



THE AGA KHAN UNIVERSITY

eCommons@AKU

Book Chapters

February 2007

Teachers' lives and their status: A secondary analysis of the life history of three teachers

Nelofer Halai

Aga Khan University, Institute for Educational Development, Karachi

Follow this and additional works at: http://ecommons.aku.edu/book_chapters

 Part of the [Educational Administration and Supervision Commons](#), and the [Secondary Education and Teaching Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Halai, N. (2007). Teachers' lives and their status: A secondary analysis of the life history of three teachers. *Teacher Status: A symposium*, 83-99.

Available at: http://ecommons.aku.edu/book_chapters/66

Teachers' Lives and their Status: A Secondary Analysis of the Life History of Three Teachers

Nelofer Halai, AKU-IED, Karachi, Pakistan

This chapter is based on a preliminary secondary analysis of three life histories of teachers from Pakistan; more detailed analysis is under process. The life histories of two male teachers and one female teacher were constructed by researchers as part of their PhD and Master's dissertations (Halai, 2002; Khan, 2004; Shah, 2004). First, the concept of secondary analysis of qualitative studies/data is discussed and then the life history method is explained very briefly. Brief life histories of the three teachers are abstracted from the dissertations in broad brushstrokes to help answer the question: How are teachers' conception of their teaching practice related to their status in society? Finally, I have undertaken a cross case analysis, comparing the three teachers' life experiences to draw insights about the factors that influence teachers status.

There is a growing body of literature on secondary analysis of qualitative studies and the secondary analysis of qualitative data (Heaton, 2004). However, at this point the distinction between the two kinds of secondary analysis—those that analyze raw data again and those that analyze the studies—is not very clear. Estabrooks, Field, and Morse (1994), for instance, state that aggregate analysis that involves the synthesis of findings from several qualitative studies is called a form of secondary analysis. Heaton further clarifies that the analysis of studies could be called secondary analysis if a new question is asked which is different from the question/s asked in the original studies. Hence, I have classified this paper as a secondary analysis as it explores a new question which is different from those addressed in the original studies. Furthermore, as qualitative research is based on the premise that the researcher is the instrument of research, the problem of the researcher not having “been there” needs careful

† The cross case analysis has focused on issues that are common or different in the three cases based on issues related to status such as (a) gender (b) professional development (c) ethnicity and socio-economic background (d) conception of school teaching and (e) subject loyalty

attention (Heaton, 2004). To overcome this problem very few secondary analysis of qualitative data are based entirely on others' studies or data. The story of Munazza is based on the author's own PhD dissertation. However, Ikraam and Gul's stories are both taken from M.Ed. dissertations—the first of these was supervised by the author and the other was supported by providing literature and some methodological guidance. Hence, the author knows two studies first hand and the third study too is not entirely unfamiliar.

Life history

Goodson has characterized life history as “the life located within its historical context” (1992, p. 2), while Bertraux defines it as “sociologically read biography” (1992, p. 210). However, I have used the conception of life history method described by Smith, Kleine, Prunty, and Dwyner. They describe it as a method that involves stories or narratives recalling events in an individual's life and obtained with the help of lengthy interviews. It includes the stories of significant others to embed in a broader context. Life history method has a post-modernistic stance to knowledge; that one can know only partially, knowledge is not only in the mind and in actions but in the context. Life history method also suggests a shift from knowledge base essential for teaching to a mode that stresses personal agency. It allows us to see the personal as the professional and vice versa and it foreshadows a more equitable power relationship between the researcher and the researched.

The semi-structured in-depth interview is a central feature of the life history method. This could, and often does, include informal and formal conversations with people in the context of the school. The feature that differentiates life history method from other biographical methods of research is that this method gives space to include the voice of significant others to embed it in a broader context. Observations and document analysis are often included in the data generation process. However, it is important to understand that life history helps us to understand teachers' theorizing rather than theorize about teachers. The three studies on which this paper is based all use unstructured life history interviews to interview Munazza, Gul and Ikraam. They have also observed their class teaching and analyzed relevant documents.

