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Background paper prepared for the UNESCO Futures of Teaching initiative (October 2021)

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Abstract

The paper aims to provide a decolonial critique of dominant global agendas concerning teacher professionalism and to propose new understanding based on the perceptions of a sample of teachers based in Colombia, Ethiopia, India, Rwanda and Tanzania. The paper commences by setting out dominant conceptions of teacher professionalism as they appear in the global literature. The paper then uses Ndlovu-Gatsheni's (2013) three dimensions of coloniality, namely, the coloniality of power, of knowledge and of being, as a framework for considering the colonial legacy on teacher professionalism and setting out the teachers' ideas concerning the barriers and affordances to their professionalism. This provides a basis for outlining the teachers' perspectives on how teacher professionalism may be conceptualised, which is discussed in relation to global conceptions. The main arguments advanced in the paper are that a decolonial lens is helpful for contextualising the perspectives of teachers in the global South; the lived experiences and material conditions of these teachers are often neglected in dominant discourses; it is important to situate the perspectives of teachers in an understanding of local contexts and realities; and, that in contrast to deficit discourses that predominate in the global literature, there is much that can be learned about teacher professionalism from teachers in the global South.

Introduction

Global debates concerning the quality of education have increasingly identified teacher professionalism as a key component in improving the quality of teaching and learning. The role of teachers in ensuring that learners do not miss out on schooling has been brought sharply into focus in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic. Teachers and teaching have played a prominent role in the Education for All movement (UNESCO, 2014) and are reflected in the sustainable development goals. The future of teaching as a profession is also a central theme in UNESCO's [Future of the Teaching Profession](#) and [UNESCO's Futures of Education: Learning to Become](#) initiatives which aim to reimagine how knowledge and learning can shape the future of humanity and the planet by equipping learners with diverse ways of being and knowing. To date, however, much of the global literature relating to teacher professionalism is framed in Eurocentric terms and is based on the experiences of teachers in high income, industrialised and predominantly Western contexts. Often missing from these accounts is an understanding of the perspectives, experiences and conditions of teachers in low- and middle-income countries in the Global South[1]. This means that dominant models of teacher professionalism may have only partial relevance for the majority of the worlds' teachers who work in increasingly complex, resource poor and challenging teaching and learning contexts that have their roots in the colonial past.

Through the colonial experience, these Eurocentric models were often assumed to be universal and were exported and adapted to non-Western contexts with limited engagement with local realities or indeed indigenous conceptions of teaching as an activity. This further

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[1] The term 'global South' is used as shorthand terminology to signify formerly colonised, low- and middle-income countries including those of research focus. Caution is needed, however, in the use of this terminology so as not to homogenise the histories and current realities facing these countries. As we discuss below, for example, the countries of research focus have very different experiences of colonialism and represent very different economic, political, social, demographic, cultural and educational realities.

limits the relevance of so-called global models for teachers in the global South. Recent scholarship on decolonising education and conceptions of education from the global south has called for a recognition of colonial and imperial legacies in education and to challenge the Eurocentric nature of knowledge through bringing dominant Western ways of understanding issues such as teacher professionalism into critical conversation with local and indigenous understandings and socio-cultural, political economy contexts.

The first aim of the paper then is to consider the relevance of existing models of teacher professionalism for teachers in the global South. It will do this through a critical review of the dominant global literature as well as of key policy texts drawn from five countries of research focus, namely Colombia, Ethiopia, India, Rwanda and Tanzania. The second aim is to co-create with a sample of fifty teachers working in our countries of research focus new understandings of teacher professionalism that are considered relevant for the twenty-first century. Through exploratory, qualitative inquiry, the paper seeks to foreground Southern and teacher-led understandings of teacher professionalism appropriate for achieving the SDGs and for realising sustainable futures for learners and their communities in these contexts. It will also seek to enhance global understanding of the issues through bringing these perspectives into conversation with dominant understandings from the literature. The paper will advance the Future of the Teaching Profession debate by identifying the implications of these emerging perspectives for pedagogies and learning environments of the future as well as the future of teacher education, continuing professional learning, and educational leadership and governance in these countries. It will develop recommendations for policy makers and for teacher organisations at the national and global scales.

The paper commences by setting out what is meant by decolonising teacher professionalism. This will be followed by a brief overview of the methodology used to co-create new understandings of teacher professionalism based on the lived experiences of the teachers in our five countries of research focus. Discussion will then turn to a critical review of the dominant, global literature that will focus on how teacher professionalism in the global South is constructed. Two broad approaches to understanding teacher professionalism based on a rights-based and more economistic approach are outlined. It is argued that although the rights-based approach in particular offers useful insights for a decolonised approach, both approaches fail to adequately engage with the realities of teachers' work in the global South.

The paper will then consider how the literature on decolonising education can provide an alternative starting point for reimagining the challenges faced by teachers in the global South. Following a decolonising theme, the discussion will focus on the colonial legacy or condition of 'coloniality' that continues to shape teachers' work and their professional identities. Drawing on Ndlovu-Gatsheni's work in particular, three dimensions of coloniality will be discussed, namely the *coloniality of power* that provides a wider historical political economy context against which education systems in the global South have emerged; a *coloniality of knowledge* dimension which draws attention to the wider discursive context based on Eurocentric and Western thinking and in relation to which teacher professionalism continues to be framed; and, a *coloniality of being* dimension which considers how the effects of the coloniality of power and knowledge become embodied in teachers' work and sense of their professionalism. Each of the three dimensions are discussed in turn and will be used as a context to foreground the perspectives of teachers themselves including their views on the

learners, the learning environments, curricula frameworks and pedagogical approaches including the use of technology, teacher education, the role of their unions and professional associations in promoting voice and policies relating to how teachers' work is governed. The discussion will provide a basis in the second part of the paper for setting out teachers' perspectives concerning their professionalism. The paper concludes by reflecting on the relevance of the teachers' perspectives for global agendas.

The key arguments developed in the paper are that models of teacher professionalism need to take account of the colonial legacy and condition of coloniality in education and must seek to disrupt the supposed 'universality' of dominant conceptions in the global literature through processes of co-creation with teachers in the global South. It should be pointed out at the outset that the paper does not claim to make generalisations concerning the perspectives of the teachers in the global South as it is based on qualitative interviews and focus groups with a small sample of teachers in each country of research focus. Indeed, the paper argues the importance of developing understandings of professionalism that are sensitive to diverse and dynamic socio-cultural and political contexts. Through highlighting the lived experiences of these teachers, how they identify and respond to the challenges they face and how they define their professionalism, it hopes to contribute to debates about how more inclusive understandings of teacher professionalism may be developed in the future.

What does it mean to decolonise teacher professionalism?

The term 'decolonisation' has a long history in anti-colonial struggles and thought over many centuries. In India, for example, diverse counter narratives to the colonial view of education played a prominent role in anticolonial struggles (Batra, 2020) and in Latin America efforts to decolonise education systems and pedagogies have been led by government, for example in Bolivia (Lopes Cardozo, 2012) and by teachers and social movements, for example in Colombia (Peñuela Contreras and Rodríguez Murcia, 2006). It has been given recent impetus, however, in the wake of student movements such as the #RhodesMustFall movement involving students at the University of Cape Town in South Africa and the #WhyIsMyCurriculumWhite movements at universities in the UK and US and elsewhere. In Latin America, decolonial thought has been developed by scholars such as Walter Mignolo (e.g. , 2011; 2018), Maldonado-Torres (e.g. , 2007), Arturo Escobar (2014; 2004), Aníbal Quijano (2000; 2007) and Catherine Walsh (2007) and in Africa by thinkers such as Mbembe (2016; 2005), Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2015; 2013), Comoroff and Comoroff (2011). These authors draw attention to what Mignolo (2007) describes as the 'colonial matrix of power', i.e., the extent to which dominant conceptions of the natural and social world continue to be shaped by Western, Eurocentric understandings of reality at the expense of more localised and indigenous understandings/perspectives that take account of the scale and diversity of populations within the global South and pose a challenge to universalistic conceptions (Batra, 2020). Decolonisation asks us to think about the unspoken assumptions which we currently practice with respect to the question of knowledge: what is admitted as 'knowledge' in the scientific sense? Who is afforded the privilege of 'expertise'? What positions and contexts are viewed as being 'objective', 'disinterested' or 'universal'? A key concern for decolonial thinkers is to 'decentre' the taken-for-granted assumptions behind dominant Western knowledge by bringing Western knowledge into critical conversation with other ways of

knowing and understanding the world. This is more than simply a question of critiquing the dominance of Western knowledge systems, as expanding our conceptions of the world is also crucial for tackling issues of sustainable development through harnessing insights from indigenous and local knowledge (Cortez Ochoa et al., 2021).

Although ideas about decolonising education are often applied to the curriculum, especially in higher education in different contexts (e.g. Shahjahan et al., 2021), it is argued they have a wider resonance to how we conceive of development and of policy (Tikly, 2020). In relation to an area such as teacher professionalism, the idea of decolonising is taken to have the following implications. Firstly, it is important to consider the colonial legacy as having shaped ideas about teacher professionalism in our countries of research focus. That is, to acknowledge that contemporary understandings of what it means to be a teacher continue to be profoundly shaped by the development of mass education systems under colonialism, and then by postcolonial administrations in the era of Western industrialisation. Secondly, it is also to acknowledge that current global and national agendas are dominated by Western thinking about what professionalism means. It will be argued that in these discourses the term teacher professionalism is often defined with reference to the experiences of teachers in the global North and that teachers in the global South are often portrayed against such understandings in terms of a deficit model.

Thirdly, a decolonising approach to teacher professionalism must seek to foreground the diverse contexts, perspectives and lived experiences of teachers in the global South in challenging and updating dominant conceptions of teacher professionalism. As we suggest below, this must comprise processes of knowledge co-creation in which teachers are actively involved with researchers in developing new knowledge and understanding. Whilst the first two aspects of decolonising approach are focused on critique and on providing a broad context for considering teacher professionalism, the third is concerned with reconstructing our global understanding through foregrounding teachers' lived experiences in diverse contexts. Clearly, seeking to decolonise an area as large as teacher professionalism, which has developed in the context of European colonialism and its postcolonial legacy over many years, is a major undertaking. It needs to be seen as an ongoing project rather than one that can be achieved in a single paper. Nonetheless, it is hoped that the insights generated will assist in this ongoing project.

Methodology

The paper is underpinned by research undertaken by the authors of the paper. This includes researchers based at the University of Bristol (Barrett, Cameron, Coles, Mitchell, Paulson, Rowsell and Tikly) and researchers based in the countries of research focus, namely Batra (India), Bernal and Vejarano (both Colombia), Juma (Tanzania), Tusiime (Rwanda) and Nigusse Weldemariam (Ethiopia).

Based on the objectives identified above, the research component was guided by the following overarching research question, namely, how can the perspectives of Southern-

based teachers concerning teacher professionalism inform policy and practice debates and decisions, specifically with respect to future learning, pedagogies and environments, teacher education and professional learning, and education governance in the focal countries and beyond? Sub-questions include: What do teachers think 21st century students will look like, what diverse needs will they have and what should they be learning for the 21st century? What do teachers think 21st century pedagogies and learning environments look like? What do teachers think initial and continuing teacher education ought to look like in the 21st century? What models of teacher leadership and governance do teachers perceive as being important for the 21st century? What has been the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on teachers' perspectives of their professionalism? In the light of the above, how do teachers and their organisations in the global South understand teacher professionalism for sustainable futures?

The first phase of research involved a review of the international literature on teacher professionalism. Toward this goal, we deployed a methodology built upon the CoSCAR approach introduced in Robertson et al. (2007). CoSCAR refers to a *comprehensive, systematic, critical* and *accessible* review of existing research around how teachers and their organisations have constructed teacher professionalism, which diverges from usual academic or policy theorising. *Comprehensive* indicates that the research is comprehensive in scale, focussing especially on regional, subnational and local levels, and engaging in particular with 'grey literature' from governments and relevant teacher associations as identified by our collaborating partners, alongside refereed publications. *Systematic* encapsulates our attempts to be truly synthetic and bring together myriad studies which have been carried out at different times, in diverse locations, and for different purposes. The *critical* aspect of the methodology avoids unproblematic acceptance or criticism of material reviewed, works to 'locate' the authorship, context, purpose, and audience of literature, and considers diverse texts as reflecting differing political, cultural, or ideological perspectives rather than functioning as simply 'academic' or 'neutral'. For this work, we add the additional descriptor of *decolonial* to form CoSCADR; decolonial research emphasises knowledge co-production and the sharing of power and decision-making between researchers and communities, but it also requires that the research project itself works to subvert dominant rationalities and Eurocentric paradigms, including in the 'home' research institution (Zanotti, 2021) – in this case, the University of Bristol.

The second phase of research involved collecting data from the countries of research focus. Data were collected from multiple streams. For each of the five country contexts, co-Investigators provided 10-15 key pieces of literature relating to teacher professionalism in their country context. Some of these were key policy texts that set out government policy relating to teachers. Understanding of the policy context relating to teachers was supplemented by interviews with three key informant interviews in each country including policy makers with responsibility for teacher policy, teacher educators and representatives of teacher unions. Other literature collected at a country level sought to foreground teachers' perspectives relating to teacher professionalism. The literature provided a context in which to situate the data gathered from the teachers themselves in the form of interviews and focus groups.

The sources of data for each context are summarised in Annex one. Qualitative methods were preferred over quantitative methods as a means of developing initial understandings of

teacher professionalism grounded in the contexts and lived experiences of teachers. In total, 50 teachers working in either primary or lower secondary schools took part in data collection across the five countries (approximately ten in each country). The strategic approach to sampling adopted by the research team reflected the small scale and exploratory nature of the study. Given the realities of conducting qualitative research in a relatively short time frame (one month) and in the context of a global pandemic, a convenience sampling approach was adopted drawing on the existing networks of schools and teachers. Interviews and focus groups were conducted online. In some contexts, this limited the sample to teachers who had access to mobile devices and to data (although teachers were allowed to claim for their data used in the project).

