Expanding teacher work roles: a resource for retention or a recipe for overwork?

Lora Bartlett⋆

Institute of Education, University of London, UK

This paper illuminates the tensions between the rhetoric and presumed rewards of an expanded conception of teachers' work and the work demands and strains introduced by such a conception. Based on data collected in the United States, this paper draws on multi-day, 24-hour time and task diaries recorded by case-study teachers, together with ethnographic interviews and observations, to illuminate the disjuncture between reform rhetoric and workplace demands. I use these data to assess the usefulness of existing theories of overwork as they may apply to teachers and teaching. This paper suggests that teacher overwork is, in part, a result of the expansion of teacher work roles. The argument unfolds in three parts. First, teachers' work roles have been expanded but structural supports for the expansion have been uneven. Second, the nature and extent of organizational support influences teacher experience of role expansion and, finally, teachers who embrace the expanded role conception strive to sustain it even in the absence of organizational supports. This results in overwork: here overwork is taken to mean working beyond the contractual day, week and year. Teachers' contracts specify their working day; when they work beyond this time without pay, then they are overworking. Current explanations of overwork do not adequately account for the case of teachers' overwork.

The teaching workforce

There are over 2.5 million K-12 teachers working at almost 90,000 public schools in the USA. As a profession, it makes up 4% of the civilian workforce. There are twice as many teachers as registered nurses and five times as many teachers as lawyers (Ingersoll, 2001); 75% of teachers are women and the majority of those teachers have dependants. Public school teaching has traditionally been a major avenue to the middle class for many people. Although there is a large volume of research on teachers and teaching, almost none of it examines the lives of teachers beyond the classroom

⋆Institute of Education, University of London, 59 Gordon Square, London WC1H 0NT, UK. Email: L.Bartlett@ioe.ac.uk or lorab@ucsc.edu

and the school or takes any account of the relationship between the workplace and family responsibilities.

In the public mind, and in the view of many scholars, teaching has been seen as easy work that is compatible with family life. However, in recent years the work demands on teachers have increased while the relative compensation of teachers—in relation to other professionals of comparable education—has decreased (Liu *et al.*, 2000). This has led to increased occupational stress, tension in the negotiation of the work–family balance and, I would argue, an increase in teacher attrition. The rates of teacher turnover are higher than in other occupations. While reports vary, most agree that 40% to 50% of teachers leave the profession within the first five years of teaching. In 1994/95, 14.3% of all teachers left the profession. (In the mid-1990s, the turnover rate of registered nurses was 12%.) Only 24% of that turnover can be accounted for by retirements. A full 45% of teacher attrition (leaving the profession) and 33% of teacher migration (leaving one school for another) is credited to personal reasons like pregnancy, childrearing and health problems (see Ingersoll, 2001).

Reforming teachers' roles

The mass media and many policy-makers, together with a general folkloric perspective, often depict teaching as a low-demand occupation requiring little time and posing few difficulties. The argument goes something like this: teachers, compared to other Americans, appear to have short work-days, free weekends and long summer holidays. Furthermore, tenure insulates teachers from job insecurity and allows them to keep their jobs regardless of competence, effort or investment. The low pay and low status of teaching contributes to the sense that people who teach have few other options. Teaching emerges from these portraits as easy work with congenial working conditions.

Viewed solely from a contractual perspective, this portrait appears credible. Teachers at a typical California high school are contracted to work for 7 hours 15 minutes a day.[1] The instructional day starts at 8.00 a.m. and ends at 3.00 p.m. The teachers' contract requires them to arrive at school 10 minutes before the first bell, guarantees them a 30-minute duty–free lunch, allows for two after-school meetings a month, mandates a shortened day when school-wide evening meetings are scheduled and ensures they receive 450 minutes of preparation time a week. Based on these guidelines, a teacher could conceivably arrive at school at 7.50 a.m., teach three classes,[2] do all her planning and grading in her 90-minute preparation period, and leave school 5 minutes after the final bell at about 3.05 p.m.

These working conditions are often said to make it an ideal women's—or more specifically—mothers' profession. And despite some increase in the numbers of male teachers, teaching is still predominately a female profession. In 1993/94, 73% of all teachers in America were female and just over 45% of all new teachers had dependants (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2000a, 2000b). Teaching is supposedly a good career for a mother because it allows her to: (1) be home after-school with her children, (2) be off work during her children's school vacations and

(3) move in and out of the profession with minimal negative consequences to income, status and skill (Lortie, 1975). Teaching, in this scenario, permits women to balance work and family.

Sociological studies of teaching as an occupation (Lortie, 1975) suggest that some women have been attracted to teaching precisely for its presumed compatibility with family life. Other studies, however, indicate that teachers who hold firmly to an "8 to 3" conception of teaching incur the contempt of their colleagues. Virtually all in-depth portraits of teachers' work show it to be difficult, complex and emotionally draining work entailing long out-of-classroom hours.[3]

Indeed, contractual provisions represent an interesting window on the relationship between formal specifications and ordinary realities of teaching. In addition to specifying working hours and days, union contracts generally specify the number of students that teachers can see in a day, the number of teaching minutes and the frequency and type of after-school activities they can be asked to perform. In fact, teachers dramatically slow and disrupt the work of a school when labour actions result in work that is in strict compliance with the terms of the contract, or simply 'working to rule'. Eliminating the volunteer hours that teachers contribute to a school's work has proven to be an effective bargaining tool in labour disputes (Bascia, 1994; Maran, 2000). Of course, the short-term effectiveness of 'working to rule' also points to enduring labour conditions that work to extract large amounts of unpaid labour from teachers (see Connell, 1985).