Lives of the three teachers: Munazza, Gul and Ikraam

I have used the lens of teacher practice and its relation to the status of teachers to summarize the life history of the three teachers: Munazza, Gul and Ikraam. The selection of the portrayal has been guided by some principles laid down in Dollard's seminal work (1935) on criteria for life history.

Munazza's story

Munazza's family includes eight sisters and one brother who belong to the *Mohajir* community. Her grandparents migrated to Pakistan from Allahabad, India in 1947. She had two brothers, but lost her elder brother at a very young age. He had just completed *Inter-Science* and was ready to go to an engineering university, when he died very suddenly. His death has been very traumatic for Munazza and her siblings. She has been particularly affected as she was the one with him during his last moments.

As a teacher, when she sees boys in her class, she wants to make sure that they study and do well in their exams. She sees it as her role as a teacher not only to complete the curriculum but to teach in such a way that students get good marks and are then able to get admission to professional institutions. She relates her own example where she had good marks and got admission into a medical college in Sindh but not in Karachi; hence she could enter into any sort of medical profession that she was very interested to follow. As a result, she realizes the importance of marks and tries hard to teach students in a way that they will get good marks.

Munazza declares school life as being the best part of her life. She liked primary school years more than the time she spent in secondary school and, in turn, liked secondary school more than her college years. School, particularly primary school, was like home to her with her own class teacher and a room. Her favourite teacher in primary school was Miss Iffat. However, her science teachers were not very good. In the primary science classes, it really did not make too great a difference as students had to learn short answers to questions given at the end of the chapters. However, in secondary science classes she found her science teachers to be very poor teachers. They did not have any concept of providing explanations. In particular, the physics teacher did not explain any content properly. The teacher asked students to read aloud from the textbook and that was all; if students asked her to explain further she would get angry at them. No activities were conducted in the science classes to illustrate concepts

and very limited oral explanations were given. Munazza wondered about how she developed her interest in science because her science teachers certainly did not inspire her. She was the first person in her family to study science—her three elder sisters had not taken up this field of study. Starting at a young age, Munazza was very interested in science activities and engaged in activities illustrated in science textbooks with her younger siblings.

Munazza consciously tries not to teach in the way her science teachers taught her and uses lots of demonstrations to illustrate concepts to her students. She teaches general science to grades seven and eight, chemistry to grade nine and *Islamiat* to grade eight. In grade nine, the stress is on completing the syllabus and ensuring that the students learn the answers to important questions so that they can regurgitate it for their Board Exams. However, in grades seven and eight, where examinations are school-based, she feels free to engage in more demonstrations and hands-on activities for teaching science.

Munazza has a great deal of difficulty in managing her class but she does not believe in demeaning punishments such as making students sit on the floor or making ponytails in their hair because they are long. She thinks that one reason for her difficulty in class management is her inability to use harsh punishments with her students.

Munazza had always like the idea of teaching and would often have her younger siblings sit across from her and “teach” them. Her father bought a full sized blackboard for her so that she could write on that rather than scribble on the walls while “teaching”. During the long break after her *Inter-Science* she decided to occupy her time by teaching in a local school. However, teaching was not her first choice for a profession—she wanted to be a doctor but as she could not get into the medical school of her choice she decided to pursue a Bachelor of Science (BSc) degree in chemistry and microbiology. As her college ended at noon and so she continued to teach in the afternoon school that she had joined after her *Inter-Science*. She continued to teach throughout her undergraduate programme, only leaving the job close to her final exams.

