divergent outcomes from a similar set of structures and inputs resonates strongly with a critical realist framework in that while a common structure frames the work of actors, differences in lived experiences matters equally to this structure, and can in turn shape the structure itself. In this way, such accounts counter the claims of World Culture theorists regarding a global convergence of schooling norms, institutions and practices, by showing how educational discourses continue to be indigenised and morph into something which may look very different from the ideal. Much of this is owing to the active agency and actions of national and local actors who both resist and/or reclaim such ideas as their own.

Research on the politics and processes of policy borrowing provides a vivid example of how various actors are strategic in their actions, and how particular structures operate through their selectivity of particular tendencies (Steiner-Khamisi 2000, 2002). It suggests the, “multilinear and unpredictable (but often simultaneous and contradictory) appropriation by various social actors in various locations of educational policy, program and pedagogies,” a concept which strongly informs the theoretical foundation of this research study (Vavrus & Barlett, 2009, p. 13).

Bringing critical theory into such accounts contributes to an “understanding of the relationship between context and process, structure and action,” which is necessary for the ecological validity that SRA demands (Broadfoot, 1999). What such critical ethnographies do is help to bolster ideas embedded in SRA such as: (1) the contingency of outcomes through disparate examples of how particular policies/programmes are

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31 The argument of world culture theorists is that the modern nation-state, arising out of the ashes of successive world wars, includes as part of it a general cultural model that extends itself to a template for organizing government institutions including schooling. Citing a common set of educational principles, policies, and practices amongst countries with varying national characteristics, these scholars contend that a process of isomorphism is occurring where schooling institutions are converging towards a common model. This is largely because particular actors (namely at the state level) perceive particular forms and institutions of schooling as the best or only acceptable way to achieve development goals and voluntarily adopt such cultural practices, norms and rituals (c.f. Meyer, 1977; Ramirez & Boli, 1987).
understood, perceived and received; and (2) how political, social, cultural and economic constraints shape and become shaped by actors at all levels. They also help to vividly demonstrate how discourses “can only be charged and enacted in the sticky materiality of practical encounters,” which can lead to “new and unanticipated cultural and political forms that exclude as well as enable,” these ideas (Vavrus & Barlett, 2009, p. 9).

**Vertical case study approach**

The particularistic and contingent stories on which many case studies are built traditionally have been confined to particular spaces (Stake, 2005). This “flat” conception of space ignores the fact that space, as the sum of all our connections, must extend beyond the local to our regional, national and supra-national connections (Massey, 2005, pp. 184-185). Similar concerns exist regarding issues of scale, assuming that the nation-state is the appropriate or relevant reference in examining the context of the case in which structures and processes are defined or shaped (Dale, 2006). Typically the unit of comparison has been horizontal, comparing practices/policies/activities of schooling in one nation to another. However, in contexts such as Timor-Leste, where international governance organisations replaced state functions and roles, particularly in the early years of the nation’s history; and concurrently where sub-national actors have grown accustomed to the vacuum created in this period by a poorly functioning state, this may not be an appropriate mechanism for analysis, and a need to compare vertically may be equally if not more important.

A vertical case study approach remains true to the fundamentals of classic ethnography by being grounded in particular local sites of study, but extends this outwards to identify the dialectic that exists between local agents and the multiple scales and spaces in which action occurs and is defined, often in more condensed field visits (Vavrus & Bartlett, 2005). Similar to the global ethnographies conducted by Burawoy and his colleagues (2000), the aim is to delve into external forces that shape local action, explore connections between various research “sites” and spaces, and uncover and distil imaginations from daily life. Vertical case studies aim to link micro level processes to macro forces and the multiple emergences that result. Applied to educational settings, this approach acknowledges that what is observed in practice is an ongoing conversation between *globalised localism*—the manner in which educational reform ideologies viewed as “travelling global policies” are incorporated with the historical and cultural context of the society under study as a rationale for change; and *localised globalism*—the manner in which these policies and reforms are reassembled and
interpreted when they encounter alternative systems of knowledge production and educational practice (Steiner-Khamsi, 2004; de Sousa Santos, 2007). This approach has been used to look at phenomena such as the implementation of learner-centred pedagogies in Tanzania (Vavrus & Bartlett, 2011); the development and sustainability of teacher training programmes in post-conflict Angola (Mendenhall, 2009); and the evolution of language policy and its connections to identity construction in Lebanon (Zakharia, 2009).

The case study documented here was concerned with developing a rich and vivid description of events and then exploring the dynamics of educational politics and politics of education underpinning them. Outcomes observed are understood to be the product of action embedded within a multiscalar political economy, as depicted in the figure. Particular aspects of the reform agenda become embedded in several “layers” of influence, leading to divergent outcomes.

![Diagram of curriculum reform and outcomes](image)

**Figure 3-1: Understanding curriculum reforms through a vertical case study**

### 3.2. An alternative language for rigour and ethics

A concern of post-development scholars such as Escobar (1995) is that the research within the field of development studies has been written in a way that legitimates the voices of experts (usually from the Global North) while undermining those of the researched. To counter this paradigm, the ethical standards of this study needed to acknowledge the context of this cross-cultural study and the multiple ways in which reality could be represented and documented. This required legitimacy of how research
participants, their actions and their words were represented in this thesis; thus validity is recast as the authenticity and fairness of representation (Guba & Lincoln, 2005, p. 207). Ethical action in the field needed to be guided by respect, reciprocity and consultation with research participants.

Such fairness was achieved by ensuring that various views and voices, perspectives, claims and concerns appear in the textual representations constructed in the research. The narrative presented in subsequent chapters aims to represent the multiple actors, perspectives and fragmentations within a given context, and to represent the divergent outcomes a particular set of ‘inputs’ can lead to (C. Davidson & Tolich, 2003, p. 113). A diversity of teacher perspectives and experiences of transformation firstly are presented verbatim, and then discussed through an interpretive lens. The perspectives of a variety of actors—namely school directors, Ministry of Education officials and development partner representatives—are also included as a way of engaging their voices in a dialogue with the teachers themselves.

Accountability was guided by an obligation, identified by Corbridge (1998, pp. 49, 42), to “be attentive to the needs and rights of distant strangers”, and to “provide plausible alternatives to existing social arrangements or patterns of development.” From the outset of this research project, there has been a firm commitment to ensuring that findings and analysis contribute meaningfully to ongoing policy dialogue and professional development of teachers in the country. In 2011 with support from the New Zealand Aid Programme (NZAP), research findings were presented at an interim stage to policymakers and research participants in a series of workshops held in Dili. Following the workshops, attendees were asked to fill out a comment form regarding their thoughts, concerns and dilemmas with the issues that had been presented to them. Subsequent to the feedback received, a number of analytical areas were further refined, as many teachers and directors reflected on the tone of the findings as simply reinforcing the simplistic message that school actors are to blame for implementation failure. Their detailed feedback and comments located teacher practice more deeply in professional routines and deeply embedded educational beliefs within society—a matter which is reflected on more critically in the analysis presented within this text produced afterwards.
3.3. Considering method

Law (2004), suggests "a more generous and inclusive approach to method" which he labels method assemblage: an approach founded on exploring multiple and competing narratives, generative and co-constructed notions of reality, and acknowledging rather than discounting uncertainty (pp. 14-15). This approach detects and amplifies patterns of relations as situated in reality, and addresses the uncertainty of understanding complex social phenomena. This openness and generosity of method was taken up as a guiding methodological principle in data collection and analysis done as part of this research.

Choice of methods was driven by a need to focus investigation on "the vertex of agential and structural objects, [and] the intersection between different levels or layers of social reality," which stands at the core of critical realism's philosophical understandings of the world (Scott, 2010, p. 34). Such a position takes no preference for either quantitative or qualitative approaches. In some circumstances, both approaches may be important for a complete explanation of a social setting to be made, but in others one approach or the other may be sufficient. Knowing this may not be possible from the outset, requiring instead what Danermark et al. (2002) label as “critical methodological pluralism,” based on achieving a saturation of data to sufficiently engage in a process of retroduction (i.e. theorise on the conditions under which outcomes observed were produced). Whilst this study was largely qualitative in its approaches, it also drew on quantitative tools to place teacher practice in context, and to provide some sense of how widely particular perceptions and beliefs of teachers are distributed or represented throughout the Timorese schooling system. The objective was to explore the individual’s personal sense of reform (self), their social activity of teaching practice in their work and community setting, and the broader socio-political context informing this activity (Layder, 1993).

Kincheloe and Berry (2004) have suggested that method be constructed from the tools at hand, being both knowledgeable and cognisant of the limitations that any method brings to the research question within its specific context. Rather than view this as an abdication of rigour and quality, one could argue that the ability to respond to emergent data and indicate open spaces for thought is exactly what is needed when researching complex social phenomena. Practically, this type of assemblage led to the research journey being a process of bricolage, which pieces together sets of representations fitted to the specifics of a complex situation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).
As the sections below detail, while entering the field aware of a number of different methods that could be applied to explore research question at hand, attempts were made to retain openness throughout to allow the data to shape the directions the empirical work took. Theoretical sampling was employed so that data collection and analysis occurred simultaneously, to allow future sampling decisions and methods employed to be informed by emerging findings (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Keeping in mind the need to be accountable to standards of transparency, reflexivity and rigour, field notes and data memos throughout recorded reasons for the decisions made in regards to method and analysis. Changes that the direction of the study took while in the field, in response to each set of emergent findings, are discussed throughout the remainder of this chapter. These decisions are explained both in terms of questions/complexities that each new set of data brought about as they were analysed, and as a reflection of what limitations each method presented with the research participants and the particular context in which they were employed.

### 3.4. Broad scale survey

Fieldwork commenced in April 2010 with the administration of a survey aimed at providing a broad scale overview of the beliefs, motivations and perceptions of practice of a large cross-section of Timorese primary teachers. A total of four constructs regarding the qualities of an ‘effective’ teacher were included in the survey instrument (Tait, Entwistle, & McCune, 1998; G. Brown, Lake, & Matters, 2008). Additionally, three constructs related to personal teaching efficacy in the areas of delivery, student engagement and classroom management were included, based on an adaptation of items from the CSC Teacher Efficacy Scale (Friedman & Kass, 2002) and the OSTES Scale (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk-Hoy, 2001). Teachers were asked to respond to all statements on a four point Likert-like scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The intent of collecting these data was to gain an initial sense of how closely teachers’ beliefs reflected the intent of reform objectives, as well as their self-perceived capability of enacting pedagogies reflected in these reforms within their own practice.³²

The survey was administered to teachers over three weeks in April 2010 while they were participating in intensive teacher training. Teachers from four of five regions of the

³² A more detailed description of the particular scales and items included in each section of the survey, and a copy of the survey, is provided in the Appendices.
country, and seven different districts participated in this aspect of the research, with a summary of survey participants noted in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Training centre site</th>
<th>Number of teachers surveyed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Manatuto Vila</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dom Alexio (Dili)</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nain Feto (Dili)</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maliana</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bobonaro</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cailaco</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ermera</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baucau Vila</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pante Makasar</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nitibe</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>718</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3-1: Summary of survey participants by location

Given that Tetum is one of the official languages of the government and is also the most widely spoken language in the country, the survey was translated into this language prior to being administered.

All scales and constructs were tested for reliability, validity and internal consistency using statistical analysis. The results suggested that the validity and reliability of these constructs were not robust enough to allow for quantitative comparison and analysis. Thus, survey data that is subsequently presented in findings chapters is presented mainly for descriptive or illustrative purposes, rather than as a form of analysis in itself. Important about the challenges and issues faced with administration of the survey, is the affirmation it provided regarding the uniqueness of the Timorese context, as well as the need for further data collection that explored the “messiness” of this data through qualitative measures (Davies, 2004; Giltrap, 2011).

3.5. Documentary analysis

McMillan (1992) notes that the collection of official documentation is crucial to informing the investigation of how current socio-political conditions and behaviours have come about. Policy documentation from the state and donors is authentic and can provide meaning to actions, behaviours, and interactions observed. From a historical process, such documentation can serve to make sense of specific facts and events related to the trajectory of reforms to teaching and learning in Timor-Leste. The advantage of such documentation as a source of data is that it is completely independent of the researcher in its construction, unlike other forms of data collected.
Charmaz (2006) contends that texts should be considered for analytic scrutiny, rather than as a form of corroborating evidence. In this study, documents were critically analysed in terms of language, discourses promoted, and stated and unstated intentions of action, to identify the underlying politics of education and education politics (vanDijk, 1993). The aim was to consider the manner in which these official texts portray problems within education and prospective solutions. From this "idealised view" contrasts and comparisons to the world of practice could then be made.

The analysis also explored whose interests are reflected in this discourse, and for what ends. Informed by the work of Jansen (2000), documentary review considered the degree to which these reforms to teaching and learning were symbolic, or to borrow his words, "polities of non-reform." This required scrutinising whether the chronology of policies concerned with teaching and learning had been coherent, and had been followed (or not) by concrete methods of implementation. Acknowledging that international actors have played a significant role in the education sector, literature from agencies such as the World Bank, UNICEF, UNESCO/IIEP and INEE were also reviewed to ascertain the degree to which specified policies and the discourses behind them may have been appropriated by or imposed onto the Timorese context. Finally, the review also considered whether presumptions, suppositions and visions of the idealised teacher and learning environment of Timorese classroom are matched by recognition of the social and material conditions in which this occurs.

Documentation was sought and reviewed from the Ministry of Education, UNICEF and other UN agencies, the World Bank, Portugal Cooperation and other development partners/NGOs working on these reforms since 2002. Documents were initially reviewed for mention of matters of teaching and learning. Once relevant sections/reports were identified, they were imported into NVivo. Coding was first done along the lines of specific subjects and themes, such as identified problems/issues with teaching and learning, the current and future roles of teachers in Timor-Leste, images portrayed of the "professional teacher" and learning, and the manner in which the context of teachers' work is framed. From this initial coding exercise, further coding within each category occurred to determine the nature of such statements, and to begin to construct a chronology and map of intention in terms of policy. The results of this analysis are discussed in the findings section.
3.6. Ethnographic approaches

After conducting the survey and initial documentary analysis, it became readily apparent that to begin to construct meaning from this set of data, a better understanding of the lived realities of school actors, and of the perspectives, ideas and internal politics of Ministry of Education and development partners officials tasked with supporting “transformation”, was necessary. To achieve this goal, ethnographic methods were carefully selected. The objective of each of the methods was to use the sensitizing concepts that emerged from the survey data and documentary analysis, to inform, but not define, what was subsequently observed and witnessed.

What is described in this section is not classic ethnography (as detailed in Burawoy et al., 2000; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Rather, it was what was possible, given limited access and embedded knowledge of the social world under study. Language was a key constraint, given that collegial or informal conversations between adults in schools, or between teachers and students, often occurred in Tetum or another regional dialect, rather than English and Portuguese. Genuine opportunities for participant observation were not feasible. Instead, ethnography was conducted from the standpoint of an observer-as-participant, both in classrooms and within the Ministry of Education/development partner circles (Gold, 1958; Van Maanen, 1988). Nonetheless, ethnography was guided by the writings of Charmaz (2005, 2006). She suggests that to remain close to the data, one should: (1) establish an intimate familiarity with the social setting under investigation, and the events occurring within it, alongside the research participants; (2) focus on meaning and process; (3) simultaneously engage in a close study of action; (4) discover and detail social context with as much attention as possible; and (5) pay attention to the use and appropriation of language. These were all considered in the methods employed.

Classroom observation

Observations of practice are widely used in ethnography to gain greater insight into studies of behaviour and attitude in the teachers’ home environment and broader community of practice (Longabaugh, 1980). For the purposes of this study, the aims were to observe teacher practice and pedagogy in action; student-teacher interactions; classroom environment; and the hidden and actual curriculum that is imparted to students. Observations also provided an opportunity to witness the degree to which teachers’ perceptions of their practice are reflected in the realities of what occurs in the classroom. It was the most authentic opportunity to understand the context where
teaching and learning occur on a daily basis, and to be involved (though passively) in the setting being studied (Patton, 2007).

Given these aims, it was important to consider the method of observation I would employ. In deciding between the usage of a structured observation schedule or less structured techniques, it became apparent that, for the Timorese context, externally developed observation schedules were irrelevant and insufficient for the questions and issues of study. Structured observation schedules have often been criticised for imposing an inappropriate or irrelevant framework on the social setting observed; lacking understanding of the intentionality behind behaviours observed; and neglecting the context behind which observed actions occur (Bryman, 2004). In educational research, they have typically been used to quantify aspects of classroom practice primarily to serve instrumental goals of improving some aspect of teachers’ work with their students (Wragg, 1999). That was not the goal of this research study.

One alternative was to conduct the observations from an unstructured standpoint, where the objective would be to record in as much detail as possible the behaviour of the main subject of the research [i.e. the teacher observed] with the aim of developing a narrative account of that behaviour (Bryman, 2004, p. 167). However, the challenge as astutely noted by Wragg (1999, p. 5), is that, “so much happens in classrooms, that any task or event, even apparently simple ones, could be the subject of pages of notes…the ecology of many classrooms can be extremely rich and full.” The ideal of providing a vivid description of all these factors needed to be balanced with the pragmatic challenges of conducting observations in a cross-cultural setting in limited time.  

For these reasons, classroom observations focussed explicitly on the content and structure of the instruction that was occurring, with specific attention to the action and behaviours of the teacher. Using an observation process known as Global Scan (Zapeda, 2009), classroom activities and research perceptions and comments could be recorded simultaneously. Under the observation column, a running log of the time, and the student and teacher activity that was occurring at that time, were documented. In the

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33 For both ethical and practical reasons audio or video recording of lessons observed was not done, as it would have been obtrusive and distracting, as well necessitating extensive translation and transcription assistance that was not viable. Challenges with transport to many of the school sites visited outside Dili meant that each classroom could only be visited once.
comments column, reactions and perceptions about the activities that were being witnessed were noted. Several excerpts from completed observations are included in Chapter Eight.

In addition, general observations of the classroom as a whole, in terms of use of language, organisation of the physical environment, and utilisation of instructional materials, were noted. As an example,

T appears to be using primarily Tetum to teach lesson, but when she is using numbers she is using the Portuguese terms, not the Tetum ones. There is a lot S work around the classroom and many visual aids. T appears to have lots of manipulatives and hands on resources for her to work with her S, much more than other classrooms observed. This may in part be due to the younger age of the S she is working with. While the youngest and perhaps most inexperienced T at the school she seems to be using more S centred activities than other T. (Excerpt from Classroom Observation 4)

Classrooms were entered into as unobtrusively as possible, with the objective of letting the scene unfold independent of the researcher, rather than prompting action (Angrosino, 2005). Despite this, teachers felt compelled to ‘perform’, based on what they thought was what an outside foreign observer would want to see. In many circumstances, these initial performances provided important insight into how teachers had taken external messages about “good teaching” practices—for example, students working in groups—and indigenised it within existing professional and institutional norms. Normally the performance aspect of what was occurring waned as teachers either ran out of novel ideas or became accustomed to an outsider’s presence. For this reason, it proved important to remain in the classroom for an extended period of time (at least 45 minutes) to witness this evolution to more typical patterns of interaction between students and teachers. The aim was to observe a single lesson from introduction to conclusion, but when lessons exceeded an hour in length, a decision was made to leave the classroom and return later to speak with the teacher about what had been observed.

It is recognised that, because these observations occurred in a cultural setting that was non-native, subject relativity, cultural relativism and observer bias would be part of the reconstruction and narration of these observed realities. To counterbalance this, most teachers who had been observed were given the opportunity to articulate their lesson objectives, intentions and actions in clarifying conversations that followed the observation. These conversations often took place informally, over a cup of coffee or tea.
In these conversations, teachers were often curious to know whether they had been observed “doing the right thing,” making it important to stress to them that the observations were not an assessment of their individual practice against a particular set of benchmarks or expectations.

Schools visited in Dili were selected on the advice of various NGOs and Ministry of Education officials who had knowledge of the teachers working at these schools, and the manner in which the school was organised and managed. The criterion was to select a cross-section of schools that were perceived to be functioning adequately or poorly according to the perceptions of these individuals. All schools selected were public, rather than church operated or private schools. Initial contact with the schools was made through the Director General’s office in Dili, which sent a letter to school directors asking for their assistance in this research endeavour. This was followed up with a phone call to establish a date and time for the observations to occur. Given the large number of teachers on staff at many of these schools, school directors were asked to discuss with their teachers who would be willing to be observed, and to attempt to select teachers who represented a cross-section of his/her workforce, based on experience, grade levels taught, and qualification levels. Ultimately, school directors retained control over which teachers they selected, and in some cases the directors purposely chose those he/she believed to be his/her “best teachers” to be observed, rather than following the sampling criteria above.

Rural and remote schools were different as access to sites without transport and/or accommodation options was nearly impossible. Thus the sample of schools noted in Table 3-2 was a sample of convenience. Schools visited in Manatuto district were ones that one NGO was conducting teacher training in, while some of the schools visited in Ermera district were those which another NGO had a long standing relationship with in terms of financial and material support. Both organisations offered transport to these school sites and in the case of Ermera region provided accommodation on numerous occasions in one of the communities they were working in. Given the smaller size of many of these schools, all teachers, barring those who did not provide assent, could be observed, allowing head teachers to have less influence on the sample of teachers observed. A summary table of the locations of each of these case study schools, and the

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34 This letter, written in Portuguese, is included in the Appendices
number of teachers who were observed, and subsequently participated in a group interview are noted in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Number of classrooms observed</th>
<th>Number of teachers in interview</th>
<th>School director interviewed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EPDL</td>
<td>Ermera</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPRL</td>
<td>Ermera</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPRC</td>
<td>Ermera</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPHA</td>
<td>Manatuto</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPRR</td>
<td>Manatuto</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPVV</td>
<td>Dili</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPFA</td>
<td>Dili</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPBM</td>
<td>Dili</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPFR</td>
<td>Dili</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPDC</td>
<td>Dili</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPSA</td>
<td>Ermera</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPRV</td>
<td>Ermera</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPSA</td>
<td>Ermera</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTALS</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>42</strong></td>
<td><strong>43</strong></td>
<td><strong>8</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3-2: Sample of case study schools

42 observations occurred across 13 schools in total, with five schools located in Dili, six in Ermera district, and two in Manatuto district. Each school was visited for one full instructional day. In Dili, this involved spending approximately six to eight hours at the school site. Different groups of teachers and students would enter into the school every two to three hours. In remote schools, all teachers and students would attend one session, usually in the morning. The small size of most of these schools meant that all teachers could be observed over the course of an instructional day. Prior to the observations commencing, teachers would be notified of their rights as a research participant and asked to provide verbal assent to being observed. As the research is focused on observing and describing teacher practice during the course of classroom interaction, students in these classes were not asked for consent to be observed (UAHPEC 2009, p. 28).

At the completion of the observations, a post-hoc analysis of teacher actions and dispositions noted was done. This provided a broad overview of trends and patterns of practice across the schools. It was also a mechanism for discussing in the findings whether teacher practices were aligned at a broad level with those that are currently articulated for them in policy documents. As stated earlier, no externally developed observation schedule was suitable for such purposes. However, an internally developed schedule included in the School Inspectors Manual (Ministry of Education, 2009d) most closely suggested the desired practices and behaviours that teachers were expected to
follow in their classrooms, and was adapted for this analysis. The aim of this exercise was not to audit teacher practices, but rather to highlight in the findings the large gulf that remains between policy expectations and the ecosystem of school-level activity, given that such data did not exist.

Field notes
Through the fieldwork period, notes and personal reflections were kept. Recognising that interpretations imposed on the data are based on personal assumptions, beliefs and actions, the taking of field notes allowed for a process of self-critique and reflective practice on the complexity of the reform process as events unfolded (Fonow & Cook, 1991). At the same time, reflecting on the importance of assumptions, beliefs and actions the one has imposed on the data is a critical component of constructing one’s own transformative understanding on the complexity of the education reform process in Timor-Leste (Giroux, 1988). Field notes provided clarity and helped to contextualise and add detail to other forms of data collected.

Focus groups
Interviews have long been viewed in qualitative and ethnographic methodologies as a useful mechanism for exploring particular topics or experiences in depth with the subjects of one’s study. In many ways, they have come to be seen as a taken for granted approach to the research discipline (Fontana & Frey, 2005). While recognising the great insights that interviewing could bring to the research questions explored, it was with careful consideration and thought that interviewing was applied and utilised as a method in this study.

Interviews are traditionally structured on a hierarchical relationship with the respondents usually being in the subordinate role. Research participants are expected to engage in a conversation, usually directed by the researcher, without such reciprocity granted in return (Bryman, 2004). Similarly, researchers generally arbitrate the viewpoints of respondents, and express and write the narratives collected from participants in a fashion that might exclude particular voices or points of view. As Fontana and Frey (2005, p. 713) note,

...the data reported tend to flow nicely, there are no contradictory data, and there is no mention of what data were included and why. Improprieties never happen, and the main concern seems to be the proper (if unreflexive) filing, analysing and reporting of events.

The suggestion is that if interviews are to be utilised ethically and meaningfully, researchers must hold a heightened moral concern for respondents/participants,
attempt to redress hierarchies of power and position between the researcher and the participants, and explicitly locate him/herself in terms of what is ascertained from the data collected (Behar, 1996; Marcus & Fischer, 1996). Interviews should be considered as a contextually based, mutually accomplished story that is reached through collaboration between the researcher and respondent. Narration of the interview needs to highlight the author’s bias and taken-for-granted notions, with alternative ways of looking at the data introduced for readers to consider (Clough, 1998).

Charmaz (2006, pp. 26-27) notes that to gather rich data, the interviewer plays an active role in the conversation but also needs to listen and observe with sensitivity. This requires having a few broad, open-ended questions to invite discussion of the topic, but to allow unanticipated statements and stories to emerge. The interviewer should affirm what is stated, but also probe beyond the surface to further the discussion. At the same time, research participants need to be seen as the experts and be able to have some liberty over what to tell and how to tell it, while teaching the interviewer how to interpret significant experiences.

For this study, the main concern in interviewing Timorese teachers was how power and control would be negotiated away from the ‘western researcher’, to the participants themselves. As noted by Charmaz (p. 28), “differences between interviewer and research respondent in terms of race, class, gender, age and ideologies may affect what happens during the interview.” As a male, highly educated, New Zealand based researcher trained as a primary teacher in North America, who could not communicate with these individuals in their mother tongues, the natural conversation aspired to in an interview setting would be almost impossible to achieve. Additionally, the culture of Timor-Leste is collectivist by nature, in which learning and conversation takes place in groups (Heyward, 2005, p. 35). The appropriateness of one-on-one interviews with teachers was questionable.

Thus a decision was made to conduct focus group interviews rather than individual interviews with these teachers. Focus groups allowed the conversation to be one where participants could build off the words of others, to construct a collective story, or to contradict the experience being portrayed with their own perceptions (Ho, 2006). Kamberelis and Dimitriadis (2005) remark that focus groups have a history of being used to elicit and validate collective testimonies, and to give a voice to those previously silenced by creating a safe space for sharing their perspectives. Used well, they help to
balance out unequal power dynamics between an 'outsider' researcher and individual teachers that are more likely to occur in one-on-one interview contexts where responses are made to "please" the researcher (Nilan, 2002). In this study, a group-based dialogue was critical in ameliorating cross-cultural misunderstandings by allowing representations and interpretations to be discussed and validated or disputed by several teachers at once. It also avoided the artificial construction of a one-on-one conversation that many Timorese are uncomfortable with, particularly with strangers, and instead allowed more natural and organic discussion, in which research participants exerted greater control over the dynamic of the interaction.

The focus groups occurred in May and June 2010, at the end of the fieldwork period, and helped to clarify aspects of: teachers’ beliefs around teaching and learning, as initially explored in the survey; the current context of teachers’ work as explored through document review and observation; and the rationales and motivations underlying teachers’ current practices in the classroom, as witnessed in observation and responded to in the surveys. In particular, focus groups helped to clarify and have teachers elucidate further on four main issues that arose after survey and observation data had been analysed, namely: the beliefs that teachers held about the qualities of a professional teacher given the changing policy discourse on this subject; approaches a teacher and/or school can take when a student is struggling academically, given the high number of students that were observed in this situation in observations; teachers’ perceptions of the purpose and function of learning, given the particular moment that Timor-Leste finds itself in; and the structural and material constraints (enablers and barriers) that teachers feel are most significant in effecting their sense of personal and professional agency.

Between May and July 2010, focus groups were conducted at most schools where observations had occurred previously, and by and large, with the same individuals who had been observed previously. The decision to revisit the same schools and teachers was in line with the case study methodology discussed previously, and to build on rapport with these individuals and sites that had been established in the months prior.

35 There was one exception to this, EPDC, where I was unable to observe teacher practice on the scheduled day of observation due to a special event. The teacher and director insisted I return to speak with them which is why they are included in the sample.
In total 43 teachers participated in the groups across 10 schools (see Table 3-2). In each of the focus groups, teachers responded to five different questions/tasks.

A Timorese-born research assistant facilitated each of the focus groups. She had previously run focus groups for the International Committee of the Red Cross, and after initial training took on primary responsibility for group facilitation. Having a Timorese in charge of the running of the focus groups helped to mitigate concerns around hierarchies of power and control, and misunderstandings of concepts and terms that frequently occur in interview settings. Rather than have her directly translate the discussion in vivo, the focus group conversation was recorded, and later translated and transcribed. The dynamics of interaction, and the topics and subjects in which dissent or struggle existed between group members were recorded through field notes. Following each focus group, a debrief session was held with this assistant where conversation points were reviewed, matters on which the participants struggled to articulate a response were considered, and the dynamics of participation discussed.

A concern with focus groups, given the larger number of participants, is that individual perspectives can get lost in the collective discussion that results. Particular individuals can end up dominating and shaping the conversation, while less vocal or confident individuals may not offer dissenting opinions. This can lead to what some writers have labelled as the “group effect” where perfectly legitimate but individual perspectives may be suppressed by the collective voice, and simultaneously the group may come to share this collective view uncritically without rational attachments to it (Asch, 1951 and Janis, 1982 cited in Bryman, 2004, p. 360). These dynamics were of interest in the study, as they provided a sense of how professional relationships and organisational views were structured at each of the schools; an interaction that otherwise may have remain hidden (Ho, 2006, p. 3).

To facilitate the observation of such dynamics, each focus group task began with individuals writing down their response to the task or activities on Post-It notes. The individuals then came together and were given an opportunity to decide and prioritise these responses according to their group values/beliefs. As part of this discussion the

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36 Some of the schools visited for observations were unable to be visited again as logistics such as transport, made this task impossible. In other cases, a suitable time to assemble all teachers together for a focus group was not possible.

37 A full focus group protocol guide is appended
facilitator ensured that individuals were given an opportunity to voice their opinion, by asking whether there were other points of view and in some cases calling on specific individuals to speak up about their opinion. Nonetheless, hierarchies of power amongst teachers became quickly apparent within each of the 10 observed groups. Much of this was gender focussed with females generally deferring to male opinion. Similarly, younger teachers, even if they were more “qualified”, tended to concede their differing opinions to that of older staff members in the group discussion. In both instances body language suggested that those who had been overruled were sometimes uncomfortable with the consensus that had been agreed to. Neither of these was unexpected given the traditional hierarchies that exist in Timorese society. The implications of some of these relationships are discussed further in the findings chapters.

**Interviews with school directors**

Following on, or prior to each focus group, a separate interview was held with the school director. School directors were treated separate to the teachers, due to the strong hierarchies of title and position that govern workplaces in Timor-Leste. It was felt that speaking to the school director separately might relieve anxieties for teachers in voicing dissent or concern. With assistance from the same research assistant, interviews were conducted in Tetum, though in some cases directors preferred to speak in Portuguese. The full interview was audio recorded and fully translated and transcribed later. In total eight school directors were interviewed. Some were not available on the day of the return visit due to illness or the need to attend to outside Ministry business.

School directors were asked to comment on similar topics to those explored with the teachers in the focus group, but also were asked about their particular roles and responsibilities as a leader within the school. A semi-structured interview protocol was used to guide discussion, but also to allow for the conversation to shift naturally and further explore specific responses.

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38 This was largely due to directors being unavailable on the day of the visit. In larger schools directors did not have any official teaching duties, but rather were full time administrators. Scheduling a time over the course of the day was easier with directors in these settings. However, in smaller schools, directors often had to balance teaching responsibilities and administrative duties, which made finding time to interview them more challenging.

39 The full interview guide is included in Appendices.

40 Excerpts from interviews from these directors, when quoted in the remainder of the thesis provided the initials for their school (i.e. EPVV), followed by their position. Thus they
Interviews with Representatives of Key Agencies

At the end of fieldwork in mid-2010, a number of individuals who represented the perspectives of key agencies involved in the country's teaching and learning reforms were interviewed. The interviews occurred after policy documentation had been analysed and reviewed, and emerging findings from the school-based observational and interview data from the school level had been considered. Apparent from this was the continued gulf that existed between the visions as outlined in policy and implementation activities, and the practices and beliefs still prevalent in Timorese classrooms and schools. It was hoped that these interviews would assist in understanding whether these agencies recognised these continued gaps, gain perspective on what they attributed this to, and how they would be going about their work in the future due to this. At the same time, speaking with these individuals aimed to provide greater historical and contextual background behind reforms to teaching and learning.

A semi-structured interview schedule was developed for these interviews, but was adapted to the particular role and agency of the individual. A total of 12 interviews occurred across several development partner agencies and the Ministry of Education, as indicated in the table below. All individuals spoken to provided written consent to be interviewed and to have the interview audio recorded and later transcribed. They were given the option of being able to review the transcripts after they had been completed, and provide any correction or modifications to what was stated previously. All individuals were spoken to with the guarantee of confidentiality, thus no individual names have been utilised in the findings. However, given the small community of practice within which they work, guarantees of anonymity could not be made as there was the possibility that they could be identified through the organisation they represented.

appear in the text as [EPVV, Director], as a way of distinguishing the source from that of the teachers.

41 This schedule is included in the Appendices.

42 Excerpts from interviews with these individuals are coded in this thesis with the prefix KI (Key Informant) and then the interview number (1-12).
Organisation | Number of Individuals Interviewed | Codes of Key Informants
--- | --- | ---
Ministry of Education (National Office) | 3 | KI5, KI7, KI10
World Bank | 2 | KI3, KI6
UNICEF | 2 | KI9, KI11
Portugal Cooperation | 1 | KI2
NZAID | 1 | KI4
AusAID | 1 | KI12
Other INGOs | 2 | KI1, KI8
**TOTAL** | **12** | ****

**Table 3-3: Summary of key stakeholders interviewed**

Interviews with representatives from development partner agencies occurred in English, with the exception of Portugal Cooperation where the interview occurred using both English and Portuguese to suit the interviewee. Ministry of Education officials were interviewed in Tetum with the assistance of a research assistant. The three Ministry officials spoken to were selected based on their senior roles within the organisation in developing, managing or implementing aspects of the reforms to teaching and learning.

**Analyses of interview and focus group data**

The sheer volume and richness of data collected through the techniques described above necessitated a method of analysis that would do justice to the voice of participants, and the multiple emergences and complexity of findings that would result. Through an inductive and iterative coding process, findings, themes and causal mechanisms were allowed to emerge from the data. The advantage of this process is that it allowed me to remain close to the data at all times, in the process of abstracting this information to greater levels of theory (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

The first step involved initially coding these data line by line. The focus at this stage was to stay as close as possible to actual data, by keeping codes short and precise and imposing little meaning on what was stated or noted at this stage. This required me to use the actual segments of text in the notes and interview data to develop codes that remained unsorted and uncategorised. It resulted in a large number of codes for each data set (approximately 200). After the completion of this initial coding, memos were written as a start to rendering these codes into early meaning and my own interpretation of these words and extracts. The aim of this process was to stimulate awareness of different research leads, groups of codes, and further lines of inquiry (Charmaz, 2006, p. 47). From this, a more focussed coding process could begin, where initial codes were collated and grouped together, based on their salience and usefulness in exploring broader concepts and themes. As a starting point, the most significant
and/or most useful earlier codes were reviewed and considered. The benchmark at all times, was to ensure that these codes remained as close to the original data as possible, but allowed for analytical potential.

This process was then followed by taking the most salient and significant codes, and abstracting them further into categories to look across multiple and larger groups of data (i.e. between interview groups or between teacher interviews and observational data). At this point, categories such as “teachers as implementers of curriculum” arose, as they were discussed in a number of codes derived from teacher and school director interviews, interviews with key stakeholders, and classroom observation comments. The last step was taking the most significant categories and grouping them together conceptually, in order to provide an interpretive frame by abstracting relationships between and across the data sets. Metaphors explored in the findings chapters, such as “being a lighthouse” in relation to the role and purpose of teachers, were conceptually derived ideas that originated in the codes and categories developed earlier. These concepts proved important in connecting the data to the contested roles and purposes of teachers and of schooling in post-independence Timor-Leste, and understanding causal mechanisms behind observed teaching and learning practices in this environment.

The coding and categorisation processes were completed with the assistance of computer-assisted software (NVivo 9). There has been some debate in the research community about the utilisation of this software for a grounded theory approach (Weitzman, 2000; Holton, 2007), however there is also growing agreement that qualitative software packages can create a more disciplined approach towards auditing the process of creating codes, categories and concepts (Dey, 2007). NVivo 9 does not do the analysis for researchers; rather it helps in quickly sifting through, organising and retrieving large amount of data. It can help to provide a record of how the coding process evolved if copies of analysis are time-dated and saved. Given the sheer amount of data I was dealing with in this study, and the number of initial codes generated, the use of this software was critical to conducting the analyses described above.

3.7. Conclusion

This chapter has substantiated and defended the methodology and methods chosen during empirical work in light of the critical realist ontological and epistemological position presented in Chapter Two, as well as ethical concerns of conducting research in a cross-cultural setting. At the core of considering the range of methods at hand, was the
need to ensure that whatever data collected would allow a critical and careful examination between that which was observed and the invisible, yet real forces and structures behind them. In this way, critical ethnography embedded within a multi-scalar approach was identified as the preferred option, and within this, a range of methods, based on ongoing reflexivity with data was utilised. Having outlined these foundations, the remainder of the thesis now moves to present and reflect on data collected, with the goal of responding to the three research questions identified in the introductory chapter.
4. Schooling in Timor-Leste: Past purposes, future visions

Mass schooling occupies a crucial role in the ‘social contract’ that exists between citizen and state, by legitimating a particular politics through its logic of intervention and the outcomes it produces (Dale, 2006). This social contract is maintained through schooling as long as it effectively balances the social expectations and perceptions of citizens (Haider 2010 cited in Ndaruhutse et al., 2011, p. 13) with the economic conditions (material practices and social relations) it produces (Fairclough, 2005). Schooling is not “a pre-given container, or a universal, unchanging, category of social relations and life-worlds”, however. Through the lens of CPE/E, it can be viewed as the outcome of discursive, material and institutionalized struggles over the role of education in the ‘social contract’, and the fashion and scales at which it should be governed (Robertson, 2012a).

As such, significant shifts in society can lead to increased questioning of educational discourses and the practices, regimes of regulation and institutions related to them, precipitating what Habermas (1975) labels as a legitimation crisis. In such spaces, where state legitimacy is increasingly questioned internally or externally, various actors develop particular, and sometime opposing, strategies for a “fix” to this questioning of legitimacy of the existing social order. There is often the need for the “operationalisation of new representations and imaginaries—new discourses and strategies—in new ways of acting and being and new material arrangements” (Fairclough, 2005, p. 935). During such a period, various actors and institutions jockey for power at different scales—over framing the debate (ideological), setting the agenda, and making decisions—through a reformulation of policy discourse (Lukes, 1974). They draw on particular discourses and narratives to represent what has happened or is happening within society, and construct alternative possibilities for the future in a process of emergence (Ndaruhutse et al., 2011). Education reform in such periods is driven by the need to reconcile the role of schooling with a changing social reality (Cummings, 1999, p. 425), through educational policies that:

- Define the content, timing and sequence of reform initiatives;
- Provide articulate and logical explanations of the problems in need of resolution;
- Attempt to shape reform in a fashion that makes it politically acceptable to constituencies and interests that particular actors feel accountable to (Grindle & Thomas, 1991, p. 18)
The focus of this chapter is to explore the crisis of legitimacy that faced Timorese education at the time of its independence, and the various discourses that underpinned reform agendas as a "fix" for this situation. As this chapter will explore, the colonial education system of Timor-Leste, similar to many other former colonised spaces, was purposely established to legitimate outside occupation through the systemic repression of indigenous epistemologies, and the imposition of external perspectives, images, symbols and modes of production (Quijano, 2007; Walsh, 2007). Unequal power relationships were legitimated through statements, texts and knowledges promoted in schooling. Schools and practices internal to them attempted to be a conduit through which the identities of both students and teachers could be (re) bordered and (re) shaped to meet certain interests (Koh, 2004; Tickly, 2004; Tiffin, 2004; Borg & Mayo, 2007). Schools promoted "... a system of knowledge and representation which deeply affect[ed] the identity formation of the colonizer and the colonized" (Hickling-Hudson, 2010, p. 300). Yet, even in this period, opportunities existed for counter-discourses and spaces of resistance that influenced the nature of mass schooling under colonisation and the outcomes it produced.

Following independence there was strong belief that an education system that reproduced behaviours, attitudes, and beliefs of the past was no longer appropriate or desirable within the context of the newly independent nation. At the country's first National Education Congress in 2003, broad recognition existed that the current, "...conception of education, teacher and school ... is different from the one we now seek ... this means we need to change" (cited in RDTL, 2008b, p. 4). This was further reinforced by the National Framework for Learning, which was adopted a year later by the Ministry of Education. It stated that, "the education system will be innovative and future oriented: it will not simply repeat or try to improve the best practices of the past: it will create new practices to quickly advance the improvement of education for Timorese" (Chadwick, 2004, p. 8).

However, the formation of new policy discourses do not develop in a vacuum discontinuous with the past. While a crisis of legitimacy can lead to a sharp change in how particular practices and outcomes are rationalised, policy discourse evolves and is in constant articulation with that which precedes it (Cox, 2004). Legacies of the past continue to shape claims of nationhood, sovereignty, citizenship, secularism and identity in the process of state and nation building (Spivak, 1993). The argument advanced in this chapter is that while normatively “post-colonial”, competing discourses
underpinning the country's current education system, and the primacy of the modernisation/human capital imperative within this, have created varying scope for a schooling experience that challenges its colonial underpinnings and ensures a relevant, accessible and quality education for all.

4.1. A brief historical overview

Schooling during Portuguese times

Educational policy and practices during Portuguese colonisation precipitated a situation of extreme education neglect, particularly of those living in rural or remote parts of the country (Boughton, 2011). This questionably "benign neglect" meant that the majority of the populace was effectively excluded from participating in the political process, which served the coloniser’s purpose of extracting natural resources without contestation. Beginning in the mid-nineteenth century, however, the colonial administration opened a few schools for the children of local liturais (chiefs). The aim was to educate a small administrative class that could effectively manage the colony in Portugal’s “best interest” (Hill, 2002; Millo & Barnett, 2004; World Bank, 2004). These schools instilled ideas that Timorese culture and history were closer to those of other Portuguese colonies in Africa than to cultures and histories of its Asian neighbours. It neglected any discussion of pre-colonial Timorese culture, history and language. Over time, those attending school were given the title of assimilados, reflecting the idea that they had been effectively inculcated into “western” society. As the demands of colonial administration grew, they were granted access to secondary education. In the 1960s and ’70s a small segment of this group was granted scholarships to study in Portugal (Boughton, 2011).

In the absence of state involvement in mass schooling, the Catholic Church became increasingly involved in educational provision. In 1904 it established its first primary school, and by 1909 was operating 17 schools across the territory (Carey, 1999). In the 1940s, Portugal signed an agreement with the Vatican which delegated responsibility for all education in the Portuguese colonies to the Church, greatly deepening the involvement of missionaries in schooling in Timor-Leste. Within the missionary school system, Portuguese was the only language that was permitted to be spoken (Hill, 2002).

According to Hill (2002, pp. 54-56), the first stirrings of modern Timorese nationalism took place within this group, and would later carry over into their roles as members of the resistance and post-independence political leadership. Some of this was due to the interaction they had with peers from other Lusophone countries (Mozambique, Angola, Guinea-Bissau) who were involved in active independence struggles.
For remote or rural parts of the country, missionary schools were often the only option for communities seeking to educate their children. Yet the relative scarcity of such schools, and the cultural alienation fostered by this language policy, continued to exclude the majority of Timor-Leste’s agrarian population from participating in formal schooling.

The legacy of this period is three-fold in terms of the contemporary educational landscape of Timor Leste. First, systematic Portuguese neglect to providing schooling for the majority of the population has contributed to high rates of illiteracy and the continued rural-urban divide in terms of educational access, participation and quality. Second, Catholicism became symbolically connected with education, largely due to the role of the Church in providing schooling to the Timorese population in response to the lack of state involvement. This historical interconnection between religion, schooling and the state presents unique challenges for the now secular and more actively involved state (discussed in more detail below). Finally, and perhaps of greatest long term significance, the importation of Western and Portuguese based epistemologies over this period have contributed to what Walsh (2007) has labelled a “geopolitics of knowledge.” Intellectual and cultural formation of the Timorese elite became intimately connected to Portuguese language, culture and historiography. Colonial scholarship for over 500 years embodied this epistemology, and written archives of the past have become framed around these colonial constructs. With the push to reclaim Timorese historiography, identity and knowledge, academics, scholars and educators are faced with discovering an “indigenous” past using a 500 year corpus of work which is itself the product of colonial and imperial design (Gunn, 1999).

Schooling during Indonesian occupation
In general, the period of Indonesian occupation greatly increased opportunities for all Timorese children to participate in a programme of basic education. At the time of the occupation in 1975, there were 47 primary schools, two junior high schools and one secondary school in the entire country. By contrast in 1990, there were 62 kindergartens, 736 primary schools, 112 pre-secondary schools, and 37 secondary schools throughout the territory. Growing numbers of children were given the opportunity to attend school, with 90% of children enrolled in school by 1990 (Beazley, 1999). The mass expansion of schooling, however, led to issues around appropriate resourcing for the significantly higher number of pupils enrolled. Class sizes were much higher than other provinces within Indonesia, and school facilities, supplies, and other
learning materials were reported to be much poorer than in the rest of the country (Beazley, 1999). Compared to other provinces, the Indonesian state invested a low level of expenditure on schooling in Timor-Leste. Most Timorese households were asked to pay for books, school supplies, uniforms and transport, all of which were provided for by the state in other provinces (World Bank and Asian Development Bank, 2007).

The intent behind broadening educational access was to assimilate future generations into Indonesian society and discount the existence of a distinct Timorese identity. The expressed aim of the schooling system was to promote *pancasila*, an ideology based on a singular Indonesia with a shared history and set of values and beliefs, despite the marked diversity within the archipelago (Cribb, 1997). Schooling under tightly regulated and centralised Indonesian control was a mechanism to "forge nationalistic loyalties and identities over ethnic, religious and class divisions" (Kipp, 1993, p. 77). Essentially, the Indonesian prescribed curriculum "ser[ed] the purpose of control" (Nicolai, 2004, p. 44). The usage of Tetum and Portuguese was prohibited in schools, with Bahasa Indonesian mandated as the sole language of instruction and communication. This language policy has been labelled by Caroll and Kupczyk-Romanczuk (2007, p. 67) as "amount[ing] to cultural indoctrination and an attempt at genocide." Described another way, Indonesian schooling according to the Commission for Reception, Reconciliation and Truth (CAVR), "was used...as a part of an integrated security approach whose overriding objective was to ensure that pro-independence sentiment did not take root in a new generation" (2006, quoted in Boughton, 2011).

Within the primary sector, the majority of teachers recruited to work in the rapidly expanded system were Timorese (Boughton, 2011). However, they were expected to obediently deliver a national curriculum and transmit the values of *pancasila* through their teaching. As public employees of the state, teachers were required to pledge allegiance to the state and promise to abstain from any form of political association. Those who refused to maintain such commitments were heavily penalised. Teachers’ roles became tightly circumscribed to following directives from superiors rather than to maintaining allegiances or connections to the communities they taught in (Bjork, 2002). According to several teachers interviewed as part of this research, uniformity of content and the messages delivered to students was ensured through weekend planning days in which all teachers of particular grade levels would gather to script the lessons they would deliver in the coming week(s). Similarly, Nicolai (2004, p. 46) notes that in the early years of the occupation, attempts at control were obvious, with military officers
serving as teachers in rural classrooms throughout the country. Throughout this period, school directors were often politically appointed military or civilian officers with the task of ensuring that Jakarta-based directives were followed, rather than ensuring quality learning outcomes (Boughton, 2011).

This politicisation of schooling led to schools being a site of ongoing social conflict between the state agenda and Timorese communities, with teachers often being the intermediaries in this conflict. School directors who came from other parts of Indonesia labelled Timorese children as disobedient, undisciplined and disrespectful, justifying the fact that Timor-Leste had poor educational outcomes compared to other provinces (Mubayarto 1991 cited in Beazley, 1999). However, from the perspective of the communities in which they served, Indonesian teachers and directors were often perceived as “outsiders” who lacked understanding of or respect for the local population, its culture, and its language, leading to low community support. During the course of research, the experience of those who had taught during the Indonesian period was discussed within some focus groups. At one school, the group discussed how, within the teaching staff, polarisation grew between those who were seen as loyal to Indonesia and those who supported the resistance movement. This led to visible tensions in the interactions that staff had with each other and also between teachers and directors, who were often appointed from other regions of Indonesia to oversee their work. These politics were reported by the group to extend into the classroom. They claimed that students respected teachers perceived as supportive of the resistance and, particularly those in the upper grades, often openly challenged—verbally or in some cases physically—those who were supportive of the occupation [EPDC, FG].

