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Muhammad Khalifa
Editors

Handbook of Teachers' Voices in the Global South

Well-being, Development and Identity

Springer

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Ismail Hussein Amzat • Muhammad Khalifa
Editors

Handbook of Teachers' Voices in the Global South

Wellbeing, Development and Identity

With 50 Figures and 90 Tables

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Preface

Restoring Roots and Reclaiming Futures: A Decolonial and Ancestral Approach to Teacher Well-Being, Development, and Identity in the Global South

In a time of global educational transformation and uncertainty of Western education models, the well-being, growth, and identity of teachers stand at the heart of efforts to build more inclusive, resilient, and equitable learning communities. As a former teacher who taught in both Global South and Western contexts, I have come to believe that decolonization of Western and Eurocentric ways of leading is our way to a humanizing future in education. Indeed, the prevailing frameworks that shape teacher policies and practices often emerge from Eurocentric logics, "universalism" pedagogies, and economic imperatives rooted in colonial hierarchies of knowledge and organization. These paradigms, which are often generalized as normal, frequently neglect the contextual, cultural, spiritual, and historical dimensions that shape teaching as both a labor and a vocation—particularly in the Global South. This book is both a scholarly and practical offering: it centers the voices of teachers whose lived experiences, ancestral epistemologies, and community-rooted struggles are too often excluded from mainstream educational discourse.

At its core, this volume is guided by **decolonial** and **ancestral knowledge systems** located in the Global South. Decoloniality calls us to examine not only the legacies of colonial occupation in education but also the persistence of coloniality—the hidden curriculum of marginalization, organizational hierarchy, and cultural/ancestral erasure that persists in postcolonial and neocolonial structures. Ancestral knowledges, meanwhile, remind us that teaching has long been a sacred act of transmission, care, and transformation. It is not merely a top-down exercise in knowledgeable instructors imparting information to students and communities void of knowledge. Across many Indigenous and Global South cultures, teaching is relational—it is embedded in spiritual traditions, kinship networks, oral storytelling, and intergenerational wisdom. To separate the teacher from these cultural roots is to diminish not only their professional identity but their holistic humanity.

The chapters in this book honor that humanity. They offer more than academic insight—they share the emotional, social, cognitive, and spiritual dimensions of what it means to be a teacher. From the schools of Indonesia to the classrooms of

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Ghana, the book foregrounds not what teachers lack, but what they carry: resilience, relational wisdom, local and community experiences, moral purpose, and a deep commitment to students and communities, often in spite of systems that have failed them. In this sense, the text is not merely a book—it is a collective archive of lived experience, an act of testimony, and a space of epistemic healing.

Part I: Well-Beings (Social, Psychological, Cognitive)

The first part of the book is a testament to the multidimensional struggles and strategies of educators working under intense emotional and institutional pressures. Teachers from Indonesia, Malaysia, Nigeria, Bangladesh, the Arab region, the Philippines, and Brunei Darussalam share stories that vividly illustrate the burdens of **emotional labor**, the silent toll of **compassion fatigue**, and the spiritual and psychological toll of working within systems that rarely reciprocate care. Yet these chapters also reveal culturally grounded strategies for restoring balance and joy in the profession.

In Indonesia, for instance, the practice of promoting **empathy** as a counterbalance to burnout reflects both a psychological and spiritual intervention—reminding us that emotional well-being is collective, not individual. In Malaysia, the chapter "You Scratch My Back and I'll Scratch Yours" explores the interpersonal trust between teachers and principals as a key component of teacher motivation and relational safety—highlighting trust not as a management tool but as a culturally embedded value. In the Arab region, school climate and cultural mismatches emerge as critical stressors, while in Bangladesh and the Philippines, **quiet quitting**, **katatagan**, and **pakikipagkapwa** emerge as both coping mechanisms and subtle acts of resistance.

Importantly, these chapters do not merely diagnose crisis—they propose decolonial solutions rooted in **community solidarity**, **spiritual practice**, and **cultural worldviews**. In Brunei, the Quranic reading culture is not merely devotional—it becomes a wellspring of inner strength, collective orientation, and moral grounding for teachers facing modern challenges. In Ghana, motivation and satisfaction are shown to be inseparable from cultural and policy contexts. The cumulative effect of this section is clear: teacher well-being is a deeply situated and intersectional condition, shaped by policy and practice but also by ancestral, social, and spiritual ecosystems.