After complete the Bachelor of Science programme, Munazza wanted to work in a pathology or microbiology laboratory for at least some time so that she could make use of her knowledge of vaccines, tuberculosis tests, cancer, etc. that she had studied in microbiology and biochemistry. However, her father thought that the *mahol* (working environment) in laboratories is not good. He believed that teaching is the best and most respectable profession for women and that is what

she should take up. Since she liked to teach and already had experience of teaching in schools, Munazza accepted an offer to join the Karachi Model Secondary School (KMSS) as a teacher. Her younger sister was already a teacher of mathematics and science at that school. However, Munazza wanted to work for some time in a laboratory in order to learn more about the practical side of science. She regretted not being able to do that, but she also made clear that she enjoyed teaching and felt very strongly that if one chooses to teach then one must do it sincerely.

Munazza found that she learnt much more about her subject while teaching than she had ever learnt as a student. As a student, she was dependent on the teacher and whatever the teacher thought was considered important to learn. But as a teacher in a coeducational school she found that students, particularly boys, come up with all sorts of questions and she had to be well-prepared in order to respond appropriately to those questions.

At KMSS, there is no regular system of making lesson plans. In the first school where she began her teaching career there was an expectation that teachers will make formal lesson plans before teaching the lessons. All kinds of teaching materials from demonstration activities to worksheets had to be planned ahead of time. For this purpose Saturday were set aside for teachers to do their planning and for preparation of materials for teaching. It was here that Munazza really learnt how to teach. In contrast, in KMSS, teachers were not expected to make formal lesson plans for submission to the principal. Hence, Munazza does not make a formal lesson plan but does have a mental plan. The night before her lesson, she does “look” at the lesson that she has to teach the next day. When thinking about a lesson she usually does not have a particular approach or teaching strategy in mind. She admits that she has had no training in teaching in the form of a degree or diploma so when she teaches she keeps in mind the way she was taught. More often, however, she teaches in a way that she was not taught, using concrete materials and demonstrations to illustrate science concepts.

In her own words Munazza is a “sincere” teacher despite the fact that she did not want to become a teacher. But at the time of the study Munazza was working towards getting a graduate degree, hoping to get an opportunity to teach at college level – she may still be teaching in a school or may have opted to teach in a college instead.

Gul's story

Gul is a young male teacher of mathematics residing in Karachi. His ancestors had migrated from the North West Frontier Province (NWFP) of Pakistan more than 40 years ago. He comes from a large family of seven brothers and one sister and belongs to the *Pakhtun* tribe. Gul's brother was very good in mathematics and Gul took encouragement from him. However, his desire to become a teacher was ignited by an excellent mathematics teacher who taught him in school.

His home environment was very religious and his parents first gave him religious education at home and then sent him for formal schooling in a government primary school. He has sweet memories of his primary school and still has fond memories of one teacher in particular who was soft spoken and taught by telling good moral stories. His favourite subjects were Urdu and Islamiat and he was scared of mathematics. He had difficulty in particular in understanding word problems. Rote memorization was the standard manner of teaching.

When Gul went to secondary school, he realized that life in secondary school was a little bit different than that in primary school. Here, the teachers taught specific subjects and the school building was bigger and he felt more independent because he was able to come and go to school by himself. Miss Khalida was a mathematics teacher that Gul still remembers: although "chalk and talk" was the standard method of teaching, Miss Khalida had a special teaching style and, as a result, he started taking an interest in Mathematics. Mathematics was seen as a dry and difficult subject but through practice and hard work he was able to score 33% in the middle exams. They were the highest marks in the class—all the other students failed even to get this minimum score. Mr. Najam was his mathematics teacher in class ten. He was very dedicated teacher and would utilize his free time to teach them. His hard work paid off and he obtained a first division in Matric scoring 88% marks in mathematics. According to Gul, "This brilliant success was a very significant event in my academic life, as it paved the way for me to pursue mathematics for further studies." Gul attributed this success to his concentration and practice and the hard work of his teacher.