In general the quality of the primary teacher workforce employed during Indonesian times was seen as poor. Most teachers entered the profession after having completed six years of primary school, followed by some form of secondary schooling (vocational or academic). Due to both the highly politicised environment of education and the relatively poor wages paid to Timorese teachers, the profession was seen as one of ‘last resort’ (World Bank, 2004). Nicolai (2004, pp. 46-47) suggests that most teachers were not adequately trained for their jobs, and lacked appropriate motivation to do their job well. Schools faced high rates of teacher absenteeism as many teachers were forced to take on second jobs. Classroom environments were unengaging of students with the focus on rote learning and passing exams.
The outcome was that schooling lacked quality and relevance to the Timorese context. Retention and drop out rates were much higher than in other provinces within Indonesia. Approximately a quarter of Timorese students were retained in Class One, and across primary school repetition rates averaged 17.9%, the highest of all provinces and double the national average. Dropout rates in the province were also amongst the highest across the country, with nearly 15% leaving the system each year, four times the national average (Beazley, 1999, p. 50). Thus, while gross enrolment rates greatly improved during the 24 years of occupation, net enrolment rates remained much lower than the rest of Indonesia, with only 42% of Timorese youth completing nine years of mandatory schooling compared to 64% nationally (World Bank, 2004, p. 6). Similarly, despite 20 years of Indonesian investment in schooling, literacy rates in Timor-Leste remained extremely low compared to other parts of the country and region.

These data suggest that providing an education of quality was of secondary interest to the Indonesian regime (CAVR, 2005). Parents saw little value in sending their children to school in terms of its relevance to their children. Most forms of salaried employment as part of the civil service or private sector were ‘off limits’ to the Timorese, and only offered to Indonesians from elsewhere. This, coupled with a highly politicised curriculum, led many to believe that education, though more accessible, had nothing to offer their children. In the initial years of the occupation within FRETLIN ‘liberated zones’, a shadow education system was established that promoted child and adult literacy, revolutionary theory, and the history of the Timorese independence struggle. Taught largely by resistance fighters and sympathisers, the goal was to counteract the indoctrinating messages of the Indonesian curriculum (Boughton, 2011, pp. 181-182).

As the occupation persisted, parents with the financial means enrolled their children in the parallel Catholic schooling system, as the Church was seen as sympathetic and supportive of the resistance movement and the general quality of schooling was perceived to be better (Arneberg, 1999; Nicolai, 2004). Others, though it was illegal, refused to place their children into any schooling at all (Rei, 2008). Thus the Timorese did not passively accept the social control that the education system promoted, and it became a site of active resistance and non-participation (Beazley, 1999; Millo & Barnett, 2004; World Bank, 2004; Caroll & Kupczyk-Romanczuk, 2007).

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44 Important about this system is that it remains a key part of the heritage of current political leadership and Ministry of Education officials and teachers, many of who participated as either teachers or students within this system.
4.2. The emergency period and the reconstruction response in the education sector

Violence initiated by pro-Indonesia militia and the military, and precipitated by the Timorese vote for independence in August 1999, had a significant and lasting impact on the education system of the country. The result was that 95% of schools in the country were damaged and 80% of them completely destroyed (World Bank, 2004). A mapping exercise carried out in 2001 suggested that more than 50% of the damaged schools were beyond repair, with most lacking appropriate water and sanitation facilities and/or sufficient furniture for students attending school (Nicolai, 2004). An additional casualty was the teaching workforce. Data from this period suggests that approximately 20% of primary teachers and 80% of secondary teachers permanently left their posts, the majority of them being Indonesians who returned to their native provinces following the referendum (UNESCO, 2008, p. 122).

Despite these challenges, communities across the country prioritised re-establishing schooling however they could. Young resistance fighters fanned out across the country to re-open schools and run literacy classes (Boughton, 2011). As soon as violence subsided in September 1999, students returned to whatever remained of their schools and volunteer teachers recruited from within each community stepped in to fill the void left by those who had left the system (Wu, 2000). Most of this activity occurred independent of the international community, which did not act in a coordinated fashion until after the completion of a rapid assessment mission in late 1999. In the interim, schools operated exclusively on the will of local communities to provide a sense of normalcy to their children, and those working in schools pieced together a programme of learning without any formal curriculum. Communities, alongside a number of NGOs and agencies like UNICEF and WFP, contributed to temporary reconstruction measures, such as reinstalling roofing, in the immediate aftermath of the crisis following the referendum. These grassroots efforts quickly returned children to the schooling system, with approximately 50% of children back in school by the end of 1999 and nearly all back by the middle of 2000 (Nicolai, 2004, p. 78).

At the start of the 2000 school year in January, the international community increased their support to these efforts to ensure that this ‘emergency’ response could continue until longer-term reconstruction projects and plans could be initiated. For the first three months of the school year, UNICEF and the WFP provided the 7,000 “volunteer” teachers working in schools with a small monetary stipend ($15 USD/month) and bags of rice for
In March, UNTAET increased the stipend payment these teachers received and assumed control over financial support (World Bank, 2004, p. 9). However, those administering the Consolidated Fund for East Timor (CFET), from which teacher salaries were paid, stated that financial support could only be offered to 3,000 primary teachers as part of the new civil service when schooling was formally opened in October of that year. A teachers’ exam, testing content knowledge, was developed and administered to recruit suitably qualified individuals into schools. Despite accusations of corruption and fraud and relatively poor mean scores of between 31-50%, approximately 2,000 individuals entered the workforce as ‘permanent’ teachers that October, most of them former teachers from Indonesian times (Nicolai, 2004). Those who weren’t given permanent positions were given short-term contracts or continued to work as volunteers with an eye to becoming contracted in the future.

Early assessments of this new workforce reported significant and continued struggles in terms of language of instruction, teaching methodology and content (World Bank, 2004). Much of this was due to a lack of sufficient training for the roles they assumed in post-independence classroom settings. A study conducted just prior to independence suggested that less than 10% of the primary teacher workforce was appropriately qualified as teachers, despite working in such capacity for several years (Arneberg, 1999). The passage of the RDTL Constitution in 2000 adopted Portuguese and Tetum as the official languages of the new country and mandated that these languages be taught in the classroom. However, most of the teachers had been schooled during Indonesian times and lacked competency in Portuguese, and in teaching Tetum as a language. Similarly, in regards to content, many struggled in terms of knowledge of subject areas such as Mathematics and Science on the examination that formed part of the recruitment process (World Bank, 2004, p. 30).

UNTAET and early Timorese leadership maintained an emergency logic of intervention that treated teacher training as a second-tier priority (Millo & Barnett, 2004; Nicolai, 2004). In 2000, UNICEF attempted to offer teacher training in certain districts, recognising the aforementioned needs of teachers, yet internal politics between central officials/district offices, as well as ongoing uncertainty around curriculum and languages of instruction, led to the cessation of this activity (Nicolai, 2004, pp. 117-118). Other Anglophone donors such as the World Bank and Australia made conscious decisions not to be involved in training based on their lack of linguistic connection to Timor-Leste. Early assistance from Lusaphone countries saw teachers from Portugal...
placed directly inside schools to teach students Portuguese for one period a day, but this was highly contested and disputed by those working in schools at the time.\textsuperscript{45}

A longer-term programme for improving the language competency of teachers, initiated by Portugal in 2000, lacked adequate incentives to encourage teacher participation and overcome their resistance to the reintroduction of the language. The programme also lacked appropriate assessment measures, and as time progressed it became increasingly difficult to track teacher progress and achievement (Lee, 2002). As a result, attrition rates were high and linking successful completion of this programme to the later developed \textit{Teacher Competency Framework} proved difficult.

UNTAET and donors also avoided the sensitive questions of reforming the content of what was taught during this period, rightfully believing that they did not have the legitimate authority to make decisions around Timorese identity, cultural values or religious morality (Millo & Barnett, 2004). The Joint Assessment Mission made it clear that curriculum reform was a "medium-term" action and that in the short term, "teachers should be encouraged to use what can be found or supplied cheaply within the region" (World Bank, 1999a, p. 9). Thus, most aspects of the Indonesian educational system were retained, deferring such transformation until authority was handed over to a new Timorese government. As part of reconstruction efforts the World Bank and other donors supported the purchase of Indonesian instructional materials. Slight modifications such as adding pictures of Timorese children to the covers of texts were made, and controversial statements on Indonesian history and identity eliminated. As one teacher who was involved in the selection of new textbooks explained, they were "chosen out of familiarity, rather than any real discussion on educational aims for the future" (Nicolai, 2004, p. 110). Many teachers were not happy with the continued use of these instructional materials and felt that greater attempts were needed to reflect the contemporary context of Timor-Leste. At the same time, such action confused an already complex situation in terms of language of instruction, as the prevalence of Indonesian textbooks and curriculum reinforced utilisation of Bahasa Indonesia, despite attempts to (re) introduce Portuguese (and Tetum, to a lesser degree) into schools (World Bank, 2004, p. 30).

\textsuperscript{45}According to one representative interviewed from Portugal’s Cooperation Agency, “...when [we tried] to teach Portuguese to the teachers during that time, we had mainly teachers from Indonesian times, so they were very resistant to such classes” [K12].
The legacy of this initial period was to establish strong involvement by the Lusaphone community in the area of teacher training, a commitment that is maintained to the present day. Portugal and Brazil continue to provide significant support to teacher training (financially and materially), while other donors have supported these reforms in other ways (see Table 6-1 in Chapter Six). As one key informant commented [KI12], “teacher training has been monopolised by Portugal, and as other donors in the sector, there is a clear message that we are to stay out of that area.” Millo and Barnett (2004) suggests that this balance of power has played a significant role in how each of the official languages was subsequently reintroduced into the curriculum.

4.3. Establishment of education as part of the new citizen-state social contract

The ratification of Timor-Leste’s constitution in 2002 firmly ensconced the new state’s obligation to promote and provide basic education to its citizenry. It specified that every citizen has a right to education, and that it was the responsibility of the state to establish a system of free and compulsory basic education to fulfil this obligation (RDTL, 2002, Sec 59.1). It also guaranteed equal access to all levels of education, and a right to all educational opportunities (Sec 59.3). These two statements cemented education as a key core state function and important dimension of the social contract between citizen and state.

In the context of a fragile, post-conflict state, ensuring that the state is making visible attempts at fulfilling this social contract is often a critical component of gaining political legitimacy. Rose and Greeley (2006) discuss how education can serve as a “barometer” of a government’s commitment to, and relationship with, its citizens. Education is a high priority for communities affected by conflict and fragility, and as such the rapid reformation of schooling is often symbolic of the state’s capacity and will to care for its citizens (Bush & Saltarelli, 2000; Smith & Vaux, 2003; World Bank, 2005; Paulson, 2008). The provision of an accessible, relevant education of quality is crucial in asserting the legitimacy and efficacy of the state. As Moxham (2008) notes, the cessation of conflict and the generation of human development occurs only when the

46 Case study research from other CAFS suggest this to be a common issue, as reliance on development partner assistance can often skew or shift well intentioned policies towards actions that are deleterious to the goal of nation-building, a matter which is taken up in more detail in subsequent chapters (Tawil & Harley, 2004; Vongalis-Macrow, 2006; Murray, 2008).
state comes to have a virtual monopoly on controlling disagreement within the political arena, and gains public acceptance of its power. Political decisions and actions in Timor-Leste, since independence, have been framed at the discursive level by this awareness. Yet, as Tomaševski (2003, p. 51) writes, the guarantee of education as a right requires the state to ensure what she calls the “4-A’s”—availability, adaptability, access and acceptability—which are a challenge for any state, but even more of one for a conflict affected and/or fragile state such as Timor-Leste.

**Availability and access to schooling**

Availability and access to schooling was a primary concern of donors and the transitional government in the immediate aftermath of the conflict of 1999-2000. Premised on the idea that (1) basic schooling should be free and compulsory to all students; and (2) all children should have equal opportunity to attend schooling, activity in the first years focused on achieving this aspect of the social contract guaranteed by the state (Millo & Barnett, 2004; Nicolai, 2004). Through the Trust Fund for East Timor (TFET), the World Bank administered a School Sector Revitalization Programme (SSRP). By 2004, over $40 Million USD was spent rehabilitating approximately 535 schools, constructing 72,000 student desks and 2,000 teacher desks, building nine integrated primary/junior secondary schools (known as Eskola Basica), and delivering two million textbooks, the majority of them from Indonesia. The SSRP’s last phase was to be more quality-focused by supporting teacher professional development and the provision of block grants to school communities to improve their school in the way they best saw fit. Unfortunately, a change in the funding climate by 2004 meant that this stage of the project was never implemented (Nicolai, 2004, pp. 102-104).

These efforts were coupled with the removal of traditional barriers to parents sending their children to school such as the elimination of school and examination fees, ending requirements for school uniforms, and the initiation of school feeding programmes. Together they led to a dramatic rise in enrolment, particularly in the primary schooling sector, and most significantly amongst the poor, girls and rural populations (Caroll & Kupczyk-Romanczuk, 2007). Net enrolment rates jumped from 65% at the end of the Indonesian occupation to 75% three years later (TFET 2002 cited in Nicolai, 2004, p. 85). Increased participation, however, also meant that class sizes grew proportionally larger with student-teacher ratios in some rural locations exceeding 100:1. UNTAET saw the solution to this as the operation of double-shifts in schools, but both students
and teachers were resistant to the idea. Instead, communities often recruited additional volunteer teachers to teach in makeshift classrooms they built themselves.

Despite these achievements, school rehabilitation projects were seen as far from adequate, with most schools still lacking water and sanitation facilities, appropriate ventilation, and sufficient furniture. Construction works were done to a five year standard and in many cases the tropical monsoon climate of the country shortened this duration (Shah & Leneman, 2010). It was acknowledged by the World Bank (2004, p. 32) that, “although 80% of the country’s classrooms were restored and useable within 18 months of their destruction, many schools were not in good condition even by 2003. Only 81% of students had a desk or chair to use in the classroom.” So although initial reconstruction allowed the system to get up and running, it did not solve the longer-term infrastructure needs of a burgeoning educational system. This continues to have an impact on the work of teachers today, as later chapters make clear.

A common response among donors is to offer assistance towards such activity in post-conflict settings as it provides a tangible and technical response to the need to restore educational provision quickly. However, the World Bank (2005, p. 48) notes the most profound and lasting impact of conflict on education is on quality rather than access—suggesting that the “access first, quality later” formula of reconstruction may “simply reproduce the limitations of previous systems or sacrifice learning opportunities for externally imposed access targets.” Recent EFA Global Monitoring Reports (UNESCO, 2006, 2009, 2011) have reinforced this message, stressing that an inattention to quality can in the long-term reverse increases in enrolment that often follow the cessation of conflict. In many CAFS the danger is that without sufficient attention to quality initiatives the system reproduces inequalities of the past, leading many to question the transformative capacities embedded in education (Smith, 2005). Of greater concern is whether growing public dissatisfaction with the quality and relevance of schooling can threaten the fragile social contract that exists between the state and its citizens in the long-term. Thus, since the granting of formal independence, attention has shifted to addressing issues of adaptability and acceptability of schooling practices and activity.

Promoting accessibility and adaptability through curriculum reform
Shortly after formal independence was granted to the nation in 2002, a push began for improvements to the quality and relevance of the curriculum. Nicolai (2004, p. 124) argued that, “having a school curriculum in place would provide a sounder basis for
textbook selection, teacher in-service training, achievement testing and financial planning.” Likewise, a report by TFET (quoted in Millo, 2002, p. 45) noted, “the desired educational efficiency and quality may not be achieved unless fundamental curriculum guidance can be provided ... and teachers are provided with adequate support.” While school enrolments dramatically increased as educational access was restored in 2000-01, net primary enrolment plateaued at around 75%, with drop out rates of 10% and 20-25% repetition rates—impeding internal efficiency of the educational system. This meant that on average it was taking 11.6 years for Timorese children to complete six years of primary schooling, making the provision of basic education a costly process (UNICEF & World Bank, 2005).

There was also increasing internal pressure for the newly independent state to take action on curriculum reform. Larger donors working in partnership with the Ministry of Education at that time signalled that they wanted to shift attention to quality-focussed improvements, namely matters of teaching and learning. The National Education Congress and the CAVR reports made it clear that the continued usage of a transitional curriculum was perpetuating what Salmi (1999) labels as “indirect violence” by alienating children and ignoring the culture, language, and identities they bring into schools. Similarly, primary teachers interviewed in 2003 identified the major issues they were facing in their job as relating to qualitative aspects of the teaching and learning process—namely an irrelevant curriculum and the continued utilisation of outdated instructional materials (World Bank, 2004).

Accessibility requires a certain quality of education, contingent in part on an adequately skilled and supported teacher workforce, non-violent classrooms and appropriate consideration of minority/indigenous rights (primarily through language) within all classrooms and schools (Tomaševski, 2003). Beginning in 2003, with significant donor assistance, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Youth and Sports (MECYS) began the process of designing and implementing a new curriculum for the country’s primary schools. The intent was for teachers, teacher educators, parents and students to feel that the content and approach of the new curriculum was culturally and socially

47 For example, the World Bank’s first package of grant assistance (FESP) to Timor-Leste was almost exclusively infrastructure and materials focussed, while its recent activities through its Educational Sector Support Project (ESSP) have included some quality-focussed initiatives. The FTI Catalytic Fund programming developed by the World Bank and the Ministry of Education has focussed almost exclusively on quality-based improvements, such as early grades instruction and learning resources development.
relevant to the context of Timor-Leste (MECS, 2004). The new curriculum was intended to “respond to the characteristics of Timor-Leste” and demonstrate that it “values its historical and cultural identity” (p. 3). At the same time, an implicit concern of the new curriculum was to lend legitimacy to the new state, signalling its ability to effectively and equitably provide mass education (MEC, 2005b). Curriculum reform was seen as an essential element of symbolising the state’s capability to provide a quality, internationally recognised programme of teaching and learning to its citizens, yet as subsequent chapters identify, this has proven easier said than done.

4.4. Defining the purposes of education in the new Timor-Leste

Just prior to independence, the interim government clearly positioned education’s promise and importance in the new nation’s development. The country’s first National Development Plan, agreed to in 2002, identified education as the vital mechanism for developing individual capacities and improving the social fabric of Timorese society. It was believed that through education a future society could be constructed that was “well educated, healthy, highly productive, democratic, self-reliant, espousing the values of nationalism, non-discrimination and equity within a global context” (Nicolai 2004, p. 177). Still missing, however, was the link between how the guarantee of a programme of basic education would lead to the prescribed aims and intentions of education specified in the National Development Plan. Nowhere in the Constitution was the purpose and intention of such provision specified. Thus, it left open the debate about the transformative possibilities that schooling was imagined as providing. As Tomaševski (2001, p. 48) specifies,

Securing that all children and young people attend school does not, however, automatically mould education towards desired ends. There is no global agreement on what education is for. Varying ends are laid down, in theory and in practice, ranging from vocationalist to liberationist.

As this section details, a number of different rationalities and functions for education in post-independence Timor-Leste have been articulated, and to differing degrees implemented through policy. These purposes have at times competed and clashed with each other, as later chapters will explore.
Increasing the capabilities of individuals for integration into 'modernity'

A strong discourse running through policy since independence has been the notion that education is a key entitlement for individuals to increase their capabilities to fully participate in contemporary society. This perspective views ‘development’ as the process of assisting individuals to be, to live and to do with increased freedom within the context of their daily reality. Within this framework, education is both a freedom and right in itself and a mechanism to improve capabilities in other domains. Reflective of this, the overall vision for schooling, according to the Education Act (RDTL, 2008a, Sect 5a) is to

Contribute towards the personal and community realization of individuals, through the full development of their personality and the shaping of their character, enabling them to reflect conscientiously on ethical, civic, spiritual and aesthetical values, as well as providing them a balanced psychic and physical development.

Alongside that, the explicit goal of basic education is to ensure that children attain the necessary skills, attitudes and dispositions of "being, knowing, thinking, doing and learning to live together", which is in line with a capabilities discourse (RDTL, 2008b, p. 1).

However, while acknowledging the need to increase personal freedoms for all citizens through education, the Education Act qualifies the purpose of education as "preparing people for modern life", with the belief that, "school must train [citizens] towards a specific path of learning" (RDTL, 2008b, p. 5, emphasis added). As discussed at the outset of this thesis, this modernisation imperative was a common discourse in post-colonial and newly independent societies in the post WWII period, with the viewpoint that development is premised in linear and deterministic ways, which require tradition to be forsaken for entrance into a ‘westernised’, individualistic and market-driven

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48 The capabilities approach (Sen, 2000; Sen, 1983a, Sen 1983b; UNDP 1997) understands poverty as the absence of certain capabilities to effectively function in society. The inability to achieve some minimum functioning within society—poverty—is driven by the lack of appropriate entitlements which are caused by not being well nourished, well clothed, or escaping early morbidity, as well as by more complex factors such as the lack of security, safety, or equity. Today, poverty has come to be understood as not just economic poverty, but rather the myriad forms of impediments that prevent individuals from being capable to be free with their life choices, leading to social exclusion from society. Central to the belief that individual freedom is about entitlement to capabilities is the corollary that poverty is about the deprivation of freedoms that limit capabilities to effectively participate in the life of a given community (Sen 2000: 87). Such exclusions take several different forms including: poverty of education, poverty of health, poverty of participation, poverty of voice, poverty of self-worth, and economic poverty. Thus, poverty is not a one-dimensional measure, but rather must be seen within a multidimensional and holistic framework.
society. It assumed that economic growth and development are predicated on a pattern experienced by countries in the Global North, and can be applied anywhere; and that to do so requires changes in psychological values at the individual and community level towards the inculcation of modern values and institutions (Coxon & Tolley, 2005). Thus the state, vis-à-vis schooling, functions to break through cultural boundaries and existing social norms to bring particular types of opportunities to its citizens (Fuller, 1991). Schools are given the role of promoting ‘modern’ characteristics of universalism, individualism, and competitiveness, and countering traditional values and practices seen as ‘backwards’ (c.f, Samoff, 1999; Anderson-Levitt, 2003; Robertson et al., 2007).

*A human capital approach*

Successive policies and national development plans have made it clear that policymakers in Timor-Leste see schooling as a key driver for economic development and integration of the state within the global knowledge economy. At the National Education Congress in 2003 those assembled noted that, “it is vital that its citizens have access to quality education that enables them to find positions in the current world. In the last 50 years the societies that grew the most were those that made great investments in the area of education” (cited in RDTL, 2008b, p. 4). The 2007-2012 National Education Policy (p. 4) reiterated this by stressing how without quality education provision, “there can be no growth and employment, which speaks volumes of the importance of education and training to the long term competitiveness of Timor-Leste in the global economy.”

This largely instrumental and utilitarian narrowing of the capability perspective is strongly embedded within a human capital framework which perceives education as aligned to and feeding into labour markets (Woodhall, 1997). As an example, the Education Act (RDTL, 2008a, Art 5e) stresses that schooling should,

> Develop work capability in individuals and provide them, based on a solid general training, with specific training and competences in terms of knowledge and initiative, enabling them to occupy fair positions in the labour market, contributing towards the progress of society, according to their interests, skills and aptitudes.

Most recently, the country’s *Strategic Plan for Development 2011-2030*, explicitly uses the term “human capital investment” when discussing its prioritisation of education as a development priority (RDTL, 2011c, pp. 7-8). Within the plan, education is seen as the critical pawn in positioning Timor-Leste along the lines of countries like Singapore and Thailand by 2030, and helping to ensure that “Timor-Leste is globally competitive, part of the global information economy.” Thus, revisions to the basic education curriculum
have introduced in the Third Cycle (Grade Seven and Eight) a mandatory subject titled, “Skills for Life and Work”, with the specific objective of “training the student for entry into the labour market at the end of compulsory schooling” (RDTL, 2011b, Art 23.4). As later chapters describe, this human capital discourse resonates quite strongly with teachers’ own beliefs around the purpose of education, as well as that of the communities in which they serve. Many continue to send their children to schools lacking in facilities and resources and with known poor learning outcomes, under the premise that education remains the only way of escaping the poverty that remains endemic in the country. The strength of the education as a poverty alleviation tool is also reflected in current policy statements produced by both multilateral and bilateral agencies, and in international agreements such as the Millennium Development Goals and Education for All (Tarabini, 2010). In many ways, the explicit link of employment and income generation opportunities to schooling is a response to pressures, expectations and discourses above and below the level of the state in an era of intensified globalisation (Bonal, 2007).

Yet, there are a number of dangers to the state in making such associations, particularly when schooling occupies such a visible and important function within the fragile social contract between citizen and state. It reduces schooling to a means to an end, and values its provision only in so far as it can provide economic returns to either the individual or society as a whole (Robeyns, 2006). Given the current economic climate of Timor-Leste this is a matter of grave concern within the context of a still nascent peacetime period. Youth unemployment remains extremely high, largely because waged jobs remain in scarce supply due to historical underinvestment in society, and the subsistence-based and informal economy that prevails throughout most of the country. It has been suggested that this situation has precipitated the entrance of disenfranchised youth into activities such as martial-arts gangs, and fostered growing alienation between civil society and the state; ultimately contributing to ongoing security issues around the country and continued conditions of state fragility (Borgerhoff, 2006; Moxham, 2008; M. A. Brown, 2009; Scambary, 2009; Molnar, 2010). Linking educational provision to economic growth can also run counter to other imperatives of reform, namely those of building social cohesion, increasing individual freedoms, and promoting an active and engaged citizenry. Human capital discourse can, "mould education solely towards economically relevant knowledge, skills and competencies,” and fail to “prepare learners for parenthood and political participation...[or] enhanc[ing] social cohesion and tolerance” (Tomaševski, 2001, p. 39).
**Education as a mechanism of nation-building**

A vital aspect of political and social reconstruction is the need for society to be socially integrated and cohesive. In essence, what is needed are a shared set of values held by citizens that promote human and economic development in a harmonious fashion (Davies, 2004). This shared set of values and behaviours, and the networks of trust and mutual understanding that are expected to result from this, have been given the label of “social capital” by authors such as Putnam (2000). It has been labeled by some as “the glue” that holds society together (World Bank, 1999b). Fukayama (2001) argues that the area through which government has the greatest ability to generate these attitudes and behaviours is the education system.

Discourses which link education to the construction of social cohesion are widely evident in the case of post-independence Timor-Leste. Just prior to the 1999 vote for independence, the exiled leadership met in Australia and drafted a development plan with the vision that “a new East Timor would aspire to have an education system that enhances the development of our national identity, based on our selective cultural and universal human values,” in order to promote national harmony and unity (CNRT, 1999). The need for schooling to inculcate a collective identity and citizen affiliation with the still imagined “nation” was heavily promoted in the aftermath of the conflict (Millo, 2002; Millo & Barnett, 2004). The Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation in Timor-Leste (CAVR), recommended that the government urgently needed to, “[find] ways of drawing on East Timorese culture and traditions...as a source of national identity and nation-building...through the education system” as a mechanism for moving the country from its fragmented and troubled past to a more peaceful and harmonious future (CAVR, 2005). Similar to other countries in Southeast Asia, the intent was for schooling to contribute to conflict prevention, political stabilisation, and protection against internal and external threats (Borgerhoff, 2006).

To that end, the *National Education Policy 2007-12*, stresses the importance of providing education for the sake of “national unity” by ensuring that the system helps to build a sense of solidarity, commitment to the nation, and ultimately “better citizens” (RDTL, 2008b, pp. 7, 11-12). This point is reiterated in the *National Education Act* (2008, Sec 12.1) which suggests that one aim of schooling is to “enable experiences that favour civic, social and affective maturity, promoting the creation of attitudes and habits that favour relationships and cooperation... within a perspective of universal humanism and solidarity and cooperation among peoples.” However, the construction of this national
identity through schooling has proven to be difficult, to say the least, with many aspects of the ‘sanctioned national narrative’ contested by its citizens. Specific challenges to schooling building a cohesive national identity are described in the next chapter.

**Education for democratic participation**

Within the framework of nation building has been the aim of building active and engaged communities and citizens that are partners in the state’s social, cultural and political development. For example the Organic Law for Education makes it clear that the current schooling system should promote,

\[...\]

Schooling is perceived as a training ground for budding citizens to gather, and practice the art of engagement and participation with each other, a function labelled as “training for democratic citizenship” (Labaree, 1997). This is articulated quite clearly in the National Education Policy 2007-2012 (p. 5), which states that students should “contribute to the construction of an open and democratic society, forming people for citizenship, solidarity and participative democracy.” The notion that such participation would lead to a more “just and sustainable world” implies a social justice mission for schools within their communities and with their students, in acts aimed at ‘liberation’ (Freire, 2000). It suggests that schools must move beyond the development of functional literacy to critical literacy, thus promoting social change and justice as part of their educative mission. For example, successive educational policies have suggested that schooling should benefit parents and the wider community through their actions, and that as public institutions, schools’ primary role should be to ensure the active integration of students with their communities and society as a whole (RDTL, 2007, 2008a). This doctrine serves to promote a notion that schooling should be ‘democratic’, with the questionable association that pedagogy needs to be inclusive, engaging and ‘student-centred’ to be reflective of this. This utopian vision for schools and for pedagogy is strongly contested within teachers’ current beliefs and attitudes, as later chapters demonstrate in more detail.

**4.5. Conclusion**

As stated in the introduction to this chapter, reform is often predicated on a legitimacy crisis in education as it relates to and reflects what is occurring in society. At the time of
independence, it was readily acknowledged that a schooling system that reinforced colonial beliefs, values and content would not suffice for a nation that was poised to enter ‘modernity’ and ‘democracy’. In particular, the unequal social, economic and political relations that education had helped to legitimate, foster and reproduce under colonialism and occupation became increasingly contested and open to criticism. Similar to what Jansen (2000) noted about the post-apartheid South African experience, there was a strong moral imperative in Timor-Leste for educational policy to symbolise a visible and clear disconnect from practices of the past—particularly in the state’s attempts to gain legitimacy.

The 2003 National Education Congress recognised that a transformative schooling experience could help to build “major social pacts,” because of its influence and interest to all sectors of society. The Congress also argued that, “education is an aspiration of all society, since it has always had moral legitimacy and it is seen as the cornerstone of any civilization” (cited in RDTL, 2008b, p. 4). Thus the government acknowledged that qualitative changes to schooling experience were needed as “society would never forgive the political power if it was to delay the change of the education paradigm or to be unable of making decisions that are vital for the future development of Timor-Leste” (RDTL, 2008b, p. 8).

This chapter suggests, however, that the rich tapestry of policy symbols signalling mass educational opportunity and expansion in the country following independence was in fact “stitched together with a thin thread,” similar to what Chisholm and Fuller (1996, p. 714) identified occurring in post-apartheid South Africa. The promise of education as a right in the Constitution firmly established mass schooling provision as part of the new social contract, but the rationales, means and ends for this provision have evolved over time, and aspects of this, namely an increasing focus on linking education to economic development, have the potential to undermine the social contract. Nonetheless competing discourses—of social cohesion, establishment of the citizen-state relationship, and economic or human development—are signposts for the ways in which reform agendas were framed, packaged and sold in the post-independence period to different audiences. They indicate important social, cultural and political values that states in transformation aspire to (Lawton & Cowen, 2001; Carney & Madsen, 2009).

The words expressed in these competing policy discourses, and the ways that problems in schooling have been conceptualised and seen as being remedied have real meaning and purpose, and in some cases political intent behind them. Ultimately this chapter
suggests that there are discourses competing for space and influence, and that they set the stage upon which multiple and contradictory interests, ideologies, policies and schooling practices are played out, as the next chapters reveal.
5. A mandate for curriculum reform?

The melding of securitisation and development agendas has placed education as a key institution for “winning the hearts and minds” of citizens following regime change (Robertson et al., 2007). The result is that conflict affected and/or fragile states often face internal and external pressure to restore educational provision as a way of brokering a “peace dividend” between the state and its citizens. Growing pressure has mounted for policymakers to also address issues of educational quality, relevance, governance and organisation as recent scholarship has noted that it is a particular type of institution of schooling that has the potential to promote longer-term stability and peace (Bush & Saltarelli, 2000; Smith & Vaux, 2003; Bakarat et al., 2008; Paulson, 2008; Davies, 2010; Paulson, 2011). Both donors and national politicians are increasingly supporting widespread and highly visible education policy changes as part of reconstruction activity at earlier stages, due to the belief that it offers political capital and legitimacy to new state institutions (Alubisia, 2005).

Curriculum (re)development is often an important aspect of this reform package, as it is reflective of legitimising the new political order in the messages it conveys (Vongalis-Macrow, 2006). Policymakers often rationalise the need for curriculum reform in the language of nation building, social inclusion and the acceptance of pluralistic identities (Tawil & Harley, 2004). It is argued that such reform, in the context of post-conflict and fragile state environments, has the potential to (re)establish social contracts between individuals and the state; provide a context for promoting appropriate norms, behaviours and expectations to uphold such contracts; and provide a forum for various social groupings within society to interact and learn about each other (Heyneman, 2001; Davies, 2004; Davies & Talbot, 2008; Davies, 2010). Accordingly, political regimes are often eager to take quick action in this area, mindful of the fact that inaction is likely to undermine their legitimacy (OECD, 2008). This pressure is situated alongside other internal and external educational demands, including the need to demonstrate progress towards meeting access and quality benchmarks embedded in current global mandates on basic education, or the need to “modernise” the curriculum to prepare the labour force for future economic demands (Fuller, 1991; Wilson, 2000; Al-Daami & Wallace, 2007; Davies & Talbot, 2008). Strong arguments are often advanced that curriculum

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49 This sentiment on education’s purpose for fighting counterinsurgency and promoting security has been seen first-hand in places like Afghanistan and Iraq where political leaders from the UK and the US have made clear statements to this effect (see Novelli, 2010).
must be reformed if schooling is to form and transmit a new collective identity. Rose and Greeley (2006, p. 9) remark that “attention to curriculum development can be crucial to ensure that conditions do not deteriorate, and also to ensure children receive an education that supports values associated with tolerance, social coheson, etc. which will have implications for future generations.”

However, the efficacy of curriculum reform efforts is strongly influenced by the degree to which such changes are perceived as relevant (Fullan, 1991). Relevance is determined by whether clear links are made between the need for change and specific policy measures, the clarity of the innovation(s) defined by the reforms, and the reforms’ utility to citizens and school-based actors. Such resonance is even more critical in post-conflict or fragile states, given the important function it serves in signalling and legitimating a new political and social order (Woolman, 2001; Earnest, 2003; Bazilashe, Dhorsan, & Tembe, 2004; Vongalis-Macrow, 2006; Freedman, Weinstein, Murphy, & Longman, 2008; Hromadzic, 2008; Murray, 2008; Woo & Simmons, 2008).

Curriculum reform rests at the heart of ideological, political and cultural debates around whose knowledge is of worth (Apple, 1979). The official (and hidden) curriculum is one that includes or excludes specific histories, influencing how and whether individuals construct and attach their identities to grand narratives (Popkewitz & Brennan, 1998). Development of a national identity through curriculum reform is often the result of a “violent process of destruction and reconstruction of social relations and structures” (Tawil & Harley, 2004, p. 9), with the aim of creating a new monopoly on appropriate knowledge. Murray (2008, p. 39) concludes that, “what we teach our children is [either the] story of who we are, or [in the case of transformative systems] who we want to be.”

Thus, if reform is to mitigate against social conflict and exclusion, it requires a process of careful deliberation, rationalisation and implementation (Davies, 2009; Miller-Grandvaux, 2009). UNESCO’s International Bureau of Education, through a series of case studies analysed the conditions in which such an approach is possible (Tawil & Harley, 2004). The contributors concluded that policy makers must:

1. Include multiple voices and inputs into the process of reform;
2. Understand and acknowledge points of contention inherent in changes to teaching and learning; and
3. Consider conditions of educational governance and donor involvement.
They contend that such reform is likely to be efficacious and sustainable when initiated by a sovereign national education authority in the context of relative stability and security, and with broad public consultation. Significant alterations to systems of teaching and learning must engage with local values and beliefs, rather than transfer a set of institutional beliefs presupposing assertions of a uniform, homogenous or imaginary political community (M. A. Brown, 2009). Without public legitimacy, the reforms are likely to become a public grievance and a source of hostility of citizens against the state (Bush & Saltarelli, 2000). Significant reform can play a role in mitigating fragility only when there is local ownership, confidence and engagement with the process (INEE, 2011). Conversely, the absence of such engagement can be deleterious to both public engagement with schooling and the long-term legitimacy of the state (Save the Children, 2007; Miller-Grandvaux, 2009; INEE Working Group on Education and Fragility, 2010). In the latter situation, which remains the more dominant case, teachers often end up caught between implementing a series of reforms that may be deemed “necessary” for a changed set of structural and material conditions of society, and working and living within a reality where such reforms are actively or passively contested or challenged (Spink, 2005; Al-Daami & Wallace, 2007; Weinstein et al., 2007; Freedman et al., 2008; Hromadzic, 2008; Zakharia, 2009; Altinyelken, 2010b). Analysis will show that for Timor-Leste, while early reforms to teaching and learning were packaged as a “fix” for crises of the past, the narratives and discourses on which such action is rationalised were and continue to be heavily contested. They are far from being consolidated in the construction of new post-colonial hegemony—signifying continued risks for the still fragile state.

5.1. A new content framework

Content-wise, the primary curriculum framework developed in 2004 made a number of major changes to the transitional curriculum in place at the time.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Time Allocation Grades 1 &amp; 2</th>
<th>Time Allocation Grade 3</th>
<th>Time Allocation Grade 4</th>
<th>Time Allocation Grades 5 &amp; 6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Language Portuguese Tetum</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematics</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion (optional)</td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>(1)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Environmental Studies</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Education, Health &amp; Hygiene</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Arts &amp; Culture</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number of periods</td>
<td>24 periods of 50 minutes each = 20 hours per week</td>
<td>24 periods of 50 minutes each = 20 hours per week</td>
<td>24 periods of 50 minutes each = 20 hours per week</td>
<td>24 periods of 50 minutes each = 20 hours per week</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5-1: Cycles One and Two subject framework (MEYCS 2004, p. 17)

This new framework sought to address concerns raised in an evaluation of the UNTAET transitional curriculum being utilised at the time. Concerns raised were that: (1) the curriculum was overly compartmentalised and overcrowded, given a short three hour school day; (2) the hasty reintroduction of Portuguese as a language of instruction was ineffective and needed to be reconsidered through a transitional language acquisition model; and (3) teachers lacked appropriate resources to teach the wide array of subjects, with many using irrelevant or outdated materials (Popov, 2001 cited in MECYS, 2004, p. 10). The framework, in a shift from the UNTAET transitional curriculum which had excluded the teaching of Tetum as a subject, introduced the language as a subject into primary schools. Human Rights, Natural Sciences, Manual Arts, Religion & Morals, and Social Science were eliminated as subjects, with some of the content matter shifted into new subject areas (discussed below). At the same time, the Minister of Education (at that time) promoted the above framework as being “more meaningful, more active, more contextualized, more relevant, more effective and more integrated” (MECYS, 2004, p. 2).

5.2. Early and continuing questions regarding shifts in content area

In Timor-Leste there were and continue to be significant concerns about the relevance of such reforms, specifically their perceived utility to end users and those tasked with implementing change. Three areas, highlighted below, provide illustration of the contestations that have arisen over the content of the new curriculum.

Language of instruction

Crossley and Tikly (2004, p. 151) suggest that policymakers in education systems at the “periphery” of global economy and politics are often caught dealing with rectifying a colonial legacy on one hand, while simultaneously engaging with demands posed by
rapid globalisation on the other. In the Timorese context, an example of this is seen quite clearly in the decision made after independence to change the official languages, and language of instruction in schools. The ratification of Timor-Leste’s Constitution reintroduced Portuguese as the official language of the country, and Tetum was given the status of a quasi-official second language, with the proviso that it “would be valued and developed by the state” (Art 13). The choice of Portuguese and Tetum as official languages was viewed as a pragmatic compromise. It balanced the need for the country to remain connected to foreign markets with a the need to support a post-colonial language and culture (Taylor-Leech, 2011).

Portuguese was viewed by early political leadership as a link to the country’s past, given its traditional role as a language of worship and its former utilisation amongst colonial and administrative elites (Cabral & Martin-Jones, 2008). Its status rose during Indonesian occupation as it became commonly used in international and clandestine communication amongst the resistance, and later in planning for independence. For this group of resistance leaders turned politicians post-independence, Portuguese was seen as critically linked to the formation of the Timorese nation as well as a vital connection to traditional allies outside their region (Quinn, 2008).

Tetum was selected as the other official language because of its position, both historically and at the time of the independence, as the most widely spoken vernacular and language of contact (Hull, 1998; Taylor-Leech, 2009). Because of the ban on using or speaking Portuguese during the Indonesian occupation, Tetum’s prominence grew tremendously between 1975 and 1999. A combination of forced migration of particular language groups to other regions of the country, and the adoption of Tetum as the language of the liturgy within the Catholic Church, saw it develop status for both its symbolic value of resistance, and as a common language of contact (Cabral & Martin-Jones, 2008). At the time of independence it was still a second language for most of the population, but was the most commonly spoken language across the country. A dialect of Tetum known as Tetum-Prasa was chosen to modernise, standardise and adopt as an official language following independence (Taylor-Leech, 2011).

The choice of Tetum and Portuguese as the official languages of the state also divided many segments of society (Moxham, 2008; Taylor-Leech, 2008, 2011). At the time the decision was made to reintroduce Portuguese, it was not a language strongly associated with contemporary Timorese national identity amongst the general population (Leach
nor was it perceived as a useful commodity for participation in the global knowledge economy (Kingsbury, 2007). In both Leach’s (2007) and Taylor-Leech’s (2008) studies a small but discernible segment of the Timorese population held overtly negative attitudes towards Portuguese, believing it to be a form of cultural imposition or neo-colonialism. Conversely, these same studies found that Tetum was perceived to be of critical utility in day-to-day existence and an important source of identity formation. Timorese teachers held similar beliefs. Quinn (2008), found that while primary teachers used Portuguese out of “compliance” with government policy, they saw little utility for students learning the language outside of academic settings. The same teachers were highly motivated to use and teach Tetum with their students, seeing it as a language of identity and civic participation in contemporary Timor-Leste. There were also pragmatic challenges for teachers in implementing the language policy of the new nation. Within the general population in 2004, only 36% of the general population reported themselves as being able to write, read or speak Portuguese, with 13% considered fully literate in the language (Direcção Nacional de Estatstica and United Nations Population Fund, 2006, p. 47). Within the teacher workforce, a 2003 survey suggested that few primary teachers (5.8%) saw themselves as being able to speak excellent Portuguese, and only 23.8% reporting themselves as excellent in speaking Tetum (World Bank, 2004, p. 47). In the early years of the nation, this led many teachers to continue to use a combination of Indonesian and local dialects as the predominant languages of instruction.

The passage of the 2004 primary curriculum attempted to reaffirm the importance of students developing academic fluency in both of the country’s official languages, with the objective that language learning should be “mutually enriching” (MECYS, 2004, p. 4). The curriculum framework presented a transitional model, where children would move progressively from a language familiar to them, to one that was largely foreign to the vast majority of them (Taylor-Leech, 2011). Tetum language development was expected to be emphasised at the lower grades with a gradual transition to Portuguese over time. Outside of specific language classes, Portuguese and Tetum were to be jointly utilised in subjects like Mathematics and Environmental Studies (Quinn, 2008). Indonesian, which had been the predominant language of instruction across all grade levels, was expected to be transitioned out, with Portuguese expected to rapidly replace it as children progressed through schooling.
However, Quinn (2007, p. 254) chronicles how within the Ministry's own documents and decisions between 2004-2007, schools were repeatedly told to prioritise the teaching of Portuguese over Tetum because of the latter language’s “tentative status.” During this time, Tetum was once again diminished to that of an “auxiliary language” to assist in the teaching process, rather than seen as an equal and important language of instruction (Ministry of Education, 2008a). Taylor-Leech (2008, p. 162) notes that the government’s “self-effacing” position towards Tetum reduced the official status of the language to one of symbolism rather than substance.

The Ministry’s lack of will to support Tetum in schools was also clear in the training programmes it initiated for teachers during this period. Steps were taken to implement, with the assistance of Lusaphone donors such as Portugal and Brazil, a large-scale and compulsory Portuguese language training course for all teachers. The government did not do the same for Tetum, assuming that the majority of teachers were already literate in the language and could teach the language easily. Research has shown this to not be the case. Tetum, while spoken by the majority of teachers is unfamiliar to most of Timorese society in written form. This, coupled with a paucity of Tetum language resources in the early years of curriculum implementation, led to teachers utilising Tetum primarily as an oral or explanatory language of instruction, while Portuguese was used almost exclusively for presentation of written content (Quinn, 2007, 2008, 2010).

The ineffective manner in which the language of instruction policy was interpreted and implemented in the early years has appeared to reinforce the second tier status and arrested development of Tetum as an academic language in the longer term. It has also led to concerns that children are failing to gain literacy in either of the two official languages. Evidence from other conflict-affected fragile states indicates that the choice and support of particular languages within schooling can be a critical aspect of reinforcing or undermining state legitimacy, as well as contributing to public grievances against the government (Tawil & Harley, 2004; Brock-Utne & Garbo, 2009; Miller-Grandvaux, 2009). The way in which Portuguese has been supported and reintroduced through schooling could be seen to uphold the interests of a postcolonial elite with pre-independence links to the Lusaphone community, potentially perpetuating societal

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50 Recently, an Early Grades Reading Assessment conducted by the World Bank (2009a) revealed that 70% of Grade One students fail to read a single word in Tetum. Additionally, more than half of Grade Three students could not respond to a single reading comprehension question in either Tetum or Portuguese.
stratification by limiting access to linguistic capital (Aikman & May, 2003). Ineffective implementation of policy intent has fostered resentment amongst citizens that the state is out of touch with the public in terms of their aspirations and hopes of schooling (Molnar, 2010, p. 92). The prioritisation of Portuguese in the early years of reform was also problematic also because of its limited utilisation in spheres outside of school. As noted in the 2011 Timor-Leste Human Development Report (Taylor, 2011, p. 46), "there is limited reinforcement of the language outside the school, except amongst the older generation and among those who belong to the country’s elite, many of whom—particularly those with diaspora experience—can speak Portuguese."

A change of political leadership, coupled with mounting external pressure to better support Tetum, has seen growing attention paid in recent years to language in education policy. In 2008, a conference organised by UNICEF and CARE brought together international experts to discuss how the country could design and implement language policy and teaching methodology that best serves the needs of children in Timor-Leste. Out of this conference, the Ministry of Education recognised the need to move forward on its language policy and programmes and revised its 'language in education' policy with passage of the Education Act 2008 (UNICEF, 2010). The Act reaffirmed Tetum’s equal status to Portuguese in schooling stating that the purpose of primary education was to guarantee mastery in both languages, and develop knowledge and appreciation of other national languages (RDTL, 2008a, Art 12). In 2009 a formal statement made by international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) working in Timor-Leste advocated for the Ministry to develop a clear language policy indicating how such objectives would be met. They stated that,

> ...At this crucial stage in the nation’s development, it is especially important that the government invest resources in the development and promotion of Tetum as a vibrant official and national language. We encourage the government to commit itself to integration of Timorese culture and languages into the curriculum, to ensure a relevant and culturally appropriate learning environment for Timorese children. (Development Partners Meeting, 2009)

The release of the National Strategic Plan for Education 2011-2015 reinforced the notion that the objective of basic education should be that children excel in learning both official languages of the country (Ministry of Education, 2010a, p. 19). It also reiterated that the objective of a new curriculum was to promote the development of national values, history and culture, in part through children developing fluency in both languages (p. 21). The plan specified that greater attention needed to be given to removing barriers to children’s participation in schooling, with the need to reconsider
how languages had been promoted and utilised in schooling as a key component of this focus. It remarked with alarm that, “decisions about language of instruction, particularly in the early primary years, directly impact upon the accessibility, relevance and quality of learning” (p. 69).

In 2011, the Ministry was presented by a UNESCO-supported National Education Commission with a plan for implementing an effective multilingual language strategy titled First Language First (National Education Commission, 2011). The plan promotes instruction in children’s mother tongue51 in Grade 1, with a transition from Grade 2 and onwards to Tetum. It does not recommend introducing Portuguese as a language of instruction until Grade 4, and then only in combination with Tetum. Differing from past policies, it advocates for the maintenance of Portuguese and Tetum as equivalent languages of instruction throughout compulsory schooling, introduces English as a subject in Grade 7, and reintroduces Indonesian as an optional language in Grade 10 in recognition that many Timorese students continue to go to Indonesia for higher education (Taylor-Leech, 2011). The intent behind this plan is to better ensure that educational experiences for children are inclusive and relevant to their backgrounds, while “preserv[ing] cultural and linguistic diversity as a means to achieving national unity, peace and equitable development.” In a departure from how past language policies have been imposed on the citizenry, the goal is that this approach will more appropriately reflect the complex and diverse needs of Timorese citizens (Ministry of Education, 2011, p. 2).

Recent revisions to the primary curriculum appear to support this position, with the Basic Education Curriculum Decree Law stating that the teaching of languages should uphold the need for schooling to promote “personal and human development, the participation in work and informed involvement in community life” (RDTL, 2011b, Art 21.1). It reaffirms the equal status of Portuguese and Tetum as national languages of instruction, and encourages teachers to use both languages as necessary (Art 21.2).

Following on recommendations of the National Education Commission, it stresses the important role of other national languages in early grades instruction. However, a further section of the law reiterates the fact that “Portuguese should be the primary

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51 According to the National Census 2010, approximately 57% of the population do not speak a version of Tetum (Prasa or Terik) as their mother tongue (National Directorate of Statistics, 2011).
language of instruction at all levels of the Basic Education system” (Art 21.3), contradicting earlier statements within the same law, and the 2008 Education Act.

At the same time, concerns have been raised by segments of civil society regarding the potential divisiveness of promoting mother tongue language instruction in the early grades of schooling. In early 2012, FONGTIL, the umbrella organisation for Timorese NGOs and REDE FETO, a network of 18 women’s organisations in the country released a press statement titled Developing Sucoism, Destroying National Unity publicly condemning implementation of the new policy. They argued that,

This policy would inculcate a sense of division, regionalism and separation based on sucos to the society. It would slowly start to destroy national identity and unity through young children...for this reason, we, the civil society, declare and affirm our complete rejection of the mother tongue language policy to be implemented in Timor-Leste, in particular in the target three districts of Lospalos, Manatuto and Oecusse. (Redefeto, 2012)

The complex, contradictory and highly contentious area of language policy, particularly as it relates to matters of social cohesion, increasing the accessibility of schooling for all, and providing a vehicle for social mobility, has important implications in terms of teachers’ own beliefs and practices, as later chapters will explore.