The approach to sampling was also purposive. The general criteria for selecting teachers was that they should be classroom teachers working in the basic education cycle (either at primary or secondary level) and in challenging teaching and learning contexts. How 'challenging teaching and learning contexts' were defined, however, differed between country contexts. Across all countries, the teachers were located in resource poor rural or urban environments often with large classes representing diverse learning needs. In all cases, they had experienced significant periods of school closures and the challenge of teaching remotely in contexts with varying but generally limited access to appropriate technology and data. Country teams were asked to identify one or two particularly salient contextual factors that helped to define the nature of the challenges faced by teachers in each country and to select teachers who were known to face these challenges.

- In the case of Rwanda, a particular challenge identified was teaching through the medium of English in settings where the vast majority of learners and many teachers had very low levels of English proficiency.
- In the case of India the particular challenge identified was the use of online learning in the context of the C-19 pandemic.
- In Tanzania the main contextual issue addressed was the relevance of the curriculum to the backgrounds of learners.
- In Colombia, teachers were chosen from a broad spectrum of regions. Two particular challenges identified were the presence of various illegal armed actors in rural school environments and regions with significant numbers of refugees from Venezuela.
- In Ethiopia the challenge was the ongoing armed conflict in Tigray region where all teachers who participated in the study were located.

The sampling approach allowed the team to develop more nuanced and contextualised understanding of the impact of these specific challenges on teachers' professional activities and identities. As is evident from the discussion of the data, these challenges often impacted on the teachers' perspectives on teacher professionalism not only in the specific country but across several of the countries of research focus. This emerging understanding of teacher professionalism, although not generalisable, can nonetheless provide rich insights into the lived experiences of teachers and can act as one basis for further research.

A thematic and iterative approach to data analysis was adopted in which country teams first coded and organised the data according to the research questions. Adopting an iterative approach allowed for the research questions to be adapted were necessary. One example of this was including a question focusing on the impact of the covid pandemic on teachers' understanding of their work and of their role. The guidelines and pro forma used for data

analysis are provided in annex 2. The country data were then synthesised through an iterative process involving country teams reporting and discussing their findings amongst the entire team. This allowed for the initial identification of emerging themes. Following this initial data collection period and analysis, 40 teachers from four of the countries participated in two online discussion events, with one event pairing Tanzanian and Indian participant teachers and the other pairing Rwandan and Colombian participant teachers, with translation into Spanish. Participant teachers from Ethiopia were unable to take part in the discussions due to a communications blackout in Tigray imposed by the Ethiopian government from June of 2021 (UNOCHA, 2021b).

Covid 19: The environment for writing.

This paper was conceptualised, researched, and written in 2021, more than a year into the global COVID-19 pandemic, when earlier hopes that a 'return to normal' would be possible were subsiding, and new waves and variants of the virus continue to challenge the Global North and South alike. COVID-related school closures throughout 2020 and 2021 have seriously impacted education: UNESCO-UIS (2021) estimated that in 2020 alone, children worldwide lost between 41 and 68% of their usual teacher contact hours, a concerning development especially for countries previously on a trajectory to meet SDG 4 targets. Without interventions, dropouts are expected to skyrocket, as families cope with the economic shocks brought on by the pandemic, and international organizations are projecting drastic increases in hunger and malnutrition (FAO, 2020), worsened mental health, child labour (UNICEF, 2020), child, early, and forced marriage (World Vision, 2020) and other forms of abuse, neglect, and exploitation (Cameron, 2021). During the initial lockdowns of 2020, teachers experienced a rapid and largely unsupported revision of their professional roles: where internet connectivity and devices were widely available, many teachers shifted to online teaching. But an estimated 463 million children, or one third of children impacted by school closures, were unable to access online learning: of that group, three-quarters come from rural and/or impoverished households (UNICEF, 2020). Teachers in those communities, often lacking devices and connectivity themselves, supported their learners in additional ways, distributing materials via paper packets, WhatsApp chats, or socially distant in-person meetings, often in support of government-sponsored radio and television lesson broadcasts.

For the research team, and indeed for participant teachers, policymakers, and education stakeholder, it is impossible to envision a future untouched by the pandemic. By mid-2021, school children across global contexts remain in flux, with various combinations of in-person and distance learning present even within one country context.

It is important to recognise the dire humanitarian crisis facing many of the teachers who gave up their time to participate in the construction of this document, demonstrating the many and often extreme environmental challenges that teachers in the global South face in addition to the pressures exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. The research was guided by clear ethical guidelines agreed by the research team. These including informed consent on the part of teachers taking part; the right to withdraw from the research at any time; the right to anonymity; the right to participate in a language that they feel able to freely communicate in; the right to verify the emerging data as being an accurate reflection of their views; the right to have their participation remunerated as recognition of their expertise and opportunity costs foregone; and, that no harm should come to teachers participating in the research.

Teacher professionalism in the global literature

This section outlines how teacher professionalism is understood in the global literature, focusing on how teacher professionalism in the global South is constructed. It is possible to identify two broad approaches. One is a rights-based approach in which UNESCO, the ILO global teachers' organisations such as Education International and many INGOs are aligned. It is within this tradition that the idea of teacher professionalism as a means to advance the right to education for all has been developed, most recently in the context of the adoption of the SDGs and SDG4 (the education SDG) in particular. The second and arguably more dominant discourse is advanced by the World Bank and is more economistic in orientation. As we will see, it features heavily in national discourses about teacher professionalism as well as literature on teacher motivation and accountability and the role for parateachers. Here teacher professionalism, where it is acknowledged as a legitimate concern, is equated largely with teacher effectiveness. Within both discourses, teacher professionalism is seen as a key component in improving the quality of education, albeit in relation to contrasting views of what a good quality education might entail. As will be discussed below, whilst the rights-based approach in particular offers valuable insights into teacher professionalism in the global South, both approaches can be critiqued from a decolonising perspective. We then turn to a third perspectives on teacher professionalism that are oriented by a social justice rationale, showing how these are aligned with a decolonising agenda.

Defining teacher professionalism

Professionalism itself is a fluid, malleable term that is highly contested in the literature. At a general level, teacher professionalism is most commonly associated with issues of autonomy and control over work, ethical conduct, subject/specialised knowledge and certification, social status, salary levels, and the existence of standards for controlling entrance into a profession (Govender et al., 2016). In the words of Furlong et al, 2000 (cited in Sachs, 2001: :150):

> *The three concepts of knowledge, autonomy and responsibility central to a traditional notion of professionalism, are often seen as interrelated. It is because professionals face complex and unpredictable situations that they need a specialised body of knowledge; if they are to apply that knowledge, it is argued that they need the autonomy to make their own judgments. Given that they have autonomy, it is essential that they act with responsibility – collectively they need to develop appropriate professional values.*

Comparisons of teaching with other professions such as medicine and law according to these basic markers of professionalism have led some commentators to describe teaching as a 'semi-profession' (Etzoini, 1969). As Goodwin (2020: 6) has recently argued, 'these perceptions have their roots in long held perceptions of teaching as a low status… technically simple work that attracts the least capable candidates ……most of whom are women'. She goes on to argue that 'moreover, teachers are typically paid less than in professions requiring similar levels of education…. plus they work with young people who are politically powerless and therefore discountable'.

Findings from this research suggest that many teachers are practicing in material classroom environments that are not conducive to student learning or teacher professional practice. Johnson et al. (2000) commented that teachers conforming with dominant Western conceptualisations of professionalism are generally found within professional education systems of high income countries. Evans (2008) offers a definition of teacher professionalism that recognises the subjective and situated nature of professionalism, describing it as "an ideologically-, attitudinally-, intellectually- and epistemologically-based stance on the part of an individual, in relation to the practice of the profession to which s/he belongs, and which influences her/his professional practice" (p. 26). When a group of individual teachers share understandings of the ideologies, attitudes, knowledges, and approaches to practices that are valued, they reflect a collective professionalism. But even within this definition, there are questions of power: who decides on what is valued, and whose approach is supported by the weight of policy? Do teachers' individual understandings of professionalism align with those evident in government policy, and do they have a voice, via unions or other representatives, in the construction of the policy? Or, perhaps more commonly, are the contours of their work lives – their pay, workloads, responsibilities, pedagogies, and practices – decided by stakeholders outside of the profession? As we will see below, these questions are handled quite differently depending on the overall approach to professionalism adopted.

A Rights-based approach to teacher professionalism

An early and significant construction of teacher professionalism for the Global South appears in the 1966 ILO/UNESCO *Recommendation concerning the Status of Teachers*, which provided international standards meant to guide "the most important professional, social, ethical, and material concerns of teachers" (ILO, 1966: 8). The Recommendation, later updated in 1997 to consider personnel in higher education settings, provided a comprehensive stance on teacher professionalism. As can be seen, the definition draws on the three inter-related characteristics most commonly associated with professionalism (Furlong et al., 2000), namely knowledge, autonomy and responsibility:

> *Teaching should be regarded as a profession: it is a form of public service which requires of teachers' expert knowledge and specialised skills, acquired and maintained through rigorous and continuing study; it also calls for a sense of personal and corporate responsibility for the education and welfare of the pupils in their charge. (p. 9)*

As a profession, then, it is also expected that teacher organisations, such as unions, "should be associated with the determination of educational policy" (p. 22), indicating that teachers have an explicit role in deciding the conditions of their work. As such, it reflects the era during which it was written, when global North teachers enjoyed a strong measure of professional autonomy. Grace (1987) indicated that in the two decades following World War II, organised teachers "had a strong sense that they were partners in the great educational enterprise" and were key in restructuring education during that period (p. 209). For Hargreaves (2000), this period was one of 'autonomous' or 'collegial' professionalism; for Dale (1989), it was one of 'licensed autonomy' in which teachers were free to pursue pedagogic freedom and held considerable influence in curriculum development and implementation, granting teachers increased social recognition and expertise-driven status. Teachers' expertise was described

as pedagogic content knowledge, bringing together subject knowledge and pedagogic knowledge on how to teach that knowledge (Shulman, 2011; Bullough, 2001). Classroom researchers called attention to the reflexive nature of teachers' professional expertise, as teachers continuously reflect on and adjust their practice according to learners' response (Schon, 1991; Connelly and Clandinin, 1990). Other researchers stressed the personal nature of teachers' work, as they drew on their physical, emotional and creative resources in their interpersonal relations with children and young people (Nias, 1989; Woods and Jeffrey, 2002).

It is during this same era that many formerly colonised nations were becoming independent, and education was seen as a vehicle towards national development. Many countries in the global South including the countries of research focus sought to expand their education systems. In many instances teachers were accorded professional status including being employed as civil service servants, subject to professional standards and entry requirements into the profession (e.g. Welmond, 2002) At the same time, they were called upon to make sacrifices in the service of nation building, by accepting postings in underserved areas where working conditions, living conditions and opportunities for continuing development diverged sharply from those assumed by Western models of professionalism (Barrett, 2008).

If the Recommendation was more based on aspiration than on reality when it was adopted, in the decades that followed, the power and promise of the Recommendation has become ever more diminished. During the era of structural adjustment programmes in the Global South, teachers' renumeration and pensions were a significant target for cuts and reforms (ILO, 1996), degrading the social capital of the profession and relegating it as an unattractive career. Today, the Recommendation reflects a drastically different international context, and, even as countries remain signatories, a host of modern economic, social and environmental factors have dramatically changed the context in which education systems operate, placing new demands on the work of schools and teachers.

The 2015 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) agenda also has profound implications for the way that teacher professionalism is understood. Whereas priority was afforded under the MDGs to increasing access to basic education, SDG 4 builds on the Education for All goals in aiming for inclusive, good quality education for all within a lifelong learning framework. Goal 4.7 signals a repurposing of education in support of sustainable development and global citizenship. The centrality of teachers is emphasised in the text to target 4C which calls for expanding the teaching workforce in the South and acknowledges that: "teachers are a fundamental condition for guaranteeing quality education [...and] should be empowered, adequately recruited and remunerated, motivated, professionally qualified, and supported within well-resourced, efficient and effectively governed systems." The view of a good quality education implicit in the SDG discourse can be seen to build on earlier UNESCO discourses relating to the quality of education (UNESCO, 2004). It encompasses a range of cognitive and affective outcomes from basic literacy and numeracy to more advanced technical/vocational skills as goals of promoting citizenship and environmental education required for achieving sustainable livelihoods.

More recently, UNESCO has renewed its interest in the concept of teacher professionalism. This is exemplified by the development with the global teachers' union, Education

International, of a Global Framework of Professional Teaching Standards (UNESCO, 2019b). The standards are intended to be adopted by teachers' organisations and governments in different country contexts. The standards including the guiding principles are included in full in annex two. They are organised according to three key domains which are included in box one below. It will be argued in later sections that the domains provide a useful way of framing teachers' perspectives on key aspects of teacher professionalism. It will also be suggested, however, that the perspectives of teachers add nuance and contextualised understanding to the standards as they are currently set out under each domain.

Box one: Domains of Teacher Professionalism (UNESCO, 2019b)

I. Teaching Knowledge and Understanding

It can be taken as given that effective teaching relies on teachers being expert enough at the knowledge, skills, and understandings of particular subjects or learning areas to be able to teach them. Good teachers know and understand their subjects, teaching methodologies, and students. Teachers also understand the social, cultural, and developmental issues that might relate to their students and their learning processes. Specific learning content will vary substantially across countries, but teaching will always require enough depth of knowledge, skills, and understanding of content, the students in the class, and contextual issues, to be able to bring the students to their own appropriate levels of understanding.

This should not imply that teaching is a simple process of transmitting knowledge from a teacher to a student. Meaning and understanding is developed in processes and relationships shaped by the complex and varied contexts within which students learn. There is therefore a substantial overlap in real terms with the other essential domains of this Framework.