Gul then entered a government college and found college life to be totally different from school life. There were far fewer restrictions but the experience was both exciting and frustrating. The frustration was mostly due to the change

in the medium of instruction. Science and mathematics were taught in English while Gul had, till then, only studied in an Urdu medium school. In addition, due to disturbances in the city, colleges remained closed often and Gul learnt most of the things through private tuitions. However, he passed his Inter-Science and entered the BSc programme in the same college, studying physics, mathematics, and statistics. According to Gul, studying physics and statistics supplemented his learning of mathematics, because they mostly contained mathematical problems. However, overall, the situation of the college was the same as he had experienced during his secondary schooling years (FSc). In college, teaching was done through the lecture method and was notes-based, so they copied down the lectures and made notes out of them.

Before getting admission into the Bachelor of Science (BSc) programme, Gul had also obtained admission in a private technical institute in Karachi, for a three years' Diploma in Associate Engineers (DAE). It was equivalent to FSc and all the same subjects of FSc were taught in the diploma program except for Urdu, and other technical subjects. Studying in the technical institute was beneficial for Gul as he got an opportunity to re-study science subjects such as physics, chemistry and mathematics, which reinforced his learning. Gul studied for the BSc and the DAE simultaneously and completed both of them at the same time. After that he joined a private firm in Karachi as a junior sub engineer. He worked for two years as a sub-engineer but found himself unfit for private service and decided to join the teaching profession. Before he started to teach formally he had already experienced teaching while tutoring students in a coaching centre. His desire to become a "formal" teacher was so strong that Gul picked up his studies again and entered the Bachelor of Education (BEd) at Government College of Education, Karachi. While he was working on his BEd he got an opportunity to teach in a private school. According to Gul this was very helpful for him as he was able to apply his learning about teaching in the school. After teaching for five years in a private school a turning point came in his life when he was selected as a high school teacher (HST), through the Sindh Public Service Commission, and was posted in the school where currently he is teaching, "I was jubilant on the realization of my dream of becoming a full-fledged teacher." He was asked to teach mathematics to grades 6 through 10. Gul had always been keen for a job in the government sector as he felt that in the private sector there was always a tension in his mind due to non-security of his job.

A good mathematics teacher is a person who is like a guide and a friend of the students. Most importantly s/he should be realistic, and an expert in content. If

the teacher is not clear about a concept s/he should not teach that concept to the children. As Miss Afsar² used to say, and I quote, “If a teacher is not clear about a concept and teaches that concept to the children, then misconception transfers from teacher to children, which is a loss, and there is no remedy for this loss”.

Gul considers himself lucky that he was selected to attend the Visiting Teacher (VT; now, Certificate in Education) programme at AKU-IED in 2002. This was his first experience of professional development and it had a great impact on him. According to him the unique learning environment of AKU-IED opened new horizons of learning for him. Before the VT programme he believed that he was a competent teacher with sound subject knowledge. But the VT Programme taught him a great deal, specially that knowledge could be constructed, rather than giving it in the form of set rules and principles. He also learnt how to become a reflective practitioner and through constant reflection he tried to improve his own teaching skills.

Gul was also selected to do the one-year Advanced Diploma Program in Subject Specialist Teaching (ADDIST) – Mathematics, at the AKU-IED. This programme was more field-based and learner-focused. For the first time in his professional life he realized that teaching could be a kind of research and he conducted a small-scale action research titled *Impact of Cooperative Learning on Children’s Mathematics Learning* during this program. The most significant things that he learnt during this programme was the preparation of *unit plans* and learning to reflect on his teaching. Facilitators from AKU-IED observed his lessons and gave him feedback after each lesson, which enabled him to improve his teaching. During fieldwork, he received extensive experience of designing activities for classroom teaching and then putting them into practice.

Teachers always played an important role in Gul’s academic life. Although he did not like mathematics in primary school, his teachers’ encouragement later made him interested in the subject. He was then further inspired by another teacher in class ten. This latter teacher’s teaching approach was based on ‘explanation’ method where he emphasized understanding over rote learning and Gul ascribed his success in matriculation examination to this teacher’s encouragement. He also further alluded that he became enthusiastic to learn mathematics in his future academic life.