A secular or identity-based position on the teaching of religion?
The teaching of religion, which had been a required subject under the transitional curriculum, was made optional when the new curriculum was released in 2004. This was reflective of a secularist orientation to religion within the state, prescribed in the National Constitution and actively promoted by the government since independence (Berlie, 2007). While seemingly in line with a rights-based approach, by protecting the viewpoints and ideologies of minority religious groups from indoctrination into the dominant religion within schools, the unintended consequence was to alienate the majority of the population.

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52 Suco are local municipalities within the country
53 In the absence of passage of the policy, the National Commission for Education, with UNESCO funding, were to pilot implementation of mother tongue instruction in these three districts in 2012, and conduct research into its impact on student learning.
54 The Ministry indicated that the decision to teach religion at individual schools would need to be made by the parents together with the school, under the proviso that what was taught would respect the freedom of belief and religion of all students at the school.
During Indonesian rule, the Catholic Church helped to unify opposition to the occupation by: (1) recognising the common suffering faced by various ethnic and culture groups within the country; (2) acknowledging human rights abuses committed by the Indonesians; and (3) encouraging the use of Tetum as a *lingua franca* (Kingsbury & Leach, 2007). As a result, contemporary Timorese identity is closely tied to Catholicism with the majority of Timorese viewing the religion as the most important aspect of being Timorese (Leach, 2007b). Recognising the role the Catholic Church served in forming a national identity, it was recommended early in the curriculum development process that the government and Catholic Church “collaborate to develop curriculum and teaching methodologies which are values-based...and that will promote a culture of peace, non-violence and human rights” (CAVR, 2005, p. 166).

The belief of the first democratically elected government was, however, that religion held no place within its vision for the construction of a modern and secular state (Molnar, 2010). The prime minister at the time contended that, “the world is made up of changes...a static world does not develop”, when asked why religion had not been included in the new curriculum (Berlie, p. 409). In many ways this rationalisation is linked to what Fuller (1991, p. 44) identifies as the polity’s desire to make the nation-state “appear modern” by making a commitment and attachment to institutional forms and socialisation processes of the ‘West’, which includes as part of it a push to “absorb secular language, knowledge and meanings.”

In the case of Timor-Leste, this interpretation of “looking modern” was highly incompatible with the cultural and historical context of the country and led to strong levels of contestation by both the Church and civil society. The argument made by the clergy, opposing political parties, and even leaders of other minority religions, was that the secularisation of schooling would result in an education system that was alienated from society, undermining the legitimacy of schooling as a “public good” (Hicks, 2011). They contended that a curriculum which excluded religion, and in particular Catholicism, could never be accepted as being “Timorese” as it ignored the country’s historical and cultural roots. In February 2005 a public letter written by two prominent bishops suggested that the state was trying to sever Catholicism’s links to Timorese identity, and challenged the Ministry of Education to reconsider its decision (Ricardo & Nascimento, 2005). This plea fell on deaf ears. In response the church mobilised a series of demonstrations in Dili. Hundreds of truckloads of protestors flooded into the capital between April and May of 2005, bringing economic activity to a standstill. The prime
The minister labelled the demonstration as "undemocratic," and ordered police to block protesters entering into the capital (Berlie, 2007, p. 410). In late 2005, after months of civil unrest over the issue, compromise was reached. Religion was reinserted into the curriculum as an optional subject at the discretion of the school and without any form of accompanying resource support.

The backlash and open contestation that the state faced over this decision took many political leaders in the country by surprise. It was the first large-scale challenge to the legitimacy of state decisions from the Catholic establishment, an institution whose opinion many Timorese hold in highest regard (Berlie, 2007; Leach, 2007b). For the Church and its followers, the lack of political will to enter into public discussion around the place of Catholicism in an independent Timor-Leste was reflective of a political elite that was out of touch with its constituency (Molnar, 2010). This alienation precipitated public dissent and served as a precursor to more violent protests and the forced resignation of the Prime Minister in 2006 (Kingsbury & Leach, 2007; M. A. Brown, 2009; Scambary, 2009). It contributed to, "[a] disillusioned and disempowered population who consider state institutions as politicized, distant and not serving the public interest...[giving] space and voice to destructive non-state actors...who manipulated political grievances [in 2006]" (vonKaltenborn-Stachau, 2008, p. 52).

Since 2006 these tensions have been somewhat ameliorated. The Catholic Church invested its own resources into developing a set of materials for teachers to utilise in the classrooms, recognising that, as long as religion was an optional subject, the Ministry would not provide such support. Subsequently, many primary schools have reincorporated religious education (namely Catholic education) as a subject within their programme of instruction, with tacit agreement from the Ministry. More recently, religious and moral education has been reinserted as a mandatory subject within primary schooling (RDTL, 2011b, Annex 1).

Incorporating Timorese history and identity into the content

Environmental studies, labelled as Estudu do Meio55, was an entirely new subject when it was introduced to the primary curriculum beginning in 2004. The subject integrates social science, science, geography, history, civics and environmental studies into a thematic study, and is based on the Portuguese primary curriculum which has an identically named and themed subject. The emphasis at the primary level was to

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55 Literally translated from Portuguese to English it means "studies of myself"
develop understandings of Timor-Leste as a nation and as a country by gaining concrete knowledge of the country's history, geography and natural environment (Heyward, 2005). It was expected that this knowledge would be applied through investigation, analysis and intervention to protect the natural and cultural heritage of the new nation (Chadwick, 2004). Students would begin with a study of their local geography and history and progress to the national context as they moved upwards through school (MECYS, 2004, p. 27).

With the development of a new curriculum, the Timorese state identified that a central objective of history education should be to,

...contribute towards the defence of national identity and independence and to the strengthening of identification with the historic matrix of Timor-Leste, raising awareness as to the cultural legacy of the Timorese people, by way of a growing interdependence and solidarity among peoples, and the duty to consider and valorise different knowledge and cultures. (RDTL, 2008a, Art. 5b)

The problem is that during both Portuguese and Indonesian control, Timorese citizens were not taught about their own country's history. Historical narratives promoted lineages between the Timorese and the culture and history of the colonizer (Hill, 2002; Millo, 2002). Thus, the Commission for Truth and Reconciliation recommended that a cornerstone of peace and reconciliation in the country would be through the development of a history curriculum that discusses the complexities of the Indonesian occupation between 1975-1999 (CAVR, 2005). At the time the new primary curriculum was released, neither the government nor donors were willing to invest in such activity, fearing it was still too soon to open such dialogue. The result—a primary curriculum that simplifies and diminishes the country’s rich historical past.

The small amount of history that is included in the curriculum asks teachers to relay a simple story of universal resistance and struggle. This story serves the purpose of validating and valorising the current political leadership in the country as well as the older, Portuguese-speaking resistance fighters who form their support base (Leach, 2007a). It is also a narrative that has traditionally enjoyed a high degree of popular consensus and helps to gloss over issues of social stratification and differing loyalties that splintered the imagined nation in the past (Molnar, 2010). While not atypical of fragile or post-conflict states, simplified and self-serving historical narratives can splinter and divide a nation in the long-term (Vongalis-Macrow, 2006; Weinstein et al., 2007; Murray, 2008).
In the early years of curriculum implementation, teachers faced a dearth of resources and subject-specific material to go beyond this simple content (Ministry of Education, 2008b). Many schools use historical texts and readers donated by Portugal which lack relevance to the East Timorese context; or use old Indonesian textbooks that present a biased version of recent Timorese history (Heyward, 2005; Leach, 2007a). According to a recent report, the use of these materials causes problems in terms of "conveying to students useful and comprehensible lessons, given the differences in socio-political context and language" (BELUN, 2010, p. 6). It has also been found to be contrary to the aspiration of many primary teachers to teach students about the struggle for independence in its many forms (Leach, 2007a).

This situation is not unlike other post-conflict settings where researchers have documented the continued use of history textbooks written by oppressive regimes, with certain sections omitted; or where governments have banned the teaching of history altogether (Vongalis-Macrow, 2006; Weinstein et al., 2007; Freedman et al., 2008; Murray, 2008). Paulson (2008) warns that such practices can delegitimise the post-colonial and transformative purposes of education in fragile states.

For Timor-Leste, one of the biggest challenges for the still imagined nation may be to build something constructive from a simple narrative of opposition to a common enemy (Borgerhoff, 2006). The country’s shared history is much more complicated, as different ethnic communities and segments of society experienced change and circumstance quite differently throughout successive occupations, invasions and incursions from outside (Janissa 1997 cited in Borgerhoff, 2006, p. 107). The degree to which different segments of Timorese society participated in the struggle for independence was a trigger point for conflict in 2006, when the army splintered between those perceived to be more loyal to colonial occupiers and those who were seen to resist (Scambary, 2009). In 2006 the Secretary General to the United Nations noted that “the resurfacing of divisions that pre-dated 1999 has highlighted the need to address the past as part of the nation-building process" (quoted in Leach, 2007a, p. 200).

Thus while a singular version of the recent past is an expeditious way to sweep questions of national identity “under the rug”, the long-term need of the country to address past divisions through the development of a more nuanced historical narrative remains. If the goal of such a project is to build a nation, the narrative that is taught must be inclusive, relevant, and cognisant of the plurality of its citizens’ experience of
the past and present (Davies, 2004). This requires a history curriculum that is endogenously written, developed through consensus and consultation, and that fosters critical thinking and debate (Weinstein et al., 2007).

More recently, through further revisions to the primary curriculum for pre-secondary schooling, greater attention is being paid to the teaching of Timorese history and civics. In Cycle Three (Years Seven to Nine), both civics and Timorese history are being introduced as separate subjects. The Ministry has partnered with a local NGO to develop the content of these subjects using a participatory, bottom-up approach to determine both the topics and content that should be included (Leach, 2007a, p. 284). Unlike the initial curriculum designed in 2004, this new civics curriculum includes some of the more contentious issues such as human rights, national identity, and the place of religion in Timorese society (Timor Aid, 2009).

5.3. Promoting a learner-centred approach to teaching and learning

In addition to changes to content, the curriculum reform package emphasised that processes of teaching and learning across all content areas should be informed by several core principles, including the fact that teaching and learning were expected to be:

- **Democratic**, defined as meeting the needs of most students, while adjusted to meet the needs of those still unserved;
- **Flexible and locally-based**, allowing adaptability to local needs and contexts; and
- **Inclusive**, demonstrated by an explicit recognition of gender, ability, cultural, language or geographic barriers embedded in processes of learning and teaching.

Acquisition of knowledge was to be one part of the learning process, but the overall objective was to develop in students life skills such as metacognitive communication and critical thinking, which would be applicable to all future endeavours (Chadwick, 2004, p. 16). The vision was that this new curriculum would support a learning experience that was more relevant, contextualised, and individualised for all children. Learner-centred pedagogy featured highly within the curriculum, labelled as reflective of “international best practice” (MECYS, 2004, p. 2). The curriculum framework stressed that teachers were expected to make use of their local community as much as possible, by integrating local events and customs throughout all subjects. Learning was to start by identifying the prior knowledge of each student. Learning was also to be made applicable to students by integrating content across subject areas and applying them to
real life problems. Students were to be encouraged in all subject areas to pose questions and then explore, observe, and experiment with their ideas. For example, the implementation framework stressed that when teachers were teaching mathematics they should start by using the school environment as a site for developing conceptual principles, using concrete materials and symbols. Or in teaching Estudo do Meio, teachers were expected to focus learning in the early years on the local environment around the school, using the community as a resource and site of investigation into understanding concepts of history, geography and science (MECYS, 2004, p. 27). These messages were later reaffirmed with the publication of more detailed syllabus guides for each of the subjects which outlined the broad learning outcomes to be achieved, the learning competencies to be developed, and possible instructional methods to be employed (MEC, 2005a). They aimed to be less prescriptive than textbooks in a genuine attempt to to allow for local flexibility and autonomy regarding how broad concepts and content were taught (Romiszowski, 2005, p. 54).

The new curriculum associated learner-centred pedagogies with a broader shift towards promoting a democratic environment within schools and, ultimately, society. Recent policy links this pedagogy with experiences of schooling that,

...encourage civic and social emotional maturity, to creat[e] attitudes and habits tending towards cooperation, and independence, and responsibility to ones’ family, community and environment as part of training for citizenship in a newly democratic society (RDTL, 2011b, Art 5h).

Similarly, UNICEF (2005, p. 20) argues (quoting a local principal) that child friendly classrooms, and active learning methodologies, “encourages children to be active players...expressing their thoughts and opinions...[which] in an emerging democracy is quite important.”

Learner-centredness is a discourse that has developed over many years with its beginnings based on the socio-constructivists theories of Piaget and Vgotsky who supported the notion that individuals construct knowledge. For Piaget the belief was that this construction occurs based on individual reconciliation of prior knowledge with new experience. For Vgotsky, the belief is that knowledge is constructed through social interaction, which is then personally internalised. Common to both perspectives is the notion that peer interaction and cooperation are critical aspects of promoting children’s learning (Dockett & Perry, 1996). Dewey’s (1998) work added to these theories of learning by stressing the importance of individualising and having children being
actively engaged in the learning experience through the identification and resolution of problems of significance to them. These ideas about learner-centredness provided contrast to traditional teacher-centred approaches to learning and knowledge by:

- Promoting a vision of learning that is individualised, and based on the prior knowledge and ability of each student;
- Emphasising the importance of the co-construction of knowledge, allowing students to draw on their own experiences and interpretations of the learning process;
- Altering the role of teacher towards one of being a facilitator of student self-discovery.

According to Dewey, this approach to teaching promotes a more democratic and participatory view of schooling and, ultimately, a more active and engaged citizenry. In terms of classroom practice and organisation, common characteristics are students participating in group work with a physical arrangement of the classroom that allows for this (i.e. desks organised in clusters/pods); greater amounts of student talk and questioning both between pupils and between teachers and students; teachers engaging in individual or group-based instruction over whole-class lecture; and opportunities for student choice in learning activities.

Such practices have become well established in the practices of classrooms in the Global North, and are seen as an example of ‘best practice’, enjoying an almost hegemonic position in terms of what is seen as justifiable or appropriate teaching in such contexts (Carney, 2008). In recent years, it has been promoted by international development agencies for its merits as an ‘effective’ teaching approach, and important mechanism for improving educational quality (Chisholm & Leyendecker, 2008). This was the case for Timor-Leste where, according to UNICEF (2007, p. 43) documentation, the focus on learner-centred and active learning was done in consideration of “worldwide best practice.” It is often embedded within broad quality-focussed reform initiatives that are supported by external actors, such as changes to the curriculum from content to learning competencies; teacher professional development activities, where child-friendly methodologies are actively promoted; and alterations to assessment policy, towards one that encourages formative testing over summative examination. Tabulawa (2003, p. 9) postulates that while often promoted as “values-free”, neutral and examples of best practice, such action diffuses a particular “view of the world, about the kind of people and society we want to create through education.” Underlying learner-centred pedagogy are discourses of democratisation, individual autonomy, and tolerance, which are seen as “necessary” for individuals to co-exist in pluralistic, liberal, democratic and
market-based societies. In the context of fragile or conflicted-affected states, promotion of such learning approaches is closely aligned with the merging of security, development and democratisation efforts promoted by outside actors. As such, some writers have argued that learner-centredness is a prime example of new forms of imperialism where foreign ideals are imposed through educational policymaking (Tikly, 2004).

A number of other scholars suggest a more complex and autonomous agenda for adopting discourses of learner-centredness into reform. Rather than direct policy transfer, what occurs in many contexts is that of policy borrowing, where symbolic elements of policy are taken, sometimes without the material elements that coincide with such ideas (Steiner-Khamsi, 2004). Jansen (2000) argues that this is what occurred in South Africa with the development of a new curriculum at the end of the apartheid-era. Specifically, he advances the assertion that what has occurred in the country is the symbolic production of policy, aimed at signalling a discursive shift from the past. Drawing on Fuller’s (1991) work, it could be contended that the adoption of policies such as child-centredness is part of the polity’s commitment to institutional forms and socialisation processes equated with the west in an attempt to appear ‘modern’. For post-colonial countries or those in transition to liberal democracy, Nykiel-Herbert (2004) advances the argument that this pedagogy has become a preferred choice by policymakers as it helps to reinforce the symbolic promise of intellectual liberation that distinguishes it from traditional approaches that could be seen as colonising or oppressive. Hoppers (1996) adds that learner-centredness is often associated with reinforcing competencies, knowledge and skills such as problem solving, teamwork, and critical thought, which are seen as essential for citizen participation in the global knowledge economy, making it an ‘easy sell’ to national and local actors.

Regardless, a key question is how deep political will runs beyond that of simply borrowing the images associated with learner-centredness. Drawing on the notion that political will is more than just policy production; that it is about a shared vision for such an idea at all levels, as well as a commitment to its effective implementation (c.f. Little, 2011), subsequent chapters will explore this.

5.4. Conclusion

Undoubtedly strong will was expressed by all sides for the restoration and reconstruction of educational infrastructure following the 1999 referendum. Concurrently, recognition mounted that for Timor-Leste to achieve its ambition of
saying goodbye to conflict, and hello to development, more was needed than just
providing all children with access to schooling. Curriculum reform was legitimated by a
number of discourses which were cobbled together to suit the competing needs and
aspirations of politicians, donors, and citizens. This reform was predicated on what
Little (2008, p. 88) describes as “political wills” rather than a singular collective will for
reform. She contends that the will for reform is driven by different agendas, often linked
to varying political interests at the local, national and international levels. Evident in
past and current debates about the place of language, religion and history in the new
Timorese curriculum was the rupture of what had been coined a ‘shared desire for
reform’.

Early political leadership and UN governing authorities failed to engage the broader
Timorese community in meaningful public dialogue about aspects of the curriculum that
are critical to the creation of a nation (Millo & Barnett, 2004). According to Bogerhoff
(2006), those who have run the country since independence lack understanding of how
to operate in a fashion consistent with the democratic principles the state now espouses.
He notes that, as former resistance fighters, many have incorporated behaviours of
dandestine and hierarchical decisionmaking into their public roles. With few checks and
balances on their power—due to the lack of strong, independent institutions and
existence of strong animosities and factions within government—decisions are often
made without sufficient public consultation, dialogue or information-sharing (Molnar,
2010). The political leadership in the country is widely recognised as lacking
transparency and openness with its constituents, and many Timorese lack awareness of
policy decisions that impact their lives (vonKaltenborn-Stachau, 2008). Thus, claims
made by Timor-Leste’s prime minister that a shared political will for a particular form of
‘development’ exists56, must be questioned given the fashion in which decisions have
been made and implemented (ETAN, 2011a).

Specific to curriculum reform, the reintroduction of a colonial language, the imposition
of a secular nature to the curriculum, a narrow version of Timorese identity/history and
the promotion of learner-centred pedagogy, all remain contested elements of the reform
package. This also brings to the fore questions about for whom, and in whose interests,

56 At the launch of Timor-Leste’s Strategic Development Plan 2011-2030 for development
partners, Xanana Gusmao stated that the country’s development is enabled by a shared
political will for reform. He claimed, “In the same manner that [colonial domination] unites the People around a common ideal, so too does it [now] in the present fight for prosperity nurtured by all with conviction, courage and determination” (ETAN, 2011a).
such decisions were made, a matter to be explored in more depth through teachers’ eyes in Chapters Seven and Eight. It has invited public resistance and division, as well as alienation between the citizen and the state. Such actions have appeared to many Timorese to foster the development of an education system catering to a small minority, rather than the needs of the majority, which was the discursive intent behind the reforms. Arguably, several aspects of this new curriculum reflect a neo-colonial rather than post-colonial discourse.

This situation may not be wholly unsurprising given the strong international presence that has marked the post-independence era. Increasing interventionism in state building has led a number of scholars to conclude that such involvement leads to new forms of governance which maintain control from a distance (Crossley & Tickly, 2004; Robertson et al., 2007; Hickling-Hudson, 2010; Novelli, 2010; Robertson, 2012a). In line with Steinmetz’s (2008) claims that processes of colonisation (and de-colonisation) are complex, contradictory and contingent, the dissonance between discourses of reform and the actions of policymakers have created a context for, “domination, resistance, subversion, ambiguity, and change” in the post-colonial period of education reform (Hickling-Hudson, 2010, p. 300).

Strong donor involvement in the development of the new Timorese primary curriculum57 has been noted by a number of researchers to impede local understanding and ownership of reform dimensions. Quinn (2006) argues that “principles of the new curriculum [include] ones that reflect the views of those consultants who helped write [it],” rather than those of the state or other national actors. Heyward (2005, p. 33) raises a similar concern, noting that, “given the extensive donor support being provided [to curriculum reform]… there is a real sense in which the ownership of programs rest not primarily with the government and local agencies but with the international and foreign agencies and their personnel.” The Ministry of Education (2010a, pp. 36, 197) itself raises concerns about extensive donor involvement in matters such as curriculum development and implementation, asserting that “international staff end up performing a significant part of the technical functions of the Ministry”, leading to poor Ministry ownership and leadership of such efforts in the long-term. Caroll and Kupcyzk-

57 The development of the curriculum was fully funded by UNICEF and contracted to a university in Portugal to write (Chadwick, 2004).
Romanczuk (2007, p. 79) surmise that this external involvement has quickly diminished prospects for transparency of decision-making and processes of inclusiveness and broad consultation.
6. A context for implementation—capacity for innovation?

Policy should be understood as having three distinct components—goals, targets and tools (Honing, 2006). In the context of conflict affected states, it is often the goals and targets that are considered and articulated in reform agendas, rather than the tools to bring such vision about. Logics of intervention are often driven by concern over the end state of such transformation (peace, security, stability, development); and are disconnected from the mechanisms and conditions that are necessary to achieve such aims (House, 2000). A symbolically rich, but resource-poor context of implementation is often the consequence of such action. Following analysis in the previous two chapters of the cultural and political landscape in which Timor-Leste's current primary curriculum was conceptualised, this chapter looks closely at the tools and mechanisms through which curriculum reform has been implemented since the process began in 2004.

The implementation of significant education reform requires a state apparatus that is able to bring together technically sound and detailed plans of action with adequate financial and human resources, strong involvement and ownership by administrators close to the ground, and well-developed systems for monitoring and evaluation (Tawil & Harley, 2004; Oketch & Rolleston, 2007; Little, 2010a, 2010b; Obanya, 2011). Such conditions are rarely found in states that have only recently emerged out of conflict. Economic stagnation or decline, typical of such states, may lead to policymakers being unwilling or unable to commit to long-term investments in reform action. This can often promote piecemeal rather than systemic change in the education sector (Brannelly, Ndaruhutse, & Rigaud, 2009; Turrent, 2011). Coupled with uncoordinated and/or poorly connected mechanisms of service delivery between central government and school-level stakeholders, there can often be little coherence to implementation actions (Little, 2010a; Obanya, 2011).

In sum, conflict-affected fragile states are confronted with the fundamental challenge of a perceived mandate for reform not being matched by sufficient administrative, technical, financial and human resources to implement change in any meaningful way. This results in educational politics being divorced from immediate concerns of what is, and what would be necessary to bring about change, as illustrative examples from contexts as diverse as Bosnia-Herzegovina (Hromadzic, 2008), Rwanda (Weinstein et al., 2007; Freedman et al., 2008) and Afghanistan (Woo & Simmons, 2008), have shown.
The proliferation of various and often competing policy symbols, rather than any concern or acknowledgement of the challenges of implementation, leads to what Jansen (2002) identifies as political symbolism as policy craft—a concept that was presented in the initial pages of this thesis.

In the case of Timor-Leste, the Ministry of Education, with support from international advisors, has been quick to produce a number of policies on issues related to access, relevance and quality of schooling, as previous chapters have made clear. These policies have often not been aligned with each other, and at times have contradicted earlier statements (e.g. language of instruction policies). Similarly, many aspects of the curriculum reform acknowledge international best practice as a reason for its adoption (e.g. learner-centred pedagogy), but without appropriate acknowledgement of the history and context of implementation. And while policy development has often been the product of widespread consultation (for example the Teacher Competency Framework discussed in the next chapter), the Ministry acknowledges that implementation attempts have, “...exercis[ed] top down planning with very little knowledge of what the issues in the districts and sub-districts are. Therefore, we design and implement standardised, generalistic [sic] tools that may or may not be effective to resolving the issues” (Ministry of Education, 2010a, p. 36).

The analysis in this chapter draws on Rogan and Grayson's (2003) theory of curriculum implementation, which identifies three main constructs—support from outside agencies, capacity to support innovation, and profile of implementation—as impacting on the efficacy of reform efforts. Specific attention in this chapter is given to the first of these three, with later chapters exploring teachers’ own perceived capacity to support innovation through their background, motivations and identity, and the impact that these conditions have on how implementation has taken shape (profile of implementation). According to the authors, support from outside agencies is action undertaken by the Ministry, other state agencies, donors or teacher unions to promote reform. Such incentives or “tools” can be either material or non-material. Material support can include: provision of physical resources such as infrastructure (classrooms, furniture and supplies); learning materials (textbooks or other teaching resources); or direct support to students or families, provided through incentives such as school feeding programmes or cash transfer schemes. Non-material support usually takes the form of teacher professional development (Altinyelken, 2010c) or, increasingly, accountability schemes aimed at more tightly classifying and framing the work of
teachers towards policy objectives (Robertson, 2012a). Each of these factors is explored in more depth to illustrate the point that the outside support that has been offered to schools has often been inadequate and/or irrelevant to the needs of teachers and students, due to competing political agendas and insufficient capacity for reform.

Particular attention is given in Section 6.2 to the evolving landscape of continuing professional development support for the country’s primary teacher workforce. Given that most primary teachers are labelled as un/underqualified for their position, effective in-service training is of vital importance in supporting teachers through significant changes in both content and pedagogy. Within the confines of a state still lacking sufficient capacity on its own to offer such support, the role of various development partners has been significant in assisting with such training. This chapter charts the evolution of this support and critically assesses the current context of in-service provision, based on interviews with teachers and development partners.

6.1. Setting the scene: a still evolving Ministry

As early as 2005 the Ministry expressed concern that while curriculum development had been well supported by donors it was, "still uncertain how the process of embedding the new curriculum in the system and ensuring that it is adequately supported in the classroom will be financed or managed" (MEC, 2005b, p. 12). Similar concerns were noted about the quality of Ministry staff employed to support the implementation of the new curriculum. Ministry documentation suggested that many lacked clarity on their duties and were often unqualified to do their jobs (MECYS, 2004, p. 12). Despite a recognition that upskilling this workforce and increasing the number of skilled technocrats was vital, three years later the government continued to lament that "deficiency and insufficiency of monitoring and supervision mechanisms, devices and structures...for educational management, planning and supervision functions," was an ongoing impediment to effective curriculum implementation (RDTL, 2008b, p. 7).

A situation analysis included in the National Education Strategic Plan 2011-2015 (Ministry of Education, 2010a) suggests that, despite significant investment in capacity-building by donors, there remain large gaps in terms of the organisation’s capacity to deliver services. Specifically it notes:

- A general lack of awareness amongst Ministry of Education staff regarding the organisation’s own policies or its current practices;
- Little work discipline with idle personnel and high absenteeism;
o Unclear and shifting mandates for regional and district offices of the Ministry, as the organisation remains a strongly centralised and hierarchical bureaucracy;

o Poor utilisation of the country’s EMIS system, due to weak IT skills of many Ministry staff and their inability to draw out or identify useful information;

o Poor coordination between policy objectives and actual activities and budgets actioned within the Ministry.

Under these circumstances, the percentage of the national budget that is allocated to education expenditure stands at about 10%. According to UNDP (Taylor, 2011, p. 46) this amount is significantly lower than what should be allocated, given the scope and ambition of current reform activity, and the government’s prioritisation of education as a key sector of investment. However, it also notes that, “...it is unrealistic currently to increase educational expenditure to such a 20 percent level, due to capacity constraints.” The result is that the money allocated to the Ministry of Education is largely directed to recurrent expenses, rather than new programmes (RDTL, 2012a).

Financing for most reform-based activity, including curriculum development, teacher professional development, school infrastructure improvements and textbook production, has come instead from donor contributions. In the primary education sector alone, actual and expected donor disbursements in the years from 2003-2008 amounted to just under $58 million USD as Table 6-1 indicates. As a percentage of the actual and expected non-recurrent expenditure budget for the Ministry for over the same period, support from donors accounted for nearly 64% of this budget.

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58 The 2012 budget allocates $94.7 Million USD to the Ministry of Education, of which $88.5 Million is for staff salary and allowances (RDTL, 2012a).

59 This figure is calculated from aggregating actual and expected Ministry of Education budgets from 2003-2008 amounting to a total of $91,061,837 USD over this period (Ministry of Education, 2009c).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Donor</th>
<th>Objectives</th>
<th>Amount (USD$)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UNICEF</td>
<td>Teacher training, capacity building at school, district and national levels, primary curriculum implementation support</td>
<td>10,304,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>Capacity building, funding of <em>Lafaek</em> magazine[^60]</td>
<td>605,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portugal</td>
<td>Language support for existing teachers in Portuguese</td>
<td>15,430,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>Language support for existing teachers in Portuguese</td>
<td>492,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World Food Programme</td>
<td>Provide free snacks in primary schools</td>
<td>3,291,408</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>Funding for <em>Lafaek</em> magazine</td>
<td>259,673</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World Bank</td>
<td>School infrastructure improvement, acquisition of Portuguese language materials, funding for <em>Lafaek</em> magazine, policy development support</td>
<td>27,535,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>57,917,981</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[^60]: *Lafaek* was a publication that was produced by CARE International, in partnership with the Ministry of Education. It was intended to be a supplementary bilingual (Tetum/Portuguese) resource to teach students about the natural and social sciences. It was one of the only instructional materials produced for Timorese by Timorese for a number of years (Heyward, 2005). In late 2010, *Lafaek* was discontinued by the Ministry of Education as this supplementary resource was deemed no longer necessary given the distribution of textbooks in core subjects to all schools.

Table 6-1: Contributions of development partners to primary education 2003-2008 (Ministry of Education, 2009c, p. 32)

The most recent Ministry of Education budget suggests that donors will contribute approximately US $29.6 Million towards its activities in FY 2012. More than half of this funding is directed towards continued improvement of the basic education sector through support of Tetum language texts and teacher resources (Korea), the reintroduction of Portuguese language into schools and with the teacher population (Portugal), targeted interventions to reduce the country's high drop-out rates (USA), and teacher training support and capacity building activities (UNICEF, Australia, New Zealand) (RDTL, 2012b, pp. 28-32).

Although without the support of these development partners, many of the Ministry's ambitions for reform would lack human and financial resourcing, the heavy involvement of these external parties has caused concern. The multitude of donor projects has been largely uncoordinated, overwhelming the Ministry's limited capacity in terms of human resource and fiscal reporting demands (Ministry of Education, 2010a). The Ministry's assessment of development partner support is that it has been marred by a “lack of effective dialogue and collaboration” leading to project-based inputs and activities that have, in some circumstances, been misaligned with its policies and practices (Ministry of Education, 2010a, p. 38). At the same time, medium to long term commitments by donors to the sector remains unclear, despite “interest and ongoing commitment to strengthen cooperation links with the Ministry of Ed,” [sic] creating uncertainty for the
Ministry in terms of planning (RDTL, 2012b, p. 28). Technical assistance that has been
to the Ministry has largely involved foreign consultants substituting for
national staff, with

...no capacity building vision on the part of some of the permanent
international staff and these international consultants do not perceive
themselves as having a major capacity building or staff-training role
(Ministry of Education, 2010a, p. 36).

6.2. Training and ongoing support

The development and implementation of the new Timorese primary curriculum
increased pressure on the Ministry to support in-service training opportunities for a
workforce that was largely unprepared for significant changes to content, language and
teaching methodology. An assessment of the workforce at the beginning of
implementation suggested they were woefully unprepared for this new curriculum,
stating, "Few of the current stock of primary teachers have been properly trained and
few have mastered more than simple classroom techniques and many have very limited
subject knowledge" (MEC, 2005b, p. 12). A separate study of teachers’ self-identified
needs at the time suggested a strong need for in-service support in teaching
mathematics and Portuguese, learning Portuguese as a second language, teaching in
multi-grade settings, psychological development, and classroom management (World
Bank, 2004, p. 46). The study concluded that to solve some of these issues, it was
necessary for the government to:

Initiate effective strategies to facilitate the transition into the new
languages of instruction (from the mother tongue to the official
languages of Portuguese and Tatum), provid[e] learning materials and
teaching guides, devising a system of student assessment, and provid[e]
continuous in-service training for teachers (Ibid).

Recognising the fact that the majority of the workforce would remain in the profession
for the short to medium term, other assessments suggested it was critical to, “improve
the capacity of existing teachers” as “their relative youth and apparent openness to
change suggests that investment in in-service training would be worthwhile” (T.
Davidson, 2005, p. 16). Thus the National Framework for Learning specified that,

...policy makers will introduce major transformations in in-service
education. Non-qualified teachers will be given an opportunity to be
brought up to date, and the many groups that contribute to teacher
preparation will coordinate their activities to insure efficacy. Best
practice in ongoing professional support includes an incentive structure
that lets teachers see the benefit of improving their practice and
encourages schools to make better learning the heart of their educational
vision (Chadwick, 2004, p. 33).
This was further reinforced within the government’s 2005 Strategic Plan for the Achievement of Universal Primary Schooling Completion (SP-UPC) by 2015. Within this plan, it was strongly agreed that improving the quality of the teacher workforce was critical. Specifically, the Ministry suggested that,

...teacher development [is] the key to school quality improvement and the essential step to ensure effective use of books and materials. The Ministry will, over the course of the next three years, place an emphasis on in-service teacher training in order to effect immediate improvements in the classroom (MEC, 2005b, p. 23).

Development partners agreed with this assessment, contending that “developing the capacity of the existing teacher force is a critical element of the UPC strategy” (UNICEF & World Bank, 2005, p. 26). In terms of the content of such training, the plan made it clear that a focus was to be on assisting primary teachers to implement the new primary curriculum, utilise instructional materials more effectively, and shift practice towards student-centred pedagogies. It advocated that training programmes be synchronised and structured so that they focussed on setting practice in the context of theory, have trainers modelling and demonstrating skills in classrooms, and ensure that teachers have opportunities to practice and be observed in using new skills by the trainers. It was recognised that the curriculum would need to be introduced gradually, and ongoing and consistent support provided.

The challenge that faced both the Ministry and donors was how to make this a reality. At the time, training provision within the Ministry was coordinated through the Instituto para Formação Continuada (Institute for Continuing Teacher Development or INFCP). Still in its infancy, INFCP was reported as being staffed mainly by foreign technical advisors, lacking appropriate infrastructure and resources, and without an appropriate mandate to develop activities autonomously (MEYCS 2004, p.14). Thus, in the SP-UPC, it was acknowledged that much of this activity needed to be done collaboratively and with the support of Portugal, UNICEF and other outside partners (including a number of smaller NGOs) who largely shaped the direction of teacher training.

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61 Developed as part of the government’s shift from emergency reconstruction towards long-term development focussed activities, it defined how the government would target resources to meet this key objective as part of its commitments to achieving MDG and EFA targets. The Plan was built on the strategic directions of the National Development Plan, the draft National Education Policy 2004-2008, and the Sector Investment Plan. For fiscal years 2006-2008, it was conceived of as a medium term, multi-donor programme of assistance in which donors would commit to more unified forms of support in achieving jointly agreed to aims (World Bank, 2009b).
Portugal Cooperation’s involvement 2004-2008

In 2004, Portugal revised its training programme to move away from school-based language focussed interventions towards one that aimed to provide all teachers with a pathway to earning a post-secondary education degree. Over two years of part-time study, teachers could participate in courses in teaching methodology, content-specific knowledge, and language, which would earn them this degree. Classes took place in sub-district centres, or in hub schools that formed part of established educational clusters known as nucleos which came out of UNICEF’s 100 Friendly Schools Programme (discussed in next section). For teachers close to these locations, they would teach in the morning, and then participate in classes four afternoons a week. For teachers whose schools were located further away, they often would participate in two full days of coursework, and then return back to their schools for the remainder of the week.

Despite the strong commitment of the Portuguese to a robust, academically rigorous course of training, there were a number of concerns voiced about the format, content and nature of this training, which operated from 2004-2008. One was the slow pace at which the programme was qualifying the workforce. Due to the limited number of trainers available from Portugal and the intensive nature of the program, only 600 primary teachers could be absorbed into training each year. Projections suggested that under this scheme a significant portion of the teacher workforce would remain unqualified until between 2015 and 2020. The nature of the programme was also criticised for being traditional in its format and content, and largely removed from the classroom context in which teachers operated (T. Davidson, 2005; Romiszowski, 2005). As a result, the programme suffered high rates of attrition. The lack of direct relevance to their daily practice, coupled with the time commitment and distance that teachers faced in travelling to training centres, led many individuals to lose motivation (Ministry of Education, 2009b).

UNICEF’s Involvement 2004-2007

During this period, UNICEF worked closely with the INFCP and the Ministry of Education to assist in teacher training efforts. It promoted the development of a clustered schooling\textsuperscript{62} network, known as the 100 Friendly Schools, comprised of 100 nucleo schools across the country, each of which would have 4-6 filial schools associated with

\textsuperscript{62} Nucleo schools were ‘hub’ schools located in sub-district centres, while filial schools were ‘spoke’ schools located further from these centres, often in remote or more rural localities.
it. The program aimed to “make learning more active, effective, and involved” for those involved in schools—namely teachers, parents and students (UNICEF, 2005, p. 21). Through the INFCP, UNICEF assisted in training facilitators and teacher trainers who were then located in each of the country’s 13 districts. In addition to the primary task of directly training teachers in more active learning methodologies, other objectives of the project were to: strengthen parent involvement at each of its schools through the establishment of PTA councils; implement school-based management systems and procedures with training directed primarily at head teachers; and strengthen district-level Ministry capacity, particularly that of technical staff such as the school inspector and curriculum specialist.

UNICEF also took on significant responsibility during this period in helping INFCP to introduce and implement the new primary curriculum in all schools. According to the Ministry of Education’s initial curriculum implementation plan, the intent was that the new curriculum would be introduced one grade level at a time over a five-year span (MECYS, 2004). In 2005 and 2006, teachers from Grades One and Two respectively were presented with the curriculum guide for their year level, and introduced to the new forms of teaching methodology and assessment that formed part of the reform. Training was delivered by a team comprised of district trainers, facilitators, and select head teachers from UNICEF’s 100 Friendly Schools Programme in each district. Training occurred using a cascade model, where UNICEF’s National Trainers (primarily Dili-based Ministry staff) would visit districts and train these teams to then deliver the programme to teachers. Teachers were called from across the district to attend training in the district centre over nine days.

In 2007, a number of changes were made to this implementation process. There was growing concern that teachers in the upper grades were operating without direction in regards to teaching content or teaching materials despite the new curriculum being ready. The Ministry of Education decided to hasten the pace of training, so that by the commencement of the 2007-08 school year the curriculum would be fully introduced into primary schools (UNICEF, 2010). As a result, the training was shortened from nine days, to two. UNICEF recommended that training occur within each school cluster rather than be amalgamated at the district level, to better ensure that teachers could work collaboratively on implementing the curriculum after the course of initial training. The cascade model was dramatically modified so that regional training teams were nationally trained and deployed through various districts to directly deliver the message.
to teachers. The belief behind this change was that “those with strongest knowledge of the training program should be the ones actually training the teachers” [KI9].

Although UNICEF succeeded in training all primary teachers on the new curriculum its larger intentions were left incomplete. There was recognition within both UNICEF and the INFCP that teachers would need ongoing professional support to effectively utilise and implement the curriculum. The original program design signalled that after teachers received initial training, they were to be supported at the school level by the district level trainers and coordinators who would visit schools on regular occasions. Additionally, there were to be “waves of short term and spaced training over the long term,” according to a consultant who worked for UNICEF during this period. Unfortunately, she acknowledged that, “[these trainers] often saw their job as ‘monitoring’ and ‘assessing’ more than supporting teachers,” and that the open-ended nature of the curriculum made it difficult for the trainers in terms of “coping” with divergent outcomes in the classrooms [KI12]. But most significantly, the follow up training that was to occur for all grade levels never occurred. This same consultant, in a final report to UNICEF at the conclusion of activity noted that,

> Considerable work went into the design and implementation of this curriculum project and much expertise was built across many levels. However, this will be lost if training continues to be a “one-off” event with no commitment to creating a permanent system of training, monitoring and, importantly, mentoring of both teachers and those who will work with teachers.

Teachers who participated in this professional development programme also noted similar concerns believing that, “ongoing capacity-building activities...were essential to ensuring projects attained their objectives and that positive outcomes were sustained over the long-term” (UNICEF, 2010, p. 48). However INFCP lacked sufficient internal capacity and funding to continue the curriculum implementation process.

**Questioning a lack of progress**

2007 saw the formation of a new government in Timor-Leste, and with this an assessment of progress to date across all sectors of society including education. Recognition mounted that the task of improving teacher quality was moving slower than expected, and was in need of reconsideration in terms of its organisation, provision and content. Improving the qualifications of and training provisions for current teachers was made a priority programme for the new government under the rationale that, “the quality of education and the learning outcomes is closely related with the quality of educators and teachers” (RDTL, 2008b, p. 3).
One of the biggest impediments to improving teacher quality, according to the *National Education Policy 2007-2012* was the continued fragmentation of training provision, particularly amongst the various external actors involved in such activity—a concern that had been brought to the forefront of discussion between donors and the government nearly three years prior. For example, Romiszowski (2005, p. 65) noted multiple "in-service training and development activities, that may, or may not, overlap in terms of participants, schedules and other key teacher duties...these same teachers may well be participating up to 4 times a week in the emergency bachelor degree program."

Similarly, Davidson (2005, p. 11) suggested that in many cases the actors involved in these programmes were not communicating or coordinating with each other around what they were doing. Recommended as part of the Ministry’s achievement of universal primary education, was "specification of the organisational structure to support both pre and in-service training at all levels of the delivery system...as a means of avoiding undue parallelism of activity between donors and government as the reform programme gathers momentum." The programme of the new government noted that, "the inexistence of a teacher training policy guiding all training, within a perspective of ongoing training for teachers" was of strong concern (RDTL, 2007, p. 4).

**New coordination and alignment on training**

Development partners, at the end of 2005, acknowledged the contribution they had made to this situation and suggested that their training programmes be more efficient and effective in their outcomes. They felt it critical that, "a concerted effort be made both by the Government and [development partners] to fully integrate all teacher upgrading programs into a single program based on internationally recognized and locally adapted sets of competencies and linked a system of formal certification" (UNICEF & World Bank, 2005, p. 11). The expectation on the part of these outside partners was that the Ministry would take the lead in coordinating efforts. This may have been an unrealistic expectation given that in 2005 it remained a significant challenge for the Ministry “to effectively harness [outside actors] so that they each contribute to the functioning of a well planned and coordinated system of continuing professional development” (Romiszowski, 2005, p. 54). The Ministry’s SP-UPC failed to provide a sense of how better coordination would be achieved. This was then exacerbated by the events of 2005-06, when Dili was plunged into violence, and the Ministry and development partners moved towards responding to this crisis. Many medium term planning issues
were delayed or forgotten, and donor agendas shifted towards supporting humanitarian education efforts such as the emergency schooling of IDP’s and peace education.

In 2008 a joint Ministry of Education and World Bank assessment recognised that many of the aforementioned issues had failed to be sufficiently addressed in the three years since a more coordinated approach to teacher training was to be undertaken between donors and the Ministry. It noted:

- A continued lack of coordination for teacher training, with duplication in terms of audience, content and timing;
- That while Portugal, UNICEF and Brazil (at pre-secondary/secondary levels) were major partners for the Ministry in training efforts, numerous smaller NGOs were also involved who were largely operating without knowledge or communication with the Ministry;
- While all teachers had received some training on the new curriculum, this was not sufficient to ensure that it would be effectively implemented and utilized in classrooms; and
- There was no quality assurance in regards to the training occurring, nor was it clear how each of these trainings would help contribute to the development of a competent and qualified teacher (World Bank, 2009b).

These findings were also reflected in a separate teacher training needs analysis, conducted by INFCP. There was particular concern about the impact that smaller NGOs were having as training providers. It noted that up to 20 NGOs were offering training to teachers, often during instructional hours, and without consulting with the Ministry of Education. Content often "reflected their own priorities rather than the priorities of the Ministry of Education" (Ministry of Education, 2009b, p. 9). The report noted that the fragmented and ad hoc nature of teacher training that had marked the system since independence had done little to improve educational quality in classrooms. Citing international research, the report made it clear that these efforts by outside actors, including Portugal and UNICEF, had largely been “ineffective, inefficient and [a] costly investment of human and fiscal resources” (Ministry of Education, 2009b, p. 10).

Finally, and following consultation with teachers, the report remarked that opportunities to participate in professional development were not perceived to be equally available, and that many teachers felt that greater coverage of programmes that allowed for them to gain a post-secondary qualification were needed. It contended that despite the efforts of donors and the INFCP since 2004, more than 8,000 teachers were still unqualified, requiring new approaches to training provision. It suggested that, “flexible and innovative approaches for both training...and support of teachers who lack traditional qualifications” was an “urgent priority for both the Ministry and training providers” (p. 11).
In response, there have been significant changes since 2008 in how teacher training is situated within the Ministry. At an institutional level, the passage of the *Education Act*\(^63\), *National Teacher Competency Framework, Regime for Organisation and Management of the Basic Education Sector*, and *Teacher Career Regime* intended to better frame and justify subsequent policies and structural changes to the organisation, content, and purpose of teacher training\(^64\). The policy intent through these system-level reforms has been to:

- Strengthen the function and role of the Ministry of Education as the coordinating body for all ongoing professional development in the country;
- Establish a competency-based framework for teachers upon which the quality and relevance of training programmes can be judged;
- Provide ongoing supervision and monitoring of teachers’ work following professional development through a cluster-based programme of professional support and the strengthening of a school inspectorate team;
- Establish parameters and a framework for outside providers of training (development partners and NGOs) as part of their ongoing support to improving the qualifications of the existing teacher workforce; and
- Develop a set of minimum standards for teachers to remain in the profession and incentivise them to seek more training (RDTL, 2008a; República Democrática de Timor Leste, 2010b, 2010a).

*A new training model based on coordination*

These measures have led to significant changes in how donors and the Ministry have worked together to provide in-service training opportunities to those still unqualified. Specifically, training provision has moved from a highly decentralised activity to one that is now under increasingly tight control of the Ministry. Donors now pool funding and support towards Ministry-articulated outcomes in relation to teacher quality, rather than the conflicted and competing agendas that often marked past activity. In 2008, the *Organic Education Law* of the Ministry of Education established a new national directorate for Continuing Teacher Professional Development (DNFP)\(^65\). DNFP would be responsible for coordinating all in-service training efforts within the country, and

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\(^63\) This law established the BacheleroP of Education, or an equivalent post-secondary qualification in teaching as the minimum standard for the teaching profession. Its passage meant that approximately 75% of the workforce was officially reclassified as ‘unqualified.’

\(^64\) The *Teacher Career Regime* and the *Competency Framework for Teachers* are discussed in greater detail in the next chapter, given the way in which they frame and classify the roles of teachers within Timorese schools today.

\(^65\) In 2011, this directorate was absorbed into INFORDEPE and is now combined with INFCP. This was done as part of a Ministry-wide restructuring, following revisions to the *Organic Law for Education* (2008). INFORDEPE was established to serve as an autonomous academic institution with responsibility for both pre and in-service training for all Timorese teachers.
ensuring that all training that was offered was aligned to a comprehensive training plan for the large percentage of teachers who were newly classified as un/underqualified under the 2008 Education Act. The INFCP was strengthened in size and scope to being an implementing agency of training in cooperation with various development partners such as Portugal and UNICEF.

In its first year in operation, DNFP worked alongside these partners to pilot a new model for training aimed at more efficiently and effectively providing in-service education to all teachers. Approximately $1.5 Million USD was appropriated by the Ministry for DNFP to coordinate an eight-week intensive training course for all teachers, which was conducted in October and November 2008. Using 250 trainers from Portugal Cooperation, Brazil’s teacher training programme (FROFEP), and INFCP, training was offered simultaneously to 8,000 un/underqualified teachers in five regional training centres.

Training focussed mainly on building the content knowledge of teachers, primarily in Portuguese language, but also in mathematics and geography/history. At the end of the training, all participants were asked to complete an assessment, which intended to determine those who would “qualify” for entry into the permanent civil service and/or opportunities to enter onto a training pathway. Interviews with senior Ministry officials suggest that approximately 90% of teachers passed the assessment at the end, allowing them to continue their work in the profession as either contract or permanent teachers. The 10% that didn’t pass were not fired, but given another opportunity to sit the exam the subsequent year, at which time most succeeded [K15, K17].

Working under Ministry coordination and leadership, however, has not proven easy for many development partners who find a continued lack of organisational capacity frustrating and challenging. As an example, two weeks before the October-November 2009 trainings, the Ministry requested UNICEF to provide it with 10,000 copies of the training manuals to be utilised. This was done without any prior warning or offer of assistance in terms of meeting costs or providing a mechanism for deployment of these materials (UNICEF, 2010, pp. 41-42).

The nature of Portugal’s current agreement with the Timorese government places it in an even more difficult position, as both a donor and service provider (Cooperação Portugal, 2008, p. 26). Through IPAD (Instituto Português de Apoio Desarrolo
Cooperação Portugal), its support of teacher training programmes is classified under "technical cooperation", and its mandate circumscribed as "responding to the very concrete demands of the Timorese government" (Cooperação Portugal, 2008, p. 51). The majority of its current effort in regards to in-service training focuses on supplying Portuguese teachers for the cursos intensivos. According to a representative from IPAD, this means that trainers, while hailing from Portugal and paid through Portuguese assistance, are effectively employees of INFCP.

The frustration for the Portuguese is that since 2008, when in-service training was placed under Ministry control, "we have had three different models on how [intensive training] is offered," according to an IPAD official [KI2]. This has serious implications in terms of being able to forecast and provide a sufficient number of trainers to meet last-minute demands. According to the same official, IPAD is often asked to provide trainers less than a month prior to the commencement of a curso intensivo, despite Ministry recognition that recruitment and training of new teachers is a lengthy process. Additionally, poor information flows between the DNFP, INFCP and IPAD meant that advance planning for training modules is difficult, and limits the preparation that trainers could make in advance. One Ministry of Education official readily acknowledged that, "because training gets done across the whole country at once, it doesn’t get managed as well as it could be" [KI10].