II. Teaching Practice

The Standards in this domain describe the key dimensions of the direct engagement of teachers with their students. Effective teaching is crucially determined in this domain, where the practices that most distinctly constitute teaching can be elaborated. Teaching activities manifest in innumerable ways and always reflect a teacher's ambition for, and understanding of, student learning, welfare and development. Effective teaching methodologies and practices within this domain rely on the Knowledge and Understanding Domain as well as on various Teaching Relations.

III. Teaching Relations

Teaching is inherently constituted in relationships. As well as engaging with students, professional relationships with colleagues, parents, caregivers, and education authorities are crucial to effective teaching. Relations with the general community are also crucial to a teacher's work and to the profession as a whole.

The definitions of each of these domains represent the understanding of teacher professional expertise as including knowledge of learners, as well as subject content and pedagogy. However, it falls short of recognising the dynamic, reflexive, constantly evolving nature of teachers' expertise and knowledge that has characterised the rights-based approach and the importance of context, points that we will return to in the conclusion to the paper.

The World Bank and management driven professionalism

From the 1980s onward, there has been a significant change in the discourse around teacher professionalism in the global North. In contrast with the member-driven professionalism advocated by the 1966 Recommendation, Robertson (2012) notes how policymakers' neoliberal, managerial ideology worked to 'colonize the field of symbolic control' over the teaching profession (p. 586), redefining the work of teachers. A professional teacher, rather than displaying the responsibility, autonomy, and knowledge called for in earlier professionalism constructions, is instead a worker who responds to the dictates of policy and management. Increasing rigidity and top-down directives for curriculum, pedagogy, and medium of instruction means also that teachers have less freedom to operate within their classrooms as their performance is judged according to standards that are externally constructed and imposed, rather than emerging from the teacher professional collective itself. Accountability is framed not as professional accountability to the larger professional service body, perhaps evident in medical or legal fields, for example, but to 'market-based competition and increased surveillance' (Whitty, 2008: 34).

Professional teachers, then, are reframed in these discourses as corporate employees, functioning according to a service agreement and producing desired outcomes (Evans, 2008), with school leaders like principals or head teachers functioning more as managers than senior academic colleagues. This form of professionalism has been labelled as managerial, measured, performative, or prescriptive professionalism discourses (Ball, 2015; Ball, 2008; Robertson et al., 2007; Sachs, 2001), with Dale's (1989), 'licensed autonomy' becoming a 'regulated autonomy' in which the work of teachers is increasingly monitored and policed. Such an approach fails to recognise the interpersonal nature of teaching, the extent to which it draws on personal resources and hence is experienced by teachers as both dehumanising and deprofessionalising (Ball, 2003). Concurrently, the increasing influence of international assessment regimes such as OECD's PISA (Organisation for Co-operation and Economic Development; Programme for International Student Assessment) on national policies and pedagogic prescriptions of international organisations and their technical experts overlook the contextualised nature of teachers' knowledge.

Managerial constructions of teacher professionalism are broadly evident in government policy, with Whitty (2008) indicating that the most powerful determinate of teacher professionalism today is the state, not the profession itself. Especially in the global South, state policy is strongly influenced by the reports and recommendations of the international organisations (IOs) and foreign governments which act as donors and funders. IO approaches to teacher professionalism are not always explicitly stated but are instead evident in how teachers and their work are positioned within their commissioned research, reports, and policy recommendations. The World Bank is a particularly influential donor. As noted above, the structural adjustment policies advocated by the World Bank and the IMF in the 1980s had severe consequences for teachers' pay and conditions of service. The Bank has also strongly advocated the privatisation of education in the form of increasing marketisation but also through advocating policies such as performance by results, the use of contract teachers and the use of technology and learning resources made available by private contractors. As we

will see below, these policies have had a major impact on the perceptions of teacher professionalism in countries such as India and Colombia.

Although the World Bank has a track record of research on teacher management, pay and conditions (e.g. Mulkeen, 2010; 2007; 2005), it is only in recent years that the Bank has engaged in global debates about the nature of teacher professionalism. The recent document entitled *Successful teachers, Successful students: Recruiting and Supporting Society's Most Crucial Profession* sets out the Bank's policy approach to teachers (Evans and Beteille, 2019). The approach, targeted at governments, equates teacher professionalism with teacher effectiveness which, it is argued, contributes towards education quality. In the discourses of the World Bank, education quality is equated with the performance of learners in high stakes assessments. Performance in these assessments is in turn equated with improvements in economic growth and productivity. This instrumental understanding of quality stands in contrast to the more expansive view of education quality proposed by UNESCO (above). Based on evidence from school effectiveness studies and from practice in 'high performing' countries such as Finland, Singapore and Shanghai (China), the World Bank offers five principles for improving teacher professionalism. These are set out in box two below.

Box two: Five principles for improving teacher professionalism (Source, Betteille and Evans, 2021)

PRINCIPLE 1: Make teaching an attractive profession by improving its status, compensation policies and career progression structures.

PRINCIPLE 2: Ensure pre-service education includes a strong practicum component to ensure teachers are well-equipped to transition and perform effectively in the classroom.

PRINCIPLE 3: Promote meritocratic selection of teachers, followed by a probationary period, to improve the quality of the teaching force.

PRINCIPLE 4: Provide continuous support and motivation, in the form of high-quality in-service training and strong school leadership, to allow teachers to continually improve.

PRINCIPLE 5: Use technology wisely to enhance the ability of teachers to reach every student, factoring their areas of strength and development.

The attention to professinoalising teachers' employment and working conditions in some of the principles, including principle one, accord with the concerns of teachers involved in our study. However, as principles targeted at policy makers, top-down in orientation, they fail to reflect contextual challenges faced by teachers in the global South or the more all-embracing view of professionalism proposed by teachers in the study.

A social justice approach to teacher professionalism

There is a relatively small but growing literature that relates teacher professionalism to ideas

of social justice. Much of this literature provides a critique of managerialist discourses such as those put forward by the World Bank (above) for providing a narrow technocratic view of professionalism. It counterposes the view of the teacher as technocrat with the view of the teacher as a reflexive practitioner with agency and autonomy (e.g. Govender et al., 2016). It can, therefore, be seen as more closely aligned with and building on the rights-based approach outlined above. It is distinctive, however, by relating ideas of teacher professionalism to an insistence that education expand children and young people's capacities and opportunities, including through dismantling conditions of oppression and exploitation. Within this literature, one influential framing of social justice is that offered by the capability approach of Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum (e.g. Sen, 1999; Sen, 2011; Nussbaum, 2000; Nussbaum, 2011; Robeyns, 2017). This frames social justice in terms of the capabilities (opportunity freedoms) available to individuals and groups to achieve valued functionings (beings and doings) that they have reason to value. Within the educational literature, the capability approach is often seen as a way of challenging the focus on a narrow range of skills associated with the human capital approach and instead focusing on a range of cognitive and affective outcomes of education that can support the development of valued capabilities and functionings relevant for supporting sustainable livelihoods within peaceful and democratic societies (Tikly and Barrett, 2013; Tikly, 2013; Tikly and Barrett, 2011; Walker and Unterhalter, 2007).

A key concern within this literature is the idea of teaching for social justice. In keeping with Friere's ideas (e.g. Friere, 1970; Darder, 2017), this includes raising learners' critical consciousness of the social forces that circumscribe their own life opportunities. In the field of education and development, feminists and indigenous activists have been involved in critical decolonising praxis (Avalos, 2013; Aikman, 2011). Such efforts have been evident at times in our countries of research focus as we discuss below including the involvement of teachers in mass literacy campaigns linked to *Ujamaa* (African socialism) in Tanzania in the 1960s and 1970s (Buchert, 1994) and the role of Colombian teachers in the pedagogical movement (*Movimiento Pedagógico*) during the 1980s which included a focus on promoting indigenous knowledge in the curriculum and resisted curricular reforms that teachers argued eroded their professionalism (Acevedo Terazona, 2013).

Social justice literature recognises that education institutions are themselves part of systems that reproducing in oppression and exploitation, for example, through selectively privileging children and young people from certain groups (e.g. children from middle class or white homes) whilst limiting opportunities of others. Hence teachers can and often are actors complicit in reproducing injustice. This includes through violent behaviours, specifically, teacher-on-student violence and student-on-teacher violence. The meting out of corporal punishment to learners is an ongoing concern, especially in low- and middle-income countries (UNICEF, 2015). Sexualised and gender-based violence is also widespread, where both teachers and students may be perpetrators (UNESCO, 2019a). Violence, including gender-based violence is an integral feature of postcolonial societies, both in countries at war and those at peace (Dunne et al., 2005; Parkes, 2015). In the Global South, a key concern in research literature is the effect of poor salaries and conditions of service on the ability of teachers to realise their professional identities (Avalos, 2013) and the inadequacy of teacher education programmes in assisting teachers to develop their own capabilities as educators (Tao, 2014).

Violence in education, however, is a problem of both the Global North and the Global South. At the time of writing, Western democracies are coming to terms a long dark history of systematic abuse of indigenous and vulnerable children within boarding schools (e.g. Voce et al., 2021). In UK, young people are calling attention to the prevalence of sexual harassment targeted at girls and violence towards LGBTQ+ students in secondary schools (e.g. King-Hill, 2021). Literature applying social justice perspectives in post-conflict context provides a critically hopeful perspective on teachers' potential to build peace and social cohesion (Horner et al., 2015; Novelli and Sayed, 2016). Situating teachers as actors within complex local and national histories, this body of work argues for creating spaces where teachers can debate difficult histories of conflict and oppression and reflect on how these continue to influence their professional identity (Novelli and Sayed, 2016; Paulson et al., 2020). As will be discussed below, many of the perspectives of the teachers in our study resonated with the themes identified by researchers working within a social justice approach. We also note that it is within this literature that problems of teacher professionalism were most directly related to decolonising education (Lavia, 2006; Walsh, 2015).

Teacher professionalism and 'coloniality'

The aim of this section is to provide a general context through a decolonial lens for considering the perspectives of the teachers in the second half of the paper concerning teacher professionalism. Following Ndlovu-Gatsheni's (2013) analysis it is instructive to consider how teachers' sense of identity is also inextricably linked to 'coloniality', i.e. to the colonial and postcolonial legacy in education. Ndlovu-Gatsheni identifies three dimensions of coloniality, namely the coloniality of power, the coloniality of knowledge and the coloniality of being. Below, each of these are considered in turn as a way of framing the perspectives of the teachers involved in the study. Each dimension draws attention to different aspects of teacher professionalism. The first, coloniality of power, provides a means for understanding the emergence of mass education systems in the global South as a context for teacher professionalism; the second, coloniality of knowledge, provides a critical framework for considering the Eurocentric nature of the curriculum but also the predominance of Western ways of conceiving issues of curriculum and pedagogy and teacher professionalism itself. The third dimension, the coloniality of being, allows for a consideration of the everyday realities that impact the lived experiences of the teachers in the study.

The main arguments developed in this section are that global discourses do not take sufficient account of the colonial and postcolonial legacies in how teacher professionalism is defined and understood and implemented. In this regard, and despite some similarities, teacher professionalism has developed under very different conditions in formerly colonised as compared to formerly colonising countries. As further argued below, however, it is important not to homogenise the colonial and postcolonial legacies in each of the countries of research focus. Each have different histories of colonialism involving differing colonising powers with diverse motives. European colonisation of India and Colombia can be traced back to the late 15th Century whilst Rwanda and Tanzania were colonised as part of the European scramble for Africa from the late 19th century. Colombia recently celebrated its *bicentenario* of independence from Spanish rule. As in other Latin American countries, coloniality manifests in part through what are sometimes described as settler colonial (e.g. Castellanos, 2017) or a

Latin American understanding of colonialism that implies settlement and 'creolization' that mingles with the legacies and realities of US imperialism (Speed, 2017). Ethiopia has never been colonised (although it was briefly occupied by the Italians) but has nonetheless, been located, like formerly colonised African countries, at the periphery of the global economy and subject to relationships of economic and political dependency (Triulzi, 1982). Ethiopia together with Rwanda and Tanzania are low-income, agrarian economies whereas India and Colombia have more advanced service and manufacturing sectors and are classified as middle income. As noted, India is also included as one of the so-called 'rising power' or BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa) economies. In political terms, all of the countries, with the exception of India have gone through periods of autocratic rule, although all now describe themselves as multiparty democracies. Rwanda has emerged from a long period of protracted conflict between different interests within the state and civil society, a current peace process in Colombia seeks to end decades of armed conflict but is plagued by politicization and renewed violence, whilst India is currently characterised by high levels of communal violence. In the case of Ethiopia, Rwanda and India, conflict has often revolved around ethnic divisions that in the case of Rwanda and India can be traced back to colonial times.

It is also important to recognise differences as well as similarities in the nature of colonial and postcolonial education policies as further elaborated below[2]. The introduction of Western style education by colonising powers occurred at different times and served differing motives. In Colombia, Western education was introduced under Spanish rule by missionaries in the 16th Century mainly to cater for the children of the colonisers whilst in India 'modern' education was introduced under the English in the early 19th Century as a means to anglicise the children of indigenous elites and to create a cadre of graduates who could staff the colonial administration. Schooling was introduced in Rwanda and Tanzania once again predominantly by missionaries from the mid-nineteenth century and then formalised at beginning of the 20th Century under German rule also with the motive of producing skills to service the colonial bureaucracy and as a means to enculturate elites. Although Ethiopia has a long history of formal education within Christian and Islamic traditions, its first "modern" schools date from the early C20th. Modelled on European institutions, these schools were established primarily for the ruling elite to meet the needs of national administration and international diplomacy (Bahru, 2002).