² School’s head-miss when Gul joined the school

Ikraam's story

Ikraam belongs to a remote mountain village in the Chitral region of the North West Frontier Province of Pakistan. The village is situated about 76 kilometres away from the town of Chitral. Most of the people of his village belong to the middle class and farming is their main source of income. Ikraam's ancestors emigrated from Afghanistan and settled in the village where they speak Khowar, a Chitrali language. Ikraam's father completed matriculation and served as a warehouse clerk in the Government Food Department of Chitral for 30 years. Ikraam's mother is a housewife. She has looked after Ikraam and two sets of twin siblings. Their income was supplemented by farming.

Ikraam's father is well-known and is respected in his community for his honesty and service to the local people. As he is educated, he values education and he sent all his children to school despite heavy financial burden. As a child, Ikraam lived for some time with his maternal grandparents and visited his parents once a week. His grandmother took him to school for admission. Corporal punishment was common and Ikraam still remembers the time he was in Class 2 when he was hit on the head with a cane for reciting the answer very softly. Ikraam started bleeding from the head and the teacher stopped the blood loss by applying *naswar* on the wound. Ikraam did not remove his cap for three days to hide the wound from his father.

After completing his primary education, Ikraam moved to a secondary school in another village about 10 km away from his home. Ikraam lost all his friends who went to different schools and, as a result, he felt both lonely and homesick living with this aunt, from where he could only visit his home every weekend. The new school was quite different from the previous one because here, teachers were specialized in each subject and there were also more students. Ikraam felt very uneasy in secondary school till the time that one of his cousins was admitted to the same school.

Mathematics was Ikraam's favourite subject; however, he also developed an interest in science because the science teacher taught students very well. For Matriculation, on his parents' advice, Ikraam chose to study science, as his father wanted him to become a doctor, though he was not sure what he would do with science. Having teachers who could teach science and mathematics was always a problem in his schools. Ikraam still remembers his science teacher in Class 9 who taught differently; he engaged the students in practical work and also provided explanations. During Ikraam's life as a student of science, this

teacher's teaching had impressed him the most. The teacher's main characteristic was that he involved the students in learning experiences and, most importantly, whenever the students faced a problem they could easily approach him.

Other experiences of learning were based on rote learning of the scientific concepts. For example, Ikraam had memorized the definition of atom, but he did not understand what an atom was. He knew the formula of water but did not know what H and O stood for. Whenever students asked their teachers for an explanation, they did not get a satisfactory response. They studied science without relating it to their daily lives. In such a situation, science seemed hard and difficult for him; Ikraam reflects that he could have become a doctor if he had learned science with understanding.

After completing his school education Ikraam joined the Degree College Chitral. He chose to study biology in spite of his interest in mathematics. During college, his studies went well but he got into a religious argument with one of his classmates; as a result, he left the college and was sent to Karachi. In Karachi, he joined the FSc programme in a local Government College. The standard of studies was not very high and he could not do well in FSc, so he then started BSc in a Federal Government programme in Karachi.

Due to financial problems, Ikraam was unable to continue his academic education after graduating; however, he managed to find a job in an office. Knowledge of computers was essential in his office so he joined a Diploma Programme in Computers. His interest in computers increased steadily and, through his teachers, he was sent to the Dubai branch of his institution as an instructor. Then, due to the incident known as "9/11" his job in Dubai could not be continued and he ended up joining the same institute in Karachi as an instructor. However, he felt that his own learning had stopped and he also wanted to serve his community so he offered his services to the school as a computer teacher and continued to work in the institute on a part-time basis.

Computer classes were held on a weekly basis at the school where Ikraam taught. Students would come to the computer lab in different groups and, usually, two or three students would share one computer. Ikraam taught basic computer skills to students; however, as computer teaching began to be integrated into subject teaching, Ikraam was asked to teach science to Class 8 and this is how he became a science teacher.