For IPAD this has led to successive cursos intensivos being understaffed in terms of the required numbers of trainers, compromising service delivery to teachers. Similarly, a lack of Ministry organisation has meant that Portuguese trainers commence work without the promised resources and materials from the Ministry, and are often left to their own devices in terms of training content. Many trainers spoken to during survey administration in April 2010 had little direct communication with the local Ministry of Education office, and felt unsupported in their roles. Due to insufficient Ministry organisation, IPAD and its trainers often came under criticism for the quality and organisation of training from teachers, given their intermediary role between INFCP and the teachers themselves. In April 2010, agitated and frustrated teachers were observed directing anger at these trainers in personal attacks and acts of resistance (walking out of training, protesting in front of the classroom), with little external Ministry support in mediating these tensions.
Training today: Meeting the needs of teachers?

Under Ministry leadership, the focus and purpose of teacher training has shifted towards one of qualifying its entire workforce to a minimum basic standard in an expeditious fashion, rather than providing them with a long-term programme of training. Based on World Bank⁶⁶ advice, the Ministry has chosen to, “...train all the 8,000 teachers up to a certain level and then, forget about them,” according to a consultant for the organisation. The attitude now, according to the same individual is to

...let [the current workforce] grow old and retire...then we can focus on improving the quality of the pre-service system. We have to stop focussing on the dribs and drabs that are coming through pre-service training momentarily, so that the major issues around teacher quality can be addressed at a stop-gap level for the time being. [KI3]

The focus is on “changing the whole profession at once,” because in the past the system affected only 30 or 40 teachers at a time. According to this informant, the problem with previous in-service provision was that, “it was just chipping away at the edges, because the vast majority of teachers were unaffected by such action.” This ‘whole profession’ ethos is now part of the Ministry’s longer-term educational strategy. The imperative is to “ensure that quality education is affordable” in part through, “modular, flexible and more efficient training systems” (Ministry of Education, 2010a, p. 141, emphasis added).

The policy language makes it clear that the focus is now on coverage and low cost when it comes to in-service provision, and is reflected in the Ministry’s ambition of ensuring that all teachers in the workforce are nominally qualified to the minimum standards required by the Education Act 2008.

One representative from another large development partner questioned this approach,

How do you teach twenty years worth of experience in five weeks, or two hours, or three weeks? It takes a lifetime to learn, so it is a little unfair to expect teachers to be everything. They are trying to promote ‘fast food development,’ the motto being ‘if it is not delivered in 30 minutes then it should be free.’ There is real danger in doing this with teacher professional development...there is not enough understanding that to become skilled takes time. [KI1]

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⁶⁶ The Bank has been a strong advocate for improving teacher quality in an effective and expeditious manner. In its assessment of the Ministry’s activities it noted that this new model could reach a much greater population of the workforce than prior, and was more efficient by ensuring that teachers are kept in the classroom during the term, and training them during the holidays when they are paid regardless (World Bank, 2009b).
For Portugal Cooperation, despite their current involvement, there is mounting concern about the feasibility and practicality of accomplishing the task of qualifying all teachers within current Ministry timeframes:

I understand the Ministry’s rationale for doing so because they have a political problem to deal with...they want to implement the Teacher Career Regime and to do so you need to quickly qualify all the teachers...but to do this you need to train the trainers well...many teachers have had already ten courses and ten trainings...and there [has been] no improvement in what they do...so where is the success?[KI2]

National coverage of training in short bursts of time is now the *modus operandi* for in-service training. Training has expanded beyond the goal of improving teachers’ content knowledge to include other dimensions of the *Teacher Competency Framework* (discussed in the next chapter), such as improving teachers’ ability to sequence and plan lessons and utilise classroom materials effectively. Training now operates during the three term holidays that occur during the school year (generally April, July and December), and has been further decentralised to occur concurrently in more than 50 sub-district centres. Trainers based in district or regional capitals travel to various sub-districts within their area, delivering training for 24 hours per week over three weeks, to groups of 60-70 teachers at a time.

The reality in many cases is that teachers are receiving much less than the stated 24 hours per week of face-to-face instruction. During observations of this training regime in April 2010 at 13 different locations across the country, teachers received between four and ten hours of face-to-face instruction per week. The balance of the time was scheduled as “independent work,” where the expectation was that teachers would work alongside their peers on tasks assigned in class. The lack of face-to-face support was largely due to an insufficient number of trainers available to conduct the training simultaneously in the 52 sites across the country. Trainers often needed to travel (sometimes great distances) between locations to reach teachers, cutting significantly into classroom instructional time. In interviews and conversations, teachers, particularly those who travelled great distances to attend training sessions, suggested that the limited hours that actually were offered made them question whether attendance was worth the effort. One teacher made it clear that for him, “it is not enough to have teacher training for one or two weeks...instead it is better to offer something *proper* than to waste everyone’s time” [EPRL, FG, emphasis added].
Nonetheless, national directors interviewed within the Ministry of Education continued to discuss the relative merits of various donors’ professional development programmes by how many teachers they had trained, rather than an assessment of the quality or effectiveness of what was being offered. The Ministry’s partnership with Portugal was seen as a “success” according to one national director because “working with them we have helped most primary school teachers improve their practices, in only two years” [KI10]. Consequently, in-service provision focussed on individualised and school-based support was increasingly marginalised or ignored within Ministry circles. Evaluation studies of two recent initiatives within the Timorese context suggest that while they may not reach the same number of teachers as the cursos intensivos, they were much more effective in impacting on teaching practice (Instituto para Formação Continuada, 2010; Shah & Leneman, 2010). What made these alternative programmes different is that they:

- Occurred at the school-site;
- Engaged with teachers over a prolonged period;
- Provided multiple opportunities for teachers to plan from and utilise new resources and materials; and
- Allowed trainers and teachers to build mutual trust.

While Ministry officials recognised the virtues of these programmes, they felt that resource and time demands that such approaches involved made them untenable on a national level. As a representative from one of these programmes noted, “it is hard to sell an alternative package of teacher training which involves a small number of schools to the Ministry these days no matter how successful it is” [KI9].

Teachers were adamant that current in-service provision is ineffective to improving their capacity due to its content, organisation and focus. Significant issues that came out of interviews regarding current training provision included the fact that: (1) there has been an overemphasis on Portuguese, to the detriment of discussing teaching methodology or classroom management; (2) the utilisation of Portuguese in all training made it difficult for all teachers to participate effectively in the programme; (3) training during school holidays didn’t provide teachers with any time to plan or rest between terms; (4) there was no coherence to the training that was offered, as teachers had no clear sense of how each module fit into a bigger qualifications framework; (5) the exclusion of teachers who were already deemed ‘qualified’ under the Teacher Career Regime ignored the fact that all teachers needed to have access to continuing
professional development; and (6) instruction in larger groups for short period of times did not meet the needs of individual teachers and schools.

These perspectives are well backed by research which suggest that effective professional development must be: (1) context-specific; (2) integrate theory with opportunities for practice, account for the individual background of each teacher; and (3) ensure that teachers have opportunities to assess whether changed practices have led to differing student outcomes (Timperley, 2010). It must also ensure that teachers come to see the importance and relevance of the gap that currently exists between policy aspirations (i.e. policy goals and intentions of the new curriculum) and practice (i.e. what teachers actually do in the classroom).

6.3. Locally based support mechanisms

International research clearly indicates that school and/or locally based instructional support is a critical component in successful implementation of reforms to teaching and learning for countries in transition (c.f. Bennell & Akyeampong, 2007). Day to day supervision is often the direct responsibility of a school director, who should serve as a facilitator, guiding teachers to improve their practice. This is often supplemented through district and regional Ministry offices, which are expected to provide ongoing monitoring and evaluation of teacher performance, and opportunities for remediation and training.

The role and function of the School Inspectorate

Passage of the Education Act (2008a) specified that management, evaluation and inspection of the education system, and in particular of schools and teachers “is an essential instrument for defining the education policy, promoting the quality of education and learning, and for the responsible and transparent management of all education system levels” (Art 42.3). To that end, it noted that the role of school inspections would be broadened to “determine the quality of education and teaching” (Art 45.2). Following passage of the law, the role of the School Inspectorate office was strengthened. The then Minister of Education noted that the role of inspectors needed to change to “include technical and pedagogical support, continuous training for all staff managers, teacher and non-teaching staff, and [to] assess educational aspects of all sectors and at all levels of education” (Ministry of Education, 2009d, p. Forward). The overall objective of the strengthened inspectorate was to “promote quality and accountability within the education setting of Timor-Leste” (Ministry of Education, 2009d, p. 1). Within schools, inspectors were given the mandate of observing,
monitoring and evaluating, and documenting the pedagogy of individual teachers. In theory, this was to involve noting whether teachers maintained appropriate records and lesson plans, utilised appropriate resources and methodologies and forms of student engagement, and demonstrated alignment with content and pedagogy of the new curriculum while teaching. Feedback on these observations was to be provided to both school directors and the teachers observed. Inspectors were also to observe the levels of professionalism that teachers exhibited through regular monitoring of teachers’ attendance, punctuality, appearance and conduct (Ministry of Education, 2009d).

Survey results indicate that inspectors did in fact visit schools on regular occasions\(^{67}\), but most teachers and school directors were not satisfied with the nature of their visits. The majority believed that inspectors should visit schools more frequently and act in more supportive ways when at schools. One director expressed his frustration, stating

I have never seen an inspector come during a visit to our school and walk into a classroom and observe what is actually happening...they may come every three or four months, but they usually step into my office, quickly meet with me, and then leave again [EPBM, Director].

This was a sentiment shared by teachers from a remote school who felt they critically needed feedback from inspectors about how to improve what they were doing. They were disappointed that, “so far they have never turned up to do so” [EPDL, FG]. Instead, as shared by one Dili school director,

...They never come and monitor or see the work we are doing. All they do is visit schools that they know are already advanced, but they don't go to the ones that are struggling or are falling behind. The Ministry should focus its attention on all schools, not just some of them [EPFR, Director].

Another director argued that inspectors needed to shift from a compliance-based focus towards one of school improvement: “Inspectors should be coming to our schools and classrooms more often to consider what kinds of improvements we are trying to make and also to find out how they can help us better do our job” [EPFA, Director].

**An evolving role for school directors**

Recent legislation has also specified that local school clusters and directors assume greater responsibility for ongoing monitoring and support of their teaching staff. Passage of the *Management of Basic Education Sector Decree Law* (RDTL, 2010c) overhauled the structure of how primary schools throughout the country are managed

\(^{67}\) Mean score=3.06; % teachers agreeing/strongly agreeing=85%
and operated. According to the law, basic education institutions (Grade One through Eight) were to be re-clustered into Integrated Basic Education Establishments (IBEE) in 2011. One school within each IBEE was reclassified as a “Central Basic School”, and surrounding this school would be several “Basic Filial Schools.” Under the new structure, a Basic School Principal with overall management responsibility for the IBEE would be supported through a management team consisting of an Assistant School Principal, Educational Cycle Officer, and Curricular Area Officer. A large part of this team’s role was to ensure effective implementation and support of the National Curriculum and the Teacher Career Regime. The Ministry’s viewpoint was that this shift in management structure was necessary to address an, “ineffective school management system inherited from the occupied period” (Ministry of Education, 2010a, p. 80).

The role of the school director was more clearly defined for each school with the development of a draft National Quality School Standards (NQSS) Framework which supports the implementation of this new management structure (Ministry of Education, 2010b). Founded on four pillars—quality school governance, building a positive school environment, effective school management, and ensuring quality learning outcomes—and a series of indicators, directors were for the first time given a clear set of expectations about how to manage a school. The standards suggested that a key component of a director’s role was to support the work of his/her teachers through mentorship and ongoing professional interaction. For example, school directors were expected to, “speak to staff about professional matters, undertake regular professional supervision of teachers’ lessons and planning, and deal with matters of underperformance professionally and honestly” (Ministry of Education, 2010b, p. 8).

In the context of Timor-Leste, however, school directors and local Ministry staff have not been trained as instructional leaders and are themselves struggling with the reforms. While they may be strong advocates for such change, they often stand as intermediaries between the demands of reform, as articulated in policy, and the actual conditions of implementation (Fuller, 1999; Altinyelken, 2010c, 2010b). At the time the new curriculum was implemented, the capacity of school directors and local officials who were tasked with supporting the work of teachers in shifting their pedagogy was deemed as critically deficient in Ministry reports. It was noted that they lacked clarity on their duties and were often unqualified to do their jobs. The highly centralised nature of the Ministry of Education was noted as affording directors and local officials with very
little professional autonomy in terms of instructional or managerial leadership (MECYS, 2004; MEC, 2005b).

In this study, most school directors noted that they had ended up in their position through ‘selection’ by local officials or their peers, often with no training and minimal compensation for the extra duties they subsequently assumed. Many of the school directors discussed how the lack of sufficient human resources in the country, following the conflict, led them to assume the positions they now held. The story of this director was a typical one for those interviewed as part of the study:

...Then independence came along and the government saw that I had enough experience and was already teaching in the area, so I was chosen to be responsible and in charge of education in the area as a director. [EPRC, Director]

None of the eight directors interviewed received any direct training on how to be a director; thus many employed a 'sink or swim mentality' like the director quoted below:

It's funny, when I became director, and I had a list of tasks I needed to do, no one gave me any directions on how to them...I just had to figure out solutions myself. Whatever administrative tasks I have learned, I have learned to do with my own effort. No orientation from anybody. So whoever comes after me, cannot just sit and wait and expect that things will be told to them, they just need to do themselves. [EPFR, Director]

Others noted that they knew what to do by “observing the previous school director” (usually during Indonesia times) [EPBM, Director], despite the fact that in that period most school directors were civilian or military officials (not educators), and school management largely involved following and ensuring others followed central directives (Ministry of Education, 2010a; UNICEF, 2010). With the new curriculum and ensuing moves to provide greater autonomy and control to the school level, the continuation of management practices from colonial times is no longer sufficient, but may explain the types of supervision that continue to occur within Timorese schools.

During the course of research, teachers were asked about the adequacy of supervision provided by their school director. The majority of teachers felt that director provided

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68 Passage and implementation of the Teacher Career Regime in 2011 intended to change this in schools, with school directors with school rolls over a certain number receiving an additional payment for their administrative duties.

69 At the time this study’s empirical research was carried out in 2010, the role and purpose for school management was still in evolution. Directors and teachers, while cognisant of these changes, reflected on their roles and the current state of school-based supervision, based on the context prior to legislation such as the Management of Basic Education Sector Decree Law and the National Quality School Standards (NQSS) Framework.
assistance when needed; provided advice on how to improve their teaching practice; treated all teachers equally; and regularly observed classes they were teaching. Fewer teachers were in agreement with the idea that their director praised good teaching openly, or that they had the time to adequately supervise their work.

These comments were further explored in follow up interviews with both school directors and teachers, to uncover the actual forms of accountability and oversight that currently exist inside schools. Generally teachers saw their director as a fellow colleague, given that most directors, barring those in the largest schools in Dili, maintained their role as a classroom teacher. Thus comments about the working relationship between the director and teacher included remarks such as “we have unity and understand each other,” [EPDL, FG] and “we work as a team between the teachers and the director” [EPDC, FG].

The majority of directors suggested that as part of their day they visited classrooms within their school. However, most felt they lacked time to do an adequate job of supervising their teachers. As one director stated in exasperation, “We have to support the teachers who have less skills, and are often here from eight in the morning until five at night...this puts a lot a pressure on us and even effects our health” [EPFR, Director]. They felt that they often struggled to balance their own teaching responsibilities, alongside the managerial duties required of them which included attending Ministry meetings or training, dealing with Ministry bureaucracy to secure resources, funds or supplies, and filling in for teachers when they were absent. Many directors discussed how they were most likely to enter classrooms when the teacher of the class was absent for any reason, rather than on regularly scheduled occasions. More experienced directors noted that they often reviewed the attendance records and lesson plans of teachers, but lacked the time to go and observe their classrooms on a regular basis.

None of the school directors interviewed detailed an ongoing system of professional development and support that they had established for their teachers at the school.

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70 Mean score=3.37; % of teachers agreeing/strongly agreeing=92.6%
71 Mean score=3.36; % teachers agreeing/strongly agreeing=93.2%
72 Mean score=3.26; % teachers agreeing/strongly agreeing=92.5%
73 Mean score=3.19; % teachers agreeing/strongly agreeing=90.2%
74 Mean score=2.89; % teachers agreeing/strongly agreeing=71.1%
75 The actual wording of the item on the survey was negatively stated, with the statement “The head teacher of my school is often too busy to assist me.” The mean score for this statement was 2.55, indicating that a large number of teachers agreed (41.9%) or strongly agreed (10.2%) with the sentiment that their head teacher was in fact too busy to provide help.
Classroom observations, when they occurred, were short in duration and often not followed by a process of feedback and reflection with the teacher observed, according to directors interviewed during the course of research. One director felt that she was not capable of assisting teachers with what they needed claiming that “…[teachers] come to me for support, but as a director, I am not a god that knows everything, so that support should be coming from the Ministry instead” [EPVV, Director].

In one Dili school visited, teachers did not feel comfortable approaching their director for assistance. As a group, they discussed how they lacked confidence and trust in their director’s ability to assist them appropriately and felt that a gulf existed between the teaching staff and the director, whom they saw as politically motivated and divisive in her approach. They were concerned that by raising professional issues with the director, Ministry actors from the “outside” would be drawn into the fray unnecessarily. Instead, they described how they were much more likely to seek the assistance of colleagues. As one teacher explained,

“If there is any problem or criticism we have of each other, we discuss it in a meeting...we don't go around talking about it outside. We bring these issues to the meeting, discuss it, and then think about how we can go about solving this problem ourselves” [EPDC, FG].

Somewhat unexpectedly, a large number of Dili school directors appeared to be completely unaware that as part of their job they might be expected to provide ongoing support to their teachers. In an anonymous exit survey completed after a presentation on some of these research findings to 80 school directors and inspectors in Dili, approximately 20% of the audience (n=21) stated that something they had learned was that it was “important for school directors to orient and share knowledge with teachers outside of class” and “monitor teachers' work in the classroom on a regular basis.”76 As a result of the workshop, many expressed the need to spend more of their time on monitoring and evaluating the efforts of their teachers. When asked what they would do differently based on the workshop, comments such as “I need to give suggestions to the teachers using modelling/examples”, or “I need to communicate with my teachers on a regular basis”, suggest that for many directors their role and function within the school remained unclear and poorly defined. Thus, while teachers identify their head teachers as providing support and accountability, this perception may be more a result of the

76 All comments written on the exit survey were anonymous and cannot be attributed to specific individuals.
historical involvement head teachers had in loosely supervising pedagogical practices, rather than what should actually be occurring in an educational system undergoing radical reform. It also suggests that despite a more clearly articulated set of expectations on the role and function of directors in policy doctrine, little of that had permeated itself into practice at the time of the empirical research in 2010 and 2011.

6.4. Provision of resources

Teachers need appropriate textbooks, teachers guides, learning materials and facilities to support changes in pedagogy and content matter. International research demonstrates that in CAFS such resources are often scarce or non-existent, a significant impediment to reform enactment (Shriberg et al., 2007). The quality and sufficiency of infrastructure is also a concern, particularly when they contribute to unmanageable teacher to student ratios. Bennell & Akyeampong (2007, p. 12) note, “Large class sizes and heavy workloads in relation to pay (the effort-price of work) also make teachers resistant to the introduction of new teaching methodologies and other innovations.” At the same time a lack of appropriate planning facilities (i.e. staff room), toilets, electricity or classroom space can be demoralising to teachers and students, and limit the activities that teachers can conduct with their students (Earnest, 2003).

Curriculum resources and associated teaching materials

In 2005, the Ministry noted the urgency of developing and disseminating new textbooks and teaching resources that corresponded to the new primary curriculum. However, as a still new and evolving organisation it did not have a process in place for sourcing, commissioning and distributing new textbooks and other learning materials corresponding to this new curriculum. In its SP-UPC it noted that,

The absence of readers or other materials designed to reinforce the acquisition of literacy and of books for Tetum or environmental studies, of supplementary materials to stretch the more advanced pupils or to provide student centred activities are serious constraints on advancing learning, as are the shortages of properly sequenced Portuguese texts. (MEC, 2005b, p. 12)

The result was that the development and distribution of these resources lagged several years behind the adoption of the new primary curriculum. Because of the lack of appropriate resources, teachers were reported to continue to rely on texts donated by Portugal which lack relevance to the East Timorese context, or to use Indonesian textbooks that corresponded to the previous transitional curriculum (Heyward, 2005). Many of the Portuguese texts were reported to be improperly sequenced and too difficult for teachers to effectively utilise with their students (T. Davidson, 2005).
subjects where Portuguese-equivalent texts were not available, teachers relied almost exclusively on *Lafaek* magazine, published only five times a year (Quinn, 2008). As new curriculum guides were developed and released, they became the only relevant teaching resource teachers had access to, and their only source of knowledge on content which was still largely unfamiliar to them. Unfamiliarity and discomfort with the new curriculum led teachers in the initial years to copying elements of their guides directly onto the blackboard, with students following suit (Heyward, 2005; Quinn, 2006, 2008).

Development partners responded to this need by assisting the government to develop and produce learning resources to accompany the introduction of the curriculum into schools. Working alongside the Ministry of Education, the Mary McKillop Foundation\(^7\) and UNICEF (2007, p. 43) produced a series of curriculum resources which it described as “bilingual in Tetum and Portuguese; the teaching and learning materials are bright and colorful.” An evaluation of these efforts suggested, however, that despite the broad consultation, the “complexity of the materials was too high and teachers could not use [them] as intended” (UNICEF, 2010, p. 36). Some national representatives of UNICEF apportioned blame for this on the Portuguese technical partner it contracted which “lacked a nuanced understanding of the education system in Timor-Leste and the needs of students and teachers because they didn’t spend much time in the country” (Ibid). At the same time, the fashion in which these resources and materials were introduced to schools through short training programmes was also criticised for being insufficient. As a result, teachers failed to see the usefulness or value in wholly incorporating these resources into their teaching practice (UNICEF, 2010, p. 48).

Textbook production lagged behind the production of the curriculum guide and associated resources, largely because confusion persisted regarding the content and language in which they would be produced. In 2005, development partners noted that issues remained regarding:

... (i) Will textbooks be designed to introduce Portuguese as a second language; (ii) to what extent will teaching/learning materials and textbooks be provided in Portuguese; (iii) will these then be complemented by materials produced in Tetum, and other spoken languages where appropriate; (iv) who will be responsible for developing these materials; (vi) will all materials be tested to ensure that they are appropriate; (v) what part of the budget will be allocated for each of these materials (UNICEF & World Bank, 2005, p. 12).

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\(^7\) An organisation that had a long-established track record in developing and publishing Tetum language readers for schools (Marra, 2007).
They recommended that the Ministry develop a clear textbook development policy in response to these concerns, but by 2007 this still had not been accomplished and the Ministry of Education noted in its Education Policy (2007, p. 14) that there was urgent need to, “Organise a procurement and logistics system able to supply books and education materials and equipments [sic] to schools, in good time.”

Passage of the Organic Law addressed some of these issues by establishing a new directorate responsible for the design and production of textbooks, and transferring control for the distribution and delivery of curriculum materials to regional offices to address inefficient and poorly managed centralised control of such matters (RDTL, 2010b). In 2009 USD $3M from the Ministry’s budget was apportioned for the purchase and distribution of new Portuguese language textbooks in three core content areas—Estudo do Meio, Portuguese and Mathematics. The books were sourced and purchased from a Portuguese publishing company (LIDEL), and partially subsidised by Galp Energia, a Portuguese petrochemical corporation.78

*Perceptions of resource availability and adequacy*

By the 2010 school year, all schools theoretically had received new textbooks for the core subjects of Estudo do Meio, Portuguese and Mathematics. This led the Ministry that year to conclude that, “quality textbooks to support the curriculum, both for teachers and for students have already been introduced and are available free to all” (2010a, p. 79). However, at the time of research, strong concerns remained on the part of teachers regarding both the adequacy and appropriateness of the resources that had been provided in support of their transition to the new curriculum.

Many teachers maintained that there was still an insufficient quantity of books at their school to teach these core subjects. Distribution and delivery problems with the new textbooks explain part of this problem. One group of teachers relayed how instead of receiving 100 student textbooks they were sent 100 teachers guides [EPBM, FG]. Another director in Dili noted that her school had received more than double the required number of textbooks for teaching Portuguese for Grade Five and Six, but were still lacking any books for Portuguese in the lower grade levels [EPRV, Director]. For

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78 Galp Energy is listed as a sponsor on the back of these next textbooks, and a statement on the Grade Six book suggests that their support is predicated on the belief that, “it will help to valorise and unite the Portuguese speaking community around the world.”
rural or remote schools, an additional obstacle was attaining books from the district distribution centre where they were delivered from Dili. According to one director of a remote school in Ermera, the expectation from the district office was that each school was responsible for picking up its books and transporting them back to their school. For months, his schools’ books sat in the warehouse because he had no way to transport these books; it was impossible for him to carry them on the back of his motorbike given the condition of the roads and the volume of material that needed to be transported [EPRL, Director]. The Ministry itself acknowledged this as an ongoing issue, stating that “initial distribution efforts have been plagued by inefficiency and many textbooks that were destined for school children were lost or arrived too late” (Ministry of Education, 2010a).

This situation is compounded by the lack of textbooks in other content areas. The Ministry expectation is that in other areas of the curriculum, teachers utilise the syllabus and curriculum guides produced to sculpt lessons and activities independent of a set text (MECYS, 2004). Very few teachers were noted as using these guides during classroom observations, and rarely were these guides recognised as a curriculum resource by teachers or school directors in follow up interviews. Instead, teachers relied on textbooks that had been saved from Indonesian times to teach subjects such as Arts and Culture or Physical Education/Health. One school director felt it was impossible for his teachers to teach such subjects without such texts, given that during Indonesian times textbooks were available and expected to be used. Teachers, according to him, grew accustomed to this system, and were not comfortable enough to develop lessons from the guides on their own. He was thankful that his school still had copies of such texts in these subject areas from Indonesian times and actively encouraged his teachers to use them [EPBM, Director].

A corollary situation in many schools visited was that despite access to textbooks of some sort, many teachers were unwilling or unable to use these resources effectively. Many appeared to not use the new textbooks for fear of them being lost or damaged. One director in rural Ermera commented that when the textbooks were first released, local Ministry officials told them that any books that were lost or damaged would have to be replaced at the cost of the school [EPSA, Director]. A concern in many schools, at

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79 According to Ministry officials interviewed in Dili this is an unfounded rumour. But there is no plan for a reprint of the same textbooks given the modifications to the Basic Education
the time of research, was the lack of a safe place to store texts in the classroom. Others teachers felt that if textbooks were distributed or given to students to take home, the school would be liable for replacement. The belief was that, "We give the books to the students to use during school time, but do not let them keep them...rather we collect them at the end of each class. We have to protect these books, as they are easily torn or destroyed" [EPRC, FG]. As a safeguard, several schools made the decision to keep books locked in a central location (usually the director’s office). This led to a situation where teachers lacked access to books when the director was not around, or in some cases were not aware of what resources were available onsite because they had been immediately locked up by the director without discussion with staff.

Teachers also questioned how lessons were structured in the new textbooks, which focussed on building conceptual awareness first and technique later. For example, one teachers’ perception of the new mathematics textbook was that,

...[It’s] not showing the proper [emphasis added] way of doing Maths, so we have to use our knowledge to teach students instead. If we go according to the book, the students will fall behind and not learn" [EPSA, FG].

There was concern raised about the messages conveyed within some of the new textbooks, particularly the Estudo do Meio series. The Grade Three books introduce to students basic matters of sexual and reproductive health, and include cartoon pictures of both male and female reproductive organs (Figure 6-1).

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Curriculum that were made in 2011, and the expectation is that new textbooks will need to be developed in a process that could take several years.
The textbooks present content that is identical to that which is included in texts produced for Grade Three Portuguese students (Alves & Carvalho, 2006). While in that context it is seen as appropriate, some teachers interviewed in Timor-Leste took great offence to this particular material being transferred over. As one teacher stated,

This is material that has never been taught to students in primary school before, and for good reason! We are expected to use these books, but we haven’t been consulted on whether we think this is appropriate content or not....and in my opinion, for children who are 10 or 11 years old, it is not. So we just skip these pages. [EPDC, FG]

Several teachers spoken to felt that the new textbooks introduced “imported content” that was not applicable or relevant to the Timorese context. One teacher in Dili felt that all the Portuguese publisher and the university contracted to write the textbooks had done was “paint white faces brown and bring them into our country as such” [EPFA, FG].

The importation of content from the Portuguese context was witnessed first hand in one Grade Five classroom. The teacher, using a Portuguese-produced text for teaching the language across its former colonies, had students copying down and reading aloud a poem about winter. The poem discussed how the cold northerly winds blow down and bring snow that blankets the countryside, and how the sheep huddle together to fight against the cold. These concepts (snow, sheep, cold northerly winds) had no basis or relevance in Timor-Leste. Recognising this incongruence, the teacher took the time to explain to students how the four distinct seasons in Portugal were different to the two seasons (wet and dry) of Timor-Leste [Observation notes, Classroom 15].
The new textbooks and/or curriculum guides were often witnessed being utilised in an inappropriate fashion. The structure of the textbooks follows a common framework of: (1) building on prior knowledge, (2) introducing a new concept, (3) allowing students to explore the new concept through an activity, and (4) practice in applying this concept in several different ways. However, in few of the observations were the texts used in such a fashion. Instead, teachers often continued to use what one international advisor termed the "cut and paste" method [K14], where large sections of text or activities from the textbook were placed on the board for students to copy verbatim. This process often occurred without any interaction or explanation from the teacher. At other times textbooks were used solely for students to complete exercises from, rather than to follow the entire method demonstrated in the textbook. Most teachers observed did not appear to be using either a lesson plan80 or the accompanying teachers’ guide to structure their lessons based on the content of the textbook, despite the fact that recent trainings run by the Ministry of Education have focussed specifically on this.

Providing teachers and students with textbooks and other resources is an important, cost-effective input to improving quality teaching and learning processes (Fuller, 1987; UNESCO, 2005). In many instances there remained a critical need for a better system of resource development and deployment. It appeared that for many of the observed teachers, the brief training on methods of using textbooks differently had failed to change deeply entrenched teacher attitudes about the “right way” to teach specific subjects.

Observations and teacher perceptions of school infrastructure

Teachers surveyed were also asked a number of questions regarding the condition of the facilities at their school. On the whole, many were not satisfied with their actual working environment, with a significant proportion of the teachers indicating that: (1) the condition of the toilets, public facilities and classrooms was not adequate81; (2) that

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80 Approximately 65% of teachers observed did not appear to be working from a lesson plan, and 85% of teachers did not use a teachers’ guide associated with the student book, instead using a copy of the student book to structure their lesson.

81 Mean level of agreement to the statement, "The conditions of the classroom, toilets and public areas at my school are good" was 2.63, with 55.5% either agreeing or strongly agreeing.
the area around their school was not safe; and (3) that current classroom conditions at their school made it difficult for students to learn.

Many classrooms observed were insufficient to the needs of the students or teacher. Outside of Dili, the walls of most schools were constructed of bamboo which meant that noise from other classrooms frequently filtered through, particularly when partitions did not extend all the way to the ceiling. In other situations, rain was observed pouring in from spaces between the side walls and roof, or from holes in the roof. In one school, students were noted sweeping water out of flooded classrooms for half of the instructional day [Observation notes, Classroom 34]. In other cases, the entire building in which students were learning was on the verge of collapse, with supporting beams precariously cracked or broken. Many of these makeshift buildings were ones that had been hastily repaired through community labour in the aftermath of the 2000 crisis (Shah & Leneman, 2010). In two schools visited, it was noted that students were studying in a building that lacked proper flooring or roofing. A continued lack of furniture led to students sitting on the dirt floor, and writing on their laps. It was clearly an uncomfortable situation for the students and over time they grew restless and agitated, making teaching difficult for the teachers [Observation notes, Classroom 4, 14]. According to the teachers from these schools, parents were concerned that their children were studying in an environment that was hazardous to their children’s health because of the dirt floors and dust that the children spent time sitting on each day. In another school visited, a shortage of space had led to one classroom being used by two different groups of approximately fifty students each. One group of students faced a blackboard set against one wall, while the other group faced the opposite wall (Figure 6-2).

82 Mean level of agreement to the statement, “The area around my school is not safe” was 2.92, with 75.4% either agreeing or strongly agreeing.
83 Mean level of agreement to the statement, “The condition of the classrooms at my school make it difficult for my students to learn” was 2.72, with 56.7% agreeing or strongly agreeing.
Overcrowding was commonly observed in a number of lower grade settings, where the ratio of students to teachers in excess of 70:1 were frequent, particularly in Dili [Observation notes, Classroom 3, 5, 7, 12, 14]. And a remote school in Ermera had had to abandon the use of two classrooms because sewage from toilets was seeping into the adjacent buildings when it rained [EPRV, Director].

As expected, these conditions were discussed in focus groups as having a bearing on teachers’ work with their students. In conversation, many teachers felt that they were working in unsafe conditions, with concerns raised over frequent flooding, unsanitary or unsafe toilet facilities, crumbling school walls, or in one case a roof that was prone to be blown off in windy conditions. According to several school directors, these conditions often led to interruptions in the programme of instruction at the schools they were forced to either shut down when they felt the weather would endanger students or staff, or spend days cleaning up and repairing after monsoonal rain or wind conditions (frequent in the rainy season). Other schools suffered from a lack of outside playing fields for students, because either they frequently flooded or were too muddy to be effectively utilised. Several school directors interviewed felt this impeded their teachers from ensuring that Physical Education was taught.

6.5. Conclusion

Since independence, curriculum reform has been typified by rich symbolism, but insufficient follow through, leading to outcomes in classrooms and schools that belie commitments stated in policy. The production of policy has taken precedent over
substantive concerns with implementation, providing vivid illustration of Jansen’s theory of political symbolism, which was discussed at the outset of this section of the thesis. Jansen (2002, p. 202) contends that if policymakers were serious about effective implementation, “one would expect government bureaucracies to outline concrete steps to that would be taken to implement such policies,” immediately following the production of new policy statements. Yet, similar to the cases he presents from South Africa, implementation processes in Timor-Leste have been haphazard, inconsistent and piecemeal in terms of a coherently meeting the broader objectives articulated in Chapters Four and Five. As these chapters suggest, this is in part due to a lack of authentic political will on the stated functions, purposes and roles that education was promised to serve in the new Timor-Leste. The actions of state actors and development partners on matters such as implementation of a clear language policy or the localisation of content areas, provides evidence that specific aspects of the reform’s promise of delivering a more relevant, contextualised and democratic schooling experience were never intended to move beyond the level of rhetoric. Whilst they share a will for some type of change, there is little demonstration of “a sustained commitment of politicians and administrators to invest the necessary resources to achieve specific objectives,” identified by Little (2011, p. 500) as the true definition of political will. What became clear from speaking with school level actors was a sense that follow-through and ongoing support to schools following policy decisions was not a feature of Ministry service delivery. Instead, the perception was that “[the Ministry] announce a decision, but nothing of substance [is] really been done to implement this decision...like when they make a decision to change the curriculum, they say they are doing it, but then nothing follows this decision” [EPFA, Director].

This is to not deny, however, that there is a real lack of capacity on the part of the state to meet its grandiose visions for education, even if shared will did exist. As earlier sections of this chapter detailed, without support of external actors, most components of the curriculum reform would not have been feasible. Paradoxically, the pressures and influences of these outside forces on state-level actors may have contributed to an environment where policy production superceded the state’s ability to deliver on its promises. The lack of capacity of the government, alongside competing pressures and expectations from both citizens and supranational ‘partners’ limits what Jansen (2002) labels “[the] room to manouever in policy reform.” It impedes the state’s ability to conceptualise and enact policy implementation with any serious intent and greatly reduces the feasibility of achieving ambitious policy goals. According to him, without
adequate capacity to deliver on what has been promised, “the state has no alternative but to resort to playing up the symbolic value of policy,” which may explain the proliferation of reform statements without meaningful action that follows (Jansen, 2002, pp. 208-209, author's emphasis). It may also explain the lack of clarity and continuity between various policies, given that “where the emphasis in policy is simply on getting-out the next set of legitimating documents, one cannot expect substantive coherence in these different documents” (Jansen, 2002, p. 204).

Irrespective of whether the issue is one of a lack of political will or capacity, the structural conditions described in this chapter present real impediments to teachers effectively negotiating current reform expectations. They continue to work in a context where professional development opportunities are insufficient to their needs, classrooms and schools are overcrowded and unsafe, school-based professional support is non-existent or inadequate, and resources provided by the state are either insufficient or irrelevant. This structurally selective context provides a particular set of constraints and issues by which teachers make strategically selective choices, as the next two chapters suggests.
7. Roles, functions and purposes of the ‘teacher’

Timorese teachers are positioned as critical change agents within current reform efforts, for better or worse. Policy acknowledges and valorises their autonomous contributions and commitment to rebuilding the country on one hand, and on the other cites them as the source of the problem in terms of Timor-Leste’s current educational struggles. A key claim made in this chapter is that teachers have come to be...

...positioned in a particular way within a dominant discourse, [they] may not take up this position, and indeed may contest it by developing quite different story lines, that is, using counter discourses that have implicit in them quite different assumptions (McKay & Chick, 2001, p. 394).

Teachers mediate the selective context created by discourses and counter-discourses based on a combination of personal motivations, community and peer expectations, and pre-existing professional values/beliefs. These factors serve as filters and influence how teachers access, organise and utilise messages from reform to more favourably meet their strategic needs and tendencies.

A key argument of this chapter is that the actions and responses of teachers are strongly informed by existing professional habitus. Bourdieu (1990, p. 52) identifies habitus as, “durable, transposable dispositions [or] structuring structures...[that can] be collectively orchestrated without being the product of the organising action of a conductor.” This professional habitus serves to frame and structure the social and cultural practices of teachers’ work—specifically the routines, shared understandings, and attitudes towards their responsibilities to their students and society. This does not, however, predispose teachers to a uniform set of behaviours, but rather serves as a frame within which individual teachers make strategic calculations about who they are as professionals, and how they might act within schools and classrooms. This habitus works in tandem with what Bourdieu labels the “field.” This field has its own internal logic and culture (i.e. notions of what constitutes an effective teacher), and affords actors within it varying levels of capital depending on the degree to which they successfully reflect this logic. In education systems the field can be established at successive levels from the school up to national policy, and act to strategically select qualities and dispositions that are seen as desirable or necessary for continued participation by individual actors. For this reason, Archer (1984), in an examination of the relationship between structures and agency in education systems, notes that
teachers agency can be defined as the actions undertaken within the umbrella of their obligations, and levels of authority and autonomy, and that are enabled or constrained through structural interaction. The contingency of classroom practice is a focus area for the next two chapters.

With these concepts in mind, this chapter sets out to explore the following key questions:

- What types of beliefs do teachers hold for their work?
- What informs these beliefs?
- How is current policy attempting to shift professional beliefs towards a particular set of norms, values and practices within schooling?
- To what degree do these articulated norms, values and practices resonate with pre-existing teacher beliefs, and to what degree do teachers feel able to meet such demands?

Through an exploration of these questions, a clearer sense of how, why and with what purposes teachers employ their agency can be gained and provide insight into the agential mechanisms driving what is observed in terms of classroom practices. It begins to provide an illustration of educational politics discussed in the introduction, namely the way in which the reforms become enacted in practice based on the agency, beliefs and values of school level actors.

While an extensive body of literature exist in regards to teachers’ biographies, narratives, and belief systems in the Global North, less attention has been given to the particular nuances of teachers’ work in the Global South, and in particular within CAFS settings. Jansen (2001) warns that theoretical considerations of teacher belief systems that are solely informed by studies from the Global North are limited in their applicability to contexts such as Timor-Leste. This is, in part, due to the complexity and ontological uncertainty that shapes such conceptualisations in periods where state legitimacy is under crisis, and the ensuing impacts it has on the field within which teachers’ professional habitus is located. Thus a focus in this chapter is on highlighting the particular conditions of CAFS, which render the construction of, reflection on, and modification of teacher belief systems fundamentally different. As far as possible, relevant prior research from such contexts is included in this exploration.

### 7.1. Conceptualising teacher identity, beliefs and motivations

As a starting premise the chapter draws on the notion that teacher professional identity should be understood as the ways that teachers, both individually and collectively, view
and understand themselves as professionals (Mockler, 2011). It is a concept founded on a personal and professional notion of one’s work based on “sense of self, as well as...knowledge and beliefs, dispositions, interests, and orientations towards work and change” (Drake, Spillane, & Hufferd-Ackles, 2001). However, a key aspect of identity is that it is not impermeable, and is prone to be influenced by the communities and discourses within which teachers live and work. Avalos (2010, p. 1) contends that, “identity is a co-construction involving one teacher and other significant agents or teachers as well as the broader society to which they belong.” Teachers have intentions and preferences these are not fixed but actively formed and reformed in processes of structured coupling with current cultural, political and economic realities (P. Jones, 2010, pp. 29-30). As Miller Marsh (2003, p. 8) notes, teachers are “continually in the process of fashioning and refashioning [their] identities by patching together fragments of the discourses to which [they] are exposed.”

Exposure occurs in particular aspects of teachers’ lives: their personal experience, professional context, and the external environment within and through which their work is situated (Day, 2002; Day, Sammons, Stobart, Kington, & Gu, 2007). Welmond (2002, p. 43) suggests that conceptualising teacher identity is a three-fold exploration of (1) defining what it means to be a teacher in a given context through the voices of the teachers themselves; (2) exploring the claims made through policy on how teachers should behave and think (i.e. the “ideal teacher”); and (3) examining the fashion in which teachers navigate this contested terrain. Others add that equally important, and irrespective of the policy context, are internal professional discourses about the role and function of teachers that serve to validate and reward particular constructs of teacher identity (Nias, 1989; Avalos, 2007; Barrett, 2008; Lopes-Cardozo, 2009). Guided by such concepts, research from the Global South has found that teachers often reconcile their own aspirations and wishes with claims coming from outside (whether through policy or professional discourse), and adopt a flexible identity in response (Schweisfurth, 2002; Welmond, 2002; McGrath, 2008). Teacher identities are not fixed, but rather are “a complex matter of the social and individual, of discourse and practice, of reification and participation, of similarity and difference, of agency and structure, of fixity and transgression, of the singular and the multiple” (Clarke, 2009). Thus, the beliefs and motivations of teachers are understood as dynamic, multi-faceted, and contextually constructed (Welmond, 2002; Barrett, 2008; Kirk & Winthrop, 2008; Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009).
Research has found personal experience, framed by dimensions of one’s own personal background (i.e. class, race, gender, age, religious belief, family and community context), as well as one’s own experience of schooling to be a significant influence on the construction of teacher belief systems (Wilson, 2000; Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Lopes-Cardozo, 2011). Equally important are the professional contexts in which new teachers become acculturated into the profession through teacher education programmes, processes of accreditation and registration, and involvement in professional associations and unions. Such contexts are important in that they develop in teachers a sense of their professional commitments, obligations and responsibilities that forge a particular impact on their sense of self in relation to their work; in other words the establishment of their professional habitus (Walkington, 2005; Mockler, 2011; Trent, 2011).

In CAFS, however, teachers often enter into the profession without such an induction. This has led some to contend that these ‘accidental’ teachers may lack the necessary inculcation into a set of shared professional values and beliefs to maintain strong conviction or vocation for the work they do (Bennell & Akyeampong, 2007; Mpokosa, Ndaruhutse, McBride, Nock, & Penson, 2008). However, such arguments have been countered by recent ethnographic accounts of teachers in CAFS which document a sense of a strong moral purpose—or the desire to “do good” or “make a difference”—in their communities or broader society (Shriberg et al., 2007; Winthrop & Kirk, 2007; Kirk, 2008). For example, Kirk and Winthrop (2008, p. 877) in a study of Afghan community-based teachers, remark that, “although not necessarily qualified or experienced, [they] have important attributes for the critical work they do”, with a “strong sense of their roles in the community, especially with respect to promoting children’s moral and ethical character and well-being.” As the authors later claim, these attributes are “significant assets to be acknowledged by communities, education authorities and their [external] partners supporting education.”

In the context of significant education reform, teachers’ functions, roles and purpose are often contested and reconceptualised in an attempt at establishing a new institutional order (Tatto, 2007, 2011). Such periods often see intense activity at the level of policy discourse towards (re)framing and (re)classifying teachers’ labour towards particular

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84 ‘Accidental teachers’ is a term commonly used for paraprofessional, volunteer, or emergency teachers who end up in permanent positions as society transitions from the emergency to post-conflict phases.
outcomes (Bernstein, 2000). (Re)classification of teachers’ work generally occurs through the establishment of norms/standards of teaching or teacher education, which redefine who is considered a professional and who is not. Alternatively, teachers are placed into a public service regime that serves to categorise and distinguish the role of such individuals in comparison to others within a school (i.e. school directors), or the larger educational hierarchy (i.e. inspectors, district officials). This is coupled with the framing of their work, which is done through the establishment of particular message systems regarding the role of teachers in society. Such message systems aim to shape how teachers labour through: (1) statements on appropriate pedagogy and the organised knowledge that should be taught (i.e. the curriculum); and (2) systems of assessment and student performance measurement to track how well teachers as individuals or as a group are meeting the objectives of the ‘ideal school’ (Bernstein, 1975). Yet policy statements and action vary in the degree to which they attempt to frame and/or classify teachers’ work throughout such periods of transformation, which is in part mediated by the capacity of the state to regulate these parameters (Connell, 2009). Additionally, they are rarely uniform in their voice, message nor effect, and are instead imbued with competing messages that create tensions and competing strategies (Robertson, 2012a). Nonetheless, teachers are structured by such classification and framing, whether weak or strong, coherent or not, in ways that lead to residual effects on the agency and practices of individuals and collectives working in schools (Jansen, 2001, pp. 245-246).

In post-colonial/post-conflict settings in which discourses around teachers’ work, the nature of the profession, and the objectives of schooling tend to shift quite significantly, it can be expected that teachers will face particular constraints and strategically respond in kind. Tensions between new externally introduced or legitimated discourses, and extant teacher notions and beliefs about teachers’ work can lead to what Jansen (2001, p. 242) labels an “identity conflict.” Such conflicts open up possibilities for teachers to draw on and utilise more than one discourse concurrently, as a strategic resource in times of educational reform (T. Jessop & Penny, 1998; Osborn, McNess, Broadfoot, & Pollard, 2000; Welmond, 2002; Barrett, 2008). In such periods, beliefs regarding one’s professional practice may be strengthened or tested. Particularly for those who have occupied positions of authority and autonomy as a teacher for some time, reforms which reclassify what it means to be a professional may lead to their work being increasingly scrutinised and called into question (Kirk & Winthrop, 2008; Avalos, 2010). Conversely,
new teachers may enter into the profession inspired by a new vision of society, and teachers’ roles within it (Lopes-Cardozo, 2011).

Thus, reforms to teaching and learning practices can place significant emotional demands on teacher identity, as new policy is contextualised within existing conditions. Such change, when implemented into a poorly supported or resourced environment, can add to the emotional demands placed on teachers. Teachers can feel increasingly dissatisfied and frustrated with their own inability to cope, or conversely may attempt to defy these constraints and feel empowered by ‘rising to the challenge,’ but often at great sacrifice to personal well-being. Which course of action individuals choose is both influenced by and influences teacher’s sense of self-efficacy in the face of change. Those with a strong sense of personal efficacy will approach reform demands as a challenge rather than a burden. A low sense of efficacy, however, can lead to particular forms of submission based on minimal compliance. Avalos (2010, p. 4) argues that teacher efficacy and agency,

...operate in interaction with the possibilities offered by social structures such as the school environment, or change demands produced extraneously. If these conditions clash with what teachers believe they can do or believe should be done, they may result in passive submission (lack of motivation) or in reasonable attempts to implement without leaving aside those practices already considered sound.

Such agency and efficacy can also be linked to teachers’ commitments to particular values and political views, as well as the degree to which teachers understand their authority to act or withhold action (Jansen, 2001).

In sum, teacher identity should be understood as the way teachers feel about themselves professionally, emotionally and politically, given the conditions of their work and the internal motivations and beliefs they bring to the job. In line with the work of Stuart Hall (2003), the affiliation and role one might have as a teacher should be understood to be in perpetual motion and layered between past and present. The corollary of this is that representations of the ideal teacher for the current context are incomplete, dynamic and contested. For this reason, the analysis presented throughout the chapter does not aim to portray the teachers in this study as uniform in terms of their backgrounds, belief

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85 Research has found that efficacy can be diminished by several different factors in the face of reforms including: lack of knowledge of content matter; a lack of confidence in imparting the subject matter; a lack of comfort with new pedagogical models; or a lack of awareness of appropriate assessment techniques (van den Akker, 1988).
systems or motivations, but rather to present the diversity of factors influencing identity construction. This chapter presents and locates the plurality of beliefs behind what it means to be a professional and/or effective teacher in the context of contemporary Timor-Leste, and situates these ideas within the professional and personal habitus of the teaching profession, as well as past and present discourses that have framed and classified the work of teachers. Ultimately this exercise is critical to garnering deeper understanding of the preferences of individual teachers and the strategic actions they employ in the context of curriculum reform (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009).