Further, the expectations made of teachers are expanding. For at least two decades, advocates of teaching reforms—especially those focused on professionalization—have taken pride in a steady expansion of teachers' work roles and responsibilities. Summing up these trends, Lieberman and Miller (2000) distinguish an *expanded* role in part on the basis of teachers' leadership responsibilities and involvement in reform-oriented activity beyond the classroom. Teachers steward many aspects of the school including responsibilities like the school's assessment systems, pedagogical practices, and curriculum development. They work collaboratively and seek to coordinate student experience across the school. These new social realities of teaching represent a dramatic shift in the work environment and expectations made on teachers (see Figure 1).

In the USA this expanded conception of teaching is a product of the education reform movement, initiated by the 1983 US Department of Education report *A Nation at Risk* that called for a boosting of educational standards and increased forms of measurement to ensure achievement. This was soon followed by a Carnegie Report that situated teacher role and school structure at the centre of this change process. *A Nation Prepared: Teachers for the 21st Century* (1986) called for a new and expanded conception of the teacher role in schools. The schools it envisaged had teachers as decision-makers and administrative and reform leaders.

Education reformers have advocated for this expansion in the quest for increased teacher satisfaction and commitment. A desire to attract and retain well-educated, motivated and engaged teachers underlies many of these reforms. Reformers argue that teachers who collaborate in the leadership of the school, look for their

From	To
Individualism	Professional Community
Teaching at the center	Learning at the center
Technical work	Inquiry into practice
Controlled work	Accountability
Managed work	Leadership
Classroom concerns	Whole-school concerns and beyond
A weak knowledge base	A broad knowledge base

(Source: Lieberman and Miller, 1999, p. 24)

Figure 1.   New social realities of teaching

professional development in the every-day collegial work of the school and who see themselves as members of a whole-school community are more likely to remain engaged and committed to their work (see e.g. Bryk & Driscoll 1988; Miller, 1999; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001).

However, the enactment of this expanded role differs greatly depending on the particulars of school organization, policy and practice. Some evidence is beginning to show that teachers who embrace the expanded role may experience greater satisfaction and commitment to the profession, but they may also experience a work overload that exhausts their enthusiasm and erodes their commitment (Bartlett, 2001; Lohman & Woolf, 2001; VanVeen *et al.*, 2001). In this paper, I find that one factor influencing these differing responses is the organizational support for teachers' work. Schools that have integrated the expanded teaching role into the regular structure of the working day are more likely to sustain the engagement and commitment of their teachers; while schools that have layered the expanded aspects of the role on to an unaltered and already full traditional teaching schedule are more likely to overload and exhaust their teachers. The cases explored in this paper illuminate the differing teacher experience of the role expansion reforms as they are enacted in their respective workplaces, and why some teachers persist with the expanded role conception despite the lack of organizational support.

Methods

This paper highlights the work experiences of secondary school teachers in two Californian high schools. To contextualize the working lives of these teachers, I draw on the extensive qualitative and ethnographic data, collected over two years (1998–2000), that trace the experience of teachers at East and South High Schools with interviews, observations, time diaries and document analysis. Teacher practice was

sampled sequentially—creating a stream of practice sample that permits a highly contextualized look at the work and experience of teachers.

For the purpose of this analysis, I rely principally on the interviews, observations and time diaries[4] of 12 East High School English teachers and 14 South High School humanities teachers. In-depth interviews with open-ended questions regarding professional commitments, role conceptions and priorities were conducted with every teacher. Altogether, the dataset provides 32 interviews with teachers of English or humanities conducted over an 18-month period. This represents 100 percent of the full time English teachers at East and 85% of the full-time humanities teachers at South.[5] All teachers were observed in multiple work contexts. These data were used to make determinations relied upon in this analysis, including the teacher leadership charts and patterns of teacher seniority and turnover.

It is important to note that the project from which the data are drawn did not set out to study teacher work time or the specific consequences of an expanded professional conception, but rather to study teachers' experience of and capacity for school reform. In particular, one strand of the study set out to understand the relationship between teachers' conception of what it meant to be a good teacher and their commitments to work and orientation to reform. Unexpectedly, a preponderance of teachers with an expanded professional conception was encountered in both schools. Admittedly, this could very well be the result of selecting reform active schools. At any rate, over time it was increasingly clear that despite the shared similarities in teacher conceptions, there was a marked difference in the support for teachers' work and in teachers' experience of the enactment of their conception. It was at that point that teachers at both schools were asked to keep time diaries, and that the research team undertook an analysis of resource allocations and completed interviews were reviewed for references to work supports, strains, expectations and frustrations. Interviews conducted after the focus shifted to the relationship among teacher work time, supports for work and commitment were more focused specifically on that area.

The main areas of analysis relied on in this paper are: Work-time determinations and definitions of overwork, support for teachers' work, teacher seniority and experience, and teacher priorities, commitments and conceptions. Collectively, these streams of analysis allow a multifaceted look at the relationship among teachers' work conceptions, organizational support for teachers' work and patterns of overwork.