It should be emphasised from the outset that it is not being claimed that a decolonial perspective is the only perspective through which teacher professionalism in the global South can be understood. Nonetheless, it is suggested that a decolonial perspective provide a powerful lens for better understanding how teacher professionalism in many formerly colonised, low- and middle-income countries may be conceived. Through shining the spotlight on the colonial and postcolonial legacies in education, it can be seen as providing an important basis for critiquing dominant agendas as well as augmenting insights generated particularly by the rights based and social justice perspectives s identified above – a point we return to in the conclusion.

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[2] Although not explicitly discussed in this paper, it is also important to recognise pre-colonial histories of education in each of the countries of research focus.

The coloniality of power and the development of modern education systems

The first dimension of coloniality proposed by Ndlovu-Gatsheni is that of the *coloniality of power* which denotes the continued dominance in economic and political terms of Western powers over those of the global South (Mohan, 2013; Stephen, 2014; Kahler, 2013; Gray and Murphy, 2013)[3]. The analysis builds on earlier critiques of neocolonialism (Nkrumah, 1966) of dependency (Frank, 1970; Amin, 1997) of the 'new imperialism' (Tikly, 2004; Harvey, 2003) but also draws on insights from postcolonial scholarship and accords with recent analyses of the 'postcolonial condition' in Africa (e.g., Tikly, 2020). It is also used to explore the ways in which indigenous elites have often been co-opted into the 'colonial matrix of power' (Mignolo and Walsh, 2018) since colonial times and continue to exercise this power over the rest of the indigenous population. Education has been an important institution for the exercise of the coloniality of power.

Space does not allow for a full account of the coloniality of power but the development of global capitalism and global markets is linked to the colonial past in which populations in colonising countries along with European heritage populations in White settler colonies such as the US, Australia and Canada benefitted economically and politically from colonial economies and from the exploitation and enslavement of native populations (Hoogvelt, 1997; Amin, 1997). Based largely on extractive and exploitative production methods aimed at maximising profit, the development of capitalism under colonialism resulted in the break-up of indigenous livelihoods and social structures, and often resulted in highly unequal and ethnically fragmented societies. It has also contributed to environmentally damaging practices including the pollution of land, rivers and sea (Perry, 2020b; Perry, 2020a). Even after independence, as Nkrumah (1966) pointed out in his seminal account of neo-colonialism, economic relationships between formerly colonised countries and those of the metropole continued to be based on the extraction of raw materials to support industrialisation in the global North.

For Ndlovu-Gatsheni and other postcolonial and decolonial critics, the coloniality of power is reflected in the nature of the state in postcolonial societies. European colonialism resulted in the introduction of highly centralised and authoritarian state structures which were intended to serve the interests of the colonisers and did not acknowledge some of the complexities of incorporating into one territory diverse ethnic groups and in some instances the challenges involved in governing vast, sparsely populated swathes of land given limited governmental capacities (Herbst, 2000). Indigenous elites were assimilated into these existing structures. As Mamdani (1996) has cogently argued, this led to an increasing bifurcation between urban elites and rural dwellers and to the use of the state to advance the interests of some ethnic groups who had previously been favoured by the colonisers at the expense of others.

The mode of rule in post-colonial states has variously been described as 'personal rule', 'elite accommodation' and 'belly politics' and as a 'shadow' or 'neo-patrimonial state' (Boas and McNeill, 2004). In the model of the neo-patrimonial state, bureaucratic and patrimonial

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[3] Although this is increasingly contested by the so-called Rising Powers, namely, India, China, Brazil, South Africa, Russia

norms co-exist. The state is able to extract and redistribute resources but this process, unlike in the Westphalian state model, is privatized[4]. 'In redressing the colonial legacy of racially inherited privilege, the independent states create a specific patrimonial path of re-distribution which divides the indigenous majority along regional, religious, ethnic and at times, family lines' (Boas and McNeill, 2004: 33). In the context of the cold war, state building became implicated in global politics with both Western and Eastern powers propping up sometimes corrupt and authoritarian regimes pursuing in support of their own global ambitions and economic interests. Access to state resources has also provided a source of conflict in many parts of the formerly colonised world which, together with the effects of poverty and inequality have fuelled increasing levels of South-South and South-North migration.

For example, in Colombia an armed conflict has been fought between Marxist inspired guerrilla and state and para-state forces since the early 1960s. The roots of this confrontation can be traced to conflicts over the highly unequal distribution of wealth and political power in a country bestowed with a wide range of natural and human resources (e.g. Bravo, 2015). Teacher trade unionists have historically often been at the forefront of wider struggles for workers' rights and many teacher trade unionists have been targeted and killed by right wing militias (Novelli, 2010). Conflict, economic crisis and poverty have also fuelled migration between neighbouring Venezuela and Colombia leading recently to an influx of refugees into the Colombian education system, particularly in the region neighbouring the Venezuelan border, whereas earlier in Colombia's armed conflict, Venezuela received Colombia refugees.

Data collection in Tigray, Ethiopia took place against the backdrop of civil war between the national government in Addis Ababa and the regional government of Tigray which began in November 2020. The full impact of this ongoing conflict remains unknown, but as of August 2021 includes at least 2805 well-documented civilian deaths, 400,000 people in famine-conditions (Annys et al., 2021), and an estimated 5.2 million people in Tigray requiring humanitarian assistance (OCHA, 2021). Schools in Tigray closed at the start of the conflict (ibid.), and the teachers who participated in this study explained that the classrooms which had not been destroyed by fighting were either being used as military barracks or as temporary accommodation for internally displaced persons (IDPs). As will be discussed below, conflict has had a profound effect on teachers' work and wellbeing.

A major implication of neo-liberal inspired reform, since the 1980s has been a convergence of development paths. Neo-liberalism has also been associated with the so-called 'hollowing out' (Ferguson, 2006) of the state. That is to say that whereas states in the post-independence era states were seen as the main vehicles for various development projects and were often characterised by assertive indigenous leadership, this has been increasingly challenged under neo-liberalism. Rather, cutbacks in government expenditure and the streamlining of state bureaucracies have had the perverse effect of increasing dependency as the capacity to govern has decreased further.

The coloniality of power is exemplified in the ability of Western powers to continue to exert

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[4] In this regard, the Westphalian model needs to be understood as an idealised model as issues of corruption and nepotism are also evident in high income Western societies that are supposedly based on the model.

control over key areas of global policy including trade, development assistance and education partly through the influence they exert in global governance agendas and over international organisations (Tikly, 2017; Jean, 2020). In the context of neoliberalism and conditional lending on the part of the World Bank and other donors from the early 1980s, global interests have often predominated over national ones through the mechanisms of conditional lending from multilateral organisations and bilateral aid in shaping national policy agendas (Ferguson, 2006). More recently, China along with other rising powers have begun to exert ever greater soft power over areas such as education in pursuit of their own agendas (Mohan, 2013; Stephen, 2014; Kahler, 2013; Gray and Murphy, 2013). It is important here, however, to see the effects of neoliberal reform in more global perspective too. As discussed in the sections above, neoliberalism has also impacted the nature of the state and understandings of teacher professionalism in high income contexts even if the effects have arguably been more overt in the global South (Govender et al., 2016).

The emergence of 'modern' education systems

It is against this backdrop of the coloniality of power that the emergence of modern education systems in each country needs to be understood. Key characteristics of modern education systems can be traced back to their introduction under colonialism. Colonial education was complicit in the wider colonial project for rendering the colonised 'economically useful and politically docile' (Rodney, 1973). It was an important vehicle for processes of elite formation (although this had contradictory implications in the context of struggles for national liberation as these were often led by Western-educated indigenous elites). Colonial education systems were highly unequal with limited access to primary education and even more restricted access to later stages of education.

Immediately following independence in African countries and India (where nationalist leaders had made several attempts to universalise basic education under the British government), there were efforts to massify state education in support of national development visions. In Tanzania, for instance, a massive nationwide effort, a rapidly trained cadre or young teachers, most with little more than primary education themselves, were posted around the country, where they were charged with mobilising communities to build schools. Alongside this expansion of primary education, an adult literacy programme was also rolled out, often facilitated by teachers after school hours. By 1981, Tanzania claimed it had achieved universalised primary education and that adult literacy rates, which barely reached 8% in 1962, had reached 80% (Buchert, 2002). In Colombia, as elsewhere in Latin America, education expanded unevenly after independence in the 1800s, at times driven by religious, state and other actors and interests. Education massified to reach most students in the last century, including in line with international and regional initiatives like education for all and government commitments, including to be Latin America's most educated nation under previous President Manuel Santos.

Despite efforts to massify education in the post-Independence era, many state education systems remain chronically under-resourced and highly unequal in terms of access along lines of socio-economic disadvantage, gender, ethnicity and rurality. Rwanda and Ethiopia are yet to achieve universal primary education and access to secondary and tertiary education remains even more restricted. Assessment systems introduced under colonialism continue to

act primarily as a filter mechanism to limit access to secondary and tertiary education.

It is also from the colonial era that many of the other characteristics of modern education systems can ultimately be traced (Altbach and Kelly, 1978; Pritchett, 2013; Tikly, 2020). For example, and despite more recent efforts to decentralise, key aspects of education policy remain highly centralised a point that is taken up below in relation to a discussion of the curriculum. In Colombia, there is no national curricula and decision making over teaching content rests with schools, teachers and local education authorities, though as will be seen below, teachers continue to critique centralised control over education and the undue influence of national and international testing regimes in restricting curricular autonomy. Another feature of colonial and post-colonial education systems is that they have often been highly bureaucratic in nature. These characteristics have often been confounded in the postcolonial era as newly independent states often sought to mimic the bureaucratic and centralised nature of so-called 'modern' (i.e. Western industrialised states) in the post-independence era (Pritchett, 2013). In their day-to-day lives, teachers are expected to spend large number of hours on administrative work. A teacher in India shared the multiple roles that teachers are expected to perform in school. This can divert time from teaching, leaving students unattended. Teachers are often made to feel that non-teaching administrative work is given far more importance in school. Teaching suffers and teachers often feel frustrated and helpless.

> Sometimes during a regular day at school as a teacher I lose stream of the teaching- learning process due to the administrative duties that I am expected to attend to on priority, like the distribution of books, opening of bank accounts for children, issuing of Aadhar card for new admissions, disbursal of scholarship money for minority children (FGD, Indian primary school teacher)

The bureaucratic nature of education systems also has implications for teachers' pay. On the one hand, the majority of teachers in the countries of research focus have historically been employed in the post-independence era as civil servants which provides, in however limited a form, a basic level of pay and job security. This stands in contrast to teachers in the private sector who are often employed on short term, insecure contracts and at lower rates of pay (Ashley et al., 2014). On the other hand, the basic inefficiency of bureaucratic systems exacerbated by issues such as Covid-19 and the onset of conflict means that as our data reveals, in some contexts such as Ethiopia and India, teachers are not paid regularly and, in some instances, not at all (see also Cameron, 2021). As one teacher in India explained

> (t)eachers in municipal government schools do not get paid on time and there is a pay lag of four to five months. The government needs to act on this immediately and release teachers' pending salary, especially challenging during the time of the pandemic (FGD, Indian primary school teacher).

Closely linked to their bureaucratic nature, education systems have since colonial times been top down in nature, reflecting wider patterns of colonial and post-colonial governance. One aspect of this is that teachers' unions and professional associations have had limited voice in educational reform. The lack of teacher voice in key areas of policy and practice was remarked

on by the teachers. As one teacher in Tanzania explained "(e)ducation policy [in] Tanzania is not inclusive as teachers are not involved in decision making matters [and] do not have autonomy in matters pertaining to the teaching profession'. According to the teachers who participated in focus group discussions in Rwanda, the education policy changes tend to be abrupt and top down. Teachers reported that adjusting to policy changes is difficult because they have had no voice in the process of policy design but also effects the ability of governments to properly implement policy. One Rwandan teacher for example, argued that every

> *education policy [that] is aimed at improving learning … should bear in mind what happens at the classroom level and …. teachers need to have a voice in the policy making process so that the policy captures practical realities at the classroom level (FGD, Rwandan primary school teacher).*

Teachers in India argued that here needs to be a feedback system through which teachers' voices about issues   of   curriculum, pedagogy and   other   professional concerns are heard, so that the process is not so top-down.

Teachers across all contexts also commented on the importance but also on the difficulties of organising effectively within trade unions to have their voices heard. Historically, teacher trade unions have played a prominent role in anticolonial struggles. However, in the post-independence era, in countries like Tanzania for example, they have often found it difficult to maintain their autonomy, effectiveness and sense of relevance for teachers (Nchimbi, 2018). As the teachers in Rwanda lamented, there is lack of a strong and collective platform where their voices can be heard in policy. About half of the teachers interviewed expressed that they did not even know that teachers' unions and professional associations existed, whilst others questioned their effectiveness, reflecting concerns in the wider literature (Cameron, 2020). The teachers in Colombia were, however, largely critical of the current role of the teachers' union federation, FECODE, in defending the rights of teachers, especially in rural areas and in failing to work with teachers collaboratively on pedagogical issues or to engage in pressing educational issues concerning the quality of education with the government. This must be seen in historical context as FECODE has in the past contributed to the promotion of important changes in educational policies through ist leading role in the *Movimiento Pedagógico en Colombia* (Pedagogical Movement of Colombia) which resisted top-down policy changes to curricula and teaching standards and (Acevedo Terazona, 2013; Peñuela Contreras and Rodríguez Murcia, 2006).

Global agendas and national education policy
Teachers' work has been profoundly impacted by global agendas advocated by donors and supported by national governments. From the 1980s onwards, the neocolonial influence of Western powers was exercised through aid and loan conditionalities foisted on indebted governments. These unleashed structural adjustment policies, which integrated low- and middle-income nations into a globalising economy on unfavourable terms (Tikly, 2004) and stagnated expansion of basic education, so that enrolment ratios declined. By the early 21st century, different national governments had in place a remarkably similar policy architecture consisting in a national development vision, sector development plans and strategies, readily

intelligible to aid agencies and external consultants. Through these the MDG agenda could be cascaded into national development policies.