7.2. The background of current Timorese primary teachers

As detailed in Chapter Four, a cadre of new teachers needed to be recruited into the post-independence schooling system following the crisis of 1999. Early reports suggested that between 25-50% of the primary teacher workforce permanently left the profession following the referendum (Nicolai, 2004; World Bank, 2004). In the survey that 719 primary teachers completed as part of this research study, they were asked to indicate their total years of experience, including those years prior to 2000. On average teachers had 12 years of experience; however there was a large standard deviation (more than 9 years), suggesting a large spread amongst the sample, as Figure 7.1 illustrates. While a slight majority of teachers appeared to be ones who entered the profession post-independence, nearly 55.1% of teachers indicated they had ten or more years of experience, suggesting that they had taught at some point prior to the referendum in 1999.
In focus groups, several teachers detailed a professional career that had commenced during either Portuguese or Indonesian times, with periods of "interruption" during their service history. For some of this group, successive regime changes or escalations of violence had caused them to stop teaching for periods of time, suggesting the politicised nature of the profession during prior regimes. A teacher from Dili, trained during Portuguese times, discussed his career journey as follows,

I began teaching in 1972. Then the Indonesians came, and I started again in 1978. I worked until 1990. Then I stopped, and started again in 1999, but I had to stop again and started again in 2000 and have stayed teaching up until now. [EPFR, FG]

During Indonesian times, those living in rural areas of the country were frequently shifted from one region to another, as a way of the Indonesian government monitoring and controlling resistance activity particularly in FRETILIN strongholds (Hill, 2002).

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\[86\] Whenever tensions between the Indonesians and Timorese escalated, schools became politicised sites with teachers either choosing or being forced to resign. For example, in the early years of the Indonesian occupation, many schools were taken over by the military with the teachers in them released from duty. Similarly, in 1990 when the Santa Cruz Massacre took place in Dili, a large influx of teachers from other parts of Indonesia replaced their Timorese counterparts (Beazley, 1999).
Some of the teachers, such as this one from Ermera, discussed these relocations within the context of their professional career.

In Indonesian times I began teaching in 1986 in Baguia...it was SMP Baguia. I taught there until 1992, and then on the 2nd of October, I was forced to transfer to Railaco. I stopped in 1999 because of the referendum, but resumed again after the referendum in October of that year. From then on I have been teaching continuously. [EPRL, FG]

Another teacher, currently working at a school in Dili [EPBM, FG], recalled how she was transferred every two years, stating “there was never a sense of permanence or security in our job.” Timorese teachers were frequently transferred from school to school, perhaps as a way of controlling the influence they might exert in any one locality.

In the early years of the occupation, repression of dissent was most pronounced with many who had supported political parties like FRETILIN losing jobs and livelihoods as the regime tightened its rule. One teacher from Dili was affected in a profoundly personal way during this period—he lost his job, was sent to prison, and then waited to gain employment as a teacher for several years after being released.

I began teaching during Portuguese times and then I had to stop shortly because I had to attend military service. After I finished my service, I returned back to my old teaching job in 1975. Then the civil war started, and soon after the Indonesians invaded. I returned to teaching, but that didn’t last long because the new government accused me of being against them for a number of different reasons...I was arrested and put in jail. I was released from jail in 1979 and applied again to be a teacher. In 1981, they finally accepted my application, and gave me the position of being a teacher in the school. I continued until 1999, when I stopped again because of the problems after the referendum. Then the country became independent, and a new government was formed, so in 2001 the Superintendent at the time called me back to help get the educational system running again. [EPFA, FG]

Romanticising the past

For teachers reflecting on their past professional experiences, the chaos and uncertainty of the present system was often compared to the well-organised and functional nature of the prior Indonesian system. As discussed in Chapter Four and Five, the conflict decimated the ability of the state to effectively deliver educational services. The process of institutional strengthening and capacity building within the Ministry of Education has been a long and slow evolution to which these experienced teachers have played witness. Interestingly, more senior teachers nostalgically reflected on Indonesian times noting it as a period when the system worked well, with many overlooking the personal challenges they faced under occupation. For example, one school director commented
that systems of teacher training and support were much more rigorous in the past than they are at present.

During the Indonesian time, I had a lot of training...training of language for example. When I became a teacher during Indonesian times, I received two years of training. This training I had at that time gave me the skills to teach, but since independence there has been a lot of talking but not a lot good training. [EPFA, Director]

Another school director discussed how schools during Indonesian times were much better resourced: “...there is a big difference between before and now because at the time of Indonesians there were plenty of books, but not now.” [EPRL, Director]

The emergency recruitment's drive and its impact on the profession

For those who entered the profession after independence, the process of becoming a teacher was quite different from their more experienced counterparts. In remote or rural parts of the country, where there was a severe shortage of employable teachers, local community leaders recruited whomever they could to teach in their community's schools, normally based on whoever had the most education. One current school director of a remote school in Ermera began his career this way:

The emergency period was the time when no one else was available to teach, and so they needed people to come in and teach...there was no one else around or available, so that is why I put my hand up to teach. I was chosen because I lived here, and there was no one else around who was qualified to do the job. [EPRC, Director]

Interim data from the recently conducted teacher census provide a national overview of when teachers entered into Timorese workforce as contract or permanent teachers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number employed</th>
<th>% of total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>2,776</td>
<td>39.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>708</td>
<td>9.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>181</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>183</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>315</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>354</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>2,115</td>
<td>29.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>253</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>7,118</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7-1: Teachers contracted by year [Source: Ministry of Education Capacity Building Programme, School Census Project, Human Resource Management Information System, September 2011]

The table suggests that there have been two large intakes of teacher onto the Ministry of Education payroll since independence. The first occurred in the immediate aftermath of the conflict, when 39% of those teachers currently serving as primary teachers became members of the civil service. Many in this group were individuals who were invited to
take an entrance examination, based on the fact that they held a valid qualification from Indonesian or Portuguese times to teach (Millo & Barnett, 2004). Over successive years, smaller numbers of teachers became part of the civil service, despite dramatically larger numbers of students enrolling and participating in schooling. Much of this was due to an inflexible Ministry policy that allowed only teachers with an appropriate post-secondary qualification to be employed, and a small budget for recurrent expenses such as teachers’ salaries, limiting its capacity to employ more civil servants.

To deal with excessively large class sizes, schools throughout the country recruited volunteer teachers to fill gaps. In some cases the services of these volunteers were taken advantage of by school directors or teachers on the payroll, who unofficially handed over the reign for all teaching duties to these volunteers while they worked elsewhere. For example, in a visit to one community in rural Ermera as part of this study, three of the six teachers on the school’s payroll never appeared for work during the one week spent visiting and observing the school. According to a local Jesuit priest, who had funded volunteer teachers to fill this absence, the walk to/from the school was “too far” for them as they lived on the opposite ridgeline, so they chose to teach at a school closer to their house instead.87 He noted that this was commonplace in the area, as poor road access and variable weather conditions led to a lack of teacher willingness to travel far from their homes, despite being paid to do so; and concurrently such conditions meant that school inspectors rarely visited these locations to check that the teachers on the payroll were actually present [K18].

It wasn't until 2009 that many long time volunteers were incorporated onto the civil service payroll after passing an examination on Portuguese, Mathematics and General Knowledge, administered by the Ministry (see Chapter Six). Despite the fact that the majority passed the exam, one individual who had been involved in the tabulation of results noted that pass marks had been “adjusted” to ensure that the majority of volunteer teachers would pass and be allowed entry into the workforce, largely to avert a backlash of angry teachers and a severe shortage of teachers in classrooms [K16].

7.3. Motivations for being a teacher

One dimension of understanding teachers’ reasons for action is the variety of motivational factors which guide initial entry into the profession and potentially sustain

87 These teachers were collecting salary from two schools, as at that point there was no centralised teacher management system.
them on an ongoing basis. While in many circumstances teachers are labelled as ‘well-motivated’ or not, based on whether their personal goals and ambitions for teaching align with the goals of the school and profession, such was not the focus of this aspect of this study (Bennell & Akyeampong, 2007). Rather, attention was given to the ways in which teachers described how and why they became a teacher and what aspects of the job they most enjoyed.  

A sense of personal fulfilment

Several of the focus groups touched on the idea that they entered into teaching because of their own sense of fulfilment in interacting and working with children. Teaching appealed to many because they had enjoyed the task of parenting and wanted to extend this role into their professional duties, or because they felt they had a natural skill in interacting with children. Teaching for these individuals was a source of joy and provided them with a sense of fulfilment as one teacher from a Dili primary school noted:

I liked working with children, and then I took a job teaching with preschool children first for three years. I really enjoy playing and interacting with children. I prefer to deal with children rather than adults, because adults give me a headache. [EPFA, FG]

There was an innate sense of reward from watching children grow and develop throughout their time in the classroom and school. Comments such as, “I feel fulfilled because I see that many of my students have learned something from what I have taught them,” [EPVV, FG] or “… it is incredibly rewarding to see your students progress and become more educated and a better person,” [EPRC, FG] were common comments amongst this group of teachers. The majority of teachers who made such comments were female and were often the same individuals who discussed the idea that an important role for teachers was to be a nurturing caregiver in their students’ lives (discussed in more detail in Section 7.5).

Three teachers separately discussed the idea that what interested them in the profession was ongoing self-development that teaching afforded them. Each of these

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88 At the beginning of each focus group conversation in the eight schools visited, teachers were asked to introduce themselves by stating their name, number of years of experience, and the reason(s) they had decided to be a teacher. Their responses were subsequently coded and grouped into broad themes.

89 Studies from OECD countries have found that women are often motivated by the intrinsic rewards of teaching, while men are much more inclined to enter and remain in teaching due to its economic rewards (Bennell & Akyeampong, 2007, p. 17).
individuals discussed how they had enjoyed learning as students themselves and that to them, teaching felt like a natural extension of this quest for knowledge. One teacher, reflecting on his entry into the profession, noted that, “I thought why not [be a teacher] because it might give me an opportunity to learn more myself...learn things that I didn’t understand before, so for me it is also about understanding things better in my life” [EPRC, FG]. In a society where opportunities and resources for ongoing adult learning are scarce, the school environment was noted as different in that, “…you are [as a teacher] dealing everyday with books and that helps me to keep learning as well” [EPFR, FG].

**Following in the footsteps of others**

Several teachers became inspired to teach by former teachers or other role models. In some cases they were actively encouraged to become teachers by these individuals. In more than one circumstance it was a person in a position of authority who had provided this encouragement either through their words or deeds. For one individual it was a commanding officer in the Portuguese army [EPRV, FG]. And in several cases it was a member of the clergy: “When I finished fourth grade in Suai, the priest came up to me and said ‘why don’t you go and teach others.’” [EPFR, FG]. These priests and nuns, who were often teachers as well, provided indirect encouragement through their approaches in the classroom: “Every time I saw this [specific name mentioned] nun teaching, she gave me inspiration and made me think that teaching is something that I would like to do someday” [EPBM, FG]. In all instances these role models either emulated or discussed the positive contribution and sense of personal reward they would gain from being a teacher: “He told me that by being a teacher I would have a great impact on my community. This idea stuck in my mind and made me think that one day if I was a teacher I could help inspire future generations of Timorese citizens” [EPRV, FG].

**Socio-political motivations**

Since independence, teachers have occupied a critical place in nation-building efforts within Timor-Leste, and policy has often alluded to the important socialisation and political role teachers have within their communities and society. For example, the National Education Policy 2007-2012 (RDTL, 2008b, p. 6) acknowledges that, “teachers are the mediators between a world in constant change and the students who are about to become a part of it.” The important contribution of teachers during the country’s initial years of independence is also recognised in policy. The preamble of the Teacher Career Regime states that, “It is because of the effort and dedication of many Timorese [teachers], many of who lacked the due qualifications for teaching, that the system never
broke down” (RDTL, 2011a). Thus, as stated in earlier policy, it is “necessary to recognize and valorise teachers, who play an indispensable part in any qualification setting for the new generations” (RDTL, 2008b, p. 6). These statements invoke an image of the ideal teacher as ‘liberator’ of society against injustices of the past—similar to what other others have observed in the context of South Africa after the end of apartheid (Jansen, 2001), and Bolivia following the election of Evo Morales (Lopes-Cardozo, 2011). Teachers were expected to “take charge of their own classrooms; they would initiate discussions; they would empower learners; they would change the world” (Jansen, 2001, p. 243).

Such discourses strongly resonated with the motivations of many of the teachers in this study. In most of the focus groups at least one teacher touched on the important place of education in nation-building efforts and the potential role they could serve in such efforts. Many felt that they were the privileged few in society who had, in times past, acquired a sufficient amount of skills and knowledge to teach. “The knowledge that I gained, it is my obligation to pass on to society, primarily to the younger generation.” [EPBM, FG]. For those living in rural communities, this sense of duty was particularly strong. Comments such as “At that time I lived in a small village, and I felt I had an obligation to spread my knowledge to as many people as I could...to give them access to knowledge and to education, and many other things.” [EPRV, FG]; or “Our village is so small, and is ignored by others, so I felt I had an obligation to help the children here, as no one else would,” [EPRC, FG] were common in rural schools visited.90 This sense of moral responsibility had led to one teacher ‘adopting’ children from the village into her home, for extended periods of time, to ensure that they would attend school and complete their homework. As she recalled,

I feel I have responsibility to take care of them. I have asked parents on several occasions to have the children stay with me...I am very proud of what I have done for these children. [EPRL, FG]

90 This sense of obligation to one’s community meant that the majority of those working in rural or remote schools were from the community they taught in. However, a small number of the teachers spoken to, particularly more recent graduates with higher levels of qualifications, ended up in remote schools because of a lack of opportunities elsewhere. Many of them expressed a desire to move to either Dili or their home community when a suitable teaching opportunity arose. Similarly, two older teachers who began teaching soon after independence noted that while their preference was to teach in Dili no such opportunities existed at the time they started. They took positions in small communities close to Dili and waited for a time when they could transfer closer to home. For both of these individuals, vacancies arose in 2006 when violence in Dili led many teachers to flee the capital.
The fact that Timor-Leste was a new country and needed to support its future generations was often an underlying motivator for teachers’ entry into the profession. “I decided to join teaching because I believed that education is the way that you develop the abilities of the next generation” [EPRC, FG]. Some teachers recognised that changes in society meant that schooling occupied a significant role in nation-building efforts and opportunities for the children in their community to effectively participate in this new society. As one teacher commented,

> I would like to contribute some of my knowledge to the country by being a teacher. I believe that teachers can provide children with opportunities to become someone in the future. Also before, when we were under Indonesian occupation, children were taught in school to speak Bahasa Indonesian. As teachers, we have a responsibility now that we are a new nation to form a new identity with our students in the languages we teach and use...Tetum and Portuguese. [EPRL, FG]

Given this reason for entry into the profession, teachers in Dili discussed how the reward for this decision was seeing their former students succeed by gaining waged employment.

> Some of my past pupils, they are already doctors because of their good results in school...some are working in the bank, some are working for the police, and when my students see me, they also show their respect and thank me for what I did and it is quite rewarding to me. They say things, like 'because of you, we have gotten this good job and we want to thank you for things you have done in the past.' [EPFR, FG]

**Livelihood opportunities**

The economic reality of Timor-Leste, both prior to and following the country’s independence, meant that for some individuals, particularly those completing secondary schooling after independence or with post-secondary qualifications that predated independence, few other options for livelihood existed. The most recent UNDP Human Development Report for the country suggested that 41% of the population lives below the national poverty line of US $0.88 per day (Taylor, 2011, p. 19). Additionally, while official unemployment rates are reportedly low (3.6%), approximately 70% of the over 15 population are employed in “vulnerable employment” where they operate small scale business or work in subsistence or cash crop agriculture with little or no permanence to the salary they generate (Ibid). Private sector jobs are an insignificant source of employment for those who are educated, thus those with secondary or post-secondary qualifications find government jobs one of the few sources of steady and secure income. With few other salaried employment opportunities available in the country, and high competition for the few positions that do become available, teaching is seen by many as one of the only vehicles to escaping a subsistence lifestyle. Several teachers interviewed
recognised they were “lucky” to have a job at all, and having access to a steady wage was seen as a benefit of the profession. For those in rural communities in particular, it often afforded them a living standard that few others could aspi." The fact that teaching is a source of primary employment to many is also represented in the gendered composition of the workforce, with significantly more men than women comprising the primary teacher workforce overall (NZAP, 2011).

Economic motivations for entering into and staying within the teaching profession are not unique to the post-colonial period, according to many more senior teachers interviewed. Some suggested that throughout the Portuguese and Indonesian colonial periods, teaching, particularly at the primary level, was one of few options for salaried employment open to Timorese nationals with higher levels of education. An older male teacher, who entered the profession under Portuguese colonisation in Suai but was now working at a school in Dili noted, “When I started...I had no other options. I really like teaching, but also there were no further opportunities for education in Suai so the only thing I could do after finishing school was teach” [EPFR, FG]. During the time of Indonesian occupation, most public sector employment was granted to civil servants from other parts of the territory (namely Java) rather than Timorese nationals (Boughton, 2011). For those living in remote sections of the country and with higher qualifications, teaching at the primary level was one of the only options open to them. “At the time I started teaching we had a small family and at that time I lived in a small village so teaching was all I could do with my education” [EPBM, FG].

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91 This does not mean to imply that teachers were satisfied with their income. A number of survey items were focussed on the adequacy of their income at the time in 2010. Responses to statements such as “As a job, teaching provides me with enough money to live” (M=2.63; SD=0.852) or “I struggle to support me and my family with the money I earn as a teacher” (M=2.86; SD=1.076) suggest varying levels of satisfaction with current income. High levels of variance (reflected in the high SD values) was found to linked to two key factors, location of the schools where teachers taught and the levels of qualifications of the teachers. Those working in Dili (M=2.28) and Baucau (M=2.38) were found to be significantly less satisfied with income constructs than those in other regions of the country. Similarly, those with higher levels of qualifications, namely post-secondary qualifications, were much less satisfied with their income (M=2.3) than those with a primary or primary equivalent qualification (M=2.47).

92 Data from the teacher census suggest that nationally, 63.5% (n=4419) of primary teachers are male, and 36.5% are female (n=2542). However significant variance exists in this gender composition. In Dili, where other waged livelihood opportunities exist for males, this ratio is essentially reversed (37.6% male, 62.4% female). And in the most remote areas of the country ratios of males to female stand closer to 70% male, 30% female. Thus the presence/absence of other waged livelihood opportunities would appear to have a significant bearing on the gender of the workforce.
For more educated Timorese who lost jobs within the Indonesian public service following the referendum, teaching was often chosen as one of only a handful of sources of employment open to them in the new Timor-Leste. For example, one teacher interviewed who had worked during Indonesian times as a meteorologist, could find no similar work after independence and was driven to enter teaching by a need to support his family. Being highly educated and able to teach science, a subject few other teachers held expertise over, provided him with an advantage in early recruitment drives [EPFA, FG].

The post-independence period opened up opportunities for a number of otherwise unemployed individuals to become teachers. Given the lack of other employment, this was an opportunity that was taken advantage of by several of the teachers spoken to, usually commencing their careers as volunteers in hopes that they would later be permanently employed. One teacher reflected how in 2007 he completed secondary school at a private school in Dili but found there were no future prospects for further education or employment. In desperation he returned to his community in rural Ermera and sought work as a teacher there. He stated, “I felt that I wasn’t doing anything else with my life, so I decided to contribute to the community and volunteer as a teacher” [EPRL, FG]. Three years later, he became a permanent member of staff at the school.

The economic pragmatism involved for many individuals in choosing teaching as a career is a source of concern to those inside and outside the profession. For those with a long-standing commitment to the profession based on vocational or political convictions, such as the director quoted below, there was a sentiment that the economic interests involved in choosing the profession was detrimental to images of teaching in Timorese society:

A lot of people have become teachers even though they don’t have a qualification only because they needed income to support the family. Teaching and nursing are one of the few jobs that people seem to run to because there are positions available in this country. [EPRL, Director]

He felt that many of those who entered the profession for economic reasons lacked a sense of duty or obligation and were frequently absent from duties as a result. He was concerned that these attitudes and actions would leave, “…a bad impression of teachers in Timorese…and also the international community [because] if they observe these behaviours they will start to say that we are unprofessional.”
This director’s concerns are not unfounded. Public attitude towards teachers appears to be rapidly changing, from a position of reverence to one that openly challenges the vocation and dedication that teachers hold for their work. Recent media attention in the country to ‘dead teachers’ on the Ministry of Education payroll93 (daSilva, 2011), and statements by politicians and civic leaders that teachers’ lack of professionalism stands as a significant obstacle to the country’s development, are symptomatic of this shift (ETAN, 2011b). One Ministry official [KI5] bluntly asserted that “many [teachers] came to the job just to have a salary…. the only reason they are working as a teacher is because they need the money to support their family.” Many teachers, in her opinion, lacked the necessary vocation for the profession, and were instead “just there to fill their time and get paid.” Some of the donors involved in teacher training felt similarly. One DP representative expressed doubt that the majority of teachers demonstrated, “a responsibility to education, and are thinking of the future of the children of Timor-Leste.” Instead he felt that, “many teachers are ones in name only” with little allegiance to the profession outside of the salary they received [KI4].

For the many teachers in this study with clear intrinsic motivation for the job, this changing external perception has and continues to have impact on the authority, respect and trust afforded to them in their communities, and challenges their natural inclinations to remain in the profession. Reduced levels of autonomy, increased accountability measures, and growing mistrust of teachers’ intentions by the Ministry greatly diminished the enthusiasm that several veteran teachers interviewed felt for the job. These individuals often discussed how they felt less and less valued by the Ministry and the communities they worked in, and would leave the job altogether if other livelihood opportunities existed.

7.4. Reframing and reclassifying the attributes of a professional teacher

The past three years have seen the Ministry of Education focus much more explicitly on framing and classifying the work and role of teachers around particular professional attributes and responsibilities, and linking them to the new curriculum. A key aspect of this has been delineating teachers who are deemed ‘qualified’ from those who are not. The process began in 2008 with the development of a Competency Framework for

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93 Dead or ghost teachers are those who receive payment for being a teacher, but who do not actually exist. Other family members or teachers working at a school instead collect their wages.
Teachers. Educators, policymakers and donors were consulted on what they believed to be values, attitudes, and behaviours that were necessary for one to be a competent teacher in contemporary Timor-Leste. It became quickly evident that a wide gulf existed between what was implicitly expected of teachers, as articulated in the new curriculum, and the actions, beliefs and attitudes of many Timorese teachers (Ministry of Education, 2009b). Four domains of teacher competency were subsequently developed to address this challenge and provide a common framework on which teachers could be assessed, benchmarked, trained and subsequently evaluated (RDTL, 2010a, Art 13). The four domains are:

- **Mastery of Language**: Acquisition and demonstration of full fluency in both official languages, but with focus given to Portuguese under the premise that only through adequate competency in this language do teachers have “full science and knowledge” to be deemed competent (Art 14.1);
- **Technical Knowledge**: Knowledge and understanding of content areas that one was responsible for teaching, but also demonstration of ability to organise this content into a logical sequence of lessons for students. Teachers would also be required to demonstrate their knowledge of child development theories, notions of how to address the needs of students with special needs, and mechanisms for catering instruction to the contextual situation of their classroom and school community. Teachers would need to be able to demonstrate the incorporation of Timorese values, customs and identity into classroom instruction (Art 14.2).
- **Pedagogic Techniques**: Acknowledgement and demonstration of the fashion in which instruction is individualised to particular students, as well as an ability to promote a classroom environment that is safe and child-centred (Art 14.3).
- **Professional Ethics**: Demonstration of commitment to the teaching profession, and as a member of the broader civil service by fostering positive relationships between the school and the community, working in a collegial fashion with others at the school, and upholding all commitments required of a teachers according to government law and policy. (Art 14.4)

Following development of these competencies, in-service training programmes were redesigned to address one or more of these domains, providing teachers with certificates of competency upon completion of specific modules. In developing these competencies, the expectation was that teachers could then be uniformly evaluated against them. Such assessments would then form the basis for promotion and/or retention within the civil service (RDTL, 2010a, Art 13.1).

In 2011 the entire teaching workforce was evaluated against these competencies, taking into account their current qualifications, years of teaching experience, and current teaching skill, and placed into a *Teacher Career Regime* composed of four levels from unqualified to fully qualified (RDTL, 2011a). This replaced the flat salary scale structure in place since independence that had paid all teachers the same wage.
regardless of their prior experience or educational background. The regime attempted to rectify the inadequacy of salaries against the increasing cost of living in Timor-Leste by providing substantial increases to those who entered the Career Regime and had the prerequisite qualifications and/or experience. Through these policies, it was hoped that teachers would be more adequately incentivised to improve their professional skills and seek opportunities to upgrade their qualification.

A recently completed teacher census provides a picture of the levels of qualification of the current workforce, and the degree to which they are deemed qualified in terms of the levels of qualification established in the regime.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>% of total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level 1 - Unqualified</td>
<td>1,668</td>
<td>23.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 2 - Partial qualification</td>
<td>3,914</td>
<td>55.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 3 - Partial qualification</td>
<td>423</td>
<td>5.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 4 - Qualified</td>
<td>804</td>
<td>11.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7.2: Analysis of qualifications of current primary teacher workforce, based on Teacher Career Regime (Source: Ministry of Education Capacity Building Programme, School Census Project, Human Resource Management Information System, September 2011)

The data suggest that approximately one quarter of the primary teacher workforce is unqualified based on a combination of teachers’ stated years of experience and educational credentials. This segment of the workforce includes those with a combination of less than three years of experience, a secondary qualification or lower, and no formal teacher training. Many teachers in this group are former volunteer teachers who entered the civil service in 2009, or current short-term contract teachers who have been employed to fill critical staff shortages but lack an appropriate qualification.

The vast majority of teachers (approximately 60%) are classified as ‘partially qualified.’ This group of individuals largely comprises individuals who were teachers during Indonesian or Portuguese times and attained a valid teaching qualification at that time.\textsuperscript{94} Many in this group were re-employed in the initial years of independence through a meritocratic system that deemed them qualified in 2000-01. However passage of the 2008 Education Act reclassified them as underqualified due to the fact that the majority did not hold a post-secondary qualification. A small proportion of this group are

\textsuperscript{94} This includes qualifications such as the SPG, KPG, SGO, PGA which were teacher training certificates gained at senior high school from Indonesian times; and a Timor-Leste equivalent of this, the PROFEP. It also includes the Posto Escolar qualification from Portuguese times, which was obtained after completing basic primary education.
individuals who have had some post-secondary training in either education or another discipline but have yet to complete their degree.

11% of primary teachers are able to enter into the career regime as fully qualified teachers. Not all teachers in this group, however, hold a relevant post-secondary qualification in education. Some have a Bachelor’s or Master’s degree in a field unrelated to education, while others do not hold any post-secondary qualification at all, but are deemed qualified because they are over 60 years old and have worked as a teacher for more than five years. Given the small numbers of teachers that are produced through pre-service channels in Timor-Leste annually (approximately 500-600), at present those with a post-independence teaching qualification may amount in reality to no more than 5-8% of the workforce.

In addition to the general problem of high numbers of un/under qualified teachers system-wide, there are growing issues of how unevenly these individuals are distributed. Females are slightly more likely to be unqualified than men at the primary level. Dili and Baucau regions, which are more urban in nature and where the teacher training institutes are located, have the lowest proportion of under/unqualified teachers, while regions that are isolated geographically from these urban centres report high proportions of un/underqualified teachers (Ministry of Education, 2009b, pp. 6-8).

These data help to validate a longstanding belief that many teachers are un/underqualified for the positions they now assume in Timorese classroom. Given that many teachers are observed to “have poor subject knowledge, weak pedagogical skills and do not have full working competency in the two official languages of instruction in Timor-Leste,” the Teacher Competency Framework is deemed necessary to support a particular type of teaching which is essential for Timor-Leste’s educational aspirations (Ministry of Education, 2010a, p. 139). As argued by a consultant for one large development agency in Timor-Leste,

...in the absence of other information you teach the way you were taught...and [the teachers] think they are doing a great job, and in many ways they probably are the best practitioners of that particular model of teaching...but the model has changed and so do the teachers. The framework provides something concrete that teachers can compare their practice to and the regime provides them with something to strive for. [K13]

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95 Based on data provided by NZAP, 142 teachers or 17% of this subgroup.
A key aspect of reclassifying who is and is not considered a professional through recent policy is to compel teachers to gain a qualification. According to another DP representative, qualified teachers are popularly perceived as better prepared for the current demands placed on them by the current curricula. He observed that,

The younger teachers who have come out with a Bachelerato of Education...they tend to focus more attention on the students rather themselves, and they are using different ways of transmitting knowledge, other than just the blackboard. You also see these teachers using more group work...you see them engaging students in debate, asking many more questions to the children. So besides the content knowledge that they have more of, they are also using more practical teaching methods. [K12]

Missing from such discourse is acknowledgement of the importance of motivation and vocation to the profession, matters discussed in the previous sections. It also tends to disadvantage a large number of individuals who may have received extensive training in teaching methodology during Indonesian times, but may not have the necessary language competency to be deemed qualified. A concern raised is that it establishes an expectation for them to “be something they haven’t had time yet to be” and judges them in a uniform way as ‘deficient’ when in fact, “the majority are fairly dedicated, hard working and happy to learn” [K11]. International research suggests that national teacher qualification upgrading policies can be seriously de-motivating for the majority of teachers, particularly when current teachers feel discriminated against or unacknowledged for their commitment and expertise (Bennell & Akyeampong, 2007, p. 40).

These concerns entered into conversations with teachers and directors. On one hand, several directors agreed with assessments that there are a number of teachers working in schools who are not properly equipped to continue in such a role. Some felt that those who entered the profession through the ‘back door’ as volunteers lack the necessary content knowledge and pedagogical skill to effectively teach others. One director expressed, “Being a good teacher means planting and helping to foster the growth of young seeds...but to do so the teacher needs to have enough raw material to allow these seeds to grow and flourish” [EPBM, Director]. Given the mass recruitment of teachers after independence, a concern for many directors was whether their teachers had the necessary ‘raw material’ in terms of professional knowledge to effectively operate in the classroom. One felt that, “A teacher is an educator...it just can’t be anyone off the street” [EPFR, Director]. Another relayed a story of a former student, who had only completed schooling to Grade Three, who was now a teacher. He exclaimed, “That
student only completed school up to the third grade, at the time that I knew him, and now he is teaching. There appears to be no real hiring process for teachers at the moment...anyone can just be a teacher” [EPFA, Director]. One teacher from Indonesian times who held a valid teaching qualification was quite adamant that, “it is almost useless for teachers with just a primary education to go and teach others...the Ministry of Education has to find ways to stop these people, they cannot go forward and teach others” [EPBM, FG].

With passage of the Teacher Career Regime, those in schools debated whether teachers with content expertise and/or good Portuguese language skills should be seen as ‘more qualified’ than those with pedagogical knowledge and years of experience in the classroom. Some teachers argued that having good knowledge was more important than teaching skills, given the current demands of the curriculum. As one teacher articulated, “it should be about what you teach, not the way you teach it.” [EPRC, FG] Or as another teacher argued, “teachers must know above all else the material they are supposed to teach.” [EPFA, FG]. Another teacher in the same focus group countered,

...but it is also about how to teach that material. For example, just because a teacher knows how to speak Portuguese it doesn’t mean that they can teach Portuguese...they have to know how to actually teach primary school students the language and its concepts. [EPFA, FG]

In response to the fact that many primary teachers were recruited above all else on their ability to speak Portuguese, one Indonesian trained teacher felt that, “A teacher should have a background in teaching...it shouldn’t just be anyone who gets the job,” again noting concern with the privileging in the current system of content knowledge over pedagogy [EPVV, FG].

Many directors agreed with the position of the teacher above. All but two of the directors had been trained under Indonesian times, and felt that the biggest point of difference between the teachers entering the profession now, versus those that entered in previous times, was their pedagogical competence. One director, referring to teachers who had been recruited for their content knowledge after independence noted that, “whatever they have been trained in before, whatever they were qualified for isn’t necessarily relevant for what is needed now...they have no knowledge about pedagogy, only about content.” For this director, knowledge of content was not sufficient in itself, as “…we had to go through training, and have knowledge of pedagogy first” [EPBM, Director]. Another director raised concern that these individuals “…know nothing about child psychology or teaching methodology” [EPRL, Director]. Another director stated,
I don’t believe we should label the teachers who were qualified during Indonesian or Portuguese times as ‘unqualified’, as they did go through some training. I can see that these ‘unqualified’ teachers get good results on exams for their students, so we should not discriminate against them.

[EP RV, Director]

Comments such as the one above indicate how directors often gauged individual teachers’ competency on their students’ examination performance.

7.5. Teachers’ perceptions of their roles, obligations and responsibilities

As discussed at the outset of the chapter, teachers’ reasons and motivations for action cannot be divorced from the external environment in which they develop and evolve. The previous section detailed how the work of teachers in Timor-Leste is currently being reframed and reclassified towards a new set of professional obligations, with the expectation that this will then have bearing on how teachers view their work. Yet all teachers come to the profession with particular ideas about what the role of a teacher should be in the classroom, based on their own educational experiences, personal motivations and beliefs about what they should or can accomplish with their students (Trent, 2011). The focus of this section is to identify such ideas, and assess the fashion in which teachers have come to embody or challenge the roles and responsibilities that the Teacher Competency Framework expects of them. The survey questionnaire presented teachers with a number of statements about the purpose of schooling and the role of teachers. In focus group discussions, teachers were asked individually to identify the traits that they felt were important for such a person to have, and then collectively decide which of these traits was most important to being a teacher. An analysis of these data is presented in this section.

Role model

In all of the focus groups, the trait that came across as being most important was that of being a positive role model for the children in the classroom, and in some instances the wider school and community. This notion of being and perceiving oneself as a role model has been found to be a common one in research on teacher identities across a number of developing-world contexts (see for example Welmond, 2002; Bennell & Akyeampong, 2007; Barrett, 2008). On more than one occasion, in discussing what a role model meant, teachers relayed the idea that they should be a ‘mirror’ for their students to emulate, and an example of the type of person the students should aspire to be. One teacher described how teaching was about the impression made on one’s students:
...you demonstrate for example to the children how one should ask, with respect and manners for something...so say for example you want something from one of the children, you speak to them politely and ask for what you want in a nice way so they can see they way they should ask when they want something from each other [EPBM, FG].

By setting such an example, “the students will follow my behaviours and be a good person...absorb[ing] the messages I share with them and apply them in their own lives” [EPRL, FG]. Some teachers felt this placed them under intensive scrutiny, given the indelible impression they believed themselves to have on their students:

Whatever the behaviour of the teacher is, it gets passed down to the students, and whatever the teacher does will be demonstrated by the students in the future. The teacher has to carefully choose the words that he or she uses with their students, because they have the ability to influence so many others. If for example the teachers are swearing in the classroom, and then the students go outside and do the same, their [the students’] behaviour can be blamed on the actions of the teacher. [EPRV, FG]

Being a role model also meant being an inspiring adult in the lives of their students, as one teacher described:

Teachers should talk to their students and provide ways of opening their mind and presenting new possibilities for the future to them. As an example, one could talk about yourself...you could talk about how you came to be a teacher...and the hard work you had to do to become one...because usually the students really look up to you as a role model. By showing to the students that you yourself were once in...their position, it provides them an example of someone who has moved forward with their life. And you can then say to your students that if you want to be like me, you have to study hard, be persistent with your progress...giving these examples helps to motivate and encourage students to be positive about coming to school [EPFR, FG].

This was seen as particularly important for teachers in rural communities where high dropout rates and a lack of parental engagement in sending children to school meant that teachers often felt an obligation to provide an alternative perspective on the importance of schooling. Many felt that as a person from the community they were a living example of someone who, “...came from their background and who studied hard, and went on to do better things with their life” [EPRL, FG].

In addition to being role models to the students in the classroom, many teachers saw themselves as exemplars for the wider community as well. One teacher described herself as a “lighthouse”, a “...centre of attention for the rest of the community to follow” [EPVV, FG]. Other teachers noted that wherever they went in their community, they were being observed for their actions and needed to maintain a particular disposition.
As such, they were expected to uphold standards of appearance, behaviour and conduct that distinguished them from others around them. At a school in Dili a teacher suggested that,

> It is important to always act in a positive way, not just in school by setting a good example, but also in my community around where I live...If the teacher is doing something bad outside, rumours will begin to spread. [EPFR, FG]

Some teachers also contended that as role models they carried a certain set of experience, knowledge and belief that distinguished them from the communities they worked in. For the teachers in rural communities this was a particularly salient issue, given that they were in fact the select few who had been given opportunities to travel outside of the region, to the capital or even further afield in their training and professional duties. As members of a particular intelligensia, they perceived themselves as having the necessary cultural and social capital to enable students to be part of communities other than the ones they currently lived in. As one teacher described, “...children do not come from same society as us...that is why he/she has to come to school to learn how to live in a good society” [EPRC, FG, emphasis added].

*Transmission of particular forms knowledge*

These perceptions related quite strongly to another key role identified across the focus groups in terms of teachers’ internal perception of their identity—that of passing one’s knowledge to the next generation. As one teacher noted, “...being a mirror also means passing on the knowledge you hold to your students.” [EPFR, FG]. Or as relayed by another teacher working in a remote school, “Teaching is about opening children’s eyes and brains, to increase their understanding. The knowledge that I gained, it is my obligation to pass on to society, primarily to the younger generation” [EPRV, FG]. Many teachers felt strongly that without attending school children would lack particular skills and knowledge that are necessary for survival in contemporary Timor-Leste. This belief was perhaps best articulated by a teacher who commented that, “school is the beginning of their [students’] learning experience...whatever students need to learn, they to learn in school” [EPSA, FG], suggesting that she did not see an inherent value in the lessons that children gained from their homes and communities. More frequently, teachers acknowledged the importance of the home and community context as one site of learning, but felt that on their own such contexts were either insufficient or inadequate to providing children with greater livelihood opportunities. As one teacher emphasised, “school helps to complete an insufficient education on its own from home” [EPRV, FG].
Others discussed the idea that a distinction between 'school learning' versus 'community learning' existed on two fronts—concrete knowledge and socialisation in the rules and mores of society. Many believed that particular types of knowledge could only be gained through formal schooling. One teacher [EPSA, FG] felt that for particular subjects, "...such as biology and science...[children] may only be exposed to at school...they may only see certain things in books at school and cannot experience them in their life outside." This was particularly true for students' exposure to and acquisition of Portuguese, where a teacher [EPFA, FG] expressed, "Children would never learn Portuguese from living in their communities and with their parents. School is where they are taught this new material." Cognisant however of the fact that schooling comprised a small fraction of a child’s daily routine, a challenge for many was in trying to effectively teach this language given its scarce utilisation in homes and the broader community. The same teacher went onto note that,

...sometimes this creates a problem because it is only one of [the] environments that children find themselves in every day. Children never speak [Portuguese] in their community so it is hard for them to follow this language in school [EPBM, FG].

In other circumstances, particularly in communities with low levels of adult literacy, teachers felt it was critical that schooling emphasised the development of literacy skills, as they would be unable to attain them elsewhere. As the director of EPDL, who was also a teacher noted, "[we] have parents who are illiterate, so children cannot learn from their families...they need to come to school.” In general, the emphasis of knowledge sharing and being a role model was on relaying one's experiences, knowledge, and wisdom, in other words transmitting this experience, and stands against the underlying pedagogical position of constructivist learning theory introduced in Chapter Five.

**Socialisation into the rights and responsibilities of being a Timorese citizen**

In addition to transmitting concrete knowledge to their students, teachers also felt an obligation to acculturate students into a particular set of social norms and mores. One teacher believed that,

...with young children...you need to teach them how to ask for these things politely, with respect, rather than just taking them from someone else...If as a teacher, you reinforce these messages and teach them from when they are young, they will grow up to exhibit these kinds of good behaviours [EPBM, FG].

Many of the teachers spoken to did not have faith that the home or community environment would impart such messages. For example one teacher suggested that, "If they stay only at home, they will not learn what is right and wrong or be able to tell the
difference between A and B,” [EPFR, FG]; and another teacher worried that, “if the community is not a good one, they can learn negative messages which form bad citizens in society” [EPFA, FG].

Teachers were quite cognisant of the particular time and place in which they were working, where seeds of conflict and unrest were still active and uneducated and disenfranchised youth were often identified as risks to the country’s stability (Scambary, 2009). As discussed by one teacher/school director at a remote school in Ermera:

My job is to form good citizens. If there is no knowledge there is no respect, and it raises conflict between neighbours and others...knowledge when learned in school is spread eventually through the entire community and it helps to make our nation stronger [EPRV, FG].

The majority of teachers either agreed or strongly agreed with items relating to statements on the role of teachers in developing future citizens.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly disagree (n=)</th>
<th>Disagree (n=)</th>
<th>Agree (n=)</th>
<th>Strongly agree (n=)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A teacher should help their students to see the need for changes in their community</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>308</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A teacher’s job is to ensure that students become leaders that change their community</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>302</td>
<td>279</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The purpose of schools is to prepare future citizens</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>492</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7-3: Frequency of responses to statements on the role of teachers in promoting aspects of citizenship in the classroom

In focus groups, however, teachers appeared to intimate that a good citizen is someone who would “follow the rules of society” [EPSA, FG]. Through analogy, students were labelled as “…young seedlings that need to be trained to grow straight” [EPFA, FG]. Consequently, the role of a teacher was to ensure that students obeyed and respected authority, the rules of society, and his/her elders. As noted by another teacher: “If you don’t put these seedlings straight when they are little, they will grow to be bent and twisted” [EPFA, FG]. In general, teachers appeared inclined to promoting what Turner (1990) has identified as a passive version of citizenship in which the norms and obligations of being a “good citizen” are handed down from above, and the citizen is presented as a subject of the state. A closer look at the above survey results suggests higher numbers of teachers disagreeing with statements related to a more active version of citizenship, in which one is seen to have greater obligations towards effecting the roles and functions of the state.
Following directives from above and exhibiting professionalism

For school directors in particular, there was a strong belief that teachers at their school needed above all else to follow the directives, orders and guidelines from the Ministry. According to the director of a ‘reputable’ school in Dili,

A good teacher should first be someone who follows directives coming out of the Ministry of Education. They have to obey the rules of the school and the Ministry, once they have chosen the career of a teacher. Even if you have a calling to do the job, you still have to follow the rules. [EPVV, Director]

The same director believed that teachers should not have any autonomy or scope to do things of their own choosing. She made it quite clear later in the interview that she believed that good teachers stuck to directives and orders, contending,

He or she should not invent things as they go, but stick to what they have written down...they shouldn’t deviate from these plans. In the process of learning, you need to stick to what you are supposed to teach, not invent material from nowhere.

Another director [EPRL, Director] noted that when he evaluated his teachers, he was looking for teachers who were “respectful, obedient, and [willing] to follow all the regulations set up by the Ministry and by the government.” Thus, critical for many directors in assessing the ongoing work of their teachers was the quality of their lesson planning and whether it was reflective of the curriculum for their grade level. A number of directors noted that they regularly checked lesson plans to ensure that their teachers covered all subject areas of the curriculum, allocated the appropriate amount of time to each subject, and had a longer-term plan for getting through the entire curriculum in the school year. Many of the directors spoken to had the expectation that teachers would then stick to this plan, so that when observed “they are following the activities they have written in their plans” [EPRC, Director].

Several of the teacher focus groups echoed this. One teacher felt that it was quite important for a good teacher to have daily, weekly and long-term planning in place, to “provide you with a plan of activities to achieve a certain goal” [EPRL, FG]. Another teacher noted that it was critical that they followed rules given from the Ministry, to demonstrate “good discipline” to the job [EPRL, FG]. Teachers also agreed that ‘sticking to schedule’ was critical, be it showing up to school on time or ending lessons at their allocated finish time. As stated by one teacher in a focus group,

Punctuality, particularly coming to school on time is important as a teacher. And sticking to the schedule is also important...so making sure you stop at the break time that is scheduled, and finishing at the time that is stated on the schedule is important [EPRC, FG].
Many linked the demonstration of such discipline to that of being a role model, arguing that without this disposition, it would prove almost impossible to expect the same from the students.

Pragmatically, one school director [EPFA, Director] acknowledged that she did not expect to see her teachers following their lesson plans to a tee when she observed them, expecting instead that her teachers would, "change what [they] are doing...to reengage [their] students," if they noticed that the planned lesson was not working. This was not a common belief of teachers and school directors, however, and what often resulted were teachers continuing to follow the textbook or lesson plan despite students not being engaged.

**Ensuring and measuring student learning**

Given that a teachers’ role was perceived to be one in which he/she covered the curriculum and transmitted a certain corpus of knowledge, successful teachers were individuals who could appropriately prepare students to pass end of year examinations. On the survey teachers responded to several statements regarding what successful learning outcomes would look like. As the table suggest, there were strong levels of agreement to beliefs that examinations were a valid mechanism of assessment and that the job of teachers is to prepare students for these exams.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The best way to see if a student understands what they have been taught</td>
<td>3.58</td>
<td>.561</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>is to give them an exam</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A teacher’s job is to prepare students to pass exams</td>
<td>3.23</td>
<td>.811</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning is about memorising information and being able to remember it</td>
<td>2.83</td>
<td>.795</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>later on</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students who have done the best on exams are the ones who have learnt</td>
<td>3.58</td>
<td>.633</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the most</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7-4: Mean levels of agreement to statements on survey regarding assessing student learning

More than one director believed that a good teacher was directly correlated with the numbers of their students who passed exams. In the words of one of them: "If I see that the examination results are good, then I don’t need to monitor them as often because I can trust that they will continue to deliver good results.” And conversely, “Even if the teachers have good plans or pedagogy [but] the results aren’t good in the work the students produce on a daily basis...then the quality of teaching is lacking” [EPVV, Director].

Similar to many other education systems throughout the world, Timorese teachers’ pedagogical practices remain geared towards summative assessment activities. The
issue in Timor-Leste is that many teachers interviewed did not make the link between their pedagogy and the impact it has on students. Only at two of the eight schools visited did teachers note the importance of ensuring that all children were learning. At one of the schools, a teacher argued that, “it is the teacher’s job...to motivate all students, so the teacher has to focus those students who are distracted or not participating back onto the activity...[they] have to be aware of the children who are quiet and perhaps behaving but are not participating” [EPRV, FG]. Another teacher believed that it was critical that teachers monitored the progress of each student after the lesson was delivered to ensure that students had actually learnt what had been taught, noting, “if you don’t go around and check and see if students are doing the activities in the way you have taught them, then you may not know if the students are not learning” [EPRC, FG]. The scarcity of such perspectives may explain why in so many classrooms students were observed to be ‘slipping through the cracks’, a matter discussed in more detail in the next chapter. In many ways the notion that all students should succeed is a relatively new one in the Timorese context, given the prior colonial education systems in which the explicit intent was on reproducing and legitimising an elite ruling class.

**Focussing on the needs of the child**

Yet teachers’ responses on the survey suggested that elements of a child-centred approach were identified as important aspects of a teacher’s current role in the classroom.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A teacher should encourage students to speak about how they feel</td>
<td>3.46</td>
<td>0.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A teacher’s job is to build the confidence of all students</td>
<td>3.27</td>
<td>0.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning should be about asking questions and finding answers to them on your own</td>
<td>3.16</td>
<td>0.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If a school is not safe and enjoyable for all students, the school is not good</td>
<td>2.65</td>
<td>1.02</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7-5: Mean teacher responses to survey items on student engagement

Teacher responses to the last statement\(^96\) indicate some ambivalence to a child-centred or child-friendly approach to schooling, and discussions in focus groups provided a greater sense of the diversity of perspectives on this and other aspects of such an approach. In these groups, some teachers reiterated the importance of making learning interesting to their students. They voiced opinions such as, “[a teacher] should teach in an animated way that children enjoy and can pay attention to” [EPFA, FG], or that “it is

\(^96\) A large number of teachers strongly disagreed (16.5%) or disagreed (26.5%) with the statement “If a school is not safe and enjoyable for all students, the school is not good.” The wording of the statement may have confused some respondents so issues of student safety and enjoyment of schooling were pursued in focus groups for clarification of teacher perspectives.
important to make learning exciting because that is how you draw the students in to your lesson and get them to pay attention to you” [EPRL, FG]. Others gave specifics of what a teacher who was doing this well would be doing—using music, songs, games, visuals and a variety of hands-on activities to engage and maintain student interest in learning. However, a sizeable number of teachers in these same groups disagreed with the notion that making learning fun or interesting to students was relevant to their job. For example, a teacher of Grade Five argued that,

I don’t think it is important that school needs to be fun and exciting all the time, because they get that at home and we don’t need to do exactly what happens at home...yes singing music, playing games in schools is fine, but it is more important that what we do focuses on getting students to concentrate on their learning...perhaps this is something that is important for Grade One students, but not for older students. [EPFA, FG]

Some teachers believed that an important dimension to their role in schools was to be a second parent to the children in their classroom as part of building a relationship of trust and ensuring student success. This relational view of teaching is founded on the belief of a teacher being a “surrogate parent, a moral example, and a key aid to the locality at which he or she is deployed” (Welmond, 2002, p. 54). Such a belief links teachers’ professional identities with the personal identity they may carry as caregiver to their own children/family, and underscores the importance of teachers being caring, nurturing, and understanding individuals who relate to their pupils as they would their own children (Osborn et al., 2000; George, Mohammed, & Quamina-Aiyejina, 2003). As summarised by one teacher,

Teachers are second parents...and must care for [students] in this way. It is important to approach and ask students, but do this in a kind way, rather than in a harsh way. [EPFA, FG]

Or as another female teacher succinctly described, “A teacher should be a mother to the students.” [EPRC, FG]. One director believed that such qualities were at the very essence of what makes one a teacher, contending that, “if you have a vocation as a teacher you must start with the characteristics of being loving and caring” [EPVV, Director]. But, many male teachers did not agree that teachers needed to act as a surrogate parent to the students in their classroom. As one teacher bluntly stated [EPFR, FG], “...it isn’t really relevant to our job. They already have a mother at home, why do we have to be the same as them?” Others contended that having good pedagogical skills and strong content knowledge was far superior to being able to relate to one’s students. One teacher [EPRC, FG] stated, “I don’t think it as important that a teacher is happy all the
time in the classroom, because if you are happy but the way you teach your students is ineffective, then you are not really being a good teacher.”

**Professional dispositions**

For a minority of directors and teachers, teachers exhibiting professional dispositions of punctuality, regular attendance, a positive attitude, and receptiveness to new ideas were seen as essential to their role in the classroom. One director made it clear to her staff that she expected them to, “...follow their lesson plans, follow my rules, and the rules of the Ministry...and also [not] be absent all the time” [EPVV, Director]. For another director [EPBM, Director], more than anything he expected his teachers to be interested and willing to learn new things, rather than get stuck in habit. Only one teacher acknowledged that continuous learning and professional development was an important dimension of the profession, despite the significant shifts in curriculum content and pedagogy. She acknowledged that, “you have to want to go through training, and want to study,” to remain in the profession [EPVV, FG].