Work time determinations and definitions of overwork

As stated previously, the work-time determinations are based on the time diaries of 12 East High School English teachers and 14 South High School humanities teachers. Each teacher kept a 24-hour time and task diary for three days in which they recorded their primary activities, indicated if they were simultaneously engaged in any secondary activities; and where they were at the time (in particular, they were asked to indicate if they were at home or at work). Additionally, individual respondents were asked if their work time for each day was typical, less than typical or more than typical. In determining individual daily work-hours, I counted any time that, on days

that they identified as typical, they were engaged in a work activity as work time, even if they were engaged in a non-work activity simultaneously and regardless of where the activity took place. For example, if a teacher spent a half-hour at home in the evening talking to a colleague on the phone regarding the next day's lesson plans while she cooked dinner, then I counted the whole half-hour as work time.[6] Collective work time was determined by averaging the working hours, of teachers at each school, of the days identified as typical. In this way, the average work-hours of the South humanities and East English department were determined.

Overwork is defined as any work that exceeds the teaching contract; however, the comparison of work-hours between the two case-study schools is more significant in this analysis than a comparison between contract hours and real hours.

Support for teachers' work

Support for teachers' work can come in many forms and encompasses the intrinsic and the extrinsic, the formal and the informal, the emotional and the structural. This analysis focuses on the extrinsic, formal and structural support of time and money provided for the work of the expanded role. In particular, I examine the financial and time resources allocated by the formal school structures in support of teachers' leadership roles.

Teacher seniority and experience

Teachers' years of teaching experience and years at a particular case-study school were self-reported in interviews with individual teachers. This was verified by analysis of each school's master-schedules for three consecutive years.

Teacher priorities, commitments and conceptions

In multiple interviews over a period of two years, teachers were asked about their priorities as teachers, conception of what it means to be a good teacher and their decisions about how to use their time and direct their energy. Many of those interviews were based on detailed observations of the individual teacher's work, as well as the teacher's time diaries. Teachers were asked at each interview about their satisfaction with teaching and with their school, to discuss their current priorities and commitments and to make personal career projections for the next one to five years. Individual career trajectories were determined by drawing on these interviews, observation and time diaries.

The schools and teachers

East High School's English teachers and South High School's humanities[7] teachers share a commitment to the expanded role conception—particularly as it pertains to leadership and collaboration. At East, the English teachers work in grade-level teams

to develop and coordinate curricula keyed to department assessments. As a department, they have embraced a concept of teachers' role that transcends the boundaries of the classroom as they concern themselves with the language and literacy of all students across the curriculum. They are committed to collective work, ambitious conceptions of classroom teaching, inquiry into their own practice, accountability, teacher leadership and department concerns. East English teachers hold themselves accountable for the learning of all students, not just the students they see daily. This broadly focused accountability motivates much of their collaborative and leadership work.

Similarly, South's humanities teachers expect to be school leaders in addition to being humanities teachers. Like the East English teachers, the South teachers work in grade-level teams to collaboratively develop curricula and create assessment rubrics. They participate in consensus decision-making as a whole staff, and serve on a variety of leadership committees whose responsibilities range from developing school-wide assessment systems to budgeting and scheduling. South's Humanities teachers are broadly involved in the work of the school as leaders and decision-makers.

Despite the similarities between the teachers' commitment to and involvement with the work of the expanded teacher, the lived experiences of the teachers vary greatly by school. Teachers at South experience significant organizational support for the expanded role, while teachers at East receive little or no support. In particular, teachers at the two schools receive greatly different arrangements of time and compensation for their leadership and collaborative work.

As shown in Table 1, South teachers always receive some compensation for their leadership work. They almost always receive financial compensation. In the absence of financial compensation they receive adjustments to their workload. As a rule, South High School pays teachers for any work undertaken outside of the regularly scheduled work-day. Ongoing leadership roles, like department heads, school governance team members and special project coordinators receive a stipend. Teachers who opt to participate in school-based research or curriculum development groups (teacher work groups) receive hourly pay for any work that extends beyond the normal work-day and year. The school has minimized the cost of this work by providing time for collaborative work. Each Wednesday, the students are released early for community service work and the teachers get time, during their regular working day, for their collaborations.

Table 1. Organizational support for leadership roles by school

Role	South High		East High	
	Money	Time	Money	Time
Department Head	$1,632	None	$1,800	None
Governance Team	$2,200	None	None	None
Teacher work Groups	$20 an hour	Wednesdays	None	None

In comparison, East High's English teachers receive very little support for their leadership and collaborative work (see Table 1). Few leadership roles are compensated financially and workload reduction is even more rare. Teachers who work on collaborative projects, like curriculum groups, do so in their own time—typically, after school and in summer—and without any form of financial compensation. The assumption of an ongoing leadership role like the department head is compensated with a stipend but the workload far exceeds that of South's department heads. While the East English department head does earn $200 more than the South department head, the East English department head has a significantly heavier workload. At South and at East, department heads are responsible for coordinating department meetings, overseeing the budget and facilitating the flow of information between the department and the academic council. In addition, East's English department head is also responsible for budgeting and facilitating department meetings and must serve on the school's governance council.[8] A South teacher who serves as both a department contact and governance council member makes $3832—that is, more than twice the stipend of the East English department head. East teachers do not receive any workload adjustments when they assume a leadership role. East has made no accommodation comparable to South's weekly teacher work afternoon.