Teachers' work has been profoundly impacted by global agendas advocated by donors and supported by national governments. The Millennium Development Goals, for instance, prioritised basic education expansion. The relative success of the MDGs is reflected in the increase in class sizes noted by many teachers. However, this has often occurred at the expense of education quality (Tikly and Barrett, 2013). The SDGs can be seen to place a greater emphasis on the development of all sub-sectors of education and training including teacher training and to focus on the quality of education. At the same time, however, SDG4 has extended the basic education cycle to lower secondary education, perpetuating the relentless pressure of expansion with its attendant challenges for quality and teacher supply (Lewin, 2007; UIS, 2012; UIS, 2006; UNESCO, 2014). More recent trends in global policy have also profoundly affected teachers' work as the perspectives of teachers below suggest. Of particular relevance for the teachers in this study are the move towards competency-based curricula, emphasis on outcome-based education, and the introduction of educational technologies, accelerated during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Overcrowded, heterogenous classes.

One implication of the rapid expansion of primary and lower secondary education is that teachers face challenging, dynamic classrooms. Since the 1990 Jomtien conference, international focus has been on ensuring that all children can access primary schooling, with calls for free, universal primary education implemented with the Millennium Development Goals in 2000. Across the world, the population of out-of-school children has fallen from 376.1 million in 2000 to an estimated 258.4 million in 2019 before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic (UNESCO-UIS, 2019). Increased student populations have had serious implications across all dimensions of teachers' work in the Global South. In Ethiopia, for example, the primary sector grew from accommodating 3 million students in the 1990s to more than 21 million students today, and the student-to-teacher ratio has more than doubled over this period. Like many similar contexts, education has shifted from catering only to a small, comparatively advantaged section of the population, to a near-universal one. Parents, as Colombian teachers noted, may not have been educated themselves or may not see the relevance of schooling, especially when it appears unaligned with the job marketplace. Often, formal education cannot compete with informal and sometimes illegal work opportunities.

Overcrowded classrooms are a common theme across several of the case contexts, a strain on both the existing school infrastructure and the (often) sole teacher responsible. In Tanzania, in urban areas where drop-out rates are lower, teachers reported classrooms having up to 180 students within a class: one primary school teacher noted that "teachers are able to deal with students who sit in front of the class only. It is very hard for a teacher to pass up to the back to see students." Policy stipulates that secondary class sizes are to be capped at 40 pupils, but a shortage of classrooms means that class sizes up to 80 are common (Kasuga, 2019; MoEVT, 2018). According to one Ethiopia teacher, "Imagine a teacher that teaches five to six classes, each with sixty students. I don't think the teacher will make sound evaluations. Afterall, he may not know who is progressing and who is not." In India, where teacher/student ratios can reach 1:65, the challenge of tracking large student groups was exacerbated during the pandemic, when so many students lacked digital connectivity. Large

class sizes hindered teachers in providing quality education and fuelled fatigue, burnout, and even boredom.

This is in a context where teachers also struggle to accommodate the diverse needs of their heterogenous student groups. In both India and Tanzania, teachers commented on the challenge of balancing the different religious and cultural backgrounds of students (and their parents) within one class group. In Colombia, where the education system has had to accommodate a large influx of Venezuelan refugee children (UNESCO, 2020), teachers often take on roles as counsellors and social workers, providing children with food, supplies, and study guides. Many of those students, due to the conditions of their migration, are behind in the expected learning for their grade level. In distant rural areas, multi-grade classrooms are common. Teachers across the other contexts also reported having multiple levels of preparedness for the grade and subject in one class group: in Ethiopia, for example, a policy of automatic promotion means that one classroom may contain students with a variety of learning levels that teachers must work to accommodate and reach. In Tanzania teachers reported the increasing vulnerability of girls, due to distances they have to travel to get to school. A woman teacher working in a conservative Muslim region reported that the gendered nature of different cultures in Tanzania presented a challenge to her own identity and cultural values.

The privatisation of education

A key aspect of structural adjustment lending during the 1980s as noted, were efforts to reduce state expenditure on education, including teachers' salaries and pensions. Government expenditure has been affected by austerity measures in the wake of the 2008 global financial crash and has not kept pace with educational expansion or the more recent shift in emphasis on the quality of education. Recent levelling off of aid for education has exacerbated the financial crisis (UNESCO, 2015). In this context, the World Bank has consistently advocated for increased privatisation of education. Privatisation can be understood as comprising two inter-related elements, both of which are linked to the spread of neoliberal inspired policies in education since the 1980s (Ball and Youdell, 2008; Verger et al., 2016).

The first is exogenous privatisation which involves the opening up of public education services to private sector participation including on a profit-making basis such that the private sector is invited to design, manage or deliver aspects of education. Private schools have long been a feature of the educational landscape in each of the five countries of research focus, catering predominantly for the children of the elite. In each of the countries of research focus, there has also been a rapid growth in the numbers of for-profit Low Fee Private Schools (LFPS) and indeed resistance to privatisation was a key aim of Colombia's *Moviemiento Pedagogico* (Peñuela Contreras and Rodríguez Murcia, 2006). Many are run by international chains. A key feature of many of these schools is that teachers are often employed on temporary contracts and at lower rates of pay than teachers who are employed as civil servants (Verger et al., 2016). India's New Education Policy (GoI, 1986), embedded during the early phase of liberalisation for example, succeeded in institutionalising educational inequities by opening pathways for differentiated curricula and schooling systems. Since the early 1990s a series of systemic changes were instituted in the provisioning and practice of school and teacher

education. Neoliberal reforms led to the withdrawal of state investment in pre-service teacher education and divested teachers of agency; reduced curriculum to minimum levels of learning; relegated teaching to lower order cognitive skills; and put the onus of learning on the child. The bulk hiring of para-teachers and the neglect of developing institutional capacity to enhance teacher professionalism and deal with acute teacher shortage made way for private players to take over the educational space. Currently, over 95 percent of teacher education institutions are in private hands.

A further form of exogenous privatisation is the outsourcing of aspects of education including the production of materials for use in public schools. The second, related form is privatisation is endogenous privatisation. This involves changes in the very nature and culture of education systems themselves through seeking to import techniques and practices from the private sector in order to make the use of public resources more effective and efficient. It might take many forms including the introduction of performance management techniques including performance by results, the increasing use of contract teachers and in the use of performance management and payment by results.

Both of these forms of privatisation impacted on the experiences of the teachers in the study. For example, in India, teachers reported instances where colleagues on short-term contracts were laid off. Similarly, in Colombia, teachers often lack permanent status, especially in some public schools which are under private administration, where contracts have a fixed term and this has an impact also on their social benefits, such as health insurance. In Ethiopia, the teachers reported that they knew of many teachers in private schools who had been laid off and had subsequently lost their livelihoods as a result of the ongoing conflict. As one teacher put it during a focus group discussion:

> *A number of teachers, especially those teachers that were working in the private schools did not get their salary since the beginning of the war in Ethiopia´s Tigray regional state. Some teachers become homeless while others migrate to other cities and countries (FGD, Ethiopian primary school teacher).*

Teachers in Ethiopia and in Tanzania also commented on the effects of the increasing use of performance management techniques. Teachers in Ethiopia reported that teacher evaluation is emphasized in policy but poorly implemented in practice and that they were subject to bias with superiors awarding high scores to teachers that are obedient or submissive to their orders, and low scores to those who challenge authorities.

> *The scores of the performance appraisal don't represent the performance of teachers. Sadly, you may find teachers who cannot teach the subject appropriately but scored high in the performance appraisal results (FGD, Ethiopian secondary school teacher).*

Students also provide an evaluation of their teachers, which the discussant teachers saw as a highly subjective, biased measure. Students were seen as giving higher scores to teachers that are less strict in taking attendance, in teaching subject lessons, and in shaping the behaviour of students. In Tanzania, whereas the introduction of Quality Assurance (QA) was supposed to more supportive than the previous, top down and authoritarian system of school

inspectors. However, this was not a view shared by the teachers interviewed or indeed by the key informants interviewed. As one informant put it:

> *In terms of the quality assurance system, of course there is an idea of moving from school inspection to quality assurance in the sense that instead of inspecting they discuss together. But…. nothing has been …. it is like inspection has been given another name (Key informant, Tanzania)*

In India, the teachers reported that the practice and culture of regular monitoring by School Inspectors increased during the Pandemic. Many teachers feel that whatever little autonomy they had in their physical classrooms pre-pandemic, has been taken away completely. "*What to teach, how to teach, what to speak in the classroom, and how to speak in the classroom*" have become matters of grave concern, and several teachers felt that they were being watched all the time. The entire focus according to the teachers is on maintaining surveillance on teachers and on compiling data in terms of student attendance and participation, submission of homework on WhatsApp groups. Every week teachers are expected to collate data on 'how many students attended online classes, how many responded, how many did not respond'. This led one teacher to comment

> *I am always pulled away from my primary duty as a teacher and directed towards other tasks which find their priority over teaching because of pressure from higher authorities…it is a kind of chain reaction. I often ask myself, have I also become the part of this chain? (FGD, Indian primary school teacher)*

Another teacher went on to add:

> *Sometimes I ask myself - is it even a school? and I a teacher anymore? Or is it just a building with multiple uses and I am a government employee assigned to do whatever work the authorities deem fit (FGD, Indian primary school teacher).*

Teacher professionalism and the coloniality of knowledge

The second dimension of Ndlovu-Gathsheni's understanding of coloniality, namely, the *coloniality of knowledge* is intimately entwined with the coloniality of power and refers to the predominance of Eurocentric epistemologies and conceptions of the world (see also Santos, 2012). This includes the way development is itself conceived, predominantly in Western capitalist terms, as a linear process of moving from largely agrarian economies reliant on the export of primary commodities to post-industrial societies characterised by a 'knowledge economy'. Education is conceived from this perspective as primarily contributing to the development of human capital. From a decolonial perspective, these ideas of development are problematic in that they often assume, high income economies to be the benchmark towards which other countries must strive. They also ignore other ideas about development and progress including those rooted in non-Western knowledge and belief systems about the nature of social reality and human subjectivity and the relationship between human beings and the natural world. Further, through equating development with economic growth they elide the consequences of untrammelled growth for environmental sustainability (Cortez Ochoa et al., 2021). In the postcolonial context, the coloniality of knowledge is also reflected in the centralised nature of curricula and the lack of emphasis placed on local knowledge and

contexts by curriculum planners and teacher training institutions with implications for teachers' agency.

Decontextualised and irrelevant curricula

Colonial education was instrumental in embedding a Western *episteme* (ground base of knowledge) as the basis for projecting Western views of modernity. Colonial curricula and textbooks promoted Western knowledge. In this way it contributed to the marginalisation of indigenous religions, cultures and languages (Thiong'o, 1986) and led to a split between educated, often urban elites who had access to western education and the majority, predominantly rural population. Schooling under colonialism also reflected wider inequalities with opportunities to access education stratified along class, racial, ethnic and gender lines.

In some countries, such as Tanzania, there was an effort by post-independence governments to address the colonial legacy in education. In Tanzania in 1964, for example, Nyerere made universal primary education a central goal for his African socialist policies. Nyerere's envisioned an education that would support "mental decolonisation" and prepare young people for productive livelihoods within their home communities (Nyerere, 1967). Education for Self-Reliance was introduced into the curriculum, intended to create space for local elders to share their skills and knowledge (Buchert, 1994: 110). In general, however, and despite efforts in some countries to contextualise curricula and pedagogical practices and to align educational purposes to post-independence development goals, curricula often remain detached from local contexts and realities of the learners and their communities as many of the teachers in the study explained. Post-independence India, for example, adopted a 'modern education system' that was rooted in the colonial view of knowledge and of the Indian people. This system of education carried with it a constituted coloniality in which the hierarchical and hegemonic character of Brahmanical power remained central. The colonial epistemic frame was left uncontested despite initial post-colonial attempts to link quality education with ideas of indigenous views of education, anti-colonial and anti-caste discourses prevalent in previous era of struggle against colonialism (Batra, 2020).

As part of global reform agendas, many countries have been encouraged to move towards more competency and outcomes-based curricula so as to make them more relevant for development. In Tanzania, for instance, efforts have been made to vocationalise curricula and Vocational Skills is now a compulsory curriculum subject at primary and secondary level. However, primary school teachers claimed that the "stadi za kazi" (vocational skills) curriculum is not relevant to the environment of their schools and that teachers should be afforded greater latitude in adapting the curriculum to local needs through integrating skills such as entrepreneurship, fishing and agricultural skills.

Subject-based curricula, patterned on those in the West with a hierarchy between theoretical/academic and vocational/applied knowledge, are still not adapted to enduring challenges of under-resourced education systems. There is often a failure to adapt school curricula to material constraints and at the same time draw on and engage with indigenous knowledge. As an Ethiopian teacher explained in relation to the new emphasis on teaching STEM in secondary schools:

> *If we need to develop our students in science and mathematics, future support should focus on the development school laboratories. Our students are not exposed to science as needed. We told our students about the ´pop´ sound of a hydrogen and then students reiterate it. They do not know and identify which one is cation and which is an anion (FGD, Ethiopian secondary school teacher)*

Echoing these sentiments, a secondary teacher of science in Tanzania stated that:

> "*Poor laboratory equipment to support students learning students end up in studying theory only*. (FGD, Tanzanian secondary school teacher)

In Colombia teachers in this study argued for a move away from what they perceived as an overly instrumental curriculum and to make them more student oriented. They argued for greater attention to arts and culture in the curriculum, which are seen as fundamental elements for students' personal growth. They also argued that there should be greater emphasis on promoting gender awareness and environmental education. In the context of peacebuilding the teachers argued the need for the curriculum to promote cultural changes that favour ethics and honesty, whilst discouraging the values associated with drug trafficking and violent conflict. Teachers argued that students should be taught to be critical citizens in democracy.