In the beginning, Ikraam had to spend a great deal of time to prepare himself before going to teach the students. During his teaching, Ikraam tried to relate science concepts to the students' daily lives. The students would read sections from the book and he would explain the content to them, and then dictate notes that the students copied and memorized. In short, he taught exactly how he was taught, encouraging rote memorization. He had a superficial understanding about science and how it could be learned and taught. While Ikraam did realize that the traditional chalk and talk method was ineffective, he did not know how else to teach.

Ikraam had entered into the teaching profession without getting any professional training. In June 2003, he was given the opportunity to attend a professional development course at AKU-IED. The environment of the classroom and the attitude of the facilitators were very friendly and encouraging and he slowly gained confidence. According to Ikraam he gained immensely from the course at AKU-IED. He has referred to the training as a major turning point in his professional life as a teacher. He got ample opportunities to enhance both his content knowledge and his pedagogical skills. In particular, Ikraam learnt about teaching strategies such as cooperative learning, group work, activity-based teaching and other child-centred teaching approaches—all of which were entirely new for him. He learnt that it is extremely important to elicit students' prior knowledge about everyday science phenomenon to understand their misconceptions and to provide them opportunities to correct them. This course also enhanced his skills in resource development. Now when Ikraam sees things such as a straw, box or a plastic bottle, he thinks of ways to use these materials as resources in his science teaching. He previously thought that because he does not have a laboratory, he could not teach students about things such as acids and bases, but he learnt that everyday materials such as lemon juice could be used to teach these topics. Before attending this course, he understood the curriculum to be the textbook and that he had to teach it. He now understands that the curriculum includes all the learning experiences that are provided to the students for their holistic development. Now, he uses the textbook as just one of many resources rather than something to be followed rigidly. Ikraam, however, feels that though he has learnt much he still has a lot to learn to improve his pedagogical skills.

Ikraam is an eldest child and his parents are keen to see him married, but he feels that, first, he has to fulfil his school sponsorship commitments. Although he has been teaching for many years but he does not have a formal degree. He is very ambitious to continue his professional growth and get a formal degree in

teaching by enrolling into a Bachelor of Education (BEd) programme. He is optimistic that with a professional degree he will be able to get a job in the government education department or even open his own school and serve the community. Apart from his school activities, he does social work in his free time.

Issues related to status

Teaching does not necessarily require formal training

Munazza was a teacher in a private school even before she completed her Bachelor degree. Similarly, Gul was exposed to informal teaching initially in a tuition centre and then in a private school before he chose to take it up formally by getting training. Ikraam was also able to take up teaching before he formally made a decision to take up teaching as a career. Hence, exposure to teaching in private schools or in coaching centres encourages teachers to “become teachers” in the “informal” sense. However, it is seen in all three life histories that teachers at some point have to make a “formal” decision to take up teaching as a career.

Becoming a teacher is a complex process and, as a result, one sees in the life histories that two of the teachers say they decided to become teachers “formally” much after they were already teaching for some time. This formalization was seen by Gul in the form of undertaking formal training such as a BEd programme. Similarly, Ikraam also expressed his desire to do his BEd as a route to a government job as a teacher. It is interesting to note that despite both Ikraam’s and Gul’s open admiration for the professional training offered by AKU-IED, both refer to the BEd as the formal path to teaching. Munazza, in contrast to Gul and Ikraam, has had no formal teacher training at all and, for a number of reasons, she has expressed no desire to engage in any form of professional development. Instead, she has chosen to do her Masters in Islamic Studies.