**7.6. Stated levels of efficacy for these roles**

**Instructional efficacy**

A critical component of achieving many of the articulated roles of a teacher—transmission of knowledge, being a role model, ensuring that students passed exams—hinged on the need for teachers to be competent in instructional delivery.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I can improve the learning of students who come to school with very low skills</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>0.604</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can respond to difficult questions from my students</td>
<td>3.18</td>
<td>0.645</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can explain something in a different way when students don’t understand it the first time</td>
<td>3.49</td>
<td>0.591</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can help students who do not remember what they have learned in previous lessons</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>0.58</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 7-6: Mean responses to survey statements on aspects of instructional efficacy*

Survey responses suggest that in terms of assisting struggling students, presenting content in a variety of ways, and helping all students succeed, teachers reported themselves as effectively able to do so. Lacking from this survey, however, were issues specific to the contemporary Timorese context, namely the confidence with which teachers felt competent in new content areas introduced with the new curriculum as well as the utilisation of Portuguese as a new language of instruction. Based on the responses of both school directors and teachers, it would appear that many teachers do in fact lack confidence or competency in such domains.
One director acknowledged, “language is the biggest barrier for teachers to be effective because many were schooled in Indonesian times, and never had experience in speaking or learning Portuguese, so now it is a problem for them in the classroom” [EPBM, Director]. The implication for children according to another is that, “…if the teacher is struggling with the language, then the students will equally struggle as well” [EPRL, Director]. This was a matter acknowledged by teachers in focus groups as well. Many noted that the majority of the teaching staff had grown up in an era in which Portuguese was neither taught nor spoken. One teacher questioned the feasibility of teaching students effectively given that, “[we] grew up learning Bahasa Indonesian, and now all of a sudden have had to switch and learn a new language” [EPVV, FG]. In many circumstances, teachers relied on colleagues who were deemed more competent in the language to overcome this barrier. As described by one teacher, “Some of the teachers...have gone for Portuguese courses. They come back and then share with us what they have learned. And we can always go to these teachers to find out what these words mean and so on” [EPBM, FG]. For rural or remote schools, however, access to this type of linguistic capital was more limited due to the inaccessibility of such training programmes. This meant that that “if we are making mistakes, say with our Portuguese, there is no one at the school to correct us” [EPDL, FG]. The general lack of confidence in Portuguese also meant that teachers were less able to engage with the forms of support provided to implement the new curriculum such as the new resources and training programmes, as Chapter Six has already detailed. The implications of this in terms of classroom practice are explored in the next chapter.

Based on the rhetoric of current political discourse, and the belief of key decision-makers that teachers need to hold a relevant qualification to be competent to teach, survey data was analysed as to whether qualifications had any bearing on instructional self-efficacy. Teachers with a secondary and/or post-secondary qualification, when compared to those with a primary qualification or its equivalent, were found to be significantly more confident in their self-reported instructional efficacy on three of four items included in the survey.97

97 ANOVA tests suggest that the difference in mean scores between each of the subgroups was significant (p<.05) for all statements except the first.
Survey data were also analysed to discern if there were significant differences in terms of efficacy levels for teachers with more experience compared to those newer to the profession. Contrary to the perception of some school directors that experience makes more competent teachers, mean scores for those with less than nine years of total teaching experience (which would include the majority of those recruited after the emergency) were significantly higher than those with more than nine years experience on all but one of the four instructional efficacy statements included in the survey.98

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Qualification</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I can improve the learning of students who come to school with very low skills</td>
<td>Primary or Pre-secondary</td>
<td>3.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>3.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Partial or completed post-secondary</td>
<td>3.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can respond to difficult questions from my students</td>
<td>Primary or Pre-secondary</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>3.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Partial or completed post-secondary</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can explain something in a different way when students don’t understand it the first time</td>
<td>Primary or Pre-secondary</td>
<td>3.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>3.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Partial or completed post-secondary</td>
<td>3.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can help students who do not remember what they have learned in previous lessons</td>
<td>Primary or Pre-secondary</td>
<td>3.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>3.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Partial or completed post-secondary</td>
<td>3.39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7-7: Comparison of mean score responses to statements on instructional efficacy by maximum reported teacher qualification

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Years of experience</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I can improve the learning of students who come to school with very low skills</td>
<td>9 or less</td>
<td>3.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10+</td>
<td>3.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can respond to difficult questions from my students</td>
<td>9 or less</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10+</td>
<td>3.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can explain something in a different way when students don’t understand it the first time</td>
<td>9 or less</td>
<td>3.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10+</td>
<td>3.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can help students who do not remember what they have learned in previous lessons</td>
<td>9 or less</td>
<td>3.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10+</td>
<td>3.29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7-8: Mean score responses to instructional efficacy statements by years of teaching experience

One potential explanation for this is that teachers with more experience are those who have seen the education system shift dramatically from either Portuguese and/or Indonesian times, and feel less efficacious now due to such shifts. More senior teachers may also be more willing to acknowledge their shortcomings. Additionally, the majority of those with a valid post-secondary qualification are younger teachers who have gone through a programme of pre-service in the past five to six years.

98 p<.05 for all statements except “I can respond to difficult questions from my students.”
**Efficacy of classroom management and student engagement**

On the survey teachers were asked a number of questions about their reported levels of efficacy to engage all students and ensure they all learned, qualities which their school directors and national policy guidelines stress. In general, teachers reported high levels of efficacy to do so.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I can connect what I am teaching to the lives of my students</td>
<td>3.21</td>
<td>0.605</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can get students to learn, even when they aren’t really interested in learning</td>
<td>2.93</td>
<td>0.845</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can get all students in my class to want to learn</td>
<td>3.53</td>
<td>0.578</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can get students to value coming to school</td>
<td>3.14</td>
<td>0.686</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can involve students in decisions about their learning</td>
<td>3.16</td>
<td>0.63</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 7-9: Mean teacher responses to survey statements on their efficacy to engage all students*

A greater number of teachers reported unease in engaging students who appeared uninterested in school. Several teachers suggested that this lack of interest, which many associated with student absenteeism, could be traced back to the beliefs and actions of the families from where the children came. Many felt they were quite powerless to change this situation. For example, one teacher noted with concern that,

> We can try to talk to children and present to them the benefits of schooling, but ultimately the parents make the choice on whether they support sending their children to school or not. That is based largely on the home-context, where if for example the parents need their children to help out at home, we cannot then force children to come to school instead. [EPFA, FG]

Likewise a number of school directors felt that they were fighting an uphill struggle in terms of maintaining students’ interest in schooling, largely due to a lack of home support. One director argued that while parents claimed that they wanted their children to do well in school, particular parenting actions undermined this aspiration.

> Sometimes children are absent for one week or longer and then they do poorly in exams...they have missed all these lessons and have also missed the homework that week so of course they do poorly then...And the problem is the parents, who...should really be taking responsibility for looking after their child and sending them to school instead of letting them play on the streets. [EPBM, Director]

When teachers were asked how they might concretely assist a student who lacked interest in school, the majority suggested that the most they could do was to talk to them in a kind way. A few suggested they could try to individualise instruction for the student, and provide him/her with greater attention, but acknowledged that in a
classroom of fifty or more children this was difficult. One director believed that with pupil teacher ratios in her school averaging about 55:1,

   ...we cannot monitor student performance sufficiently in terms of reading, writing and counting skills...even in Grade One where we have only 46 students, it is too many, because at that young age a teacher needs to actively guide students on basic things such as how to hold a pen, open a book...and it is difficult with so many. [EPVV, Director]

Similarly, for one Grade One teacher large class sizes meant that, "I cannot pay adequate attention to all of them," and she needed to make strategic decisions on which students she paid most attention to [EPVV, FG].

Mean score responses to the statements above were further analysed by gender, qualification levels and years of teaching experiences to uncover if any statistically significant differences in means could be noted. This analysis revealed a number of interesting variations of responses. Female teachers reported themselves as more able to engage all students, even when they appeared to not be interested in learning, and likewise to get all students to learn. Teachers with higher qualifications reported themselves as more able to get all children in their class to want to learn. And similar to the responses to statements on instructional efficacy, teachers with less experience appeared to be more confident in engaging students to learn, than those with more experience.

Teachers were also asked a number of questions regarding their perceived efficacy to manage the classroom in a fashion that promoted strong relationships with students, and provide a safe environment for all students to learn in. Their responses suggest that while able to control and manage a classroom, doing so in ways that are “child-friendly” was more difficult for many of them. Part of this reported lack of efficacy to child-friendly classroom management techniques may be due to a lack of buy-in/engagement

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99 Mean scores for statement "I can get all students to learn, even when they aren’t interested in learning" for female teachers=3.02, male teachers=2.86; p<0.05. Mean scores for statement "I can get all students in my class to want to learn" for female teachers=3.58, male teachers=3.49; p<0.05.

100 Mean scores for this statement: teachers with primary/pre-secondary qualification=3.33, teachers with secondary/SPG/KPG or vocational training=3.55, teachers with partially completed/completed post-secondary degree=3.59; p<0.05.

101 Mean scores for statement "I can get all students to learn, even when they aren’t interested in learning" for teachers with 9 or < yrs experience=3.04, teachers with 10+ years experience=2.85; p<0.05. Mean scores for statement "I can get all students in my class to want to learn" for teachers with 9 or < yrs experience=3.61, teachers with 10+ years experience=3.45; p<0.05. Again, it could be that teachers with more experience are also more realistic about their shortcomings and limitations.
with such principles. As discussed in previous sections, a number of teachers continue to question whether having such rapport is necessary to student learning, and many maintain a belief that teachers need to retain a particular stature within the classroom and community. At the same time, the introduction of such techniques remains still in its infancy, given the limited scope of UNICEF’s *Eskola Foun* programme through the country. Classroom management has not been a focus of the *cursos intensivos* thus far.

A lack of efficacy in engaging all students and managing the classroom in a child-friendly fashion may be linked to particular school-based constraints such as large class sizes that make both issues a more difficult endeavour. Many teachers noted that while it would be ideal to have strong relationships with all students and to manage the classroom in non-threatening ways, class sizes, which exceeded 80 students in some instances made this almost impossible. Another teacher noted that to control her class of 63 Grade Two students, she had no choice but to, “really shout inside [the] classroom” [EPFR, FG].

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I can get students to follow my directions in the classroom</td>
<td>3.48</td>
<td>0.571</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can control students who are misbehaving without shouting or using physical force</td>
<td>2.56</td>
<td>0.984</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can get students to follow classroom rules</td>
<td>3.46</td>
<td>0.582</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can joke with students without it affecting their respect for me</td>
<td>2.53</td>
<td>0.968</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 7-10: Mean levels of teacher efficacy to manage the classroom, based on survey items*

**Professional responsibilities**

Teachers were not directly surveyed about the degree to which they felt they could meet particular professional obligations. However, data from focus group conversations suggested that despite teachers believing that it was important to meet professional

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102 In 2010, the programme was operating in 39 schools across the country. It is built around several modules that work to establish ‘child-friendly’ spaces and practices inside schools. It has several objectives including: helping teachers and students to establish and use active learning in their classroom; fostering linkages between the school and home; encouraging student and community participation through the establishment of student government; and helping teachers to use books based on the curriculum to promote integrated and practical learning (Instituto para Formação Continuada, 2010).

103 This summary analysis was disaggregated to assess the degree to varied by gender, school location, experience and qualifications. No significant differences between various subgroups were found in this exploration.
responsibilities such as regular attendance and punctuality, several factors impeded
them from doing so.

At four of the eight schools, at least one teacher mentioned that the distance between
their place of residence and the school made reaching work on time, or making it to
school at all, a difficult endeavour. For those living in Dili, an ad hoc system of how
teachers were allocated to their schools meant that teachers on one side of Dili often had
to travel to the other side for employment. At one Dili school a teacher [EPVV, FG] noted
that “many of us come from [a suburb located on the other side of Dili] and there is no
good transport to get us from there to here on time...[the Ministry] talks about the need
for punctuality but it is almost impossible with the current transport situation.”
Similarly, for teachers working in rural locations, schools were often located a
considerable distance from where many teachers lived, and with no transport options
available and no good roads, most resorted to walking to/from work each day. Many
frequently arrived late to school because of this, or alternatively did not come to school
at all on days of heavy rain or poor weather due to the condition of dirt roads and tracks.
The challenge for many school directors was that it meant that,“...the community also
then knows that the teachers at these schools are never on time...and then send their
children to school late [as well]” [EPRL, Director]. In another remote school, it was
suggested that this vicious cycle of tardiness was easily resolved by having a director
who ensured that the schools’ timetable was adhered to, with teachers reprimanded
when they were late, as was the case at their school. One teacher described how “our
teachers are punctual...because we have been given a timetable by [the director] and he
checks up on that...at other schools the teachers don’t come on time, because either they
don’t have a strict timetable or it is not followed” [EPRC, FG].

For all teachers, the collection of their salary on a monthly basis meant that they needed
to be absent for a day (in Dili) or longer (in remote areas) to travel to the regional office,
receive their payment in person, and either deposit those funds or cash them and travel
back to their place of employment. Acknowledging this, many of the directors stated
they openly excused up to three days of absence a month without explanation. One
director in Dili noted that these absences created a headache for her, requiring her to
cover up to three classes a day. To address this she,

...tried to get the teachers to be organised by having the ones that work
in the morning go in the afternoon to collect theirs, while the ones in the
afternoon should go in the morning to collect their salary...however, it
never works out perfectly because of the queues, so there are some
teachers who end up missing school on this day...or sometimes they are late by two or three hours because of this. [EPFR, Director]

Additionally, teachers also faced other livelihood or family commitments outside of school. When surveyed, teachers perceived that teaching incomes did not provide a living wage\textsuperscript{104}; were not sufficient to support their families on\textsuperscript{105}; and did not pay sufficiently considering the qualifications and experience they held.\textsuperscript{106} This led to teachers seeking other livelihood opportunities in addition to their teaching commitments in an aspiration to advance the well being of their families. Directors at remote schools acknowledged that teachers were frequently absent to either tend to their plantations or to sell products at the local markets to supplement family incomes.

Women teachers were noted as frequently absent due to ongoing responsibilities within the family, and often needed to be away from school to tend to immediate or extended family members who had fallen ill or passed away. As one school director [EPVV, Director] remarked, “women teachers are sick more often because they have lots of problems they have to deal with in the family...and this happens a lot!”

At the same time, a repeated concern, expressed by directors at several schools visited, was that some (not all) teachers did not take their responsibilities seriously and were frequently absent, yet faced little sanction for such behaviour. One director, noted in frustration that,

...many times, my teachers are absent for a day, without notifying me, and then they return the next day as if they were never gone. When I ask them for a letter, they say they forgot and will bring it the next day but they never do. Sometimes I report these behaviours to the district offices or inspectors, but nothing ever happens [EPRL, Director].

7.7. Conclusion

In Timor-Leste, new discourses on the purpose and focus of teachers’ work sit alongside antecedent historical claims about the nature of the profession and its function within society. Many school actors would appear to base their internal beliefs about teaching

\textsuperscript{104} Mean score to the statement, “As a job, teaching provides me with enough money to live on” was 2.63 (SD=0.852). % of teachers agreeing/strongly agreeing with this statement=61.4%

\textsuperscript{105} Mean score to the statement, “I struggle to support me and my family with the income I receive as a teacher” was 2.82 (SD=1.076). % of teachers agreeing/strongly agreeing with this statement=64.7%

\textsuperscript{106} Mean score to the statement, “I am paid well considering the education and qualifications I have,” was 2.67 (SD=.721). % of teachers agreeing/strongly agreeing with this statement=62.4%
on their experiences of working within a colonial education system that promoted particular values and beliefs (as detailed in Chapter Four), or on their personal experiences of schooling from this time period. In this respect the chapter demonstrates the ways in which colonisation has impacted on the construction of and habitus of teacher professional discourses, as well as its deep inculcation into the organisational routines of schools. Examples from this chapter include how teachers interpret and understand the idea of schooling for citizenship, the manner in which both learning and the school actors within it are maintained as distinct from the community outside, and the strong belief of school directors in maintaining a culture of ‘compliance’ within school settings.

However, other aspects of what teachers articulate in terms of their purported roles in the classroom suggests an acute awareness of the changed economic, social and political realities of the country following independence, and of teachers selectively utilising and/or contesting aspects of this reality to favour particular preferences and tendencies. Those who have strong economic motivations and interests in the profession utilise the space afforded by a lack of accountability and oversight to seek other opportunities for livelihood, while those with strong socio-political motivations have (re) entered into teaching to advance their conviction for the nation inside the classroom. Additionally, ideas such as the promotion of a child-friendly classroom environment do not resonate strongly with many teachers’ beliefs and ideas about what is needed for children in this changed reality, and as such are far from universally accepted into teachers’ reformulated reasons for action. Thus the current time, place and space within which schooling occurs “selectively reinforces particular forms of action, tactics or strategies” and provides a place within which teachers “can be reflexive, can reformulate within limits their own identities” (B. Jessop, 2005, p. 49).

More than anything the intent of this chapter has been to contest the discourse of ‘deficit’ that has tended to plague how many within the teaching profession in Timor-Leste have been labelled in recent years. The findings suggest a much more complex and nuanced story where in many ways teachers demonstrate strong vocational commitment, motivation and resolution for schooling to build a new Timor-Leste. Yet, the personal, institutional, and structural constraints which teachers face make it difficult for teachers to reconcile the ideal vision they have for themselves as professionals, with the lived realities they face. Thus simply labelling a particular set of attitudes or beliefs as antithetical to reform may not do true justice to the multifaceted
set of dilemmas, decisions and choices that teachers must assess and then employ agency over in the face of change.

George et al (2003, p. 204) correctly note, “given that the teacher is central to the reform movement...it is essential that a thorough understanding of the identity of teachers be garnered.” Unfortunately, the personal and professional narratives of the Timorese teachers included in this study do not appear to be appropriately acknowledged in current policy. Instead the Teacher Competency Framework and Teacher Career Regime reveal a simple labelling of most teachers as ‘unprofessional’ or ‘unqualified’. Both policies are informed by the logic of qualifying and more tightly classifying/framing the work of teachers towards a set of externally driven objectives. Such action has the potential to devalue the vocational and socio-political commitments of a large proportion of the current workforce, reducing overall teacher morale (Giroux, 2004; Vongalis-Macrow, 2006; Apple et al., 2011). The efficacy of teachers appears to be increasingly challenged in such a context.

What is necessary instead is acknowledgement of the unique time, place and space within which teachers have forged and are reforging their value positions and beliefs. The intent of this chapter has been to demonstrate the ways that teachers’ agency, reflected in their identity, beliefs and motivations, can simulatenously be aligned with and challenge the intent of curriculum reform through their preferred behaviours and tendencies. Moving from this, the next chapter explores the varied outcomes of the dialectic between situationally located actors and structural conditions which favour particular types of action.
8. Understanding and interpreting teacher actions

Teacher resistance to educational reform is a well-studied phenomenon in the literature. It is most commonly presented in the school effectiveness and educational policy literature as a problem to be rectified, rather than seen as a reasoned, reflexive and/or principled stance against purported reforms (Achinstein & Ogawa, 2006). This stance commonly perceives teacher resistance as the intention to maintain existing practices in the face of change that are considered either undesirable or threatening, or due to the fact that it is often difficult to undo teachers’ entrenched habits and patterns (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1996; Greenberg & Baron, 2000; Giles, 2006). And it is noted as occurring because of the absence of something—whether it be a lack of teacher understanding of reform intentions, a lack of teacher ownership of reform agendas, or a lack of skills/knowledge to be able to enact the stated reforms (see for example Van den Akker, 1988; Fullan, 1993, 2007). As a remedy to either of the above issues, it is often argued that teachers should be involved in shared decision-making, collaboration, professional development, and consultation throughout the reform process (Argyris & Schon, 1974; De Fieter, Vonk, & Van den Akker, 1995; Timperley, Wilson, Barrar, & Fung, 2007).

While engaging teachers in the reform process is both necessary and important, the goal behind such action remains the same—for teachers to adapt to the reform process, rather than for the reform process to adapt to teachers’ sense of purpose and belief, and to acknowledge the lived reality of their work.

What this body of research generally does not allow for is acknowledgement that there are particular types of resistance (overt and covert, active and passive) with unique costs, benefits and outcomes for children and teachers (Altinyelken, 2010a). Of particular focus in this chapter is the idea that teacher resistance is not universally employed; nor is it uniformly applied in all domains of teachers’ work and practice. In support of this claim, Sloan (2006, p. 145) contends that individual teachers "do not experience and respond to [reform] in predictable, mechanistic or unidimensional ways," thus "portraits of teachers experiencing and responding to...[reform] are inadequate at best and misleading at worst.” Instead, reform periods, according to Giroux (2003), create a borderland of movement and translation rather than a fixed and unitary site of translation in which teachers have the ability to act as what he labels “public intellectuals” and challenge pedagogies and content which do not adequately give students a sense of history, identity and place. This perspective opens up the possibility that teacher resistance can “evoke a resilient, even activist, self-renewing
response to change otherwise perceived to be disruptive or harmful” (Giles, 2006, p. 176). In essence the suggestion is that teachers can resist aspects of reform based on a principled stance. Conversely, teachers can also be conservative forces in progressive reform efforts (Tatto, 2007), and potentially promote what Davies (2004) labels as “negative conflict” inside the classrooms of conflict-affected states.

Thus the key objective of this chapter is to demonstrate a claim made at the outset of this thesis: that the actions which individual teachers undertake in reform is influenced by the beliefs (personal and professional) about their role and the function of schooling in society, and their understanding of the context and the constraints and strategic resources it affords. As McLaughlin (2006, p. 198) notes,

> Implementation is not about mindless compliance to a mandate or policy directive, and...implementation pitfalls are not just cases of individual resistance, incompetence or capability. Rather implementation involves a process of sense making that implicates an implementer's knowledge base, prior understanding, and beliefs about the best course of action.

This argument is advanced through the case of learner-centred pedagogy, given the prominence and visibility with which this reform features as a symbol of ‘good teaching’ in the Global North, and by which teacher practices across the Global South are now judged. This aspect of global isomorphism can be traced back to Beeby’s (1966) early classification of education systems across the developing world in which he identified a clear trajectory of ‘progress’ from those founded on rote-learning to those which were based on teaching for meaning/understanding. This “teleological purpose of westernization disguised as ‘better teaching’” has tended to polarise teacher-centred practices as antiquated in comparison to learner-centred practices that are deemed modern (Guthrie, 1980, p. 421). It uncritically accepts educational transfer as a necessary and inevitable process of modernisation, despite the problematic assumptions, presented in Chapter One, upon which such action is founded. One particular critique that is expanded on in this chapter is that irrespective of the outcomes—and based on well-established beliefs, and existing professional discourses about what is needed for themselves, their students and society as a whole—teachers resist, indigenise and invert reform (Steiner-Khamsi, 2000; Lopes & De Macedo, 2009). Research from a number of different contexts across the Global South now suggest that the socio-cultural context within which teachers’ work is located influences the

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107 Negative conflict is action that exacerbates rather than mitigates against future conflict in society.
practices which are observed in classrooms, independent of the training on learner-centred pedagogy one might have received, or the levels of resourcing that are afforded to such efforts. Some researchers looking at the implementation of such approaches in sub-Saharan Africa suggest that teacher-centred, formalistic approaches resonate much more strongly with teachers’ own beliefs around the nature of knowledge and how it should be transmitted (O’Sullivan, 2004; Serbessa, 2006). Closer to Timor-Leste, research from Indonesia suggests that teachers’ own views of their position, their professional stature and the history of the profession, can render changes to practices towards locally-oriented and contextualised learning problematic (Bjork, 2002).

Specifically, when such teachers feel that such practices may disadvantage their students in terms of national examinations (Crossley & Guthrie, 1987), are not feasible given the teaching environments in which they practice (S. Johnson, Monk, & Hodges, 2000), or may create conflicts with particular norms of child-rearing in the communities in which they teach (Tabulawa, 1997), resistance may be principled and even well justified.

Based on this prior research from other contexts, the remainder of this chapter probes the breadth of teacher resistances in Timor-Leste to learner-centred pedagogy, to understand why, how and with what consequences teachers act on their beliefs and motivations about this modality of learning, and do so in reconciliation with the material conditions of their work.

8.1. Understanding and interpreting pedagogic practice

To move beyond an analysis in which teacher actions are labelled as ‘compliant’ or ‘resistant’ to the imperative of shifting their practice towards learner-centredness, this chapter draws on the important sociological work of Basil Bernstein (1975, 1990, 2000, 2004) who, over the course of his career, established an abstract language for describing and understanding patterns of pedagogy. He argued that pedagogic discourse consists of two different forms: instructional and regulative discourse. Instructional discourse is that which creates specialised skills in students, while regulative discourse is that which defines social conduct within classrooms. Both discourses are governed by a set of internal rules, which in instructional discourses are rules over the selection, sequencing, pacing and evaluation of learning; and in regulative discourse are rules of hierarchy between student and teacher. A third set of rules, common to both discourses, are the rules of criteria, or judgements on what is defined as ‘legitimate’ or ‘illegitimate’ learning in the pedagogic relation. Bernstein (1990) notes that regulative discourses always take
precedence over instructional discourse in pedagogic relations. The inner logic of pedagogic practice consists of the relationship between these three rules, and all modalities of such practice are generated from these foundations but vary according to the strength of their classification and framing values (Bernstein, 2004, p. 197).

Classification determines the types of boundaries that are drawn between categories, agents, actors or discourses in a pedagogical relationship, while framing relates to the locus of control over the selection, sequencing and pacing of instructional discourse. Strong classification produces clear divisions of responsibility and clear demarcations of knowledge between and within subject discourses. This may lead to particular subject specialists teaching each area of the specified curriculum, clear demarcations of subjects within the curriculum, and/or the clear distinction of knowledge which is gained in schooling from that which is gained outside schooling. Weak classification, conversely, is typified by the blurring of subject disciplines, with an emphasis instead on learning dispositions and the application of knowledge to outside contexts. Strong framing locates control of the learning process with the transmitter of knowledge, while weaker framing locates control more with the learner. Thus, in settings typified by stronger framing there exist more visible forms of pedagogical practice, the rules of regulative and instructional discourse are explicit, and the transmitter has visible control over the selection, pacing and criteria for learning. On the other hand, where framing is weaker, the practice of pedagogy tends to be less visible with the learner holding greater control over the learning process, and the rules of regulative and instructional discourse are implicit and less known to the learner (Bernstein, 2000).

Out of this Bernstein identifies two broad models of pedagogical practice, based on his analysis of schooling in England—performance and competence pedagogies. At the core of the performance model is a stronger classification and framing of instructional and regulative discourses. These are typified by clear boundaries in terms of who controls time, space and discourse in pedagogical practice with the teacher and learner bounded by a prescriptive curricula and rigidly structured divisions of time. The expectation is for learners to reproduce pre-specified text through particular skill-based instruction in numeracy and literacy and they are assessed on the deficit of such an output. Interaction in the classroom is tightly governed through systems of discipline, control and routine. Barrett (2007, p. 277) notes that, "the focus on learners' performance and achievement of explicit attainment tends to produce instrumentalism and 'surface learning'," with a risk of, "estrangement or withdrawal amongst those who fail to
perform as required.” Likewise, it tends to strongly frame the work of the teacher, as “the transmitter has explicit control over selection, sequencing, pacing, criteria, and the social base” (Bernstein, 2000, p. 13).

On the other end of the spectrum, a competence-oriented pedagogy is both loosely framed and classified. Arising out of theories of early-years and special needs learning, and based on constructivist ideas of learning, the belief is that the learner is “active and creative in the construction of a valid world of meanings and practice” (Bernstein, 2000, p. 43). Due to the weaker framing and classification of instructional and regulative discourses, boundaries between subjects are weak and learning activities may be interdisciplinary in nature, while time and space are more loosely structured inside classrooms. Similarly, interpersonal communication between teachers and learners is emphasised, diffusing the hierarchical systems of control regulating classroom interaction and leading to more invisible and implicit rules. Evaluation practices are geared towards acknowledging what students know, rather than what they do not, and the criteria for evaluating students are not explicit. Such pedagogy requires heavy investment in terms of material resources, teacher training and the time demands of teachers, as greater responsibility is handed over to the teacher to craft instructional resources, evaluate students, and facilitate project-based activities.

Important to note about this binary is that often what occurs in classrooms in not an either/or but rather a contingent set of pedagogies in which new forms of instruction are interpreted through teachers’ current constructs of teaching and learning. Bernstein (1975, p. 56) himself notes that there are varying modes and practices within a performance or competency orientation to pedagogy, stating “the modes may give rise...to a pedagogic pallet where mixes can take place.” And as such, a “complex typology of pedagogic modes and the identities these project is derived from two fundamental pedagogic models” (Bernstein, 2000, pp. 41-42).

A limitation of Bernstein’s description of teacher practice is that it is based on culturally situated practices of the UK in the late 20th century. Therefore principles of individualism, personalised instruction, and diffuse interaction that are part of Bernstein’s competence pedagogy may not hold pertinence in collectivist cultures prevalent in many parts of the Global South. Nonetheless, the value of Bernstein’s ideas is that it helps researchers to arrive at a more nuanced understanding of classroom practice in which teachers incorporate a palette of
ideas, which draw on elements of progressive/constructivist pedagogies but maintain aspects of what has traditionally been labelled “teacher-centred” practice. More recently his theories have been applied to such dynamics in the Global South (Barrett, 2007; Nyambe & Wilmot, 2008; Sriprakash, 2010). Important about this recent scholarship is: (1) the extension of Bernstein’s typology to environments of heightened ontological uncertainty commonly found in the Global South, particularly in post-colonial/post-conflict settings; and (2) the explicit location of the classification and framing constructs of pedagogy as historically informed, culturally constructed, and influenced by broader social and material conditions of society. These studies have helped to carefully deconstruct the binary between a teacher-centred versus child-centred approach to pedagogical practice, and demonstrate how interactive and more weakly framed regulative discourses can be juxtaposed with a tightly classified instructional discourse or vice-versa. Through a close examination of teachers’ values and ideas regarding teaching and learning and their efforts to put these into practice they have given attention to the fact that “their ‘pedagogic palette’ is mixed” in the face of reform (Barrett, 2007, p. 292).

8.2. A typical lesson

To begin to apply the above ideas to understanding how the shift to learner-centred approaches is being interpreted and actualised in many Timorese classroom, notes and comments from a single classroom observation of a second grade classroom in Dili are presented. This observation was chosen because in many ways it represents a typical example of what was observed across the 42 classroom observations—in how the teacher structured the lesson, interacted with students, and taught the material at hand. It provides a useful discussion point from which to explore how, despite the reform’s stated intention to more loosely frame and classify instructional and regulative discourses in pedagogical practice, the majority of classroom interactions remain strongly classified and framed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Observations</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9:00</td>
<td>T begins with S by stating the subject of the lesson (Estudo de Meio). T then copies text, from the S textbooks onto the board that S are to copy immediately.</td>
<td>Only about half of the S appear to actually be copying the material into their books. The rest seem to be struggling to get started. The text that the T is writing down on the board is quite long for Grade 2 S, being approximately a paragraph of text.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:04</td>
<td>T finishes copying the text and says to S that they will have 15 minutes to copy the text into their notebooks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:06</td>
<td>At this point many S still struggling to get started on the task at hand. After a couple more minutes the T begins to circulate the room to see that all S copying the material into their notebooks.</td>
<td>The Portuguese language the S are being tasked with copying is quite complex. Words like tacito and afacto are probably unfamiliar to them, and it is certain that S will not understand the content of the paragraph they are copying down without a good explanation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>Comments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:11</td>
<td>T announces that she wants S to copy the material first, and then she will explain the material later.</td>
<td>Some S have still not begun to copy the text on the board into their notebook (10 minutes after they were tasked with this). The T doesn’t seem to circulate the room to take notice of this. Meanwhile a small number of S are beginning to finish with this task. It seems to be a very inefficient use of everyone’s time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:17</td>
<td>T circulates the room again when she notices that some S are getting restless, but her attention seems to focus on only half of the classroom.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:20</td>
<td>T asks S how many are done copying. Only about half the S respond in the affirmative. T says, rather impatiently, that she has already given them 15 minutes and that it is important that they copy this material down so they can review it at home.</td>
<td>All of the T verbal instruction is in Tetum, but all the text in both the book and that the S have copied is in Portuguese. In addition the names of the organs are in Portuguese not Tetum. T appears to spend most of her time translating the text from Portuguese to Tetum as the S have no knowledge of the Portuguese they have copied down.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:22</td>
<td>T begins lesson. Doesn’t asks S to put down their pens before beginning however, so many S still busy copying and not paying attention to her. T holds up the textbook and shows the S a picture of a boy with the different sensory organs of the body labelled. She begins by asking the S if the picture is one of a boy or a girl. T then points at different organs labelled in the book and says the word in Portuguese. T asks S (whole class) what the equivalent word for these organs would be in Tetum and helps them to respond by beginning the word before the students have a chance to respond independently. T then discusses what each sensory organ’s function is (referring to the description provided in the textbook). She does this by asking questions to the S…(i.e. the nose is for…) but doesn’t really give S to respond, instead leading the answer for them. All questioning is closed with the T providing S the answers. At no point during this period of instruction does the T go through the actual text the S have copied. Instead all of her instruction is focused around the photo in the copy of the textbook she has.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:27</td>
<td>T erases text from the board and begins to copy an exercise from the textbook onto the board. T orally goes over the answers to this activity first before copying the activity without answers onto the board. The exercise (all in Portuguese) involves S choosing correct response from a list of different body parts (in MCQ style). For example the ears are for, and then four possible choices given. S asked to copy all this text down so they can then complete the activity.</td>
<td>This whole process appears to be a huge waste of time as this work could have been done as either a matching activity, or an oral exercise rather than making the S copy the textbook activity verbatim.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:36</td>
<td>T finishes her translation/explanation of the exercise and asks S to copy and complete. At this point one S asks a clarifying question because she doesn’t actually understand what to do. T re-explains the activity once again.</td>
<td>Good that the S feels comfortable enough to ask a question as it isn’t often witnessed. T could have prevented confusion however, by going through one or two examples together.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:40</td>
<td>T re-explains the activity S are to complete once again, but this time she actually tells S which answers to mark. She instructs S to bring their notebooks to the front once they have completed their activity.</td>
<td>By doing this the T doesn’t allow any opportunity for the S to think for themselves.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:42</td>
<td>Some S (about 1/2) begin to hand in their notebooks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:45</td>
<td>For S who have completed the activity, no further directions are given to them on what they are to be doing next. Meanwhile, while waiting for rest of S to hand in their notebooks, the T is preparing her lesson plan at the front.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:46</td>
<td>T says that S who have completed the activity can go and play outside.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:50</td>
<td>S continue to hand in notebooks. Other S float in and out of classroom as they finish.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:52</td>
<td>T has S come up to board to read the questions and write their responses to the questions in Portuguese.</td>
<td>It is interesting to note that when the T asks a question in Tetum, the S are readily able to respond to what each sensory organ’s purpose is. They know the content, what they don’t know is the language, so in essence the Estudo de Meio lesson becomes one that is more focused on language acquisition rather than anything else.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 8-1: Observation notes from Classroom 20

Through utilisation of printed text and activities directly from the textbook, the teacher’s instructional pedagogy was strongly classified and framed by what was presented in these materials. In part this was a reflection of the strong belief expressed in the previous chapter, that teachers should stick to their plans and ensure that they cover all areas of the curriculum as a critical component of their role. The objective of the lesson was also clear to both students and the teacher: that they should come away with a clear understanding of the function and role of each of the sensory organs of the body (ear, nose, mouth, eyes). Use of a textbook helped to ensure, at least in the teachers’ mind, that she could achieve this, as conveyed in a conversation with her after the lesson.

What was taught to students continued to be largely prescribed through these texts with little school or classroom input into the process, despite the reform intent to make knowledge selection and sequencing more flexible, locally-based and inclusive. The teacher made no attempt to connect learning to students’ prior knowledge or to prior lessons. Content was presented devoid of the personal connections students may have to the subject. As Figure 8-1 suggests, this was commonplace in most lessons observed. In most circumstances, teachers continued to maintain a clear distinction between school knowledge versus outside knowledge, in line with the beliefs they articulated in the previous chapter. Utilisation of the text, with little deviation from this, offered little opportunity to personalise and localise content.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Connecting learning to the students</th>
<th>100.0%</th>
<th>90.0%</th>
<th>80.0%</th>
<th>70.0%</th>
<th>60.0%</th>
<th>50.0%</th>
<th>40.0%</th>
<th>30.0%</th>
<th>20.0%</th>
<th>10.0%</th>
<th>0.0%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Topic taught is related to everyday lives of students</td>
<td>19.0%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic taught is connected to other learning areas</td>
<td></td>
<td>9.5%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connects lesson to prior learning</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>23.8%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The one area, however, where this varied tended to be in the language chosen to convey the content of such text. The observation notes from the above lesson make comment on the complexity of Portuguese in the Grade Two Estudo do Meio textbook, an issue that was discussed in Chapter Six as a reason why the current textbooks were perceived as inadequate for the needs of students. Many teachers, cognisant of this struggle, would end up re-explaining the content in Tetum to ensure that students had appropriate access to such knowledge. By doing so, teachers mediated the tightly framed and classified sequence of knowledge delivered in such texts to meet the needs of their students.

According to Bernstein (1990, p. 25), pacing refers to the rate at which learning takes place:

Pacing is the rate of expected acquisition of the sequencing rules; that is how much you have to learn in a given amount of time. Essentially, pacing is the time allowed for achieving the sequencing rules.

In the case of the lesson presented, the teacher appeared to maintain control over the pacing and flow of instruction at almost all points in the hour-long session. In early stages of the lesson, the teacher established a parameter and timeframe in which she expected students to finish copying what she had written on the board from the textbook. The time period was not adjusted or modified for particular students, with some struggling to complete the delegated task in the time allotted, and others completing the task early with no direction given on what they could do next. When the teacher went on to present the material, again the pacing of the lesson was firmly established through a combination of what was presented in text, and how the teacher went on to explain it. A series of questions asked of the class during this presentation were collectively answered. This teacher’s approach of utilising closed response questions, intonating answers by providing a leading sound or word, and her encouragement of collective responses of repetition were common in many lessons observed and maintained a clear rhythm led by the teacher. When students were tasked to copy the questions and answers after the conclusion of the lesson, pacing remained

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108 Quinn’s (2011) research found similar patterns in instructional delivery, where her in-depth analysis of patterns of language utilisation found that teachers would deviate from the prescribed text in Portuguese to ensure that students had access to the content presented.
tightly framed. This was despite the space students were given to work autonomously.
The teacher established a clear task with particular rules, expectations and parameters for its completion. Such practices were also commonplace in the classroom observations of Quinn (2011).

During the lesson, the teacher maintained almost complete control over how time, space and resources were utilised in the classroom, as well as control over the dynamic of interaction between students and teacher, and students with each other. In this classroom, as in many, the classroom space was used uniformly in a whole-class setup and completely controlled by the teacher. Unusual about this lesson compared to others observed, was that the teacher granted permission for students to leave the classroom and play once they had completed their activities. In doing so, the teacher sent a clear message about who controlled how time and space were to be used in the classroom, although once outside students had much more liberty to make choices.

This tight control of language and communication was commonplace across the majority of the classrooms visited (see Figure 8-2). In most instances, teachers maintained control of the talk that occurred in the classroom by regulating when students were allowed to speak (in unison, only after response to a whole-class question to the group), and with whom (in response to the teacher). Within the case study lesson no opportunity was given for the students to talk with each other or the teacher. On the few occasions in the lesson when the teacher did ask the class a question she often quickly answered the questions she asked, without offering opportunity for students to think and respond independent of prompting.
Figure 8-2: Summary of actions observed by teacher across observations in regards to questioning and facilitation techniques (% of 42 classrooms)

As the case study lesson demonstrated, most classroom activity was characterised by high amounts of teacher talk and little opportunity for student talk.\(^{109}\) In the case study lesson, the fact that a student asked the teacher an unsolicited question was a rarity and surprise, as the notes indicate, given that in most classrooms students had few opportunities to ask questions or provide opinion, and even when given such opportunities very rarely did students speak. Questioning, when utilised by teachers, was mainly closed\(^{110}\) in nature, and little opportunity was given for students to think, discuss, or provide feedback into the learning process.

Related to the above, evaluation in most classrooms was strongly founded on a performance-based model where the emphasis was on explicit criterion of right and wrong. In the observed lesson, the teacher made this clear through the activity she

\(^{109}\) A more detailed analysis by Quinn (2010) calculated that 90% of talk in the classrooms she observed was done by the teacher. Thus, “questioning rehearsed information previously handled or seen as ‘common knowledge.’ When questioning deviated from this pattern or students became confused about the routine” (Quinn, 2011, p. 186). As she notes from her own classroom observations, “students were clear on their role in this sort of interaction: the language of the teachers directs action and students need only respond with the correct action, not talk themselves” (Idid, p. 177).

\(^{110}\) Closed questions are ones with one correct answer. Conversely, open questions are ones that may have multiple possible responses that are appropriate. Quinn’s research provides further detail and reinforces these findings about the content and nature of questioning in Timorese primary classrooms.
chose to assess student learning—multiple choice responses—in which there was only one right answer out of an option of four for students to choose from. This was also apparent in the closed nature of questioning she employed. While not as visible in this lesson, in other observed classrooms teachers often chastised children who did not provide the right response and judged them as lacking in intellectual capacity. Table 8-2, provides evidence of this (see 11:28 and 12:12), when students were acknowledged for their correct responses and scolded for their mistakes. Given teacher beliefs that summative examinations were an effective way to gauge whether and what students had learned, and served as an adequate proxy of student intelligence, such action may not be unsurprising.

Finally, while less apparent in this lesson, teachers maintained firm control of students through a “disciplining regulation where deviance is highly visible” (Bernstein, 2000, p. 47). In most classrooms, it was clear that students were expected to remain quiet, obedient and still. Disciplinary control was firmly in the hands of the teacher as the authority figure in the classroom. Cumulative analysis of observation data suggests that while the majority of teachers could control their classrooms effectively, their techniques were often punitive or done in a way that threatened the safety or emotional welfare of children. Few teachers exhibited qualities of classroom techniques common in child-friendly spaces\(^\text{111}\) such as providing positive reinforcement and praise for positive student behaviours and actions (16.7%), using appropriate gestures and body language (35.7%), or greeting students in a positive manner at the start of the lesson or activity (33.3%). More concerning was a number of instances where teachers were observed using physical violence or strong disciplinary controls to maintain order in the classroom. Below is one example in which a classroom of 75 Grade One and Two students, with two teachers, was managed repeatedly with strong, and sometimes punitive, disciplinary control by one of the two teachers.

\(^\text{111}\) It should be noted that in most of the classrooms where such techniques were observed, specific training in child-friendly disciplinary techniques had been part of the programme of in-service support (i.e. UNICEF’s Eskola Foun and NRC’s Compact Teacher Training Programme).
In another instance, such disciplinary control was given over to one student with a bamboo stick as the notes from this classroom observation detail. While a child was given ‘control’ over this important classroom function, it was still largely framed by a disciplinary code established by the teacher and with clear and explicit instructions on what to do when students failed to follow the expected disciplinary code.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Observations</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15:16</td>
<td>T gives one S, sitting at front of room a stick. The S is asked to go around and redirect his peers who are off task. He does so by going around the room and hitting S with this stick who he sees are misbehaving or off-task. Meanwhile T continues to have S come up and read text individually. The remainder of the class is just sitting bored at their desk, though surprisingly docile considering they haven't been given any direction on what they are to be doing in the meantime. Every once in a while during this whole process, T attempts to get all S to pay attention by yelling something at them, but he is not very successful in these attempts. Giving S this kind of control (i.e. corporal punishment) is dangerous and unsafe. S appears to go around and hitting S ad hoc, which is completely inappropriate.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8-3: Extract of observation notes from classroom 24

While the above two examples represent the extreme cases of disciplinary control, the tight regulative framing of student behaviour can be associated with many of the articulated beliefs of teachers presented in Chapter Seven. Specifically, the very strong discourse of teachers as authority figures to be revered in the classroom and community-at-large, could explain part of teachers’ reluctance to cede control over the framing of discipline inside the classroom. A significant number of teachers in that chapter expressed doubt that it was important for teachers to more loosely classify and frame their disciplinary control by acting in a more nurturing way with students or joking/laughing alongside them. Such attitudes would make difficult ideas inherent in competence-based pedagogy that, communicative devices should “mask” or “blur” the asymmetrical power relations in the pedagogic relation between teacher and student (Bernstein, 2004, p. 1999). It also would seem to work against the intent of the teacher moving towards an “environment favourable to learning through supportive actions on their part...positive and productive interpersonal relations; and establish[ing] a safe environment to support learning in which students feel safe and secure” (Ministry of Education, 2009a).

Ultimately, the prevalence of performance discourses and practices in what was observed had particular impact on student success within such environments. In the previous chapter, teachers contended that a critical part of their role was to help build the nation, which included ensuring that students came away from their schooling experience with the necessary skills and attitudes to contribute in a positive way to a new Timor-Leste. Several school directors and some teachers felt that it was important that teachers provide appropriate forms of monitoring, feedback and support to all students, rather than just the majority, as the teacher below suggested:

As a teacher, you have to have different techniques to get the attention of the students in your classroom and to listen to the lessons you are giving. You have to for example, provide visual demonstrations of what you are...
saying on the board...this may help to motivate students. And say a student doesn’t understand what you are teaching in the lesson or what you have presented on the board, then you have to think of another way of presenting this information to the students. [EPRL, FG]

Despite these beliefs, students were often observed to lack understanding of the content or message of the lesson. Teacher responses to this varied, but often the teacher would just move on to another activity or restate things exactly as taught before.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Observations</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15:03</td>
<td>T has written a large chunk of Portuguese text on the board. S are being asked to individually read this passage when I enter the classroom. Passage is titled “The Fish”, and is a poem about the life of a fish under the sea. Passage is as follows: “Dormem numa cama da alga entre as rochas, so nao podem bronzar-se na grandez, dos areais porque peixes fora de agua nao conseguem respir. Mexem as guerlras despesa e voltam logo para o mar. Os peixes de muitas cares, da aquas fundas dos mares sabem por ovos fribumenhos que dao peixinhos aos milhares.”</td>
<td>The language of this passage is quite complicated and difficult for students who are learning Portuguese as a second language, particularly given the fact that it is also throwing in specific scientific vocabulary that S may not have an understanding of in their native tongue.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15:06</td>
<td>T has S read the text out in their row groups. Before he does this, he reads aloud the text and re-explains the meaning in Tetum.</td>
<td>It is quite evident that the S have no understanding of the meaning of what they are reading—thus the activity rather than being a science lesson is purely about being able to read Portuguese, but no sense of gaining understanding from it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15:12</td>
<td>T underlines certain words in the text (as shown above). He explains what each of these words means in Portuguese, however very few S are actually listening or are engaged in what he is saying. At one point while T is explaining the words, he goes over to one of the S and hits him on the shoulder with his ruler (lightly). T then continues with explanation.</td>
<td>Very apparent at this point that the text being presented is way too difficult for these second language learners. As a result, most are now completely disengaged from lesson. Only about six of the 40 students in the classroom are actually paying attention. Additionally, his explanation of the actual words mean is poor, and only after he refers to his teachers’ guide. This suggests T’s own understanding of the language is limited. Perhaps this is why he doesn’t attempt to explain it in Tetum.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15:14</td>
<td>T has individuals S come up to front of class and read the text aloud. The remainder of the class is expected to sit at their desk and follow along but few are actually doing so. T not really even following what S are reading off the board, and S at front struggling to read the text and making many mistakes in the process without any sort of correction or redirection.</td>
<td>At this point it seems like T almost just trying to fill time rather than do anything of substance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15:27</td>
<td>T changes activity and has rows of S read the text aloud again.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15:31</td>
<td>T attempts to assess whether S have a basic understanding over the meaning of the text. He asks, to the whole class, “What is the name of a person who catches fish called in Portuguese?” Only about a handful of S are able to respond but most cannot or aren’t even paying attention to what he is saying.</td>
<td>This lesson appears to have no coherence at all. T seems to be making things up on the spot and not effectively using either his T guide or his lesson plan book. This becomes more evident in the abrupt change of activity that follows.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15:33</td>
<td>T calls up S to individually write out a sentence that he dictates aloud to them, such as “I am a student of 4th grade in Turn C.” The S are supposed to correctly spell out the words in Portuguese, but most struggle. At one point while he is doing this he stops to go hit a S with a stick who is off-task.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8-4: Excerpt from observation notes classroom 24
Little evidence existed across the 42 classrooms observed of teachers individualising instruction or catering to the needs of particular groups of students. This was an issue noted by Quinn (2011, p. 190) of her classroom observations where she concluded that,

As teachers had few strategies to draw upon, they could not cater to student learning differences in the classroom—those who needed a different way to understand the material—and those who did not understand the teachers’ way of dealing with content had to wait in the hope of a better explanation.