In their symbolic expressions of teacher work expectations, South and East High represent very different conceptions of the teacher role. East's lack of material supports for the expanded role, in the form of time and compensation, signals a more narrow and traditional conception of the teacher role. South's support signals its recognition that teachers' roles have expanded and efforts must be made to ensure teachers are compensated for the new leadership and collaborative responsibilities they have undertaken. A mismatch between teachers' role conception and an organization's role conception, as manifested in its material supports, creates incongruous conditions that can have significant consequences for teachers' work.[9]

Expanded roles and overwork

Teachers at both schools share a commitment to the expanded teaching role, but they do not share an experience of the expanded teaching role. South teachers, whose work is supported by organizational policies, practices and structures, are able to undertake the leadership work without adding significantly to their work-day. For the East teachers, who receive little support for this work, sustaining the expanded role requires uncompensated and longer work-hours.

East's lack of support for the expanded role has dramatic and devastating consequences for its English teachers. Lacking time during the work-day for the collaborative leadership work they embrace, the East English teachers accommodate it by extending their working day. East's teachers typically work 11.5 hours a day. In comparison, South's teachers typically work just 8.5 hours a day.[10] Teacher meetings take up most of the three extra daily hours. An analysis of just one English teacher's time use reveals at least 13 after-school committee meetings monthly.[11] If we assume

23 school days a month, then 56% of those days include an after-school meeting and that does not account for the meeting preparation and follow-up work.

Work-hour differentials are not the only differences between teachers at East and South High Schools. Teacher turnover for East English teachers is much higher and the average seniority level much lower than for South humanities teachers. Between September 1998 and June 2001, East High School lost half (six of the 12) of its English teachers. During this same time, less than 15% (two of 14) of South's human-ities teachers exited the school. East's high turnover negatively affected the seniority of its teaching staff. Few English teachers made it past the five-year mark. In the spring 2000, East's average seniority was only 3.25 years in teaching, while South's average seniority was 9.8 years in teaching.[12] All but two of East's English teachers had fewer than five years' teaching experience, while only two of South's teachers had fewer than five years' teaching experience. Twelve of South's teachers had taught for more than five years, compared to only two at East.

This analysis is not intended to draw a causal relationship between the long work-hours at East and its high turnover and low seniority levels. Many factors unexamined here may contribute to these conditions. Teachers may be responding to bigger picture issues like changes in the policy context, or the high turnover of East's teacher may be merely an unfortunate coincidence. However, the differences between East and South's work times and organizational supports, coupled with the turnover and seniority patterns, do suggest a plausible relationship.

Additionally, the pattern of overwork at East High School is negatively affecting both teachers' work and home lives. Seven of the 12 East English teachers explicitly reference, in interviews, the strain that overwork is putting on their lives.[13] Six of the seven feel that, despite their long work-hours, they are not able to live up to their work ideal. All seven of them report the long hours they work makes their home lives less satisfying. They complain of strained relationships with partners, lost creative pursuits and lack of sleep. They are torn between living up to their work conceptions and having a life outside of school—yet feeling dissatisfied with both.

A vivid example of these tensions lies in Karen Olsen's struggle to care emotion-ally and economically for her two young children, preserve her marriage and sustain her expanded work orientation and her commitment to teaching.[14] In her own words, she is the 'queen of limited time'. In her first three years at East, she addressed the time-squeeze by putting work before family. Her maternity leave was very brief[15] and she always worked nights, weekends and during summer. In her fourth year of teaching, she shifted her use of time by narrowing her conception of

Table 2. Teacher seniority, experience and turnover by school

	South	East
Teachers w/>5 yrs experience	12 of 14	2 of 12
Teachers' average seniority	9.8 years	3.25 years
Teacher Turnover (Sept. 1998–June 2001)	15%	50%

her work role and intentionally spending more time with her children. She cut out all activities that were not directly connected to care of her children or her students, unless they came with additional compensation.

Time and money drove many of Karen's decisions. Her middle-class teacher's salary, even coupled with her husband's contribution from his working-class job, was insufficient to sustain her family in the expensive San Francisco Bay area:

> You know, it's kind of an embarrassing thing, and … whatever. But it is very much tied to who I am as a teacher. But umm … you know? I can't afford to even stay married. We're $9000 a year below poverty. We're waiting for our Section-8 house, but it hasn't come in yet. And I'm going to have to get a room-mate really soon. My mom pays for my children's preschool and last year my expenses were $32 000 more than what I brought in.[16] And I noticed 'cause I just did this financial-aid form a couple of days ago, and I was shocked. I know my mom's been helping a lot, I know that we have to scrounge money here and there, I know that I have to do without all the time, and that my credit cards are in enormous debt that I'll never get out of. And so … I'm carrying all this burden, for what? And that's just really hard. And really demoralizing. To go to school, and you know? I have my room open at lunch, and the kids all make fun of me for having oatmeal all the time: 'All you ever eat is oatmeal. Gross.' I wanna say, you know what? It's because I decide to teach you kids and so … I'm too poor to afford a real lunch like you guys, you know? (Int.1/29/01, lines 925–93)

This financial and time crush caused Karen to narrow her expectations of herself as a teacher, in an effort to sustain herself as a teacher and her family's well-being. While in previous years she mentored student teachers, served as a grade captain, coordinated the student creative-writing magazine,[17] and so on, she now limited her professional activities to only those that either directly concerned her classes (i.e. curriculum development and grading) or increased her income. In her fourth year she started hosting Saturday school – an in-house detention programme.[18]