The perceived lack of relevance of the curriculum is related by the teachers to its highly centralised/ standardised nature which is seen as limiting their ability to adapt curricula to the local needs. As one Tanzanian educator noted:

> *[the] curriculum was centralised by assuming that all Tanzania should learn the same contents across the country. But in fact we need to think about it in another way, the curriculum needs to be decentralized as we have 26 regions with more than 122 ethnic groups. We need to give power to teachers on curriculum development and implementation so that they can include some issues from their local areas to be included in the curriculum (FGD, Tanzanian secondary school teacher).*

Similarly, teachers in Colombia argued strongly against standardization of curricula, which they argued, does not respond to the different regional contexts, including the needs of indigenous, Afro-Colombian and other communities. The majority mentioned the need to contextualise subject guides. One teacher, referring to the guides asked himself the question, "Where did they write this"? Teachers in India argued that even the well-intentioned interventions by the government, such as the 'Happiness Curriculum' are over centralised. According to the teachers, School Inspectors tend to force teachers to follow the manual for 'Happiness Curriculum', when in fact, it is meant to be merely recommendatory. This makes the entire exercise mechanical and ineffective in achieving the desired objectives.

The perceived standardisation and decontextualization of curricula was also linked by the teachers to the effects of high stakes assessment regimes. In the context of highly unequal education systems, examinations have acted predominantly as a filtering mechanism limiting

access to secondary and higher education and training. In India and Colombia, teachers also commented on the role of international assessment regimes such as PISA and TIMMS in further entrenching standardisation and limiting teacher autonomy. For the teachers in all of the countries, the phenomenon of 'teaching to the test' limited their ability to respond to the needs to the increasingly diverse needs of learners.

In some instances, the centralised nature of the curriculum and its lack of pedagogical relevance has been exacerbated by the pandemic. In India, for example, as teaching shifted to online modes because of school shutdown during the Pandemic, several of the teachers had been given readymade curricular and pedagogic content in the form of videos and worksheets to be disseminated to students. Teaching content is prepared by non-governmental and corporate organizations and imposed on teachers. The worksheets are often rigid and do not match up to any principles of teaching practices or learning. Giving an example of a language worksheet, one of the respondents said that activities are often based on a 'product' approach with a focus on 'grammar'. This approach does not help children develop reading comprehension capacity and skills. The process has become rigidly top-down with virtually no role for the teacher. Teachers have become mere conduits of 'information' in the form of worksheets and lessons.

> *It has been almost ten days and I am yet to spend extended time with the children. Children were tired of asking that when are we going to study. I had no replies. All I had were registers, lists, more lists, cleanliness, children's bank accounts and several other registers, lists to be managed. I am perceived as a multitasker, a task-performer, a facilitator who has an expertise in both teaching and non-teaching tasks; a hygiene inspector for children; a person responsible for imbibing moral values in children. I am basically seen as an "Ashta- bhujji", (ashta-eight, bhujja-arms) more functional than anyone else (FGD, Indian primary school teacher)*

Pedagogic communication has often taken the form of following "orders" from the administration. Even when teachers feel that the worksheets are not pedagogically appropriate for students of their class, they neither have the space nor any platform to raise doubts, objections, and the need to discuss. For instance, the State Directorate of Education sent a circular making it mandatory for teachers of grade I to take 'dictation' twice a day in a separate notebook. Many teachers felt that such an activity is pedagogically inappropriate, but they had no means of making themselves heard. Teacher performance is assessed on the parameter of 'complying' with these orders; so, they are coerced into following them. Respondents said it was relatively easier to negotiate such impositions during pre-pandemic times. With the site of teaching shifting to online modes, even the little space they had to assert their autonomy and professional judgement, has disappeared.

Global versus local languages

Colonial education often took place in the language of the coloniser, particularly at more senior levels. In all of the countries of research focus with the exception of Ethiopia, the medium of instruction is in a global language. As the participating teachers from Rwanda in particular explained, this poses significant challenges for teaching and learning, particularly for socio-economically disadvantaged learners in rural areas. In Rwanda, the language of

instruction is a particular barrier for students and teachers alike (Cameron, 2020; Pearson, 2013; Tolon, 2014). English, instituted as the medium of instruction with the rapid 2009 shift, is still not widely spoken in Rwanda, where a vast majority speak one local language, Kinyarwanda. Teachers commented on seeing the gap between ambitious policy and what was possible in the context:

> *Sometimes, we give children a zero or low mark well knowing that they could have succeeded if the exam was set in their mother tongue- a language they understand most- especially at lower Primary. As a teacher, I feel painful when I see children failing because they do not understand English well knowing they have not had exposure to this new language in their communities (FGD, Rwandan primary school teacher).*

Similarly, in Tanzania, there are 123 ethnic groups and tribal languages spoken. Kiswahili is language of instruction in pre-primary and primary education, whilst English is the language of instruction in lower and upper secondary schools. The use of English as a language of instruction is a challenge to many secondary schools, but there is currently poor support for students to transition to English medium instruction (MoEVT, 2018). It is worth pointing out that whilst academic and professional tertiary education normally uses English as the language of instruction, many graduates from lower secondary will continue to Kiswahili medium vocational education and training.

So impracticable is the use of a language, which many learners rarely hear outside of school, that teachers across sub-Saharan Africa have for decades improvised bilingual strategies (Benson, 2014; Clegg and Afitska, 2011; Clegg and Simpson, 2016). In Tanzania, teacher educators have worked collectively to develop a 'langauge supportive pedagogy' (Erling et al., 2021) whilst in South Africa, researchers have been exploring the potential of translanguaging as pedagogy (Probyn, 2015). Both these approaches allow students to use languages they know well in the classroom and hence articulate knowledge from their community and home. They also exemplify the capacity of the teaching profession to generate pedagogic solutions to the dilemmas and contradictions posed by coloniality.

The digitisation of teaching and learning

As noted in previous sections, the use of digital technologies has been increasingly identified by organisations such as the World Bank as a means for improving the quality of teaching and learning. There has been significant attention paid to the benefits of 'twenty-first century learning' for the global South over the past decade whilst the use of digital technologies to promote learning has burgeoned during the covid-19 pandemic. For example, Ethiopian teachers commented positively on how, prior to the conflict, support for STEM subjects had been increasing including the use of plasma TV as a teaching aid. Social media (e.g. Telegram) has also been used to share documents and information with students during COVID-related school closures.

> *The integration of the Plasma TV was so interesting to the profession. At least, you benefited from other experts and, at the same time, you know how other students (i.e., those in other schools) are learning. So, it was becoming a platform to equate differences among teachers and schools. A student, irrespective of his location and kind of teacher assigned to teach*

him, had an optimum similarity in terms of the contents he was taught through the Plasma TV (FGD, Ethiopian secondary school teacher).

Teachers in Colombia, stated that despite the precariousness of connectivity and the multiple problems that have arisen in getting students to access online platforms, online learning offers new opportunities for learning and is likely here to stay after the pandemic.

Nonetheless, teachers also expressed concerns about the digitisation of learning in relation to their professionalism. Firstly, teachers are seeing growing inequalities and reversals in access to schooling as a hard digital divide excludes children in rural areas from poorer households in urban areas from accessing education (Dixon, 2019). This reflects evidence from the wider literature. In Africa, for example, around three-quarters of rural primary schools in sub-Saharan Africa do not have access to electricity (UNESCO, 2017). A recent study (Crawfurd and Hares, 2020) found that of 450 million children in Africa, only around 19 million (4.2%) are users of edtech – for the most part, educational TV programmes. The Ethiopian teachers pointed out the limited availability of EdTech generally in Ethiopian schools but particularly in rural areas. In India, children of migrant labourers who returned to villages cannot afford mobile phones. In Rwanda, teachers reported growing inequality in the quality of education between wealthier pupils enrolled in private schools and those served by the public sector. In Tanzania, one teacher stated that

ICT is almost impossible in some places in Tanzania because there is a lack of source of power, especially in rural areas. ICT use in teaching can be possible only in urban schools but most of Tanzania residents are living in rural area". (FGD, Tanzanian Secondary School teacher)

A related concern is the lack of access to ICT facing many teachers. Teachers in Rwanda and Ethiopia reported that they cannot afford laptops: *teachers don't have computers to write exams"* (FGD, Rwandan primary school teacher). The move to online learning also raised concerns amongst some teachers about their changing relationships with learners. This prompted one teacher in Colombia to ask "*How can we maintain the bonds with our students in the virtual world?"* One of the roles of the teachers is to sustain bonds of affection. School is often the place where students can express what may be affecting them, such as domestic violence, drug use or teenage pregnancy.

In India, the teachers expressed fears that the increased digitisation of learning during the pandemic was also associated by the teachers with new forms of surveillance. For example, the Head of the School and even the School Inspector are part of the WhatsApp groups that teachers create with students. These are "monitored and checked by administrative officers" during inspections too. Any talk about the administration and the school is seen as "conspiring against them". Technology has provided the opportunity "to record whatever is happening at a given moment and send it as a complaint." Respondents shared that many times colleagues record videos of each other if there is a debate or conflict between them and register that as a complaint. Often these are one-sided narratives which harm the collegiality and the spirit of working in collaboration. Further, teachers fear that this surveillance system will continue beyond the pandemic via methods like CCTV cameras to keep a watch on

teachers in real time. The culture of surveillance will most certainly come in the way of teachers trying to understand their students' lived experiences, ground realities and "discussing real issues" with them. This means that education will become more and more disconnected from their immediate social and personal milieu. This will make the job of teaching extremely difficult and teachers will also be overly conscious of how they 'should' behave in school and in classrooms.

> *We will not be able to be spontaneous in class, nor even relate to our students with the closeness required for establishing a bond with our learners. We are also worried that the relationship between teachers and students will change even more (FGD, Indian primary school teacher).*

Teachers in India also feared being 'replaced' by apps and other technology. In the coming years, teachers will no more be living thinking beings; they will become mere tools in the hands of the administration. This is already visible in advertisements of companies that offer all kinds of educational technology devices, digitised content, and accessories. One such "EdTech applications (Biju's) portrays teachers' roles to be replaceable by a tech app." Aggressive advertisement campaigns by EdTech companies have convinced parents that apps are necessary for children to succeed. "Many parents even believe that subscription to these is compulsory." In years to come, the hold of the market will be tighter in terms of dictating school curricula and pedagogic approaches. The aggressive push for technology and artificial intelligence in policy, and market forces will reduce teachers' agency even further.

Teachers in all explained how, in the absence of proper training, they have often struggled to teach themselves how to connect and manage virtual platforms. They have had to acquire the technological equipment themselves and pay the costs of data plans to ensure connectivity. Finally, as the teachers in India explained, one of the roles of the teachers is to sustain bonds of affection. School is often the place where students can express what may be affecting them, such as domestic violence, drug use or teenage pregnancy. But in the virtual world it is more difficult for students to express themselves. Still, teachers are afraid to return to the classroom in the midst of the pandemic and parents reject their children's presence in the classroom because of the risk of contagion. As one teacher put it, "How can we maintain the bonds with our students in the virtual world?". Research on digital inequalities and specifically digital literacies inequalities (Morrell and Rowsell, 2019) have shown that there are deeper divides and inequalities that move beyond strictly discussions about access and connectivity moving from a have/have-not debate to a more pressing can/cannot debate. That is, lack of access and connectivity are leaving parts of the world behind not only due to a lack of virtual platforms and the latest technologies, but also limiting severely the understandings and skills that children and young people cannot have and cannot achieve because they cannot engage properly and meaningfully in virtual environments. The tremendous digital inequalities faced by Global South contexts have been referred to as blackholes (Castells, 2000); contexts where people make things work and learn on-the-fly in the face of scant wifi, patchy connectivity, and primitive technologies.

The inadequacy and lack of relevance of teacher education
Initial teacher education in many low- and middle-income contexts also been affected by the coloniality of knowledge. That is to say that it has often been didactic in orientation and

divorced from the realities of the classroom. Teacher training curricula have often also lagged behind changes to curricula, policy and practice (Moon, 2012; Batra, 2014; Westbrook et al., 2013; Pryor et al., 2012). Many of the teachers spoke of their dissatisfaction with the lack of relevance of initial teacher education in preparing teachers for the classroom. According to one Tanzanian teacher educator for example,

> *The challenge with student teachers is that we impart them with irrelevant knowledge that cannot help them to have self-employment. The assessment mode we use focuses much on measuring their mastering of the material we deliver to them; theoretically they do not possess any skill that they can use in practice and real life (Key informant, Tanzania).*

The Colombian teachers interviewed argued that

> *there is a broken bridge between them and the schools, as teachers do not have experience in the classroom before arriving at the schools. There are no real internships in the undergraduate programs (FGD, Colombian secondary school teacher).*

There was also criticism of the perceived lack of relevance of curricula. One educator in Colombia argued for instance that attention should be given to the 'whole' role of the teacher, not just the teacher as academic expert. Education must contribute to eradicate child abuse as well as sexual and work-related exploitation, and to achieve safe conditions for children and adolescents. In Ethiopia and India, the teachers interviewed suggested that greater emphasis should be placed on how to make use of digital resources whilst in Rwanda, the teachers talked about the need to prepare teachers to teach in English.

In India where the bulk of initial teacher education programmes are now privately delivered and state investment in the sector is likely to see a further decline, teachers expressed fear that teacher education will morph into a factory model where the expectation would be to produce 'trained teachers' with the least amount of resource investment. Instead of focussing on real education and critical thinking, priorities would shift to enhancing market-based skills among schoolteachers. The base of students aspiring for teacher education programmes is likely to see a major shift, with a likely steep decline in the representation of marginalized groups.