Similarly, the predominance of a performance pedagogical discourse meant that, more often than not, students were expected to absorb the content without follow-on individual support or monitoring from the teacher in the independent activity that often followed the directed lesson. Less than half the observed teachers (42.9%) moved between students to assist and guide them individually, or provided an alternative appropriate form of support when they noticed they were struggling. Teachers usually did not have good mechanisms for assessing student understanding of an activity, as most often teachers would either orally review answers as a class (with the teacher providing the answer), or call on a small number of students to write their answers on the board. Such activity provided little opportunity for teachers to assess the progress of each individual student in the class. In the example presented at the outset of this section, the teacher made efforts to collect student notebooks and review what they had done. Unfortunately, this was not commonly observed across all 42 lessons. Students in a number of classrooms were observed to be “falling through the cracks” as they struggled in silence without notice from the teacher as the extracted notes and photo evidence from Observation 28 suggests.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Observations</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10:15</td>
<td>Class begins with T having S stand and recite a prayer, greet the T and each other</td>
<td>Appears to be a routine that occurs every day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:17</td>
<td>T writes down the date, subject, and class on board. S copy into their notebook. T proceeds to copy a section of the text from the Portuguese textbook onto the board. It is a short passage about a girl from Aileu who is going to school for the first time. It takes T nearly five minutes to write the text on the board. Meanwhile many S are off task waiting for her to finish. She then instructs S to copy material into their notebook. Many S appear to either lack notebooks, or pencils and are off-task as a result. T doesn’t appear to do anything about this.</td>
<td>All verbal instruction to S take place in Tetum, not Portuguese, even though content of subject is Portuguese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:25</td>
<td>Those S who have notebooks and pens are copying text while T takes roll call. S who have copied text do so by sight and with no apparent connection to what text means as they copy what is written on board letter by letter</td>
<td>Many S appear to have no real literacy skills and are copying by sight. This has disastrous results (photo taken as evidence from this classroom)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:32</td>
<td>T circulates around the room to see how S are getting on with copying text. One S is off tasks. T flicks the back of the S ear with her thumb and forefinger to redirect. T continues to circulate and see how S copying material but appears to ignore the students sitting in near proximity to me (at the back).</td>
<td>By this point it has been nearly 20 minutes since class begun, but hardly any T instruction thus far. No explanation of the text that S copying prior to commencing the activity.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8-5: Extract from observation notes of classroom 28

Figure 8-3: Copy of a Grade Two student notebook from classroom 28

The way in which this student copied the text the teacher had written on the board suggests that he continues to struggle with basic letter formation and the separation of words and letters, which would render him illiterate according to measures of basic literacy included in the recently conducted Early Grades Reading Assessment (EGRA) in Timor-Leste (World Bank, 2009a). When the teacher was later asked about why she did
not check the notebooks of students in the back of the room, she explained that her large class size (more than 50 students), coupled with a high number of overage students, necessitated her making strategic decisions about which students to focus her attention on. She believed that efforts were best expended on those who had the greatest potential to succeed, rather than the students who were already struggling. The students she placed at the back were the students most at risk and who had already repeated Grade Two at least once. Her sense was that many of these children lacked something—whether it be appropriate home support, enough intelligence, or sufficient motivation to learn—and were not worth expending attention on. This is similar to what Sriprakash (2010, pp. 303-304) found her in her study in India,

Within the classroom, performance stratification is explicit and little agency appeared to be held by the ‘dull child’ in a strongly framed pedagogical interaction...social deficit constructions of students and their families at times legitimised these strong pedagogical controls; a revealing example of the social message underlying the principles of knowledge transmission.

8.3. Learner-centredness

As introduced at the outset of this chapter, learner-centred pedagogy has become part of an emerging global curriculum, deemed as a response to the imperatives of modernisation, democratisation and globalisation. This approach to teaching and learning comes from a long-standing tradition of progressive educational theory. Key aspects of this in terms of how children learn include the belief that:

- Individuals construct a personal reality based on piecing together their prior knowledge with new experiences;
- Learners construct new knowledge based on what they are told by others and by being shaped through social experience and interaction; and
- Learning occurs through experimentation and practice supported through active student engagement, discovery, inquiry and empirical problem solving for children as part of the learning process (Dewey, 1998; Reusser, 2001).

Based on these ideas, the paradigm of learner-centredness has become characterised by shifting instruction away from lecture or direct transmission of knowledge towards individual and small group activities, as well as visible opportunities for students to ask frequent questions and be engaged in dialogue with each other (Leu & Price-Rom, 2006). It is often labelled as more “active” due to its encouragement of activity-based work such as group discussions, hands-on learning, and games/role play (Mayer, 2004). Drawing on the concepts of Bernstein, a key aspect of learner-centred pedagogy is a
move towards a weaker framing of the instructional and regulative role of the teacher vis-à-vis the learner.

In many parts of the Global South, however, the implementation of such approaches has been found to be intensively mediated by local beliefs, values and practices, with policymakers, schools and teachers modifying it in ways that might misappropriate the philosophies on which it is founded. The result is that, more often than not, the bulk of teaching and learning practices remains teacher-directed and dominated (T. Jessop & Penny, 1998; Jansen, 2001; Nykiel-Herbert, 2004; Al-Daami & Wallace, 2007; Carney, 2008; Altinyelken, 2010c; Vavrus & Bartlett, 2011). While teachers often have knowledge about such a pedagogy, laud its purported benefits, and claim its usage in their practice, classroom observations often find that these claims are unsubstantiated, or that only symbolic elements of the pedagogy are observed, while substantive dimensions of teacher practice remain teacher-focussed and based on rote learning due to the context of teachers’ work and the beliefs and values teacher hold (Nykiel-Herbert, 2004). Altinyelken’s (2010a) work in Uganda and Turkey provides recent evidence of this. She found that in Uganda, teachers use group work for pragmatic, rather than pedagogical reasons—namely to organise children according to ability, and allow them to share scarce resources. In Turkey, she observed that teachers perceive themselves as opening spaces for student participation and talk despite the fact that such participation is often framed around choral-based responses to recall questions posed by the teacher. In Tibet, it is not teachers who misappropriate the messages, but rather policymakers. In this instance, the concept of individual rights which stands at the core of child-friendly methodologies is actively challenged by the Chinese state, leading to policy advocating the symbols of learner-centredness without the underlying philosophy behind it (Carney, 2008). A significant conclusion from this research is that teachers’ (and policymakers’) own interpretations and choices regarding the appropriateness and relevance of learner-centredness are strongly mediated by internal realities and contextual factors (Napier, 2003). New pedagogies are framed differently in policymaking and implementation to accentuate particular aspects of learner-centredness that suit this strategically selective context (Lopes & De Macedo, 2009).

In the case of Timor-Leste, prior research has consistently found that teachers have ‘resisted’ the imposition of learner-centredness into their practice with most reverting to pedagogies that are performance-based and tightly framed and classified by the teacher (Instituto para Formação Continuada, 2010; Shah & Leneman, 2010; UNICEF,
A summary analysis of modes of instruction (Figure 8-4) would appear on first glance to affirm the notion that teacher practice in Timor-Leste is resistant to change. Most lessons observed followed a structure, similar to the lesson presented in Table 8-1, where the teacher would begin with a lecture, followed by students copying material and written activities into their notebooks silently and independently. After a long period of this independent work teachers would review answers to these activities, often by calling students to the board to present their answers. Activities such as group work, music/games, role-play or active demonstration, which have the potential to more loosely frame how knowledge acquisition is sequenced, structured and paced, were the exception rather than the norm across the sampled classrooms.

![Teaching Methodologies Observed](image)

**Figure 8-4: Summary of instructional modalities observed**

From this it could be easy to infer that teachers are largely ‘resistant’ to the imposition of learner-centred pedagogies and a more loosely framed and classified curriculum approach. To make such an assumption, however, obfuscates the more complex reality of teachers’ practice. This became apparent after these data were initially presented to educators on a return visit to Timor-Leste in March 2011. Instead, what shall be argued is that teachers have incorporated or creatively mediated learner-centred approaches into a belief, value and practice system, which is underpinned by a performance model of pedagogy. Reasons and motivations behind this are explored.

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112 A discussion paper presenting some of these data was developed for the New Zealand Aid Programme prior to the seminar by the author (Shah, 2011). The tone that this paper took was one in which teacher practices were deemed resistant to change, and explained this resistance as caused by a number of different contextual factors. Feedback and criticism from teachers over the simplistic determination of resistance assisted in further considering these findings in light of their own explanations for teacher action.
8.4. Examples of creative mediation in the Timorese context

A closer examination of the activities and actions observed across the 42 classrooms uncovered numerous examples of instances where teachers were creatively mediating messages of learner-centredness within a performance-based pedagogical environment.

**Making learning “fun”**

As the extract from one classroom observation suggests (Table 8-6), activities such as games and music, while not commonplace, did occur in a number of the classrooms visited. Many times, games were incorporated and mediated into existing discourses of regulative and instructional control by the teacher, as reflected in the example below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Observations</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10:45</td>
<td>T writes down subject (about our identity) and subtopic (natural symbols) on the board.</td>
<td>Good that T provides an opportunity for S to engage early on in lesson and seeks out multiple responses to each question.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:46</td>
<td>T reviews with S the way in which the country is divided into different geographical and landscape areas, and the natural life that exists in each. The focus of today’s activity is to be on reviewing this information. T directs several questions to S to brainstorm ideas.</td>
<td>Good to see T using a different kind of informal assessment technique to check for S understanding. This approach will allow T to possibly see how well individual S have learned the material and for the class as a whole to review the material in a more interesting way. The S seem excited by the prospect of being out of their desks and actively moving around the room.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:48</td>
<td>T decides to play a game as a way of reviewing this information. Game is based on musical chairs so S will sing a song, and then when T asks them to stop, S find a chair. S who fails to find a chair has to answer a question, such as “what is the name of their suco, sub-district, national flower, etc.”</td>
<td>Good to see T using a different kind of informal assessment technique to check for S understanding. This approach will allow T to possibly see how well individual S have learned the material and for the class as a whole to review the material in a more interesting way. The S seem excited by the prospect of being out of their desks and actively moving around the room.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:51</td>
<td>Game begins after S reshuffles the desks and chairs around to make more space in room. First S who is “out” asked a question. Struggles to answer the question, and appears quite uncomfortable being directly questioned by T. In the end, the S gets the answer to the question from another S who states the answer, and then the S who is out just repeats the answer.</td>
<td>Interesting that S feel so uncomfortable in a one on one setting with the T. S obviously unaccustomed and afraid of being asked individually by T.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:55</td>
<td>Game continues. At one point a S responds to question with an incorrect answer. Getting the answer incorrect results in the S having to do a dance in front of the rest of the class. He appears to be utterly humiliated and embarrassed by this experience.</td>
<td>It is no wonder the S appear to be so afraid to speak up in front of T. If they are ridiculed and not given an opportunity to take risks and be “wrong”, S will continue to feel quite timid and afraid to say anything. Makes a transition to S centred approaches quite difficult. Public shaming does not seem appropriate nor an example of a safe classroom.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:00</td>
<td>Game continues to be played as I leave the room. Many S continue to struggle to respond to questions and require prompting from either T or S. At this point it is not clear whether S just don’t know the answers or whether they are afraid to say anything at all for fear of being wrong and publically humiliated.</td>
<td>Activity has backfired on T as he has set a dynamic where S are no longer willing to take risks.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 8-6: Extract from observation of classroom 10**

At the outset, the students appeared to be enthusiastic about the activity, but this quickly waned as they became increasingly intimidated by the risk of getting an answer wrong. The teacher maintained tight control on pedagogic inputs and outputs, specifically the evaluative and instructional discourses underlying such action. Students were judged on whether they could answer a question correctly or not, and those who couldn’t were made to feel insufficient through open humiliation. Additionally, the
teacher maintained strong control over the types of questions that were asked, the pacing of such questions, and the content of the game itself. At no point were students asked or given opportunity to consider how the game could be operated or modified. This type of incorporation of a game or musical activity into the existing instructional routine was not uncommon in other observations. It was often rationalised by teachers afterwards as an attempt to refocus student attention or reengage them, rather than to fundamentally shift the underlying pedagogical discourse as the teacher below notes:

Things like singing or other more active activities can also motivate children to stay engaged in the classroom. If we just continue the same activities over and over again on the board, the children will lose interest. Also if the children are sick and tired of being in the classroom, you can take them outside and do something different with them outside the classroom. [EPRL, FG]

In general such activities were still seen as a fun distraction from the real objective of their job, which was to impart the material specified in the texts, as expressed by this teacher:

“Yes, singing music, playing games in schools is fine, but it is more important that what we do focuses on getting students to concentrate on their learning...perhaps this is something that is important for Grade One students, but not for older students” [EPFA, FG].

Style without substance

In some classrooms, teachers appeared to be trying to incorporate activities such as group-work, brainstorming activities, or a combination of the two, as part of what they understood to be at the core of the new curriculum. As a typical example of this, the teacher in the lesson below divided students into groups as a way of giving them the space to come up with divergent responses to a question he posed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Observations</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10:24</td>
<td>S move around the room and form into four different groups. Takes some time for S to get into groups and get settled. Once S in groups they copy what the T has written on the board. Each group has about eight students in it.</td>
<td>No clear directions given at outset from T as to what they started to do yesterday or what they are supposed to do from here.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:29</td>
<td>T hands out to the S the work they began in previous lesson. T has photocopied a page from the Estudo de Meio book. He has also written out a page of directions for each group (handwritten and copied over four times) on what they are supposed to do. The directions written requires the students to: 1. Read through the information about dengue fever and the different types of the strain that exists. 2. Write down and respond as a group to the four questions they are asked which are: What is dengue? How is it transmitted? What are different types of dengue? How is it treated?</td>
<td>While in some ways it is great that the S have been placed to complete the activity, the task they are actually supposed to do is quite uncreative. There are many more interesting ways the T could have gotten the S to present what they had learned rather than just have them to write down their responses, which is something they normally do individually at their desks in any case. The only point of difference is that the T in this case encourages the S to discuss answers before writing their ideas down.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8-7: Extract of observation notes from classroom 21

This teacher, on later reflection, noted that these types of activities were important in providing the necessary space for students to exert greater control over the framing and
classification of pedagogic discourse. He felt that, “These kinds of activities, such as brainstorming, are engaging for students, because it encourages them to come up with their own ideas, rather than being told what is right and wrong, think for themselves” [EPRL, FG]. Yet once students were in groups, some students appeared to be lost by the openness of the task they were given to complete, and the teacher, through the type of questions he asked, limited the spaces that existed for students to come up with divergent responses and/or make connections to their lives as the observation notes suggest.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Observations</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10:36</td>
<td>S set to work. T circulates around the room. T goes around to prompt S to find answers from the photocopied text, not their notebooks, indicating that S have a really hard time locating information when it is not spoon fed to them.</td>
<td>It is interesting that S struggle to find the information that correctly answers the questions at hand, considering that the answers are written on the photocopied page they have been given, and are even organized by relevant subheadings. Instead the S are referring to their notes which are on malaria not dengue.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:42</td>
<td>S continue to work in their groups. One S in each of the groups appears to take a leadership role in each one, while there are a sizeable number of others who are off tasks or disengaged from the activity. T continues to circulate between the groups telling them to write down a particular response to the question at hand.</td>
<td>The groups with a larger number of S appear to struggle to effectively work together. Group with only four students much more productive. Not sure why T has made the groups so large.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:45</td>
<td>One group becoming increasingly off task, while in the other groups that are “quietly” working, only one or two S actually engaged in the activity and participating, while the others are quietly off task.</td>
<td>Clearly working in groups, articulating/verbalizing ideas with peers not something the S are familiar with or know how to innately handle.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:54</td>
<td>One group becoming increasingly off task, while in the other groups that are “quietly” working, only one or two S actually engaged in the activity and participating, while the others are quietly off task.</td>
<td>There could be possibilities for open ended and lateral thinking that provokes discussion, but instead the T falls back on traditional activity of copy and paste learning.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8-8: Extract of observation notes classroom 21

Although the teacher facilitated the placement of students into groups, and provided them with a visible space in which to construct and discuss ideas in a less tightly framed pedagogic space, his underlying practice did not appear to shift. The types of questions he posed to the group, and students’ lack of ability to work effectively within a looser pedagogic space and timeframe, rendered group work largely ineffective in terms of shifting towards competence-based pedagogy.

In this lesson, management of group work appeared to be lacking, and many students became off-task or disengaged from the lesson. This was a concern that another teacher from the same school raised in an interview following her own lesson. She stated, “...but with group work you also have to be aware of how students are managing their time because sometimes they just fool around and don't get anything done” [EPRL, FG]. The practical struggles of managing such activities in a fashion which engaged students and/or allowed the teacher to maintain control often led teachers to return to practices
and approaches that were familiar and safe to them. In several instances, teachers were observed returning to teacher-focused control of the lesson when students became unmanageable or disinterested in the activity. One of the teachers, in commenting on such decisions, noted “...we struggle when [these] activities don't go according to our plan, and so we give up” [EPVV, FG].

Similar conclusions were reached in the evaluation of the CTT programme where, even after five weeks of intensive training in learner-centred pedagogy,

The team noted that in several classrooms the majority of students were off-task, disengaged, or not participating during such activity. In other classrooms, while students were organised into groups, the task at hand was still individual in nature, with students completing exercises without discussion or collaboration with their peers. This suggest that while teachers may now be aware of how to organise their classroom differently using groups, the substance of such activity may not always meet its full purpose or intent (Shah & Leneman, 2010, pp. 37-38).

Interpreting active learning

There was some level of cognisance amongst teachers that current practice in many Timorese classrooms limited spaces for students to actively participate in their learning. This awareness was most pronounced in teachers who had undergone training in 'child-friendly' teaching and learning approaches through the activities of either UNICEF or NRC. In one focus group this turned into a lively discussion when a teacher commented that,

Students in Timor-Leste are not given an opportunity to speak in their classrooms...the teachers talk at the students from the time they enter until the time they leave. When teachers act like this, it doesn’t allow for the ideas that are contained in students’ heads to be expressed. [EPRV, FG]

A colleague of his added that,

The problem is that many times the teacher presents himself as the one that knows everything and keeps talking, and the students just sit there as statues, not giving opportunities for the students to express themselves. And sometimes, the teacher just goes ahead and does the tasks for the students, instead of allowing the students to do the task themselves. [EPRV, FG]

All of this stood in the way of fostering what another teacher coined “democratic freedom” through education. According to her, “teachers need to act in a way that encourages students to think independently and make their own choices...[giving] them all opportunities to become a good person in the future.” [EPRV, FG]
Thus, some teachers made associations between a looser framing and classification of pedagogy and the aspirations which many teachers articulated for their students in the previous chapter; being contributing, active and positive members of society in the future. The more pressing question for many teachers was what “active learning” and student participation looked like in action, given the preference that many had for maintaining strong control over pedagogic discourse in their classrooms. In many instances this tension was reconciled through claims that providing a space for students to ask questions (even if none did), giving students opportunities to come to the board (and shamed if they made a mistake), or having chances to speak during the lesson (often as part of choral response), were part of active learning. Some of these beliefs were founded on historical precedent, as teachers were told during Indonesian times that such techniques were examples of “active learning.” Many felt that they were following a mantra of “75% of the time should be teachers talking and 25% of the time students” [EPDC, FG], a formulaic message received from training on this pedagogical approach when the curriculum was first introduced. Some teachers also contended that independent seat work of a task ordained by the teacher was a reflection of “active learning” or learner-centred pedagogy, as it allowed students autonomy and control over what they were doing and in the teachers’ eyes was loosely framed. One teacher, for example, believed that such activity, “gave students responsibility over their learning, and was part of them learning to be independent” [EPRC, FG].

There were notable exceptions to this, in the form of juxtapositions of moments where framing/classification of pedagogical discourse was significantly weakened within a performance-based pedagogy. In one instance a Year One teacher felt that critical to encouraging participation was a need to make students feel safe to take risks. To do so, she acknowledged that she had to “speak to them in a soft way instead of a harsh way, and encourage them to speak their own mind” [EPRC, FG]. In observing the lesson she taught, on the idea of size, her disciplinary approach was significantly less regulative than the more commonplace techniques discussed earlier, utilising a disciplinary chart and techniques of praise throughout. She also presented to students an open-ended assessment activity at the end, where she asked them to draw a classmate of theirs who was tall, and another who was short, and then to come up to the front of the room, stick their drawings on the board and explain the logic behind their drawings. Thus she opened the way for divergent answers and provided scope for students to demonstrate their application of knowledge in more than one way (visually and descriptively).
And in another instance the teacher of a Grade Five class quite radically opened up how pedagogy was both classified and framed at the outset of her lesson. She created opportunities for students to exert greater control over the resources they employed in their learning, the techniques they used to solve the problem, and the way in which they reconciled prior knowledge with new idea (Table 8-9). As the lesson progressed, and moved from conceptual building blocks to the development of concrete knowledge, the teacher regained control over the sequence and pacing of knowledge construction, and moved to more explicitly frame the concept (perimeter) under study.
Table 8-9: Excerpt from classroom 32

More so than any other classroom observed, this lesson provides an example of how a teacher successfully mediated the demands of reform, predicated on a belief that learners should have greater control over the pedagogical process, alongside historical institutional values (discussed in Chapters Four and Six) and personal beliefs (discussed in Chapter Seven) which maintain that pedagogic interactions should be tightly framed and classified. Yet the majority of teachers continued to struggle with the weaker
framing of pedagogical interactions that is typical of learner-centred approaches, with outcomes in the classroom that outwardly appear to be a resistance to reform agendas. It is maintained, however, that these are calculated responses to a strategically selective context of reform that favours the continuance of performance-based pedagogies.

8.5. Understanding teacher actions within a strategically selective context

In Timor-Leste, the new curriculum and Teacher Competency Framework would in many ways seem to symbolise a shift away from a performance-based model of pedagogy to a competence-based one. Specifically, the curriculum’s focus on contextualising learning to the interests and prior knowledge of students, shifting pedagogy to one which is learner-centred and less teacher-directed, and ensuring that students use their community context as a springboard for learning, would seem to suggest this transition. The curriculum also encourages teachers to develop their own resources and materials for particular subjects, rather than maintain a strict dependence on textbooks or other printed materials. Yet the messages which teachers appear to respond to regarding learner-centredness focus largely on the classroom environment and the types of activities that occur in such settings, rather than on the pedagogic model behind this. Some of this may be the influence of messages conveyed through both training programmes and policy prescriptions. For example, the draft National Quality School Standards Framework labels a classroom as child-centred and child friendly if:

- Student work is displayed and acknowledged and praised within class and changed every 3 months;
- Children work in groups, learning is active and participative;
- Children have opportunities to discuss what they would like to learn and how (Ministry of Education, 2010b, p. 24).

These standards, largely superficial constructs of learner-centredness, do little to measure the quality of the learning experience for children, or the degree to which underlying pedagogical discourse has shifted towards a competence-based model.

Likewise, the curriculum of UNICEF’s Eskola Foun and NRC’s CTT have tended to focus on techniques within learner-centred pedagogy (group work, activities, classroom environment), rather than building teacher understanding of how to meaningfully enact a pedagogical routine which is consistently more loosely framed and classified (Instituto para Formação Continuada, 2010; Shah & Leneman, 2010). Observations of classroom practice conducted in these schools as part of this research, and other contract research work, found that the result of such training often had residual effects that gave little
credence to the underlying philosophy behind learner-centredness. An evaluation of NRC’s CTT found that,

While teachers may now be aware of and utilise [child-centred] techniques, many appeared to be struggling to effectively incorporate these methods into the lesson at hand. In many classrooms visited, activities were not applicable to the lesson, and used as a distraction or break from the normal routine of instruction (Shah & Leneman, 2010, p. 36)

A separate evaluation of UNICEF’s (2010, pp. 48-49) efforts between 2003-2009 to promote learner-centred practices in Timorese classrooms noted that deeply engrained and long-held beliefs about “traditional teaching and learning practices” often led to classroom practices reverting to such modalities after the conclusion of its activity. In a separate 2005 study, Ninnes (cited in UNICEF, 2010, pp. 48-49) found that in more than half the classrooms where UNICEF had attempted to introduce the concept, teachers did not value the new techniques enough to sustain them. He hypothesised that this was due to the fact that many of these teachers were successful students under transmission pedagogy and rote learning, and did not see merit or worth in shifting practice. He suggested that to change such a mindset would require, “intensive training and sustained support to understand the value behind child-centred teaching and learning techniques.” A baseline assessment for UNICEF’s Eskola Foun programme also found that “few schools had fully incorporated child-centred methodology, with most citing group work as the extent of active learning” (cited in UNICEF, 2010, p. 53).

In earlier sections of this thesis, implementation of the curriculum was argued to be a prime example of political symbolism as policy craft,113 where the results of poor implementation belie the commitments inherent in political doctrine. Much of this can be attributed to a lack of willingness and/or capacity on the part of those responsible for implementation to address the complex challenges and needs of Timorese teachers and students. Instead, they have gone for the ‘low-hanging fruit’ of reform, in this case formalistic messages on what learner-centred pedagogy entails, without an ongoing commitment to working within and slowly shifting practices away from a strongly framed and classified pedagogical discourse. Other aspects of the curriculum maintain characteristics of a performance-based schooling experience based on historical precedent and the imperative of human capital development. Specifically, the new curriculum: (1) maintains the delineation of subject disciplines and time allotments for

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113 This concept, discussed by Jansen (2002) was first presented in the Introduction, and again revisited in Chapter Six.
the teaching of each subject within the curriculum; (2) encourages the utilisation of a language of instruction which clearly distinguishes the school context from that of the community; and (3) reinforces an assessment and examination system focussed on summative mechanisms which identify and retain a large number of students due to their own learning failures.

These factors work alongside teacher beliefs and values to support the continuance of performance-based pedagogies, based on their articulations of a strongly framed and classified instructional and regulative discourse of learning. As the previous chapter detailed, teachers maintained a strong conviction in their authority as guardians of particular types of knowledge and behaviour that are distinct from those of the community outside. Many teachers continued to see their students and their families from a deficit-standpoint, which reinforced their belief in strong pedagogic controls. Aligned with this, learning is still understood as the acquisition of knowledge from the teacher, rather than a dialectic process between student and teacher.

Yet the previous chapter also uncovered that teachers understood particular demands and aspects of reform, namely some of the key slogans behind this agenda such as inclusiveness, democracy and active learning. Bernstein (2000) labels this acknowledgement as "recognition rules." They are means by which one is able to recognise the speciality of the context in which he/she operates; in other words to be able to read a particular context and determine what this context demands. Teachers, through beliefs expressed on the survey, suggested that they could and should meet the needs of all children in their classroom, and engage all students in the learning process. Likewise in focus group settings, teachers agreed with the need to shift learning from passive to active instruction, and from teacher-focussed to student-focussed approaches. From these responses, it could be concluded that teachers possessed the recognition rules necessary to respond to the demands of reform. Through observation it became apparent, however, that many were challenged in making such meanings public or realising this understanding in practice. In part this was due to more fundamental uncertainties that teachers faced in terms of their self-confidence to successfully address reform imperatives.

The previous also chapter detailed how many teachers and school directors, while initially optimistic about instructional efficacy on the survey, expressed doubt in interviews and focus groups regarding whether they had the necessary capacity to teach
all areas of the curriculum in the way that is required of them under the *Teacher Competency Framework*. In several instances, teachers were observed struggling with the content of the material they were tasked with teaching, particularly when they attempted to deviate from what was presented in the text. This often occurred when teachers attempted to explain or reinforce material to students, be it conceptual ideas or issues of language. For example, in one classroom [Observation 13] a teacher struggled to understand the connection between repeated addition and multiplication when explaining it to his students, despite several other examples previously presented in the text. This was made clear when he went to write an additional example on the board; he wrote "2+2+2+2+2=10" and then underneath it "2x4=10", and taught it as such to students with none of them correcting this error. Frequently, teachers appeared to fumble their way through Portuguese words presented in the textbooks, as their explanation or translation of words was often noted to be incorrect or imprecise.

Similar struggles with content knowledge were noted in classroom observations conducted by Quinn (2011, pp. 220-221) leading her to conclude that,

> The patterns of highly formulaic questioning, heavy reliance on teaching notes to generate content and high amounts of repetition ultimately protect teachers from having to deal with questions that might be outside their expertise in the language, that is, beyond a narrow range of vocabulary and grammatical structures. Controlling the questioning also restricts dealing with content outside what might be known by teachers. Thus, some teachers may be influenced by lack of competency to reproduce the patterns of language behaviours seen in these classrooms.

A combination of the looser classification and framing of the new curriculum, alongside personal struggles with particular content areas within it, presented ongoing challenges to many teachers in terms of their perceived professional obligation to cover the curriculum and stick to plan (as discussed in the previous chapter). For many teachers a clear lesson plan founded on the material in the textbook was seen as a necessary and critical crutch as they confronted such uncertainties. Such routines "protected teachers and students from having to work with unfamiliar concepts and make meaning" (Quinn, 2011, p. 186). Thus, the new curriculum’s expectation that texts and the curriculum guide should be one of many resources that teachers draw on as part of their teaching routine appeared to be unrealistic and/or unfeasible for many. In response, teachers without access to texts for all subjects believed that they could not teach effectively. A statement such as, "because we don’t have books, we cannot teach the parts of the curriculum that we are supposed to," as vocalised by one teacher [EPDL, FG], was a
common excuse for not teaching certain subjects. The result was exactly that—in many schools certain subjects were not taught at all, despite being included in the curriculum.

The table below indicates the actual subjects that were observed being taught across the 42 classroom observations, compared with what proportion of the school timetable should be devoted to such subjects in Grades One and Six based on the 2004 Curriculum Framework for these grade levels.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>% observed (cumulative)</th>
<th>% expected Grade One</th>
<th>% expected Grade Six</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Portuguese</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tetum</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematics</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estudo de Meio</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts and Culture</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health/Physical Hygiene</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8-10: % of observed versus expected instructional time dedicated to subjects

The three subjects where textbooks are now readily available in most schools, appeared to be taught more frequently than expected; while those subjects for which texts were either not noted as being present, or not available to teachers, appeared to be taught less than expected or not at all.

Teachers also attributed their inability to effectively meet the demands of reform to other structural barriers. One issue related to inappropriate infrastructure or large class sizes, with many classrooms lacking in space, furniture or the necessary human or material resources to adequately implement learner-centred approaches. For example, one school, which had participated in UNICEF’s *Eskola Foun* programme, felt they were limited in implementing child-friendly methodologies by the actual size of their classrooms. “To do activities in groups of six is almost impossible because there is no space to move, let alone for the students to breathe,” noted one teacher in exasperation [EPRV, FG]. For other teachers, the lack of textbooks meant that they had no choice but to continue to use the cut and paste approach to teaching, despite their desire to move

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114 Given the number of observations, and the varying times of the day at which they were conducted, the assumption is that a fairly representative sample of content should have been witnessed over the course of 42 one hour observations. Additionally, in many instances the stated subject according to the schools’ schedule was not being taught when the researcher observed the actual lesson.

115 This is based on the observations of the researcher that at most schools at least one copy of texts in these three subject areas was available to teachers. Additionally, the recently completed EGMA study notes that 83% of children reported having access to a mathematics textbook at school (Gacougnolle & McNamee, 2011).
away from such a model and towards more interactive and learner-centred approaches. Several teachers, particularly those teaching in the younger grades, expressed a strong desire to shift classroom activity to a model that was more interactive, engaging and student-focussed. What precluded them from doing so was the large class sizes which were commonplace in Years One and Two in particular, with most schools having upwards of 50-60 students in one class. With this number of students, teachers felt that the only way they could manage such large numbers of students was through a continuance of a tightly framed and classified instructional programme, primarily to maintain some level of discipline and order in the classroom. As one teacher [EPDC, FG] working in a classroom with insufficient textbooks and where students were forced to sit four to a desk questioned rhetorically, “To teach in [this way], you need to have all the resources at your disposal...if you have no desk, no chairs, no books how is this possible?”

A number of teachers and school directors linked the lack of prevalence of learner-centred approaches visible inside classrooms to poor quality, inadequate or irrelevant training, with particular criticism levelled at the cursos intensivos. In several sessions of the cursos intensivos that were observed as part of this research little evidence existed of the trainers, particularly the ones from Portugal Cooperation, modelling constructivist or more loosely framed and classified instructional modalities. Instead, training sessions of up to two hours in duration were lecture focussed and provided little opportunity for the Timorese teachers being trained to shape and participate in the learning that occurred. This is noted in excerpts from field notes taken while observing these training sessions in action:

In many of the classrooms run by Portuguese trainers...I witnessed the trainers lecturing the teachers on how they should best use their curriculum materials with little opportunity for the teachers themselves to actively engage in the material in question. With this type of approach it would seem that changes in teacher practices would not occur that quickly (April 16, 2010).

This technical-rational approach to teacher training, focussed on the transmission of knowledge and skills about ‘good teaching’ which trainees then apply, does not appropriately model the more loosely framed and classified curriculum approach that learner-centred pedagogy implies (Lewin & Stuart, 2003).

Those that had received some training on learner-centred approaches often reflected back on their training experience as insufficient to their needs, often asking for more
training and in-school support which was often not available due to the current focus on breadth versus depth in training provision. Specifically, teachers felt that programmes such as NRC’s CTT and UNICEF’s *Eskola Foun* were often too short in duration, and without ongoing follow through. Many felt they needed ongoing opportunities to be mentored and given feedback/guidance on lessons conducted if shifts in their practice were to be maintained. The brevity of most training provision does not invest sufficient time, commitment and energy to sustain teacher enthusiasm or willingness to shift practice, as the final evaluation of the CTT notes:

Six months after program intervention ended, it was clear in some schools that teachers...were struggling to consistently or adequately utilise the skills and tools the CTT equipped them with. Ideally, it would be the job of the Ministry of Education, through the Inspectorate and district offices to provide ongoing support and reinforce positive behaviours with these teachers and schools. However, one NRC official spoken to doubted that any of the inspectors were equipped with the knowledge and skills to do so. According to a representative from PLAN, ‘Timorese teachers need ongoing professional development and support, and while the training was a nice boost for them, they will probably lose their enthusiasm and interest in what they learned without continuous encouragement and feedback.’ (Shah & Leneman, 2010, p. 39)

This proved particularly true in settings where despite strong convictions to change one’s practice, the expectation of peers, the school director and community was for teacher-directed pedagogy to be visible in the classroom. One teacher, who had earned her *Bachalerato* at an institution whose curriculum is based on Australian Catholic University’s pre-service teacher education curriculum (Beck, 2008), felt that she was ‘swimming upstream’ in her attempts to institute a more weakly framed and classified pedagogy in her classroom. She noted,

> When I came here, the other teachers at the school looked at what I did as strange, and questioned whether I was actually teaching. They thought I was acting like a child, and not teaching the students a proper lesson. And parents also began to speak to the director about me playing with the students, and not controlling them as I should. [EPRC, FG]

Scepticism on whether teachers could meet the imperative of transmitting knowledge efficiently and effectively through learner-centred approaches was also evident in the comments of one school director. In an environment where an examination-driven and content-based assessment process drives student promotion decisions and entry into higher levels of education, these concerns are not unfounded (Leite, 2012). She questioned advice she had been recently been given in training to shift the arrangement of furniture in the room:
And now they are giving us instructions to put the chairs and tables in a certain order (i.e. groups of four where students are facing each other)...but the problem is when the students are facing each other, they are not facing the front, and how are they going to learn this way? The students can’t look at the blackboard, or the teacher, and have to make a big effort to turn around and look at that, so it is difficult for their concentration. It has been only a few days since we have received these orders, and we are having difficulty in implementing these directions, for the students and the teachers. According to the trainers, they suggest that this is the way things should be in the classroom, so we just follow those instructions, but I am not sure it is necessarily the best way. [EPVV, Director]

For teachers who believed that giving students more control over the regulative and instructional discourses of pedagogy could potentially benefit their learning, this scepticism, when coupled with their own doubts on the recognition and realisation rules of such an approach, led to a return to approaches that were familiar and uncontested. One teacher, observed in a remote school in Ermera, maintained a more loosely framed pedagogy than most other teachers at her school, but also reflected after her lesson was observed that she had changed her practices to fit more in line with what was expected of her. Specifically, she felt that despite her desire to blur boundaries between subjects, and give students more control over the sequencing and pacing of the instructional discourse, she was pressured into retreating to a tighter classification of her pedagogy in response to peer and community pressures. She also relayed how another colleague of hers, who had graduated in the same group as she had, had found working in the school and rural community too difficult due to its conservative expectations regarding pedagogy, and left the school after only one term.

8.6. Conclusion

Using the example of learner-centred pedagogy, this chapter has sought to demonstrate how antecedent personal and professional values and beliefs of ‘good teaching’, married with an environment of insufficient government capacity and will for current discourses of reform, lead to a range of resistances. Resistance to learner-centredness is for some a pragmatic decision, while for others it is a pedagogical one. In either case, such choices are principled ones. In this way actors’ preferences and tendencies interface with the strategically selective context they find themselves. As in other contexts throughout the Global South, tensions remain in Timor-Leste between competence pedagogical models, such as those promoted through learner-centred pedagogy, and the conditions and cultures of schooling (S. Johnson et al., 2000; Barrett, 2008; Vavrus, 2009; Sriprakash, 2010).
Some teachers use the space afforded by an environment of political symbolism rather than substance, to maintain strongly held beliefs and values about their role vis-à-vis their students. Many teachers continue to ascribe to a strong framing of pedagogy marked by hierarchical relations between teacher and student, as well as particular expectations of the conduct, manner and character of the teacher in relation to both the individual child and the community at large. Others end up ‘resisting’ learner-centredness not out of choice but out of compulsion to community or peer expectations, or due to a lack of appropriate forms of support. Bernstein (1975, 1990) notes that competence based models of pedagogy, which are loosely framed and classified, are effective in so far as teachers feel supported to construct meaning on this theory within the confines of their own classroom. Shifting one’s underlying pedagogy requires a high level of commitment and time from teachers to construct resources, establish particular types of relationships with students, and assess student knowledge individually. It also requires teachers to socialise parents and their broader communities into such practice. For many Timorese teachers this is neither feasible nor practical due to a number of factors. For one, school and community expectations and conditions create a level of compulsion for teachers to stick to their lesson plans, follow prescribed textbooks/curriculum, and the measure student achievement through summative assessment activities. And large class sizes, insufficient infrastructure, teachers’ inability and/or understanding of how to structure learning independent of textbooks, and the imperative of instructing in a language of instruction that is unfamiliar to both student and teacher, undermine such efforts.

Of concern are the teachers who on the surface have accepted the symbols of learner-centred pedagogy, but whose underlying teaching approach remains strongly informed by a modality of teaching and learning that is tightly framed and classified. They have embraced and/or incorporated aspects of learner-centredness (i.e. group work, games) that are exemplified and highlighted in training and current policy, but with outcomes that are antithetical to the intent of this pedagogy and of good teaching more generally. The borrowing of symbols of learner-centredness without prerequisite understandings of its pedagogy, can lead to a situation where bad teaching practices and poor student outcomes are overlooked in the quest for modernisation and visible change. There is grave danger, that this type of pedagogy when implemented on “ideological rather than pragmatic grounds” can turn “the intended recipe for education success into a new
variety of educational malpractice, producing yet another generation of illiterate, innumerate [children]” (Nykiel-Herbert, 2004, p. 250).

Ultimately, what is necessary is appropriate consideration of how to adapt the underlying intent of a shift towards learner-centredness—driven at least outwardly by a desire to make education more inclusive, democratic and equitable—to the local context, culture and structural conditions. As Guthrie (2011, p. 17) notes with reference to critical realism’s distinction between the real, actual and empirical worlds, “[acknowledging] culture is a prior condition for classroom change...[this] context may not be controllable scientifically or administratively but it does exist and it does have real effects.” Pragmatically speaking, this apt comment suggests that reform interventions need to focus on improving rather than transforming extant teaching practices, and acknowledge that pedagogy is more than just a simple binary or trajectory of progress from bad (i.e. teacher-centred) to good teaching (i.e. learner-centred) practices. Pedagogy in practice is the product of and informed by deeply embedded social relations, cultural beliefs, institutional norms, structural conditions and political agendas (Guthrie, 1990; Tabulawa, 2003; Barrett, 2007; Nyanbe & Wilmot, 2008; Ginsburg, 2009; Altinyelken, 2010c, 2010b; Sripakash, 2010). This needs to be better acknowledged by both policymakers and education practitioners in the midst of reform.
9. Conclusion

On the eve of the UN’s withdrawal from Timor-Leste in September 2012, the newly re-elected Prime Minister stood before a crowd of UN dignitaries in New York and made clear his government’s continued prioritisation of education as the key to the nation’s long-term stability, prosperity and place in the world. Later in the speech, however, he acknowledged the serious shortcomings that the educational system faces noting that, “...while our country is full of promise, we still face many challenges...90 per cent of children enter primary school...[but] regrettably more than 50 per cent drop out...[which] puts at risk social cohesion” (ETAN, 2012). While acknowledging the flaws of the current system, the remedy to this according to the Prime Minister, is to build more classrooms, train more teachers, provide more books and learning materials, and learn from countries such as Finland, Singapore and South Korea about how they developed their own education systems (Ibid).

These proposed solutions suggest the belief that if policy measures can better address past failures, through better financial and material resources and sound technical advice, schooling would be more relevant, contextualized, and responsive to the needs of individual students, and more children would experience success in their educational experiences. Yet, as argued in this thesis, such technical-rational process assumes that educational policy making and implementation processes are devoid from the broader politics of education—that is the broader cultural political economy in which education is located. Above all else, the thesis has sought to demonstrate how the historically informed values, beliefs and identities of teachers interact with political, social and economic dimensions of a society in flux to mediate the inputs provided into the system and the outcomes that result. It has explored the educational politics of and the politics of education (Dale, 1994) surrounding curriculum reform in Timor-Leste by asking:

1. In whose interests and for what aims was curriculum reform carried out?
2. By whom, at what scale, and with what intent was such reform legitimated, coordinated, administered, and operationalised?
3. In what ways has such reform interacted with the agency, beliefs and values of actors to produce a contingently situated set of outcomes in classrooms?

This concluding chapter brings together the ideas presented in the previous chapters to respond to these questions, and to link it back to the conceptual and theoretical underpinnings of this work.
9.1. Interests and aims of curriculum reform

The 1999 referendum and the conflict that followed provoked acute crises to existing institutions, structures and discourses, and opened up space for new and competing discourses to be considered and incorporated into the post-independence cultural and political landscape. As Chapter Four details, the existing social contract between citizens and the state vis-à-vis education needed to be reconsidered given that social expectations of citizens regarding the purpose, role and function of schooling shifted after independence, as did underlying material practices and social relations. The revolutionary, anti-colonial and Marxist-based discourses of the Timorese resistance movement validated the place and space for a post-colonial education system that challenged past knowledge claims and learning approaches. Education was relocated within the nation-building and decolonisation process, legitimating the state to engage in substantive reform. However, this agenda competed for space alongside the quest to build a state that would secure Timor-Leste’s place in global economic, political and social relations, given the era of intensive globalisation in which it became a nation.

Reform discourses put forth by the state in the initial period attempted to balance both interests—that of state and nation building. Reeling from the recent legacy of conflict and decades of chronic underdevelopment, education was seen as a vital panacea to building a lasting peace among a deeply splintered citizenry, and concurrently, a reflection of the state’s entry into modernity and development. For that reason, sweeping reforms to the curriculum and the pedagogy underlying it were initially premised on statements of mass opportunity, equality, inclusiveness, relevance and accessibility.

Yet, the overarching focus in the early years of the country’s independence was on the construction of a ‘modern’ state that was founded on a liberal democratic model of governance and institutions that were at least symbolically, emulating the Global North in its actions and aims. This state structure, which was largely put in place by external actors, that would allow Timor-Leste to be seen externally as economically competitive, democratic and following norms of good governance (R. Hughes, 2006; Moxham, 2008; Richmond & Franks, 2008; Richmond, 2011). (Re)establishment of the education system in this period was driven by these pressures, and the need for quick, visible, efficient, and tangible successes—specifically the desire to modernise schooling according to outside constructs, and to broker a quick ‘peace dividend’—rather than concerns for the degree to which such changes would lead to a more equitable, relevant,
and accessible education for the majority of the population. Teachers were recruited in haste, schools rebuilt quickly to a minimum standard, and a new curriculum drafted without adequate consideration of the context into which reform was being implemented. New forms of outside intervention/dependency under successive UN missions, coupled with the capture of the state by a small political elite, have prioritised a modernisation focussed state-building enterprise where the hegemonic order has been retained rather than challenged ten years on. By the end of the reform period in question, discourse was consolidated around the key message that education is a vehicle for individual advancement and economic development, and with that a focus on ‘modernising’ the curriculum with the premise that it would improve access of children to the global marketplace. Aligned with the Global Education Agenda (Tarabini, 2010), the focus became on education as a vehicle for poverty alleviation, rather than as a tool or mechanism for nation building.

It is maintained here that the Timor-Leste case provides a vivid example of a key point of CPE/E: of how beliefs and values (represented through discourse) interact with existing and new political and economic relations and institutional forces to become mediated, co-opted, and refashioned. It also is a reflection of how colonial-era and conflict-precipitating practices, institutions and beliefs can become revalidated through new discursive symbols and ideas—such as that ones that legitimate the prioritisation of Portuguese as a language of instruction in schooling at the expense of national language promotion. As a structuring force, such discourses are selective in that they create limited spaces for those seeking to create a truly postcolonial education system. Examples of this are evident in observations of teacher practice, and through analysis of their beliefs. As indicated in Chapter Seven, most prescribe to the idea that the content and pedagogy of what is taught in classrooms should provide children with access to ‘outside knowledge’. Such knowledge, when acquired well, was widely perceived as a ticket out of poverty and an entry into professional and waged employment. The expectation is that through diligence, hard work and successful acquisition of a corpus of knowledge situated outside the community context, students can advance and effectively participate in the ‘Global Knowledge Economy’. Incredibly, such beliefs were maintained despite the actual economic conditions of the country where employment prospects remain limited, and demand for skilled workers remains significantly less than supply, particularly now with the withdrawal of the international peacekeeping mission (Agence France-Presse, 2012). It suggests the power that the myth of meritocracy and individual betterment plays in post-colonial societies despite the
broader inequities, institutional barriers, and structural constraints—created through colonialism—within which such a discourse operates and helps to perpetuate. Yet, the structuring influence this discursive hegemony has on education is not absolute. As Chapter Five suggests, particular areas of the curriculum, such as the language(s) of instruction, are broadly perceived by school-level actors as a policy of exclusion rather than inclusion, and strongly contradictory to the stated objective of equal opportunity. This has created a sense of alienation and resentment, and in some cases active resistance and opposition.

Ultimately, this questionably ‘post-colonial’ schooling system will come under increasing public scrutiny as increased access to education will be realised as not creating real opportunities for individual and societal advancement—in part due to issues of educational quality, but largely due to the incompatibility of a human-capital driven discourse for the provision of education in the current political and economic environment of Timor-Leste. As in many other post-colonial states, “...economic development is thwarted by the injustices of global and national capitalism which maintain neo-colonial structures of exploitation and inequality ...educational modernization and expansion cannot be expected to be the main instrument for development” (Hickling-Hudson & Klees, 2012, p. 212). As summarised in Chapter Four, Timor-Leste’s current modernisation imperative does not support conditions of availability, adaptability, access and acceptability of education to all segments of society (Tomaševski, 2003), in neither the conditions of schooling it establishes nor the outcomes it produces. This denies children their right to schooling as specified in the Timorese constitution. The danger is that the social contract between citizens and the state through mass expansion of schooling opportunity may be revealed to be stitched together with a thin thread, despite continual ‘social repair work’ that the political leadership engage in by claiming that all problems can be solved through improvements in educational quality and infrastructure. Authors of a recent report on education in fragile and conflict affected states (INEE, 2011, p. 49) warn that, “in contexts characterised by economic fragility” such as a, “volatile and weak” labour market, an education system geared with the false promise of individual meritocracy might “not cater to [students’] needs and could frustrate their expectations,” as has been evidenced in Papua New Guinea following the Bougainville crisis (Kent & Barnett, 2012). For these reasons, there should be continuing concerns that schooling provision, premised on a human capital framework, may not provide the necessary long-term social cohesion necessary for the still fragile state of Timor-Leste. Revealed in Chapters Seven and Eight.
through the varying outcomes and exclusionary policies and practices of schooling that remain in Timor-Leste, is a suggestion that conflict within education has not been mitigated, and may be exacerbated if current reform directions continue. Ultimately it may require reconsidering the underlying logic models and ideologies on which the practices, value systems and institutions of schooling in Timor-Leste are founded and continue to be perpetuated. Doing so requires what Dale (1994) identifies as questioning, as this thesis has, the way the education system has been structured and come to be.

9.2. The scales of reform conceptualisation and implementation

Beginning with Chapter Five, the thesis critically analyses ways in which reforms to teaching and learning were conceptualised and implemented. The conclusion of this chapter suggests that at the time that the reform movement shifted from the discursive to the material, the capacity of the state to implement stated changes was severely limited, and as is the case in many other conflict affected and fragile states, the donor community played a significant role in helping the state to coordinate, administer and operationalise various aspects of this agenda. However, what is made clear through Chapter Six’s examination of teacher professional development since the reforms commenced, is how there are and continue to be competing, overlapping and/or dissonant agendas between and amongst various development partners and successive national governments on how best to approach this task. Caught in the middle have been teachers, who have often been subject to ill-conceived programmes of support that often lack follow through or continuity. Similar concerns were outlined regarding the agenda of learner-centredness that featured heavily in reform. Rather than simply accepting the association that is often made between such a pedagogy and ‘good practice’, Chapter Eight questioned the underlying intent, purpose and role of such a form of teaching in a cultural context where it remains quite foreign to embedded beliefs and practices.

Thus, when the reforms' messages and promises are contrasted with existing institutional arrangements, structural relationships, and beliefs and values of teachers, what is clear is that greater preoccupation exists with the symbolic messages regarding the end state of reform rather than the mechanisms and conditions to bring such change. Symptomatic of the conditions which Jansen (2000, 2002) outlines in his theory of political symbolism as policy craft, the process of implementation has been a succession of quick and often contradictory policy decisions, often informed or advised by external
actors or discourses, and with little coherence with the contextual reality of school and classroom practice. Drawing from a central premise of CPE/E which contends that educational policy production (and ensuing implementation or lack thereof) are driven by the drive to legitimate a social, political and economic order, in Timor-Leste (as in South Africa) the settlement of policy struggles has largely occurred within the political arena rather than the world of practice. As suggested in the conclusion of Chapter Six, this may reveal a lack of authentic political will for a committed and concerted effort to achieving the stated objectives of reform.