She still believes in the importance of teachers involving themselves in the leadership of the school and inquiring into practice—but she can't afford the time. She used to give up a lot of family time to sustain her professional identity but she is consciously changing that. She said:

> Now, I am really going to divide my time. Instead of before, when it was like work first and then my family. And now I am saying I am really going to spend half of my kids' day at school and the other half with them. (Int.1/29/01, lines 1943–5)

She was achieving this balance by teaching only two-thirds of her time. This may improve her family time, but it also increased her financial stress and has definite implications for her teaching identity.[19]

There is growing evidence that the East teachers are not the only ones overworking. Many teachers are working significantly longer hours than they are paid for and report that their work is not doable within the regularly scheduled work-day (Drago *et al.*, 1999, 2001; Pocock *et al.*, 2001; Pricewaterhouse Coopers, 2001). Given the possible costs to the profession that result from teacher stress and attrition, it is important that the causes of overwork are identified.

Explanations for teacher overwork

There are two main overwork theories in the work/family literature. The first is Juliet Schor's economic argument that overwork is motivated by the desire for increased income. Employers' financial incentives lure employees into ever-increasing cycles of overwork and consumption (Schor, 1991, 1999). The second is Arlie Hochschild's argument, that people increasingly prefer work to home. This preference is born of both employers' efforts to make work more appealing and employees' feelings of comfort and community at work, and the sense many people have that success and rewards at work are more easily earned and discerned than at home. The work of home life, particularly the relationship and childrearing aspects, are often fraught with ambiguity. This argument, that work has become home and home has become work, suggests people overwork because work rewards and satisfactions outstrip those of family life (Hochschild, 1997).

Neither of these theories, however, fully explains teacher overwork. Theories based in economic incentives prove least persuasive in this case. Much of the extra work undertaken by teachers is uncompensated. There is little to no financial gain for teachers who overwork. As teachers' incomes are generally fixed regardless of hours worked and salaries are generally only increased by seniority, it seems unlikely that many teachers are motivated to overwork by the promise of increased income.

Theories that give prominence to psychological and social rewards of work have more explanatory power. Hochschild's work thus goes further in explaining teachers' overwork.[20] There is some indication that a sense of community and a desire to belong at work can partially explain the East teachers' overwork. Traditionally, teachers work in isolation from other adults but the work of the expanded role—leadership and collaboration—bring teachers into greater contact with other adults during the work-day. Teachers experience this adult work contact positively and will go to some lengths to sustain it, even under conditions that do not support it (Bartlett, 2001). These findings are consistent with Hochschild's theories of overwork. Teachers, like other workers, want to live up to their colleagues' expectations, to experience a sense of belonging and to sustain a positive work identity.

However, Hochschild's work does not fully account for the overwork observed here among the case-study teachers. Several elements limit the explanatory value of this theory for teaching. First, schools are generally more primitive workplaces than those of the private sector employing individuals of comparable educational attainment. High school teachers commonly work in an emotionally and interpersonally intense environment (seeing 150–80 adolescents in their classes every day), without adequate work space, basic supplies, telephone access or even bathroom-breaks (Little, 2001). One of the common appeals of work to the workers studied by Hochschild is the social exchange with other adults, and this, too, is in short supply for high school teachers, who spend most of the work-day in the company of adolescents. Certainly the 'new company town' (Useem, 2000), with its many workplace amenities—i.e. on-site childcare, exercise facilities, catered meals, courier services—remains far outside the workplace experience of teachers. In effect, teachers trade their long hours for neither

high incomes nor added workplace comforts and services. (Ironically, in the few instances that childcare is offered on high school campuses, it is generally only available to the students' children.)

Additionally, teaching work is endowed with the same ambiguity of goals and rewards as the home, leaving teachers frequently unsure of their relative success (Lortie, 1975). Finally, teachers frequently take work home with them. This work invasion into the home runs counter to the idea that teachers might overwork to avoid home (Drago *et al.*, 2001). Further, there is some evidence that family responsibilities (like caring for a child) make it more difficult to sustain the work-hours and identity of the expanded work role (Bartlett, 2001; Lohman & Woolf, 2001).

This paper offers a further, but partial, explanation by attributing overwork to teachers' efforts to sustain a particular conception of teaching obligations in the absence of sufficient organizational supports. Without support for leadership work, especially time during the school day to accomplish it, teachers must undertake those aspects of their work outside of the regular school day. Certain puzzles remain. This argument does not yet account for why teachers persevere with the expanded role in the absence of organizational supports. Why don't the East English teachers simply abandon the expanded role conception? Many of them, as the turnover and seniority patterns and Karen's story suggest, do abandon it, but generally, only after a sustained period of striving to sustain it (see also Little, 1996). Because the nature and extent of teachers' overwork emerged only in the process of data analysis, the interview data offer incomplete evidence to account for teachers' persistence. However, the topic did come up spontaneously in several of the interviews. Relying on these instances, I propose three related explanations for that sustained striving: (1) teachers' equation of the expanded role with good teaching practice, (2) the moral imperative of teaching and (3) the desire to live up to the expectations held by themselves and their colleagues.