However, this ability to drift into teaching is the very aspect of teaching that reduces the status of teachers. Teachers who have not invested any time in an educational institution, learning how to teach, do not see themselves as professionals. Hence, it is relatively easy for individual to enter and leave the profession. In his story, Ikraam has mentioned the possibility of opening a computer institute in his residential colony. There is not tacit but a very open understanding that if one is not doing “anything else” then one can start teaching. Or, if there is a break in formal studies than one can start teaching in

a private school. One could argue that this is also the case of college and university teachers—they too do not require any teacher education before beginning to teach. However, they are required to have at least a Master's degree in their subject before they can teach at college or university level. Hence, subject expertise is required. In addition, there is such severe competition for the few college lecturers' positions available in both public and private sectors that it discourages "drifting" into such a position.

Gender

From the three life histories it seems that gender has a huge impact on the choice of a profession, but the stories also break some stereotypes. It is Munazza rather than Gul or Ikraam, who clearly did not want to become a teacher but her father in particular felt that this was a profession more appropriate for women. Despite her obvious commitment to her students, Munazza yearns for another life—in a science laboratory. And, contrary to general stereotyping it is both Ikraam and Gul who want to become teachers. Gul leaves a job as an engineering associate to continue with his teaching.

Notwithstanding the above, the patriarchal nature of Pakistani society is reinforced in the roles played by the three teachers. Munazza, largely due to her father's wishes, continued to teach after her BSc rather than take up a job in pathological laboratory. However, the two men, despite teaching being seen as a vocation of less status and value still get their way and decide to teach. That the decision to teach remained in the hands of the male teachers but was made by others for the female teacher is an interesting dimension. Lortie (1975) has also shown his awareness of a gender division in teaching. He has reported that women teachers in their twenties do not get deeply involved in their careers as they are "hedging their bets" to cover contingencies related to husband and children. These socio-cultural dimensions affect teaching because they have impact on the professional development of teachers. This is one reason that Munazza says, "*agar chhorni pari tu chhor doongi* (if I have to leave [teaching], I will)."

Young female teachers are at a very difficult stage of their lives—a "waiting stage" where they cannot make many long-term decisions about their lives because the big decisions of marriage and career are yet to be made. Hence, they do not commit to professional development in the way that we see Gul and Ikraam. In a highly patriarchal society like ours, men are "allowed" to accept and take-up whatever sponsorship commitments that they make and can be sure that

their family will support them in everyway. However, this is not the case with women. Munazza is not sure whether she'll be able to honour any commitments she makes to her school if decisions related to her marriage are made.

Teachers as transmitters of knowledge, not creators

All three teachers conceptualize teaching as transmitting all the knowledge that they have about a subject to their students through appropriate pedagogical strategies. Even the two teachers who have had professional development through AKU-IED have a relatively superficial understanding of their role as reflective practitioners. Both Gul and Ikraam mention that they still need more professional development and need to learn from others, such as faculty of AKU-IED, to get a better understanding of pedagogy, evaluation and monitoring, and other similar areas. Except for a very brief mention by Gul of his experience as a researcher in the ADDIST programme, there is no mention of the development of knowledge by the teachers.

If teachers do not take ownership of the problems of their practice and continue to look to the University professors to offer solutions to the problems of their practice through research, then the profession of teaching will not grow. And if the profession does not grow or, even worse, is not even seen as a profession, teacher status will remain low.

Teaching as researching the interface of content and pedagogy

All three teachers have very clearly mentioned that they understood the content that they were expecting to teach much better through teaching it than by learning it as a student. What each one tacitly acknowledges is that "subject content" is not a fixed body of knowledge – it is different for different people. The subject content of say physics is different for a student and is different for a teacher. The teacher needs to know not only the main principles but also how best to teach it. With it goes the understanding of the nature of the subject and how best to make that come alive to the students, The iterative relation between the subject content and the pedagogy is itself a research process that has only been partially understood by educational researchers. This continues learning and researching is what keeps the challenge of teaching alive. Note that Ikraam left a more lucrative job in an office environment for teaching as he said he wanted to continue to learn. This conceptualization of teaching as a research process that is continuing whether explicit attention is given to it or not is area that could enhance teachers own self of self and their status in their own eyes.