This is not to propose that policies, as discourse alone, have no purpose. They have and continue to reflect the changing cultural political economy within which schooling and the state are located. As Jansen (2002, p. 211) aptly notes, “discourses have political intent.” Bringing together the concept of discursive selectivity with CPE/E, it is argued that political actors seek to address and remake structural constraints and opportunities, such as a lack of government capacity, to better serve their interests. A case in point of this is the recent shift in responsibility for the management, governance, and implementation of curriculum reform, away from central Ministry offices to regional, district and school-based officials as noted in Chapter Six. This reallocation of responsibility may not be an unsurprising course of action given that many of the fundamental conditions within central government, namely the capacity of the Ministry of Education, have not changed significantly from issues noted almost ten years ago. Technical assistance is still largely provided through consultants who often substitute rather than supplement the capacity of national staff; the Ministry of Education still lacks appropriate mechanisms for effective service delivery on basics such as textbooks and furniture for classrooms; and many of those responsible for implementing or overseeing reform do not have the necessary understanding or capacity to effectively do their job (Ministry of Education, 2010a). In such an environment, it is easy to shift blame onto schools themselves for failures, rather than to acknowledge or validate the insufficient structural conditions surrounding reform, particularly when the social contract on which state legitimacy is built is threatened.

Chapter Six also suggests that local school inspectors and directors are not systemically effective in supporting teachers through the reform progress. Thus there is real danger that delegating responsibility for reform onto these actors could lead to higher inefficiencies and inequities within and between schools which have varying access to strategic resources (power, knowledge, linguistic capital, etc.) and support mechanisms
to meet tighter accountability requirements that are likely to follow suit. In the long term this will undermine attempts at building a nation, and instead splinter such efforts. Instead, if the intent is on building a resilient and robust national education system, the focus should be on “promoting adequate degrees of decentralisation in combination with some central form of regulation, while strengthening capacity and monitoring efficiency at both central and decentralized levels” (INEE, 2011, p. 52).

9.3. Reform outcomes as contingently situated and mediated

Jansen (2002) notes that discourses can and do influence and leave traces in practice, even if this was not the central focus of reform agendas. This is because discourses, as part of the structurally selective environment within which agents operate, provide a field of both opportunity and constraint for actors, and shape the conditions under which agency is employed. For this reason, one cannot understand the decisions and actions undertaken by actors without an understanding of how they perceive the environment within which they act (Hay, 2002a; P. Jones, 2010). This was a primary focus of Chapters Seven and Eight—namely the dialectic between the environment in which teachers’ work in Timor-Leste is located, and their own sense of agency defined by their beliefs, motivations, history, and professional identity. There is ample evidence in these chapters of how social relations that occur within education at all levels—between school level actors and the Ministry, and between teachers and students—are shaped by the particular environment in which schooling occurs.

For example, the insufficiency of resources, or classroom space, is an opportunity for some teachers to maintain a tightly framed and classified pedagogy, which is predicated on a strong set of beliefs and values about the right way to impart knowledge. They justify their actions, which some acknowledge as antithetical to reform messages, because of the lack of appropriate attention to policy implementation (i.e. insufficient training, space, resources). For others, such conditions are an enormous frustration in their motivations to change pedagogy towards a style that facilitates more active learning in the classroom. This was found to be particularly true with teachers who had some exposure to an environment premised on a more loosely framed and classified pedagogy through professional development or pre-service education. For this group of actors, the environment created by a lack of appropriate commitment to reform was seen as limiting in terms of the choices and courses of action they could make, and as was the case with one teacher in Chapter Eight, often worked against ones’ preferences and natural tendencies for action, thus limiting agency.
Additionally, the lack of appropriate follow through on many policies, particularly those related to accountability and oversight, meant that school directors and teachers had broad scope to exercise autonomy and agency. Interesting about the case of Timor-Leste, is the marked sense from teachers that their level of free will is limited by doctrines and rules from above, despite the high levels of autonomy and authority (particularly in rural communities) that an environment premised on the empty production of policy promotes. What this would suggest is the strong influence that a colonial past has and continues to have on teachers’ sense of real or imagined agency. As discussed in Chapters Six, most saw the lack of structure not as an opportunity to exercise autonomy, but rather one that limited this possibility. Nonetheless, evidence from the observations of practice in Chapter Eight suggests that teachers did indeed exercise high degrees of autonomy but often unconsciously rather than actively. As Jessop (2005, p. 51) notes, these teachers’ “knowledge of their terrain and its strategic selectivity is partial, at worst it is demonstrably false.” In this strategically selective environment, the outcomes of the decisions teachers made varied greatly, with ‘resistances’ to reform agendas driven by multiple agendas in terms of their intentionality, objectives, and purpose.

Since independence, the terrain of teachers’ work has shifted significantly. They find themselves working within a much more loosely framed and classified curriculum framework with significantly fewer resources at their disposal. The result: reform agendas become symbolically mimicked at all levels, with little understanding regarding the purpose or meaning of such changes to teaching and learning practice. This has created a situation that is both deleterious to student learning and demoralising to teachers. Evident from teachers’ beliefs and understandings about the reform agenda in Chapters Seven and Eight were that action was often founded on imperfect information of the context they work within—particularly their room for negotiation within the reform agenda itself. They made false assumptions and chose a course of action that often appeared to be lacking in reflection or based on habit, but in fact were a deliberate response to a perceived, but often misjudged set of structural constraints.

9.4. Implications of this research

*Global isomorphism contested and contextualised*

The above conclusions link back to a central premise of critical realism regarding the distinction that must be made between the worlds of the empirical, actual and real. In
this study, the real is the entire range of possibilities that has existed for education since the nation’s independence in 2002—including the discourses expressed in policy aspirations, as well as others that were never fully divulged but are often implicit in the context of postcolonial nation building and state modernisation. The actual is the cultural political economy in which reform occurs, but that may not be entirely visible to all actors. Notwithstanding this, this world of the actual creates a strategically selective environment within which action occurs. And finally, the empirical, namely the practices and beliefs of actors observed and documented in action as well as the associated outcomes noted for students. Although there were dominant patterns of how teachers employed agency, these were by no means universal, nor were the ways in which these actors acknowledged and creatively mediated or negotiated the strategically selective environment in which they found themselves. Instead, what becomes evident is the temporal, spatial and discursive selectivity within which agency is framed and outcomes occur, as well as the dialectic that exists between a constantly changing set of structures, and the employment of agency within it.

Such findings have important implications for studies of global policy, borrowing, lending and appropriation. Accepting Dale & Robertson’s (2009) urgings to move away from the hegemony of methodological nationalism and educationism, this study has clearly demonstrated that the myriad factors driving the choices that actors make are: (1) far from uniform; (2) situated in scales both above and below that of the state; and (3) highly contextualised with the worlds of the political (power and institutions), cultural (discourses, language, beliefs, values), and economic (existing social relations). It is recognised that the notion of global isomorphism promoted by world culture theorists is a compelling narrative, and evidence exists to support this on one level within Timor-Leste, specifically within policy where symbols from outside have been used to legitimate contestable changes to pedagogy and content in the post-independence curriculum. This theory falls short, however, in acknowledging, as this thesis has, that such policy ideals can be “contested and transformed through a range of socio-political and discursive processes, strategies and struggles…that take place at different scales engaging an array of actors and interests” (Robertson, Bonal, & Dale, 2002, pp. 475-476). Through an investigation into the intent, purposes, beliefs and values on which global education policies were “borrowed”, and the ways in which they were appropriated into existing social relations within the classroom, the thesis highlights a principal shortcoming of World Culture Theory—namely its inability to
explain the continuing variation of strategies, beliefs, values, actions and agency of actors at all levels in the process of appropriation.

*Contextualising purpose, policy and practice*

The uniqueness of the Timorese case presented in this thesis is its location within an agenda of educational transformation following conflict and independence. Through a multi-scalar approach, the preceding chapters have sought to reveal the deep structural constraints and institutional forces that are situated both within and external to the state, and the personal and professional dilemmas this context creates for teachers. The objective: to present a much more nuanced and complex picture of how what is empirically observable in schools is the product of shifting expectations about the purpose/role of education in a post-conflict/post-colonial society such as Timor-Leste, and the varying ways in which they are articulated, interpreted, constituted and institutionalised by a range of actors within particular economic, political, and social projects. This contributes to a shortcoming in academic and programming literature on education in CAFS, which frames specific policies and initiatives in largely “technical and apolitical terms, operating as if relatively insulated from broader ideological, political and economic factors acting on and within the sector” (Smith, McCandless, Paulson, & Wheaton, 2011, pp. 43-44). Analyses of the geopolitical and political economic context of implementation is made explicit in this thesis, to highlight the importance of these factors in framing intentions, actions and outcomes observed.

Applying ideas from SRA and critical realism more broadly, the thesis challenges the notion that education is located in a static, unchanging, and universal set of social relations and material practices, and instead contributes to scholarship that locates education within complex, highly contested and multi-scalar discursive, material, and institutional struggles regarding the social contract between citizen and the state. The particular time, space and place of Timor-Leste, as a newly independent and post-conflict country, helps to bring such struggles to the forefront, and counter universal claims that characterise some strands of education research and policymaking.

What SRA specifically contributes to the analysis in this thesis is a clear sense of how education has structured and has the potential to mediate the fragile social contract that currently exists in Timor-Leste between citizen and the state. The argument made throughout the thesis is that to understand what is visible in terms of educational practices and activities inside the classrooms and schools visited, one must
retroductively investigate the negotiation that has occurred between the context within which teachers' work and practices are structured, and the variety of strategies and responses that are enacted based on this. Given the rapidly evolving environment in which reform continues to occur in Timor-Leste, more of this type of scholarship is needed, not just within the academic domain but also amongst the donor community working in the country at present. The continuance of technical solutions in educational policymaking to systemic problems that are deeply rooted in the cultural political economy of a post-colonial and post-conflict nation is suggested to be insufficient to achievement of quality learning outcomes for Timorese children and the morale of their teachers.

A critical realist evaluative framework contributes to the understanding of seemingly intractable issues of poor educational quality and relevance in the context of Timor-Leste. It does so through its ability to separate out and distinguish that which is empirically observable from the actual processes that lead to this and the seemingly real but invisible forces and discourses underpinning them. But it also allows a discussion of the potential interactions between these three worlds and identifies multiple potential outcomes from a singular intervention. It reframes the structure/agency dichotomy by demonstrating the mutual coupling that exists between the intentions and actions of actors, and the selective nature of the real and actual worlds they operate within. Such a framework is necessary in the complex adaptive system within which education is located in Timor-Leste. It helps us to acknowledge that educational policy and practice are not immune to the politics of education.

*A more nuanced understanding of teacher resistance*

In recent years the dichotomisation of teachers’ work—into those who are either compliant or resistant to educational reform—has grown in its influence in policymaking circles throughout the Global South. This is precipitated by a number of influential reports into ‘what makes schools work’, taken largely from contexts in the Global North, and the tighter classification and framing of teachers’ work towards particular means and ends through the Global Education Agenda (Vongalis-Macrow, 2007, 2008). In this study, teachers articulated and were observed operating across a spectrum of practice and/or ideology ranging from ‘resistant’ to supportive of various aspects of the reform agenda. The educational literature is full of similar findings, and such actions are often dichotomised as teachers opposing reform (bad) or teachers
supportive of reform (good). Where this thesis has differed is in how it has positioned and explained such action.

The argument is that what is observed in classrooms and could largely be labelled as ‘resistance’ to reform, is the product of teachers operating within multiple (economic, political and socio-cultural) and simultaneous realities (present, past and future). It is also the result of teachers juxtaposing their own motivations and space for manoeuvre within a context which is both strategic and selective towards particular lines of action. In such an environment, they are negotiating a vision of reform within a set of structural and material conditions that are emerging and contested. For that reason, the apparent resistance to learner-centredness or the incorporation of local knowledge into teaching content must be located within the context and culture of practice that exists in Timor-Leste. Rather than simply judging current outcomes as ones that can be attributed to a teacher workforce that is unaccountable, lazy or apathetic, as is increasingly the case in judgements of teacher action in CAFS, more attention must be paid to how particular teacher responses are understood and negotiated. Teachers in Timor-Leste continue to reflect on the structural conditions afforded to advance or promote strategies that suit their professional ideology, politics, history and/or positions of power (Callaghan, 2008).

Reform that hopes to engage rather than alienate teachers must begin with acknowledgement and incorporation of their knowledge base, experience, skills, values and beliefs. Unfortunately, reform processes often “ignore the complexities and value-laden nature of education and prescribe innovations to teachers while remaining stubbornly naïve of their realities, and which alienates [them] in the process” (Schweisfurth, 2002, p. 22). In Timor-Leste, as in many other countries, the policy production process has been “firmly located at the centre, in the hands of national and international scholars and policy makers,” largely ignoring the context in which teachers work and the constraints they face (T. Jessop & Penny, 1998, p. 399). This has led many teachers to lose faith in the state to follow through on its promises, and increased the alienation between the state and its identified soldiers of reform. This should be of concern, given that Timorese teachers are a formidable workforce of 10,000 individuals who maintain clout, influence and power within their local communities, and who have begun to publically question the sincerity of government will to deliver on its educational promises. As demonstrations, strikes, and protests against the Ministry of Education have mounted in recent years, the fragile legitimacy upon which continued
policy production is built may crumble. Fundamental changes to schooling practices will only come about when teachers are given opportunities to articulate, reflect on, and defend their theories of practice. It may also require acknowledging that teacher practices exist along a continuum rather than as a dichotomy of resistance or not to reform messages.

9.5. Thinking about the difference between the rhetoric and substance of educational transformation in CAFS

The story of ten years of continuity and change within Timorese classrooms told within the pages of this thesis highlight how in many ways a legacy of colonialism, elitism and exclusion lives on. Timor-Leste still has a long way to go to truly achieve the goals it has outlined for education’s role and purpose in society—namely that it helps its future citizens to learn to do, to know, to be and to live in harmony with each other, and with the effective capabilities to do so effectively. What becomes clear ten years after Timorese independence is that restoring educational service provision may have garnered short-term state legitimacy, but the risks to this are multifaceted. As learners and communities increasingly perceive the quality and relevance of schooling as insufficient to their needs, and teachers come to recognise that their status as valued heroes in the post-independence period is being greatly diminished and replaced with blame for failure, the symbolic promise of transformation will be questioned. When examining the key objectives of the curriculum reform—that children are more engaged in their learning, and that what is taught is more flexibly mediated with local conditions and community aspirations—it is amply evident that such goals are far from being met. In reference to a central concept of this thesis, that of political symbolism as policy craft, the thin thread on which policy production substitutes for a sustained political will, commitment and capacity for implementation could be easily unwoven in the years to come. This unravelling of the social contract threatens the fragile transition from being a post-conflict state to one on the sustainable path of development.

To truly say ‘goodbye conflict, and welcome to development’ requires more than reconstructing an educational paradigm that is substantively no different to that which preceded it in terms of its outcomes of inequality and irrelevance. It may necessitate deep structural and institutional change that prioritises the development of political and social literacies in schooling, skills that support sustainable livelihood opportunities, and an explicit focus on changing social relations that might be impacted by past and
ongoing conflict both in society and within the schooling system itself (Smith et al., 2011).

Winthrop (2011) notes that restoring the status quo in CAFS may fall short of ensuring children’s longer-term wellbeing. For children to effectively gain the ability to live, to know, to be, and become in such societies, requires a focus on quality learning in a broader sense. This must consider the diverse forms of learning (technical, practical, and emancipatory) that children consider valuable in such contexts and for these ideas to be effectively incorporated into the pedagogy that occurs within classrooms. This necessitates, according to Winthrop, teachers who understand societal expectations of schooling, and the cultural and historical contexts of the children they teach. A criticism made in this thesis is that Timor-Leste has labelled most of its teachers as ‘unqualified’ despite the fact that many have this awareness and understanding. Knowledge and understanding of context is deemed as obsolete to the challenges of modernisation and economic development, with the Teacher Competency Framework, instead, adopting an internationally recognised set of professional standards of ‘good’ teaching and learning practices in deciding which teachers are deemed ‘qualified.’

Davies (2009) remarks that in CAFS, there is often an unequal balance of power between those with perceived knowledge of what is necessary for reform (namely political elites and outside actors) and those who do not have such knowledge (namely school-based actors). This often leads to a process in capacity development, whereby teachers are expected to "undo" past practices through the acquisition of new skills and knowledge that are imparted to them to enact, and often viewed through a deficit model. The problem, as Davies notes (p. 21), is that these teachers, "have vast knowledge, of their work and political context," and in particular the ways in which such context enables or constrains reform agendas but that is often glossed over in the name of progress. Paying heed to such knowledge is critical for longer term and sustained impacts to practice. Curriculum policy change should be a process of bargaining, social dialogue, negotiation and eventual consensus between various social actors involved in reform. Unfortunately, very little negotiation or acknowledgement of teachers’ knowledge is evident in the trajectory of reform in Timor-Leste.

While not excusing the poor educational outcomes which plague the Timorese system at present, ultimately this thesis argues what is visible in these classrooms is a negotiation between a set of strategically-selective structures and the strategic (albeit not always intentional) actions of actors. Not disputing that these outcomes are less than adequate
for a nation coming out of a conflict-ridden and colonial past, what this thesis challenges is where fault for this continued failure of reform to live up to its promises should be directed. The contention is that many of these problems lay not within specific policies practices of education itself, but rather within the realm of how, why, and with what purposes education reform has been framed, determined, and addressed. Until appropriate consideration is given to the politics of education in Timor-Leste, reforms predicated on the aspiration of constructing a truly postcolonial, socially cohesive and prosperous society remain exactly that—a symbolic aspiration more than a lived reality.
Appendix I: Survey design and administration

Survey Design

The first section of the survey (Section A) collected basic demographic information about the teachers. The aim of collecting this demographic data was to provide background detail on the surveyed teachers, in terms of their gender, years of experience, teaching location and qualification levels. Given the absence up until now of reliable government information on any of these matters, the collection of these data was seen as important in better understanding the current composition of the primary teaching workforce. That stated, there was never the expectation that the sampled group would end up being representative of the primary teaching workforce as a whole, nor could this be suitably determined given the limited data available within the EMIS. A secondary aim of collecting this demographic information was to allow for comparative analysis of mean response scores to particular constructs in other sections of the survey.

The second section was designed to solicit views from teachers on the purposes of learning and the role of teachers in meeting these objectives. The aim was to ascertain the degree to which teachers’ views of teaching and learning were aligned with the current vision of the purposes of learning and teachers’ roles as educators in post-independence Timor-Leste. Ultimately it was hoped that these data could provide a broad overview of the degree to which teachers’ views were shaped by the historical and colonial past (which promoted non-critical, superficial and passive teaching and learning methodologies) versus the current government discourse (which focuses on developing a critical, democratic and deep understanding of course material in learners). To test this, a pair of constructs, labelled as surface and deep learning in this study, items developed originally by Tait, Entwistle and McCune (1998) in their ASSIST protocol, and subsequently refined and validated by Brown, Lake and Matters (2008) for teachers’ attitudes in New Zealand and Queensland, were utilised. A total of three statements relating to each construct were included in this section.

An additional set of constructs in this battery of items aimed to assess teachers’ perceptions of their actions, intentions and beliefs when it comes to their role as educator. A total of four pre-validated constructs, each consisting of three distinct statements were incorporated into the survey. These four constructs were chosen as
they represent the past (transmission) and future (social reform/nurturing) visions of education's purpose/function in Timor-Leste.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct Name</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Examples of items included</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transmission</td>
<td>Effective teaching requires a substantial commitment to the subject matter or content of study.</td>
<td>A teacher’s main job is to lecture to students a series of facts. A teacher’s job is to prepare students to pass exams.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apprenticeship</td>
<td>Teaching is the practice of preparing students for the roles expected of them in their community.</td>
<td>The job of a teacher is to connect learning with the lives of the students. A teacher's job is to teach students skills that they can use in their daily lives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social reform</td>
<td>Effective teaching is about encouraging students to challenge the status quo and engage in collective action for societal improvement.</td>
<td>The teacher’s job is to ensure that students become leaders that change their community. A teacher should help their students see the need for changes to their community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nurturing</td>
<td>Good teaching &quot;comes from the heart.&quot; Teachers’ main role is to encourage and foster self-esteem and worth in all children.</td>
<td>A teacher should encourage students to speak about how they feel. A teacher’s job is to build the confidence of all students.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 0-1: Constructs and items measuring roles of the teacher in the classroom

The third section of the survey aimed to measure teachers’ levels of efficacy as originally detailed by Bandura (1977). According to him, human behaviour is determined by two kinds of expectations. One is based on the conviction that if a certain set of behaviours are employed, a certain set of outcomes will result (outcome expectations). The other is the belief that one has in oneself to execute the behaviours necessary to achieve this desired outcome (efficacy expectation). Researchers since have seized on this research and employed it to develop constructs to measure each dynamic within the context of teachers’ work. In regards to outcome expectations, a number of researchers have looked specifically at the degree to which teachers believe they can get their students to learn, despite external mitigating factors. They have also aimed to measure the agency teachers feel as individuals in the classroom to achieve the tasks they deem as necessary in their professional responsibilities (Berman & McLaughlin, 1977; Gibson & Dembo, 1984). These two interrelated concepts have been given a number of different titles, but have generally been labelled as general efficacy and personal teaching efficacy, respectively (Coladarci, 1992). It was the latter of these two concepts that this section of the survey was structured on, as it was individuals’ own sense of agency, rather than beliefs in the power of the normative teacher, that was of interest in this study. Items
related to personal teaching efficacy were reviewed and adapted from a combination of CSC Teacher Efficacy Scale (Friedman & Kass, 2002) and the OSTES Scale (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk-Hoy, 2001) to create three exploratory efficacy constructs that were entitled instructional, student engagement, and classroom management. The definition of each of these constructs, and specific items included under each construct are listed in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct name</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Examples of items from survey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Instructional efficacy                | Measures the degree to which teachers felt they had the necessary skills, knowledge and dispositions to teach the content they are responsible for | I can respond to difficult questions from my students  
I can explain something in a different way when students don’t understand it the first time |
| Student engagement efficacy           | Measures the confidence teachers have in their ability to interest and maintain the interest of all students in learning | I can get students to learn, even when they aren’t really interested in learning  
I can get students to value coming to school |
| Classroom management efficacy         | Measures teachers’ self-perceived capacity to maintain order and respect in the classroom | I can get students to follow my directions in the classroom  
I can get students to follow classroom rules |

Table 0-2: Constructs and examples of items measuring personal teaching efficacy

The final section of the survey was designed to better understand how aspects of the school environment influence the daily work of teachers in Timor-Leste, recognising that this context can play a large bearing on teachers’ levels of motivation and morale, and on the willingness or ability of teachers to consider changes to their practice. Specifically this section included items that measured teachers’ satisfaction with their school facilities, resource adequacy/availability, collegial relations, supervision and accountability measures, job security and salary as concerns or issues. From that, the research could then explore in subsequent data collection the ways in which these factors impact either positively or negatively on the work of teachers within their specific contexts. The items included in the survey were informed by validated constructs from an original and revised version of the School Level Environment Questionnaire (Rentoul & Fraser, 1983; B. Johnson, Stevens, & Zvoch, 2007), as well as the Teacher Job Satisfaction Questionnaire (Lester, 1987). However, neither of these instruments adequately assessed teachers’ satisfaction with accountability mechanisms between themselves and the Ministry, or adequacy of resourcing. Thus exploratory items were added in to measure these dimensions. In total, 38 items across seven constructs were included in this section. A description of the various constructs, and
examples of items (which were both negatively and positively worded) are indicated in
the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct name</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Examples of items from survey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Supervisory support</td>
<td>Level of satisfaction with instructional provided by their immediate supervisor (i.e. school director/head teacher)</td>
<td>My school director provides me help when I need it (+)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The school director is often too busy to assist me with problems I have (-)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collegial relations</td>
<td>Level of satisfaction with the relationship they have with their peers at the school</td>
<td>I get along well with other teachers at the school (+)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Teachers at my school talk badly about other teachers (-)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilities</td>
<td>Level of satisfaction with school infrastructure (excluding resources)</td>
<td>The conditions of the classroom, toilets and public areas at my school are good (+)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The condition of the classrooms at my school make it difficult for students to learn (-)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>Level of satisfaction with income that teaching as a profession provides, in consideration of current context of Timor-Leste</td>
<td>I am paid well considering the education and qualifications I have (+)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I struggle to support me and my family with the salary I earn as a teacher (-)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professionalism</td>
<td>Measures the levels of perceived professionalism teachers feel about their colleagues</td>
<td>Teachers at my school follow all the rules of the Ministry of Education (+)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Teachers at my school take their job seriously (+)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Security</td>
<td>Degree of security that teachers feel about maintaining their current position into the future</td>
<td>Being a teacher provides me with security about my future (+)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>It is very hard to keep a teaching job at my school (-)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources</td>
<td>Level of satisfaction teacher have with both the relevance and quantity of instructional materials at their disposal</td>
<td>The materials and resources that are available at my school are easy to use with my students (+)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I have enough resources and materials available at my school to do my job well (+)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 0-3: Constructs and examples of items measuring motivation and morale of teachers**

The survey was piloted with a small group of teachers in March 2010. Based on the pilot it was discovered that the survey took longer than the 20 minutes that it was expected to take, as many teachers had lower than anticipated levels of literacy, even in Tetum. A quick assessment of the internal reliability of the scale constructs utilised also suggested high levels of inconsistency of teacher responses. In an email to a colleague at the University of Auckland, dated March 29, 2010, I noted that:
While I think that most of them [sampled teachers] were quite able to do the survey and understood the Likert-like Scale, when I went to do a test of reliability along the already established constructs (from previously validated instruments), many of the Alpha Coefficients were <.60 and in some cases were negative!!! That is bad as it indicates that there is no strong consistency of responses. Now I know that I can’t take too much from a sample of 10, but I do think it at least could indicate a red herring in the full survey sample of 300-400 teachers I hope to survey in about three weeks time. I am wondering whether (1) Continue as is and then deal with constructs that prove to be unreliable at a later point, (2) consider more fully the fact that my study is mainly qualitative and use the survey and specific items within it solely on a descriptive level or 3)????...which is why I am asking you. What would be your humble advice be in this situation? I think language, literacy levels, and the fact that Likert scales are a fairly foreign concept (particularly for teachers) are all hurdles that I must be cognisant of in terms of reliability of data collected in quantitative forms.

The advice I received back from this colleague, who is an expert in quantitative research methods, was that while the lack of consistency and reliability in the constructs I had established was a concern, the sample was too small to make any major modifications. He suggested that,

What you might have (yes, 10 is not enough to really tell - the important thing from the trial is whether they felt they could respond) is a different set of constructs - in other words, T-L teachers do not see the world in the same way as the teachers on whom the scales were established...That is not a bad thing - you may have established something different, and it gives you a chance to talk about how they see things differently. Also means that in your interviews, you can explore some of those differences-interesting stuff! (Personal communication, email from E. Irving 29/3/10)

The pilot made it clear that while the initial intent to conduct a robust quantitative analysis from survey responses may not prove fruitful, what such data might reveal in its absences might be as equally telling as what was presented. Thus, the decision was made to proceed in administering the same survey to a larger sample of teachers. Two items that were worded poorly (double negatives) were eliminated from the final survey, as they caused confusion when teachers completed the pilot.

Survey Administration
A suggestion was made by those within the national office of the Ministry of Education to administer this survey during the holiday break in April 2010, when most teachers would travel away from their local school sites to training centres located in each sub-
district for three weeks of intensive training on use of the curriculum guides. This would allow for the sampling of a large number of teachers in a short amount of time, and include a cross-section of those working in both urban and quite remote schools throughout the country.

Prior to administering the surveys, a letter was sent out by the Director General of the Ministry of Education to each of the regional offices of the Ministry regarding the intent of this study. While DNFP was given the opportunity to view the survey, and provide comment, it was made clear that my research study was independent of the Ministry, and could not be influenced by the presence or interjection of their opinions into the data collection. To prevent coercion or bias in teacher responses, a clear statement was included in the letter making it clear that Ministry of Education officials were not to be present in the room during survey administration.

All surveys were administered with a research assistant who was Timorese and familiar with the education sector, having been employed in the past as a language assistant with the NZAID Capacity Building Programme in the Ministry of Education. At the outset, I led the administration of the survey, with my research assistant translating verbatim. As he grew more familiar with the protocol surrounding survey administration and with the contents of the survey itself, he was able to exercise more of a leadership role. He would instruct the teachers on the purpose of the survey and how it was to be completed, and was able to respond to teacher questions around language independently. However, I remained with him at all times in case there were questions or concerns he couldn't answer. The research assistant also played an important role in making it clear to Ministry of Education officials, development partner representatives, or teacher trainers who were sometimes at the site, that they could not be present during survey administration. In one case, this took several tense moments of negotiation when one Ministry official attempted to take over the administration of the survey.

A number of practical challenges were encountered during the period of survey administration. One was a lack of reliable/valid information from offices of the Ministry of Education (both national and regional) regarding when teachers would actually be in attendance at each training centre. In many training centres, the expected number of teachers who were to be present was often overstated. As an example below is a table
indicating what Ministry data suggested, versus what actual attendance numbers\textsuperscript{116} were on the day I visited.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Expected</th>
<th>Actual</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Manatuto Vila</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dom Alexio</td>
<td>284</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nain Feto</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textbf{Table 0-4: Expected versus actual number of teacher attending training in March 2010}

Additionally, training schedules provided to me from both regional and national offices of the Ministry were often incorrect. The Ministry’s schedules indicated that all teachers would be attending training every day over the course of the three weeks. What I quickly discovered, on my first day administering the survey in Dili, however, was that these calculations were based on a quantity of trainers that did not exist in reality. Pragmatic decisions made at each training facility meant that often, sessions were shortened, or in some cases cancelled on certain days to allow the limited number of available trainers to travel from one centre to another to deliver training. In one instance I travelled by public transport for an entire day to survey teachers in Baucau, to discover that no training was occurring at the site on that particular day. This was despite being reassured by the local Ministry office that training was indeed occurring on this day at the site. In speaking with the Portuguese trainers, I discovered that they were 10 trainers short for their area, and thus were splitting their time between three different sites that were two to three hours distance apart by car.

Teachers and trainers were also often unaware of, and surprised of my presence at their training centre, despite the communication that was to have gone out to these individuals about this research from the Regional Offices. This placed me in a precarious situation at times, where these individuals, who were already dissatisfied with the poor organisation of the training, vented their frustrations on my research request. Rightly so, they were concerned that with the limited amount of time available for training, completing an external research survey was not an appropriate use of instructional time. With the skilful negotiation of my research assistant, we explored other options that most often involved having teachers volunteer their time either prior to or immediately after the training session to complete the survey. The issue of poor communication between national and regional offices and schools and teachers, is one that will be returned to later in examining the institutional context of teachers’ work.

\textsuperscript{116}There were a few teachers at both Dom Alexio and Nain Feto school who chose not to complete the survey
There were also pragmatic challenges of reaching each of the intended survey sites. The poor infrastructure and lack of public transport in the country meant that creative considerations had to be made about how to sample a large number of teachers in a short amount of time. In many cases, the training sites that were selected were based on convenience sampling; namely those I could reach with available transport options.\footnote{For example, I visited the site in Manatuto Villa because the National Director for Continuing Professional Development was to open the training and offered me a ride. Similar free rides offered were why sites in remote areas such as Maliana and Ermera could be included. Through the good fortune of the United Nations, and with written support of the Ministry of Education, I was also able to travel by helicopter to Oe-Cusse, a region that is otherwise quite difficult to reach by land, because of its location inside West Timor.}

Finally, while this was true for only a small number of the 718 teachers who were sampled, there were issues with teachers copying each other’s survey, soliciting responses from a more senior teacher, or having a more senior teacher telling a junior teacher what to write down. There were also teachers who were ambivalent about completing the survey, and began to circle numbers ad hoc. These practices when observed were stopped, but it was often hard to control for these actions in a room where the survey was administered to 50 or more teachers at a time owing to their own time constraints.

*Survey analysis and collation*

Soon after the last of the survey data was collected, entry of this data began, first into MS Excel, with importation into SPSS, after data was cleaned. As data were entered, there were times where it was evident that teachers had started to circle numbers in an ad hoc fashion (i.e. all 4’s or 1’s circled on a page, even to negatively worded items). When this was obvious, responses of this individual within this section of the survey were excluded and entered as missing data.

All sections of the survey were subjected to tests for validity, reliability and consistency before the scale constructs chosen could be compared or analysed further. Validity of the scales was done using factor analysis, to determine how well the assembled items “fit” together into a particular construct. For constructs to be valid, a factor loading of at least .30 onto the a priori scale is seen as necessary for items to be considered interrelated to each through a common concept (Coakes & Steed, 2007). Linked to that is the need to ensure that the concept measures something that is unique and not
measured by other scales. Thus each factor was tested for the degree of correlation it had to others, with the hope that correlation levels would generally be low between them. Conversely, within each scale, the aim was that responses were internally consistent and correlated to each other. This was accomplished by calculating Cronbach's alpha coefficient for reliability.
Appendix II: Survey questionnaire (English)

Dear Teacher,
I am a student completing my doctorate at the University of Auckland in New Zealand. As part of my research I am trying to better understand what your life as a teacher is like. Attached you will find a survey that I would appreciate if you would take the time to fill out as truthfully as possible.

While the Ministry of Education has given its support of my research, and is allowing me to hand out these surveys to you during your training, I will not be showing the completed surveys to them or anyone else. Nowhere are you required to put your name or other details that might identify who you are on this survey. You are not required to complete the survey if you do not want, just return it with nothing filled in.

The survey should take approximately 30 minutes to complete.

I sincerely appreciate your help and your time in completing this survey. Read the directions for each section carefully. Please ask if you have any questions while completing the survey. Remember, there are no right or wrong answers and it is your opinion that matters.

With warmest regards,

Ritesh Shah
PhD student, Faculty of Education
University of Auckland, New Zealand
PART A Directions: Please complete the section below by either filling in or ticking (✓) the relevant box or boxes. There are no right or wrong answers. Please respond as truthfully as possible.

A1. Are you male or female?  

M  F

A2. How old are you?  

yrs old

A3. How many years have you been teaching in total?  

yrs

A4. Are you born in the sub-district that you teach in now?  

Yes  No

A6. What class(es) do you teach? (Tick all that apply)  

K1  K2  K3  K4  K5  K6

A7. What best describes your position at your school?  

Permanent teacher  Contract teacher  Volunteer teacher  Head teacher

A8. What is the highest level of schooling that you have completed?  

Primary education/SD  Pre-secondary education/SMP  Secondary education/SMR/SMG/Eskola Vocasional  D1 or D2  Bachlerato or D3  Licenciatura/SI  Masters Degree/S2
A9. What best describes the location of the school you teach in? (choose only one)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Choice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In Dili</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capital of the district</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centre of the sub-district</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outside of the centre of the sub-district</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A10. Since the beginning of 2010, how many days have you been absent from school? __ days

A11. If you were absent, what were the reasons for this? (Tick all that apply)

- I was ill or expecting a baby or someone in my family was ill or expecting a baby
- I had to attend training or a meeting away from my school
- I had to go to collect or deposit my salary
- I had to work at home or at another job
- Funerary or church event in my village
- Another reason (please write down what it was on the line below)

TURN TO NEXT PAGE
**PART B Directions:** I would like to ask you your personal beliefs about teaching and learning in Timor Leste. There are no right or wrong answers. Your opinion on these statements is what is important.

The scale is as follows:
- Circle a 1 if you **STRONGLY DISAGREE** with the statement
- Circle a 2 if you **DISAGREE** with the statement
- Circle a 3 if you **AGREE** with the statement
- Circle a 4 if you **STRONGLY AGREE** with the statement

Draw a circle around your response (1, 2, 3, 4). Circle only one number for each statement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B1  The best way to see if a student understands what they have been taught is to give them an exam</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B2  The job of a teacher is to connect learning with the lives of the students</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B3  Learning is about gathering more facts and information</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B4  A teacher should encourage students to speak about how they feel</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B5  A teacher should help their students see the need for changes to their community</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B6  A teacher’s main job is to lecture to students a series of facts</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B7  Learning is thinking about old ideas in new ways</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B8  A teacher’s job is to prepare students to pass exams</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B9  A teacher’s job is to teach students skills that they can use in their daily lives</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B10 Learning is about memorising information and being able to remember it later on</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B11 The teacher’s job is to ensure that students become leaders that change their community</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B12 A teacher’s job is to build the confidence of all students</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B13 Learning should be about asking questions and finding answers to them on your own</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B14 Learning is worthless unless it connects to your daily life</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B15 Students who have done the best on exams are the ones who have learnt the most</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B16 If a school is not safe and enjoyable for all students, the school is not good</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement</td>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>B17</strong> The purpose of schools is to prepare future citizens</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>B18</strong> The material that students learn needs to be connected to the kinds of work they are most likely to end up doing as adults</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TURN TO NEXT PAGE**
**PART C Directions:** The next section of the questionnaire is designed to understand some of the common problems teachers face in their classroom. There are no right or wrong answers. Your opinion on these statements is what is important.

The scale is as follows:
- Circle a 1 if you **STRONGLY DISAGREE** with the statement
- Circle a 2 if you **DISAGREE** with the statement
- Circle a 3 if you **AGREE** with the statement
- Circle a 4 if you **STRONGLY AGREE** with the statement

Draw a circle around your response (1, 2, 3, 4). Circle only one number for each statement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C1 I can connect what I am teaching to the lives of my students</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C2 I can get students to work together when learning something</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C3 I can get students to follow my directions in the classroom</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C4 I can control students who are misbehaving <strong>without</strong> shouting or using physical force</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C5 I can get students to learn, even when they aren't really interested in learning</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C6 I can get students to follow classroom rules</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C7 I can get all the students in my class to want to learn</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C8 I can improve the learning of students who come to school with very low skills</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C9 I can respond to difficult questions from my students</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C10 I can explain something in a different way when students don't understand it the first time</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C11 I can get students to value coming to school</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C12 I can help students who do not remember what they have learned in previous classes</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C13 I can involve students in decisions about their learning</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C14 I can joke with students without it affecting their respect for me</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**PART D Directions:** I would now like to found out what it is like to work at your school. There are no right or wrong answers. Your opinion on these statements is what is important.

The scale is as follows:
- Circle a 1 if you **STRONGLY DISAGREE** with the statement
- Circle a 2 if you **DISAGREE** with the statement
- Circle a 3 if you **AGREE** with the statement
- Circle a 4 if you **STRONGLY AGREE** with the statement

Draw a circle around your response (1, 2, 3, 4). Circle only one number for each statement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>D1 My head teacher provides me help when I need it</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D2 I like the other people whom I work with at my school</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D3 The conditions of the classroom, toilets and public areas at my school are good</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D4 It is very hard to keep a teaching job at my school</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D5 I struggle to support me and my family with the salary I earn as a teacher</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D6 Teachers at my school follow all the rules of the Ministry of Education</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D7 I am afraid of losing my teaching job</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D8 Teachers at my school are frequently absent</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D9 My head teacher praises good teaching</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D10 As a job, teaching provides me with enough money to live</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D11 I get along well with other teachers at the school</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D12 My head teacher provides advice on how to be a better teacher</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D13 I am paid well considering the education and qualifications I have</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D14 The condition of the classrooms at my school make it difficult for students to learn</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D15 The money I am paid is less than I deserve</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D16 The head teacher or director of my school is often too busy to assist me with problems I have</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D17 I have enough resources and materials available at my school to do my job well</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement</td>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
</tr>
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<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>D18 Teachers at my school talk badly about other teachers</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D19 The area around my school is not safe</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D20 The school director at my school regularly observes classes I teach</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D21 Compared to other ways I could earn money, teaching provides a good income</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D22 The materials and resources that are available at my school are easy to use with my students</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D23 The conditions of the facilities at my school make it easy to do my job</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D24 It is hard to work together with other teachers at my school</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D25 Teachers at my school take their job seriously</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D26 Teachers at my school know how to use the resources available</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D27 My head teacher treats all teachers at the school equally</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D28 I have made some good friends with the other teachers at the school</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D29 Being a teacher provides me with security about my future</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D30 My head teacher tries to make available the resources and materials I need to do my best</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D31 Teachers at my school come to work on time everyday</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D32 School inspectors regularly visit my school</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D33 Teachers at my school support each other</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D34 Teachers at my school are well motivated</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D35 My head teacher creates conflict amongst the teachers</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D36 I work hard to prepare for the lessons I teach</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D37 Other teachers at the school help me improve my teaching</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D38 I have enough resources and materials to teach my students</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix III: Teacher focus group protocol

Introduction (5 min)

- Ritesh will introduce himself to the group, thank them for the time, introduce Simoa and the fact that she will be facilitating remainder of discussion
- It will be explained that:
  - Their participation will aid in Ritesh’s understanding of the experiences and beliefs of teachers in Timor-Leste, and gives them an opportunity to express any concerns they have about the conditions they work in; but that ultimately they have choice on whether to participate or not
  - Every attempt will be made by us (the researchers) to keep what is said in this group confidential, but it is also up to others in the group to ensure that what is discussed here is not discussed with others in the school or community
  - Your names will not be used in any research that comes out of this group
  - Because you are giving up your own time to participate in this discussion, we are providing lunch for you today.
  - The conversation will be recorded so it can be listened and reviewed by both of us later on. This recording will not be shared with anyone else. If you feel uncomfortable with us recording the conversation, please say so now.
  - Explain that dynamic of a focus group is to have a conversation and work on some activities together, and that there is no right or wrong answer to anything that is discussed here. Opinions are what are important and ideally, everyone in the group will contribute equally.
  - Focus group will last for approximately one hour
  
  Teachers will then be asked to go around and state their name and what grade level they teach prior to Ritesh starting recorder.

Characteristics of being a teacher (3 min)

As a way of getting for us to get to know you a little, we’d like to start the discussion by asking each of you to respond to the following questions (as one at a time).

- How long have you been teaching? What was it that made you want to be a teacher in the first place? (to be asked individually to each teacher in room)
- What keeps you motivated to do your job?

Activity #1: Notions of what being a professional teacher constitutes (12 min)

The first activity will involve you as individuals and as a group thinking about what a professional teacher thinks or believes about their students, what a professional teacher does both inside and outside of the classroom, and how a professional teacher acts in front of their students and with the other teachers at their school. You will be given some post-it notes on which you will take three minutes to write down as many qualities of a professional teacher as you can think of individually. You will then stick all your ideas onto this chart as you finish.

After three minutes:

- As a group, now categorise these qualities into three areas: very important, somewhat important, or less important. Use this second chart (Ritesh will hold up) to move the qualities over and categorise them.
After three more minutes:
- Pointing and reading out the less important category: Why are these qualities less important?
- Pointing and reading out the very important category:
  - Why are these qualities of greatest importance to being a professional teacher?
  - How does someone gain these qualities (read them out)?

Activity #2: Understandings and perceptions around purposes of learning (15 min)
I’d like to change the topic of conversation a bit now. I’d like you to think about what you believe to be the reasons that your students should come to school and learn—in other words what are the purposes of learning? Again you will be given some post-it notes on which to write the different possible reasons you can think of. Put only one reason per post it note. Try to think of at least five different reasons why it is important that students come to school and learn. Take five minutes to think about this.
Read aloud what everyone has put on their post-it notes. Now as a group, categorise these reasons again into three areas: very important, somewhat important, or less important. Use this second chart (Ritesh will hold up) to move the qualities over and categorise them.

After three more minutes:
Pointing and reading out the less important category:
- Why did you decide that these reasons were less important?
Pointing and reading out the very important category:
- Why did you decide that these reasons were very important?
As a general question/discussion to whole group:
- How is it that you as a teacher can get your students to value coming to school?

Activity #3: Assessment of school environment (15 min)
We’re going to shift the discussion away a bit from your classroom to look at your school as a whole. We want you to think about things such as: the facilities, location of the school, resources available, the kinds of support you receive from the outside, the kinds of students that attend your school, support from your school director, and the other teachers you work with when you are doing the next task. You will see that the chart Ritesh is holding up is split into two columns. One half asks you to think about strengths or positive things about your school, and the other half about weaknesses or negative things about your school. Again you will be given a few post-it notes and we want you to think about both the strengths and weaknesses of your school. Write down only one weakness or strength per post-it note. Come up with as many strengths and weaknesses as you can in five minutes, keeping in mind it doesn’t matter if someone else puts the same thing, as long as you agree with it. Then come up and put your ideas in the appropriate column.

After five minutes:
- Read aloud the answers and ask the following questions:
  - How do some of the weaknesses of the school impact on your work in the classroom?
- Now as a group, we want you to decide which are the biggest strengths and weaknesses of your school. As a group choose the top three strengths and the top three weaknesses and then we will discuss. You have five minutes for this.
  - After a further five minutes:
    - If you were in charge of the world how would you go about chancing some of the bigger obstacles your school faces?
Activity #4: Students who are struggling (10 min)

I am going to tell you a short story and then I want you to think about what you would do with this student. Abui is a student in 3rd grade [show picture], and is falling further and further behind the rest of the students in the class. She can barely read beyond basic words, and has trouble writing words down on paper. It takes her a lot longer than the rest of the class to copy what the teacher has written on the board. She often misses school to help her family with their day-to-day chores and her parents are illiterate and cannot help her. Because she has trouble learning, she often grows restless in class and starts to distract other students.

Take 3 minutes to think of what you would do with Abui if she was in your class and write down your thoughts on one post it note. Then put it up on this poster. We will then discuss it as a group.

The following questions may be asked...

• Are any of these ideas unrealistic considering the actual situations you face in your classroom?
• Is there anyone who thinks that there is nothing you can do to help Abui? Why?
Appendix IV: Key informant interview guide

Note: Probes are indicative only and will be altered based on the role and affiliation of the key stakeholder being interviewed

Quality teaching
- In your opinion, what are the attributes/qualities that define a professional, skilled teacher in Timor-Leste today?
- How well do you think the current teacher workforce matches this description? What is required on the part of the teachers themselves to meet the qualities you described, and what support do they need to achieve this?

Understandings and perceptions around teaching and learning
Describe a classroom in which quality teaching and effective student learning were going on
- What would classroom look like in terms of the physical environment and facilities?
- What would the teacher be doing with the students in this classroom?
- How would you know that the students were effectively learning the material?
- How would the students be engaging with the teacher and each other?
- Any other aspects of the teaching or learning process that you think contribute to good student outcomes?

Role of specific agency
Let’s talk about the role your office/organisation had in improving teacher practices in Timor-Leste over the past few years
- Can you detail specific initiatives you have undertaken in this regard?
- How successful do you think some of these initiatives have been? How do you know?
- What have been some of the major challenges or mitigating factors that have worked against what you have tried to do?
- First at school level
- Then, at organisational level?
- Then, at larger political, social and economic levels of Timorese society as a whole?
- What lessons do you think you and your organisation have learned from these kinds of challenges?
- Roughly how much has your organisation invested in teacher professional development activities in the past three years in total?
- What would you like to change internal to your organisation to make your work more effective?
- What would you want to change outside your organisation if you could?
- What do you think is the perspective of teachers about your organisation? Why do you think that is?

The future
- Where would you like to see the Timorese education in five years time?
- What role will the Timorese teachers play in helping to achieve these goals?
Appendix V: School director interview guide

**Personal background**
- Describe how you became a school director
- How long had you been teaching before you were made a school director?
- When you became a school director did you receive any training?
  - What kinds of training have you received since?
  - How helpful/useful has this training been in helping you do your job better?

**Good teaching**
- What do you think are the qualities that define a good teacher in Timor-Leste today?
- How do you think a teacher becomes better at teaching?
- What skills do you think teachers who have a teaching qualification learn that others without might not know?

**Understandings and perceptions around teaching and learning**
- Describe to me what would be going on in a classroom where all students were learning? Specifically....
  - What would the students be doing?
  - What would the teacher be doing?

**Monitoring and assessing teachers at the school**
- How do you know your teachers are effectively teaching the schools' children?
- How often do you visit the classrooms at your school?
- What do you do when you visit the classrooms?
- How often do you meet with the teachers of your school? What do you discuss when you meet with them?
- How frequently are teachers away from their classroom for whatever reason?
  - If a teacher is absent how do they notify you of this?
  - What are the main reasons that teachers at your school need to be away from their classroom?

**Being a school director**
- What kinds of things do you think a school director should be responsible for?
- What do you think are the most important qualities of a good school director?
- What are the main challenges you face as director of your school?
- How frequently are you away from school for meetings or trainings?
- What is your normal schedule during the week?

**General issues/challenges facing the school**
- What goals do you have for this school for the next few years?
  - What do you think are the factors that will stand in the way of your school achieving such a goal?
- What kinds of resources (i.e. textbooks, teaching materials and aides, supplies for students to use) do you have available for you to use at your school?
  - Are these resources sufficient for the teachers and students?
  - If not, what kinds of resources would you want more of? How would you use these additional resources?
  - What do you think about the quality of the resources you have at your school right now? Why?
• What would you like to change about your school that you think could help you and the others at your school do your job better?
• What kinds of support do you receive from the regional and district offices of the Ministry?
  o Is this support adequate?
  o If not, how could these offices improve the way they help your school?
Appendix VI: Letter of introduction to MoE regional offices, school directors and teacher trainers

To: Apolinario Magno, MBA
From: Director Geral
Subject: Support to Mr. Ritesh Shah, a researcher from the University of Auckland.

Mr. Ritesh Shah is currently in Timor-Leste with the intention of gathering data for his doctoral thesis. His project aims to understand better the opportunities, conditionalities and challenges that Timorese teachers face in their classrooms, schools and communities.

Mr. Ritesh and I met recently in Dili and I believe that his project will be important in informing current and future actions that the Ministry of Education develops with the view to improving the quality of basic education in the country. Mr. Ritesh has my full support in his project, and I would also like to request that V. Exa. can assist as much as possible. More specifically:

1. In April, during the period of teacher training, Mr. Ritesh will need to visit various training centers in districts I, II and IV, to conduct a brief survey of 30 minutes with all teachers of cycles 1 to 3 to receive training in these centers in these days. The formators will have to inform Mr. Ritesh of the time necessary to conduct this survey. The ideal would be that someone from the Ministry accompanies Mr. Ritesh on his visits to the teacher training centers.
2. Mr. Ritesh will return to these two districts for two weeks during the second quarter (May to July 2010). Mr. Ritesh will visit at least four schools in these districts, whose names he will communicate to V. Exa.

Mr. Ritesh will present some of the conclusions of his study in Dili, before his return to New Zealand at the end of July. V. Exa. will be invited to attend this meeting, whose place and date will be communicated later.

Dili, 25 de Março de 2010

Director-Geral, Apolinário Magno MBA
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