The East English teachers are unable to abandon the expanded role conception easily because it has become a standard of good teaching they have internalized. Abandoning the expanded role would require them to either accept a lower professional standard of themselves or redefine what it means to be a good teacher.[21] Patrick, the English department head, believed he and others were better teachers when they collaborated and coordinated their practice; collaboration got them closer to producing 'more of the right thing' than if they were to do it on their own:

> The reason I think it's worth while in this context is that, if we were not collaborating and trying to stay close to each other, so that we were working together on lessons … I think that there's a deepening of the curriculum when people are forced to talk about it or need to talk about it, or want to talk about it with each other. I think that there's evidence of that in my own teaching … we believe that collaboration eventually will produce the right thing, and more of the right thing than if I were to do it on my own. We believe that some of the things we're going to try to lace this collaboration around is the right thing to teach our kids. Therefore, we have got to do this thing, or nobody else will, kind of feeling. It's almost like a bunch of martyrs on some sticks that are nailed up around the building. (Int.10/20/99, lines 818–50)

Implicit in Patrick's statement is the moral imperative for teachers to serve students well, regardless of personal cost. It is important to do this work of good teaching—even if it martyrs them—because it is for the good of students. Others in the department shared Patrick's notion of good teaching. They set a very high professional standard and felt individually inadequate if they were unable to meet the expectations. Morag, a third-year English teacher and 9th-grade curriculum coordinator, and a new teacher mentor whose work-day averaged 11 hours, said:

> I just mean, you know, the day-to-day reality of teaching and the grading and the amount of work and trying to strike a balance and feeling like I'm constantly not doing the kind of job that I know I could do if other factors were available … So, you know, I guess if it doesn't continue to improve, the difference between what I think I can do and what I am doing, if that gap doesn't continue to get smaller to a point where I can say, okay, I can accept this gap, then I probably would consider pursuing the field of education in another way. (Int.2/9/99, lines 1401–9)

When asked whether the expectations might be too high and the support for the work too low, she first agreed but then upon reflection added:

> But there are teachers who can do things like that—like Patrick. So it's hard to bring that [the goals and expectations] down. I think sometimes it comes down for me—but then I look at other teachers and I say, my gosh, they can coach soccer, and they can work out every day, and they can still have their grades every week and they have children. (Int.2/9/99, lines 1446–51)

Margaret, in her third teaching year, also equated the expanded teaching role with good teaching practice and perceived it as increasing the quality of education offered to students. She offered both of these reasons as explanations for the extra leadership work she had assumed:

> … mainly because there's a need for it, I think. And everybody, it seems to me like … everyone has a lot more on their plate than they can handle at once, so, and yet there's still a really great need, um, and I think that maybe in the third year what got me interested in it [leadership roles] was just seeing that I could impact students more, perhaps even more effectively if there was more school cohesion, and there were more teachers talking about, if there are just more, you know, structural changes versus classroom individual, and to choose this book over another book. I think the quality of the education can increase. (Int.4/11/00, lines 709–16)

The opportunity to improve the quality of education for students motivated her to involve herself broadly in the work of the school but she admitted another reason she took on this work was collegial expectation:

> I do feel like it's expected … Um, I feel like where, I guess the school and the department, and … I mean, I think that by, through watching, like people's example, through the example of other teachers … It feels like, that other people do things and you're expected to do things too. (Int.4/11/00, lines 697–702)

Lynne, in her fourth year as an East English teacher, felt the same pressure to live up to her colleagues' expectations for collaborative curriculum development and

classroom coordination. She acknowledged the work was productive and valuable, but also difficult and time-consuming as provisions for that work were not made in their work schedule:

> So there's this expectation that we're doing all this work together and some people do a very good job of that. I probably do a less good job of that … I think that a lot of the work we've done at the 10th grade level as a team has been incredibly productive and valuable; and I really respect my colleagues and find that the work that they've contributed to be really helpful, but it means that you have to find time to work as a team. And that's time that is not built in to our schedule, and so I just always feel that to be a conflict. (Int.2/7/2000, lines 421–39)

As Lynne put it, teachers at East attempting the work of the expanded role got 'No room, no pay, no time'.

Conclusion

The cases presented here suggest reformers have succeeded in expanding the teacher role in some schools and among some teachers. However, where the adoption of the role and supports for it are uneven, teachers attempting to sustain it are vulnerable to overwork and its related stresses. In examining these cases of teacher work, I have highlighted an area of overwork previously unexplained by dominant theoretical frames.

Mainstream theories of overwork are insufficient to explain these cases. Teachers work excessive hours, despite lack of financial incentives and in the absence of compelling workplace supports. Teachers attempt to sustain the expanded role, even in the absence of organizational supports, in response to understandings and commitments to internal notions of good teaching, collegial and personal expectations and the moral imperative of teaching to provide the best possible educational opportunities for students.

There are significant features that distinguish teachers from the other occupations previously considered in other theoretical frames of overwork. Teachers do not generally receive additional pay or promotion for extra work and longer working hours do not result in higher pay. This suggests something else is motivating them to work the longer hours. Teaching is a human service and could be classified as care work. This research suggests an alternative theoretical frame of overwork for teaching—and, perhaps, other care work like the ministry and social work—based on the commitment of care workers to live up to moral obligations determined through individual and collective conceptions of what it means to be professionally responsible and proficient. Professionals who rely on intrinsic and psychic sources of motivations—like a personal sense of satisfaction based on serving students well and living up to notions of good teaching—may not be able to reconcile themselves to doing less. Letting work slide may be perceived as letting people slide, and thereby shirking a moral obligation and sacrificing an essential source of reward.