The teachers across all contexts expressed their desire to undertake continuing professional development (CPD). Teachers also welcomed opportunities to get involved in in-service trainings and seminars to develop themselves professionally. In India some of the respondents said they are part of Delhi University's Central Institute of Education Literacy Group which is a support group for Language teachers where they can exchange views on teaching practices and discuss specific issues. Teachers miss these discussions as all such interactions have come to a halt during the pandemic. Some lamented the closure of the Regional Resource Centre for Elementary Education in CIE that offered various platforms for teachers to organise study sessions and undertake classroom-based research with mentoring support. In Colombia, two teachers spoke about their experience as beneficiaries of public training programs. One of them is involved in the "Todos a aprender" (Let's All Learn) initiative, which is recognized by UNESCO and has been successful in regions such as

Magdalena, particularly in the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta. The program provides scholarships for master's degrees, fully paid for with public resources, and even the possibility of going on to a doctorate.

However, a key concern flagged by many of the teachers that is also reflected in the wider literature is the lack of opportunities to undertake relevant continuing professional development (Westbrook et al., 2013; Moon, 2012; Claudius Komba and Japhet Mwakabenga, 2020). As one Tanzanian teacher explained

> *There are many changes taking place in the curriculum but teachers are not prepared to accommodate those changes. There is need to conduct thorough research to accommodate changes of curriculum and teachers need to be trained to accommodate those change (FGD, Tanzanian primary school teacher).*

In Rwanda, teachers expressed the need for CPD to assist them in coping with top-down changes such as the change in language of instruction policy. They lamented a clear policy concerning CPD and the lack of incentives for teachers to enrol in CPD programmes. In Ethiopia, teachers reported that CPD programmes in areas such as STEM education, whilst welcomed are often too short and lack a practical component

> *Summer training is too short. Especially, for sciences fields such as mathematics, physics and chemistry, it is not only short but impossible to cover some basic contents of the subject. You never go to the lab to test and see how things work. You never exercise and read additional books to develop your understanding. What you do is only reading teacher notes given either in modules or power point slides and pass the paper pencil test.*

The need to work with new technologies was considered important for keeping pave with student learning. As one Ethiopian teacher explained

> *I cannot operate some equipment as equal as my students…some students even those with poor academic achievement learn fast when it comes to technology" (FGD, Ethiopia primary school teacher)*

In India an ongoing challenge is to pedagogically train teachers in various technologies, especially with the thrust in the National Education Policy (GoI, 2020) being on blended learning and the teaching of coding in younger grades.

Teachers as innovators

Despite the lack of formal opportunities, teachers seek help from online education platforms such as "DIKSHA" (Government of India portal) to learn new teaching practices. Many of the respondents said that they discuss issues and concerns with peers and colleagues or people they know who are working in education, such as PhD scholars or people working with educational NGOs. Respondents said that they would like to read more research papers on pedagogic practices if given a chance. Since the teachers are not in direct contact with children during the Pandemic, teachers try to make videos for children and parents explaining how to do the worksheets. One of the respondents said that she seeks ideas   from the curriculum and pedagogic practices   of   other countries like   Singapore.

She specifically looks for pedagogy research papers. Others said that they revisit their BElEd notes, read publications like the position papers of the National Curriculum Framework, 2005 and research of the National Council for Educational Research and Training (NCERT). Some teachers are part of social media groups of teachers where they engage with each other. One of the respondents shared that she studied a short-term course on pedagogy from an elite alternative private school in Delhi to enhance her pedagogic understanding and skills. In Tanzania, teachers had devised ways to stay in contact with students during the period schools were closed via their parents. The teacher educator interviewed had several ideas for improving the programme at her college and indicated some of the ways ICTs are used creatively as pedagogical tools almost as soon as they become available in a college or school.

Teacher professionalism and the coloniality of being

This brings us to the third dimension of Ndlovu-Gatsheni's framework: the *coloniality of being*. This refers to the ways in which colonial relations are embodied at the level of personal experience in "habits of mind and ways of being" (Adams et al., 2017) which take place in the context of, and result from, the asymmetrical power relations and knowledge systems discussed above (Maldonado-Torres 2007). A focus on teachers' "being" requires attention to the material conditions of their lives, as well as their perceptions and emotional states.

With respect to teacher professionalism, everyday realities that shape the lived experiences of the teachers in our study include: their disesteemed professional status, inadequate salary and growing precarity of their work; the requirement to manage the unmanageable (in terms of dealing with policy contradictions, structural inequalities and conflict); their lack of agency and professional discretion in educational decision-making within and beyond their immediate classroom contexts; and an emotional commitment to their work which results from its perceived importance for students and wider society.

An inadequate, undignified salary

In the colonial era employment in medicine, engineering and law was highly restricted for indigenous people, and teaching was one of the few opportunities for relatively well-paid and secure employment within the lower rungs of the civil service hierarchy (Altbach and Kelly, 1978). Today, as our respondents explained, teaching remains a job with relatively low entrance requirements, but one for which the salary is, for the most part (India excepted], inadequate to meet the costs of living now and in the future.

Financial concerns were most serious in African contexts, where teachers' salaries are often inadequate for their needs and an ever-present source of stress and anguish. In Ethiopia, joining the teaching profession has been described as "economic suicide" (Gemeda and Tynjälä, 2015: 176). Teachers in our study explained that the job can provide graduates with "early employment" as a stopgap while looking for better-paid work, but that the long-term economic prospects for teachers are so poor that "experienced teachers advised their [newcomers joining their school] to take early actions to leave the profession." (FGD, Ethiopian secondary school teacher)). One participant explained: "I am struggling to cover the cost for house rent and other expenses such as food and tuition fee for my kids." In Rwanda FGD participants were less vocal on this issue, however, teacher salaries in this context have

long been described as a poverty wage (Rwanda, 2014) and even with the recent salary increase, government-employed primary teachers still barely operate above the poverty line (Cameron, 2020). The situation is similar in Tanzania, where the majority of teachers in our study engaged in second-income generating activities to meet their living costs (see also Tao 2013). The above not only affects the material conditions of teachers' lives in terms of their ability to provide for themselves and dependents,   but can evoke a sense of shame – that they could be better providers if they found alternative work. For example, an Ethiopian participant recounted:

> *I will never forget the difficult question that my kid asked me…"Dad! Why don't we have a good house and a car like *** [a neighbouring engineer who works at the municipality]" (FGD, Ethiopian primary school teacher).*

Although less acute outside the African continent, similar concerns around salaries were raised in the other contexts. In Colombia, participants reported that salaries "did not dignify the work of teachers." Health insurance is not guaranteed, and many teachers are on temporary contracts which means that their years of service are not fully recognised, leaving them ineligible for a pension at retirement age. Indian teachers in government schools reported that their salaries were often late, and this delay had reached four to five months during the Pandemic, while teachers on short-term contracts had been laid off.

In terms of the lived experience of teachers, the conditions described above evoke a range of negative emotions. Many reported an acute sense of injustice that they earned less than other government employees with comparable levels of education, fewer responsibilities, and additional incentives such as subsidised transport and meals. As such, many felt exploited or persecuted, while undertaking an important but impossible task (discussed below).

The sharp end of societal and systemic problems: Dealing with the fall out
Of everyone in society, teachers are the group most familiar with the tensions, contradictions and inequities inherent in the mass schooling systems identified above: irrelevant and overly-challenging curricula delivered in languages many learners cannot understand; underfunded, poorly resourced and overcrowded classrooms. Teachers in our countries of research focus operate at the sharp end of these challenges, giving them privileged knowledge and perspectives of the everyday barriers to a quality education for all. However, they also stand on the lowest rung of top-down civil service hierarchies, meaning that they recognise the challenges and contradictions of policy, but lack the decision-making authority to remedy this.

Across the board teachers gave examples of how central policy decisions had complicated and intensified their work in unanticipated ways. For example, a Rwanda teacher explained:

> *"There are times when we teachers teach more than 50 hours a week. The recent policy changes from Kinyarwanda to English without corresponding teaching and learning resources has created severe teaching conditions. Some teachers have had to translate the learning content from Kinyarwanda to English before they start teaching. It a*

laborious process and we lose an incredible amount of time…"

As this quote demonstrates, responding to policy changes has physical and emotional costs for teachers which are often not fully anticipated or compensated for when higherups make seemingly technical decisions.

Amongst more familiar concerns raised by teachers in our study are new ones relating to the Pandemic. Across the board teachers reported growing inequalities as a result of school closures and inequitable access to out-of-school learning opportunities. In Rwanda, India, Colombia and elsewhere teachers were required to support out-of-school learning, including on weekends; however, such provision was widely considered inadequate, and teachers were fearful of what awaited them when schools re-opened.

In addition to the above, teachers have to deal with the fall out of violent conflict. The ongoing civil war in Tigray, Ethiopia meant that the rural teachers who participated in our study were internally displaced persons (IDPs) who had been given temporary accommodation in classrooms in the city. One such respondent invited a member of our research team to:

> *"Imagine the rural [war-stricken] areas and think where the children are these days. Many were killed, and those who escape from the perpetrators are moving from mountain to mountain, and from gorges to gorges; and are living in caves rather than their houses. Teachers are not the exception. Everything that happens to the people is also happening to teachers: torture, rape, mass killing and forced detention." (Urban FGD, Male, June 13/2021).*

When schools re-open it will be the responsibility of teachers to support the generation of young people who are experiencing psychosocial trauma. Similar sentiments were expressed by teachers in Colombia, where participants predicted an increase in violence in coming years despite a formal end to armed conflict (with only one, armed, actor). It is dangerous for teachers and students to move through areas where illegal armed groups are present. In some regions, the security situation aggravates the precariousness of school attendance, and forced recruitment of students by armed actors is common. Armed groups have taken advantage of economic needs and the lack of connectivity in the midst of the Pandemic to recruit minors. In areas where the armed conflict continues, teachers may have the children of armed actors in their class, which can inhibit their ability to teach freely, create a sense of insecurity, and threaten their mental health. Teachers in our sample expressed the challenge of addressing the topics of peace and conflict in class, and one (. A female leader in Córdoba) had been threatened for defending children's rights.

Emotional rewards
Despite the bleak picture recounted so far, some teachers also reported positive emotions resulting from their work. This was often expressed in relation to the perceived importance of their work. A Tanzanian teacher explained:

"I am happy working as a teacher despite the many challenges I face. I usually go to the class teaching my students with enthusiasm. I don't show them that I have challenges. It is my responsibility to make sure students are well taught." (FGD, Tanzanian secondary school teacher)

Teachers also reported feeling satisfaction vicariously through the success of their students, such as this Ethiopian teacher:

"I get excited when I see my former students who reached higher levels, such as become medical doctors, engineers and the like. I feel as if I get a return for my engagement." (FGD, Ethiopian secondary school teacher).

That said, overall, viewing teacher professionalism through the lens of the *coloniality of being* reveals a systematic disregard for the material welfare and emotional wellbeing of teachers. Postcolonial state structures treat teachers as dispensable or interchangeable, their present and future living conditions of little consequence. Within a hierarchical civil service system, teachers occupy a subservient position as foot soldiers to be directed rather than professionals whose knowledge, perspectives and judgment are of instrumental value for quality improvements in systems of mass education.

Towards a teacher-led understanding of teacher professionalism

In this concluding section we bring together the perspectives of teachers discussed in the above sections and present an overall conception of teacher professionalism based on the analysis in previous sections. The discussion also explicitly draws on the data developed through the two international workshops held in June 2021 in which the participating teachers were asked to comment on the emerging findings and to identify key characteristics of teachers' professionalism in relation to these. The second aim of the section is to relate the emerging understanding of teacher professionalism with the dominant models in the international literature and in particular the models proposed by the World Bank and by UNESCO/IE presented in the introductory section. We present our findings in relation to the latter model (which most closely encapsulates some of the views of the teachers), although we are also critical of this model.