Teaching practice and the socio-cultural, political and organizational environment of the teacher

Comparing again the lives of the three teachers, it seems that the two male teachers are very keen to become teachers. This does not appear to be the norm in urban areas where, because of the low status of teaching and low salaries men do not want to take up teaching. However, both the men covered in the studies are keen to become teachers. Gul gave up employment as an Associate Engineer to go back to teaching while Ikraam returned from Dubai and took up teaching as a computer teacher in a school. In contrast, it is Munazza who did not want to become a teacher and at the time of the study too she would have been willing to take up alternate employment that would use her knowledge of microbiology. All three teachers are urban-based; however, both the male teachers have connections to the North. Ikraam is from Chitral and Gul has connections to the NWFP. Does this account for the male teachers valuing becoming a teacher? Is being *Mohajir* (a descendent of immigrant), who are the most highly educated community in Karachi, responsible for Munazza's desire to go into a profession other than teaching? These are questions that will need more probing.

Discussion

Though this is a preliminary secondary analysis, it does bring into spotlight how strong and effective professional development can enhance the status of a profession in the eyes of the practitioners. All three teachers started teaching "informally" before they had made their final decisions to continue to teach as a career; yet, the two male teachers received, in their own words, professional development which were "turning points" in their lives. This helped them to see their own career and their role in it in a new light that enhanced their view of both teaching and their view of themselves. "Effective" professional development makes a huge difference in the way teachers' perceive themselves. Both Gul and Ikraam define AKU-IED's professional training as the turning point of their lives. Note that Gul also completed a Bachelor of Education (BEd) degree but the impact of that programme is not described as a critical factor in his life. Ikraam too attributes his professional development at AKU-IED as a life-changing experience. In contrast, Munazza, who has had no professional development despite teaching for eight years, and despite her commitment and sincerity to the profession, still thinks of the possibility of working in a laboratory at least for some time.

It is my claim that good professional development creates pride and a commitment to teaching that brings with it its own social status. Social status is a complex phenomenon and in Pakistan, professional pride and commitment and public recognition help to define it. Through their professional development Gul and Ikraam reached a stage where professional pride has helped them develop a deep value for what they are doing and this is evident from the way they story themselves. Hence, professional development is not only essential from the perspective of being an essential knowledge base for teaching but also from the concept of developing teacher status.

“Good” professional development can come only from trained, professional teacher educators. My biggest recommendation is that we should not only focus on teacher development but on the development of teacher educators as well – to pay attention to those who teach our teachers and to improve the conditions of their practice.

References

- Bertraux, D. (1992). *Biography and society: The life history approach in the social sciences*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications.
- Dollard, J. (1935). *Criteria for life history*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Estabrooks, C. A., Field, P. A. and Morse, J. M. (1994). Aggregating qualitative findings: An approach to theory development. *Qualitative Health Research*, 4(4): 503-11.
- Goodson, I. F. (1992). Studying teacher's lives: An emergent field. In I. F. Goodson (Ed.), *Studying Teacher's Lives*. (pp. 1-17). New York: Teachers College Press.
- Halai, N. (2002). *Munazza's story*. Unpublished Doctoral dissertation, University of Toronto, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, Toronto, Canada.
- Heaton, J. (2004). *Reworking qualitative data*. Thousand Oaks, CA.: Sage.
- Khan, M. I. (2004). *A study of secondary mathematics teacher's beliefs about the nature of mathematics*. Unpublished Masters dissertation, Aga Khan University, Institute for Educational Development, Karachi, Pakistan.

Lortie, D. C. (1975). *Schoolteacher: A sociological study*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Smith, L. M., Kleine, P. F., Prunty, J. P., & Dwyer, D. C. (1986). *Educational innovators: Then and now*. New York: Falmer Press.

Shah, M. Z. (2004). *Exploring a science teacher's conception about the nature of science through a life history approach*. Unpublished Masters dissertation, Aga Khan University, Institute for Educational Development, Karachi, Pakistan.