Additionally, this work illuminates the organization's ability to mediate overwork with policies and practices integral to its structure, rather than relying solely on

specialized work–family policies. The organizational structure of a school can support or constrain teachers' ability to fulfil their conceptions of good teaching within the regular work-day. A good fit between teachers' work expectations and the material supports of the organization enables teachers to complete their work without overworking, to minimize stress and to help sustain work commitment. South High supported the work of the expanded role with time allotted for collaborative and leadership work. In the absence of time, South High compensated its teachers financially for this work. By supporting the expanded role, South High made it possible for teachers to fulfil the expectations of that role without overworking. At South High the organization and the teachers appear to share the expanded conception of teacher role.

The case of East High suggests the teaching profession will pay the price of uneven role expansion with teacher overwork, stress and increased teacher attrition rates. This exploratory analysis highlights the importance of further research into the relationship between role expansion, teacher overwork and teacher attrition. Such research will contribute to practical understandings of teacher retention, as well as contribute the unique perspective of human service workers to overwork theory.

At a time when many countries are struggling with how to increase the supply of qualified teachers, it is important that public policy intended to address staffing short-falls attends to the sources of teacher stress and satisfaction. Too often efforts to increase teacher supply have emphasized recruitment efforts without attending to issues of retention. And many policy responses to retention issues, such as the career ladders of the 1980s in the USA or the more recent focus in several countries on performance-related pay, get the incentives wrong. The desire for increased pay or career advancement is not the source of motivation for the teachers in this study, nor is the lack of these elements the cause of their exit from the profession. More recent efforts to improve supports for teacher work and reduce workload—like the workforce remodelling initiative in England—offer greater promise as a means to improve retention. Whether or not those efforts positively affect teacher retention depends on whether the initiative offers supports that improve teachers' ability to fulfil individual and collegial notions of good teaching.

While this research finds that some teachers leave teaching because of long work hours, it also suggests that simply mandating a reduction in work-hours will not ensure teacher retention. Any effort to relieve teacher overwork by reducing teachers' working hours—and thereby improve retention—needs to attend not only to what teachers are doing in their work-hours, but also why they are doing it. Simply removing tasks from teachers' area of responsibility will not reduce their working hours unless they feel students are still being served well and that, as teachers, they are fulfilling notions of good teaching. Policy efforts to support teachers' work must start with a clear understanding of the conception of teaching work being supported and ensure that there is a fit between conception of and support for teaching work. Misfits between conceptions and supports are more likely to exacerbate teacher stress and overwork than to increase teacher retention.

Notes

1. The contract details cited here are drawn from the union contract of East High teachers. East High is one of the focal schools examined in this paper.
2. Block schedules of four 90-minute periods a day have replaced the 50-minute class period in many high schools. Both of the schools examined in this paper use block schedules.
3. The literature is large, encompassing historical, sociological and social-psychological research (see Jackson, 1969; Sizer, 1984.
4. The time diaries were adapted from those developed by Robert Drago *et al.* (1999) for their study, 'What gives? A time diary study of teachers and caring time'.
5. The South number reflects 14 full-time equivalent teaching positions but 13 assigned teachers. These are the 13 teachers who taught at the school full-time for the entire 1999/2000 school year. The remaining teacher resigned during the school year due to illness and was replaced by a long-term substitute who was not included in the study.
6. Another interesting line of analysis to be followed is the incidence of intersection or overlap between work and home. I intend to pursue this in a future analysis.
7. South does not have an English Department. English, history, social studies and some art are taught by humanities teachers in interdisciplinary classes.
8. East High has a Curriculum Council, while South High has an Academic Council; these two groups are equivalent, in that they represent the highest teacher leadership group in the school. In other ways, they are quite different. South's Academic Council has authority over budgeting and personnel, and sets and directs school policy. Members are elected and serve a two-year term. East's Curriculum Council has a much smaller circle of influence, serving primarily as an advisory council to the principal and reviewing course syllabuses. Membership is appointed by the principal.
9. Elsewhere, I have written more fully on the topic of role congruence and teacher commitment (Bartlett, 2001).
10. As determined from the time diaries completed by the 12 East teachers and 14 South teachers. Each teacher kept a time and task diary for three days. The 'typical work-time' was determined by averaging only those work-days designated by respondents as typical of their working time.
11. Meetings included three curriculum development groups, grade-level study groups, school leadership team, curriculum council and department meetings.
12. East's aggregate is based on the average of 12 teachers' teaching experience, while South is based on the average years in teaching of 12 of its 14 teachers. Total years in teaching were not available on the other two, so they were not included. However, each of them had been at South for more than five years.
13. Of the remaining five English teachers, two appear to hold more traditional conceptions of the teaching role. Neither of them has taken on leadership roles, and both question the importance of collaborative work. A third teacher is new both to the school and teaching and receives a great deal of support from the others.
14. Karen is the only one of the 12 teachers who had primary care responsibilities for the children.
15. Teachers do not get paid maternity leave. They are allowed to go on state disability and to receive the difference between their pay and the rate paid for the substitute.
16. Karen makes $35,000 dollars a year. Her monthly take-home pay is $2200. Her rent is $1350 a month.
17. All uncompensated (with either time or money) activities at the school.
18. An add-on that the school recognizes with financial compensation. Students sit silently in the room. Karen uses her time to grade papers. She said: 'I am doing Saturday schools and you get

paid for those. So that's extra pay. I can do that in the morning and get some work done at school and I can do it in my own classroom.'

19. Karen's goal was to increase family time but she used at least two afternoons a week for school work. She is still doing unpaid work, but now she is earning even less than before.