Part II: Teacher Development

The second part of the book expands the discussion to encompass the **professional trajectories**, **training practices**, and **capacity-building** experiences of teachers across the Global South. Yet rather than replicate the top-down, technocratic models so often imposed on Southern education systems, these chapters emphasize **development as transformation**—a process grounded in lived experience, mutual learning, and cultural relevance.

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From untrained teachers in the Solomon Islands to adaptive aquatic modules for special needs teachers in Southeast Asia, these narratives affirm that **teacher development must begin with listening**. Too often, development is seen as a deficit-based exercise, where teachers are presumed to be lacking in skill or adaptability. This book resists that framing. In Algeria, we see how the linguistic shift from French to English complicates identity and pedagogy, while in Namibia and South Africa, teacher voices reveal the systemic challenges of institutional neglect and opportunity gaps.

Particularly powerful is the inclusion of chapters that challenge ageist and technocratic assumptions—such as the exploration of **technology learning among older Filipino teachers**, and how **TVET policies in Ethiopia** must address not only skills training but the broader political and economic ecosystem. These stories underscore that "development" cannot be disentangled from **structural conditions**, **emotional labor**, or **personal identity**. When teachers in Indonesia use **local wisdom** to frame professionalism, they are enacting a form of knowledge sovereignty—where development is not about conforming to imported standards, but revitalizing local ways of knowing and leading.

Likewise, the chapter from Saudi Arabia on girls' physical education is a case study in how policy, gender, and cultural change intersect. Pakistani teachers' efforts in inclusive and innovative behavior reflect the growing demand for **inclusive pedagogies** that do not simply accommodate but celebrate difference. Throughout Part II, we witness how mentorship, peer support, and spiritual-pedagogical practices (such as in Nigeria's CPD models) create conditions for **sustainable and dignified growth**.

Part III: Teacher Identity

The final part brings the most intimate and often contested aspects of teaching into focus: **identity**, **belonging**, and **professional selfhood**. In contrast to essentialist or static views of teacher identity, these chapters show identity as dynamic—negotiated through **performance appraisals**, **linguistic positionality**, **spiritual beliefs**, and **institutional recognition**.

For instance, the chapter on **national program teachers in GCC countries** exposes how identity is shaped by the tensions between local curricula and global expectations. In Kenya, performance appraisal data becomes a site for both validation and alienation. In the Philippines and Thailand, teacher candidates and English language teachers confront stereotypes tied to **nativeness**, prestige, and global English hierarchies. These experiences reflect the **colonial residues of language and professionalism**, where legitimacy is still tethered to Western norms. But they also offer tremendous promise in what the Global South has to offer to education everywhere—that being that power and knowledge is **embodied** and **experiential**, and that teacher expertise is not within books, but **within peoples**.

Meanwhile, in Brunei, **Islamic Religious Knowledge (IRK) teachers** struggle to balance institutional demands with personal conviction—a tension familiar to many

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educators who teach within religious frameworks in secularizing or neoliberal educational environments. In India and South Africa, the chapters delve into **belief systems**, **assessment philosophies**, and **intercultural competencies**, all of which influence how teachers perceive their roles and enact their values.

Most profound are the insights on **aspired versus unwanted selves**, which emerge in Bosnia and Herzegovina, where self-regulation becomes a means of survival and agency. These identity negotiations are not merely psychological—they are deeply sociopolitical, connected to colonial histories, nation-building narratives, and global discourses of "quality" teaching. Teachers across these contexts are not only professionals—they are cultural agents, moral leaders, and epistemic bridges.

Conclusion: Toward Epistemic Healing and Collective Flourishing

This book is not an endpoint—it is a beginning. A beginning of re-centering teacher experiences in global education dialogue. A beginning of embracing **plural epistemologies** that validate relationality, spirituality, embodied experiences, and the wisdom of place. And a beginning of recognizing that the Global South is not a space of lack, but a geography of abundance—of ancestral knowledge, collective strength, and pedagogical creativity. The book calls on scholars, policymakers, and practitioners to shift their gaze: from extraction to reciprocity and reconstruction, from standardization to contextualization and embodiment, from reform to restoration and dreaming. Let this volume serve as a reminder that in restoring the dignity, voice, and well-being of teachers, we are doing more than improving education—we are healing futures, one story at a time.

Columbus, OH, USA
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Muhammad Khalifa

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