Situating teacher professionalism

It is a central argument of the paper that any understanding of teacher professionalism must be situated in an understanding of the context of teachers' work and lived experiences. This more nuanced and contextualised understanding stands in stark contrast to the one-size-fits-all approach of existing models such as the global model proposed by the World Bank. Rather, as suggested below, the findings are more in line with the approach of the UNESCO/-IE model which argued that understanding of teaching standards and teacher professionalism must be adapted to suit different contexts. A second key argument that becomes apparent in the discussion of the situatedness of teacher professionalism is the extent to which the coloniality of power, of knowledge and of being, place constraints on the possibilities for teacher professionalism compared to teachers in high income contexts.
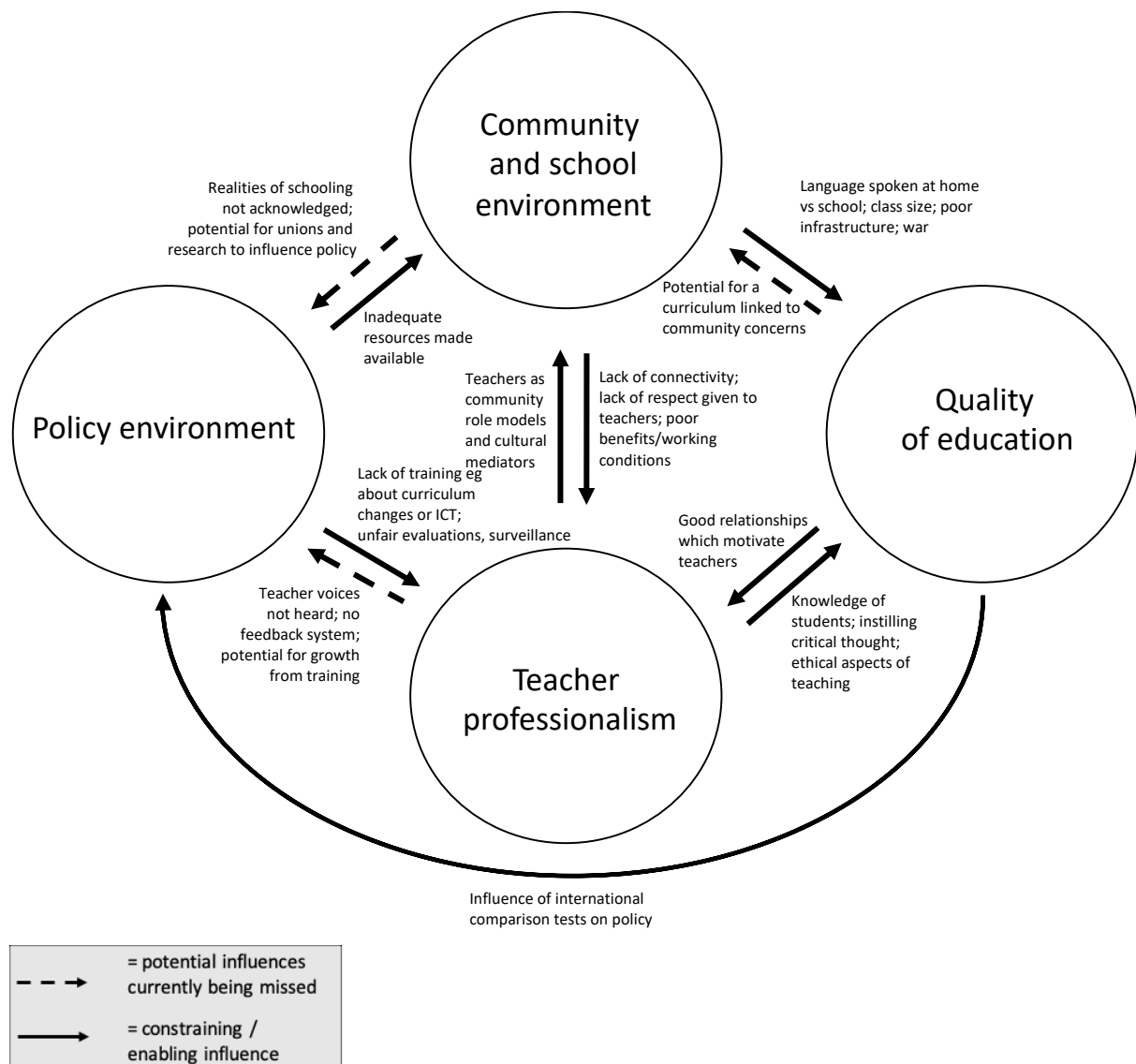
Diagram one below provides a heuristic model based on the perspectives of the teachers that captures the importance of context. Specifically, it relates the idea of teacher professionalism to the differing policy environments in each country. This includes key areas of teacher governance such as teacher pay and conditions of service but also the role of teacher unions and the lack of teacher voice in policy-making processes. It also relates, however, to the wider policy environment. Important to the discussion in previous sections are policies relating to the curriculum, pedagogy, digitisation, assessment and responses to Covid-19. In the discussions above, the broad characteristics of the policy environment were related back to the analysis of coloniality. This includes the top-down, bureaucratic and highly centralised nature of policy but also the impact of sometimes contradictory global agendas linked to rights-based discourses emphasising inclusivity and sustainable development on the one hand and more economistic discourses emphasising privatisation and the instrumental role of education in developing human capital on the other hand. It was argued that teachers' own coloniality of being emerges from these wider dynamics and the contradictions inherent within them and puts constraints on their professional status, their voice in policy-making and ability to act autonomously in the classroom. The words of the teachers in our project give insights into the enduring impacts and effects of historical colonialism and also point to the "complexly mutating entity" (Mbembe, 2016, p.32) of such legacies.

Teacher professionalism is also situated in complex and nested school and community contexts which are affected by poverty and different kinds of inequality but also the impact of conflict. Importantly, the analysis draws attention to the cultural divide between home and school in linguistic and cultural terms and the role of teachers as cultural mediators. In the discussion of previous sections, these dynamics were again linked to coloniality including the coloniality of power which perpetuates poverty and inequality but also the coloniality of knowledge which leads to a bifurcation between the modernist conception of the school and the community. The reality of teaching content that is often dislocated from local contexts and in languages that are not widely spoken in the community also puts constraints on teacher autonomy in a way that is often not experienced by teachers in high income settings but also draws attention to the tremendous skills of many teachers as cultural mediators and their importance as role models. When engaging students in any learning at all means deviating from official policies, teachers can themselves become complicit in concealing their reflexive, adaptable pedagogical expertise.

In diagram one, teacher professionalism is also related to differing conceptions of education quality. In discourses of the World Bank, education quality is often defined in relation to a narrow set of cognitive outcomes measured in the performance of learners in standardised assessments. By way of contrast, the teachers offered a much more holistic view of the quality of education, for example in relation to the overall wellbeing of learners and the rights of learners to lead sustainable livelihoods within peaceful, societies. Such an understanding is more in line with the capability approach proposed by Sen and Nussbaum in which the fundamental role of education is to provide the capabilities (opportunity freedoms) required by learners to lead the lives they and their communities have reason to value. In seeking to address the capabilities of learners in their charge, teachers drew attention to the importance of their relationships with learners and communities, their own capabilities including their quest to develop their own professional knowledge, agency and voice. Having offered our

synthesis of how teachers view their professionalism in relation to policy, community and the quality of education, in the next section we bring together their views on that what teacher professionalism means in their different contexts.

Diagram one: Situating teacher professionalism

Community and school environment

Realities of schooling not acknowledged; potential for unions and research to influence policy

Language spoken at home vs school; class size; poor infrastructure; war

Inadequate resources made available

Potential for a curriculum linked to community concerns

Policy environment

Teachers as community role models and cultural mediators

Lack of connectivity; lack of respect given to teachers; poor benefits/working conditions

Quality of education

Lack of training eg about curriculum changes or ICT; unfair evaluations, surveillance

Good relationships which motivate teachers

Teacher voices not heard; no feedback system; potential for growth from training

Teacher professionalism

Knowledge of students; instilling critical thought; ethical aspects of teaching

Influence of international comparison tests on policy

= potential influences currently being missed

= constraining / enabling influence

Dimensions of teacher professionalism

The three dimensions of teacher professionalism proposed by UNESCO/IE provide a useful starting point for considering the perspectives of teachers. A key argument developed in this section is that the perspectives of the teachers provide a grounded, contextualised understanding of each dimension that can complement global understandings such as those proposed by UNESCO and Education International.

Teaching knowledge and understanding

It will be recalled that the UNESCO/-IE framework emphasises the importance of teacher expertise in subject knowledge but also in their abilities to teach specific subjects (often referred to in the literature as pedagogical content knowledge). The teachers involved in the present study endorsed the importance of both subject and pedagogical content knowledge. For example, they emphasised, in keeping with global agendas, their own need to upgrade their skills and knowledge in specific subject areas such as STEM and, particularly in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, the use of digital technologies. The teachers across the five contexts also emphasised the importance, however, of knowledge and skills linked to sustainable futures. These included an emphasis on relevant vocational skills but also including environmental understanding, peace and citizenship education, as well as the value of arts and culture education for developing learners as all round human beings. Missing from the UNESCO/-IE model is the crucial importance of teachers not only as receivers and transmitters of knowledge but as potential creators of knowledge. In particular, the teachers emphasised their role in developing better understanding of the realities of teaching and learning in the challenging contexts in which they were often operating.

Teaching practice

It will be recalled that this domain is concerned with the ability of educators to engage with their learners. In global discourses this is often related to ideas about teacher effectiveness and the ability of teachers to improve learning outcomes in high stakes examinations and international comparison tests. As mentioned, however, the teachers largely rejected this understanding of their own effectiveness and instead offered a more holistic understanding of the outcomes of education and of the meaning of education quality. A key consideration was the ability to relate and adapt curricula to the backgrounds and needs of the learners and that this in turn required detailed knowledge and understanding of local context and realities. Even the way teachers introduced and talked about the limitations of the curriculum and the challenges of classroom teaching, demonstrated reflexive practitioner knowledge. They did not talk about their pupils and students as anonymous 'learners' but as children and young people. They knew about the homes they lived in, where they were when schools were closed, and were aware of young people's aspirations for their own futures.

There were differences between countries in the breadth of teachers' vocabulary for talking about pedagogy, with teachers in India and Columbia demonstrating greater pedagogical content knowledge than participants from the three African countries. However, this disparity may be regarded as an indicator of the distance between the realities of classroom conditions in the three African countries and the ideals Western discourses of professionalism that slide between the poles personalised versus performative pedagogy. A key aspect of teaching practice that is often not relayed in the global literature is the crucial role of teachers as cultural mediators and community leaders. This not only entails seeking to bridge the gap between the standardised knowledge contained in centralised curricula but also in being able to mediate between the home languages spoken by the learners and the medium of teaching and learning which is often a global language. In the context of increasingly heterogeneous learning environments this requires the ability of respond positively to cultural diversity. It also requires exceptional linguistic capital on the part of teachers. In the research, teachers mediated in the opposite direction, articulating for researchers the aspirations, opportunities

and constraints experienced by students. Finally, the teachers often emphasised their important role in safeguarding the welfare of their students including their skills as counsellors and career advisors.

Teaching relations

The third dimension of the UNESCO/IE model focuses on the central importance of relationships with students, fellow professionals, caregivers and educational authorities. In relation to parents and communities, the teachers emphasised their role as socialising agents including their ability to inculcate acceptable societal values, citizenship and a love for lifelong learning. They talked about the importance of having high expectations for all learners. They also emphasised their position as role models and the importance of values such as honesty, fairness and humility. The teachers also highlighted the importance of collegial relationships that were often challenged by the emphasis under neoliberalism on performatively, competition and surveillance. Finally, and in contrast to the top-down view of professionalism that is often evident in global agendas and realities, the teachers unanimously emphasised the importance of their voice in policy making. On the one hand this was considered important as a means for advocating teachers' rights to decent pay and conditions of service and as a means to have their professional status recognised. Crucially, however, the teachers emphasised the importance of their perspectives for effective policy implementation and as a means to improve the quality of education for their learners.

Conclusion

The paper has sought to make a contribution towards the decolonisation of teacher professionalism. This is done through using a decolonial lens to critique dominant global discourses concerning teacher professionalism and by foregrounding the perspectives of teachers in the global South against a situated understanding of the diverse and often extremely challenging contexts in which they work. Through the course of the paper, we have sought to develop several key arguments. These include the importance of situating any understanding of teacher professionalism against an understanding of the diverse contexts in which teachers around the world currently operate and to use this understanding to push back against the tendency to promote one- size-fits-all models of teacher professionalism. We have sought to argue the value of a decolonial approach towards understanding how coloniality of power and of knowledge impact on the coloniality of being of teachers, constraining their professional standing and autonomy. Nonetheless, and in contrast to some dominant global agendas, we have explicitly rejected a deficit view of teacher professionalism in the global South. Whilst recognising the barriers and constraints to teacher professionalism we have also sought to highlight the tremendous resourcefulness and resilience of teachers, the full range of their capacities, skills, and dispositions as well as their commitment to their profession and to the wellbeing of their learners. Here, there is much that global discourses can learn from the lived experiences of teachers in the global South.

We recognise however, the exploratory nature of our study and the constraints imposed on the research by the demanding time frames involved and the demands of conducting research in the context of a pandemic. The study is based on work with a small sample of teachers in each of the countries of focus. Thus, whilst we are confident that our study provides useful, contextualised understand that can add value to existing debates it is not intended to be definitive or as fully representative of teachers views in these countries. Further quantitative

and qualitative research might usefully develop some of the insights generated to involve a greater number of teachers and in diverse contexts. In conducting our research, we have sought to illustrate the potential for actively engaging teachers in the research process as co-creators of knowledge about their own professionalism. It is suggested that engaging teachers in this way not only provides an antidote to the often extractive and top-down approach that characterises much of the research into teacher professionalism but also serves to positively illustrate the importance of engaging teachers' perspectives for taking forward global debates.

Annex one

Table 1. Data collection in the country contexts.

Country context	Forms of data collection carried out
Colombia	**Focus group discussions** with twelve (12) primary and secondary school teachers from eleven different regions of the country. Six teach in rural schools, one in semi-rural, and five in urban schools. **Interviews**: (1) representative from the teacher union federation, *Federación Colombiana de Trabajadores de la Educación* (FECODE); (2) advisor from Institute for Educational Research and Pedagogical Development (Instituto para la Investigación Educativa y el Desarrollo Pedaagógico, IDEP); and (3) teacher the Universidad Distrital, Bogotá, and advisor to the Ministry of Education. **Focus group discussion** with two secondary school students.
Ethiopia	**Focus group discussions** with ten teachers from Tigray region: five teachers from secondary schools in Mekelle; five teachers from rural and semi-rural areas (four primary, one secondary) who were internally displaced due to the conflict. **Interviews**: i) President of Teachers Association, ii) Representative of Teachers Association with responsibilities for teachers' housing construction, iii) Director of university-based teacher education programme
India	Focus Group Discussion with 9 teachers of state schools in the region of Delhi. Pedagogic Artefacts: one from each of the 9 teachers. Anecdotes of practice: one from each of the 9 teachers. Additional Data: All 9 teachers collated data from a total of 28 additional teachers of state schools, largely through individual interviews and some via group discussions with 2-3 teachers.
Rwanda	**Focus group discussions** with nine (9) teachers and one teacher training college instructor. The group included four primary school teachers and five secondary school teachers. Those teachers provided additional data collected, including pedagogic artifacts from eight of their colleagues, including four primary teachers and four secondary school teachers. **Interviews**: One official who has worked in the field of teacher professionalisation and development
Tanzania	**Focus groups discussions or one-on-one interviews** (due to connectivity issues) conducted online with nine teachers, with 6 from primary schools and 6 from secondary schools. 9 taught in rural settings and 3 taught in urban settings. **Interviews**: (1) a teacher educator from a teacher college; (2) a researcher from a large, influential education advocacy and policy-influencing organisation.

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