20. In addition, Hochschild's (1997) work opened up a substantially new way of thinking about overwork. She framed the problem in terms that encompass both the work and family spheres—a frame that permits a more complex look at the causes and consequences of over-work.

21. As I have written elsewhere (Bartlett, 2001), some teachers do redefine their definitions of good teaching, but generally only after efforts to sustain the expanded role conception despite the lack of organizational support.

Note on contributor

Lora Bartlett is Assistant Professor of Education Policy at the University of California Santa Cruz. Her research focuses on the context of teachers' work and the conditions of teacher commitment. Her recent publications include work on teachers' careers and commitment in the context of reform. She visited the Institute of Education in 2003–04 as an Atlantic Public Policy Fellow.

References

Bartlett, L. (2001) *A question of fit: conceptions of teacher role and conditions of teacher commitment*, PhD Dissertation, University of California, Berkeley.

Bascia, N (1994) *Unions in teachers' professional lives: social, intellectual and practical concerns* (New York, Teachers College Press).

Bryk, A. S. & Driscoll, M. E. (1988) The high school as community: contextual influences and consequences for students and teachers, paper prepared for National Center on Effective Schools, University of Wisconsin.

Carnegie Task Force on Teaching as a Profession (1986) *A nation prepared: teachers for the 21st century* (New York, Carnegie Corporation).

Connell, R. W. (1985) *Teachers' work* (Sydney, Allen & Unwin).

Drago, R., Costanza, D., Caplan, R., Brubaker, T., Harris, N., Cloud, D., Kashian, R. & Riggs, T. L. (1999) What gives? A time diary study of teachers and caring time, paper presented at the March 2000 Conference *Work and Family: Expanding the Horizons*, San Francisco, CA.

Drago, R., Costanza, D., Caplan, R., Brubaker, T., Cloud, D., Harris, N., Kashian, R. & Riggs, T.L. (2000) The longest day: working time for teachers in working time: international trends, theory and policy perspectives (D. Figart & L. Golden) (Eds) (New York, Routledge).

Hochschild, A. R. (1997). *The time bind* (New York, Metropolitan Books).

Ingersoll, R. M. (2001) Teacher turnover and teacher shortages: an organisational analysis, *American Educational Research Journal*, 38(3), 499–534.

Jackson, P. (1968). *Life in classrooms* (Chicago, IL, University of Chicago Press).

Lieberman, A. & Miller, L. (1999) *Teachers transforming their world and their work* (New York, Teachers College Press).

Little, J. W. (1996) The emotional contours and career trajectories of (disappointed) reform enthusiasts, *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 26(3), 345–359.

Little, J. W. (2001) Teachers' work at the turn of the century, in: J. Oelkers. (Ed.) *Futures of education: essays from an interdisciplinary symposium* (Bern, Peter Lang), 281–303.

Liu, E., Kardos, S. M., Kauffman, D., Peske, H. G. & Johnson, S. M. (2000) 'Barely breaking even': incentives, rewards, and the high costs of choosing to teach—the next generation of teachers. Available online at: http://www.gse.harvard.edu/~ngt/papers.htm (accessed August 2004).

Lohman, M. & Woolf, N. (2001) Self-initiated learning activities of experienced public school teachers: methods, sources, and relevant organisational influences, *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice*, 7(1), 59–74.

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

Maran, M. (2000) *Class dismissed: a year in the life of an American high school. A glimpse into the heart of a nation* (New York, St Martin's Press).

McLaughlin, M. W. & Talbert, J. E. (2001) *Professional communities and the work of high school teaching* (Chicago, IL, University of Chicago Press).

Miller, L. (1999) Reframing teacher burnout in the context of school reform and teacher development in the United States, in: Vandenberghe, R. & Huberman, M. (Eds) *Understanding and preventing teacher burnout: a sourcebook of international research and practice* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press).

National Center for Educational Statistics (2000a) *Digest of education statistics: 2000* (Washington, DC, US Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement).

National Center for Educational Statistics (2000b) *Teacher supply in the United State: sources of newly hired teachers in public and private schools, 1987–88 to 1993–94* (Washington, DC, US Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement).

National Commission on Excellence in Education (1983) *A nation at risk: the imperative for educational reform* (Washington, DC, US Department of Education).

Pocock, B., van Wanrooy, B., Strazzari, S. & Bridge, K. (2001) *Fifty families: what unreasonable hours are doing to Australians, their families and their communities* (Australian Council of Trades). Available online at: http://www.actu.asn.au/vunions/actu/ (accessed April 2003).

PricewaterhouseCoopers (2001) *Teacher workload study. Report to the UK Department for Education and Skills.* Available online at: www.teachernet.gov.uk/wholeschool/remodelling/workload-study (accessed January 2004).

Schor, J. B. (1991) *The overworked American: the unexpected decline of leisure* (New York, Basic Books).

Schor, J. B. (1999) *The overspent American: upscaling, downshifting and the new consumer* (New York, HarperCollins).

Sizer, T. (1984) *Horace's compromise: the dilemma of the American high school* (Boston, MA, Houghton Mifflin).

Useem, J. (2000). Welcome to the new company town, *Fortune Magazine*, 141(1), 62–74.

Van Veen, K., Sleegers, P. & Bergen, T. (2001) Teachers' orientation and role conflicts in times of change, paper presented at the *American Educational Research Association*, Seattle, May.