

J. Marais

WISDOM AND NARRATIVE: DEALING WITH COMPLEXITY AND JUDGEMENT IN TRANSLATOR EDUCATION

ABSTRACT

This article explores wisdom as concept to guide translator education in institutions of higher education. It uses the work of Paul Baltes to posit wisdom as the orchestration of mind and virtue for the common good. Wisdom then signifies the outcome of translator education. Narrative is a mode of communication that is able to foster wisdom. In this respect, the article elaborates on Baker's use of narrative theory in translation studies. In conclusion certain aspects of education are suggested, which would enhance translators' wisdom so that they may be able to judge ill-structured, complicated communication situations in order to enhance communication.

1. INTRODUCTION

Translator education should, to my mind, be informed by, among others, a view of what translation entails. The only problem is that one finds very little consensus amongst translators or translation scholars as to what translation entails. One would, for instance, be able to draw a divide in the field of translation between practitioners and scholars. Amongst scholars, one would be able to indicate proponents of translation education as training or the mastering of skill and technique, against proponents of translation education as liberal education and being imbibed in the humanities and critical discourse. When one goes into more detail, one would find a plethora of philosophies and approaches to translation and translator education being put forward. One could view translation, for example, from a linguistic, cultural, functional, hermeneutic, social, post-colonial, critical discourse, or a number of other points of view. Most translation scholars would view translation studies as an inter-discipline, having points of overlap with linguistics, literary theory, communication theory, cultural theory, narrative theory, discourse theory, hermeneutics, etc. Views on how to translate differ from proponents of foreignising to proponents of indigenising. Some views hold that translators should operate according to a strict

Dr. Kobus Marais, Senior lecturer, Department of Afro-Asiatic Studies, Sign Language and Language Practice, University of the Free State, Bloemfontein, E-mail: JMarais.HUM@ufs.ac.za

code of ethics, only serving society by faithfully relaying messages between source and target texts. Others hold that translators should be, or cannot be but, agents of social change, cultural mediation, or even resistance.

I do not bemoan this complex situation. On the contrary, it serves as a point of departure for the discussion in this article. If translation is such a complex activity, and it will take some effort to prove the opposite, translators should be educated to function in this complex profession. The aim of this article is, then, to explore wisdom as a notion applicable to the complexity of the translation action and to translator education. In this regard, I shall make use of the work of Paul Baltes as a point in case to explore the possibilities that modern thought on wisdom hold for translation studies. I shall also explore earlier work I have done on wisdom in Ancient Near-Eastern narrative texts. My intention with this is to tap into concepts other than Western rationalistic thought as a source of thinking about translation. I shall bring the above to bear on one aspect of Baker's narrative theory.

The methodology in this article is a combination of literature overview and conceptual exploration. By bringing together various perspectives, the intention is to describe the end-state of translator education, an end-state that is only initiated in the formal education phase at an institution of higher education. The idea is that this end-state should inform choices made regarding curriculum, teaching and learning, and assessment. In theory, once the goal of an education process has been clarified, all other aspects of the education process can be aligned to the attainment of that goal.

2. WISDOM

The past ten years or so have seen a proliferation in the number of publications on wisdom (see the bibliography in Baltes 2004). The current interest in wisdom differs from conventional interests in that it focuses on wisdom as a modern, contemporary phenomenon, and specifically its relationship to life issues. It also brings wisdom into relationship with specific disciplines such as psychology and political science. Previously, wisdom studies would either have been historical in nature, looking at, for instance, wisdom in the Ancient Near East, or it would have been philosophical, which has traditionally been the locus of the love of wisdom. Currently, scholars are interested in the notion of wisdom as a practical orientation to life, but also as the ability to handle life and the complexities thereof. Life would here include professional or working life. Wisdom is becoming relevant to education in the sense that it refers to the meta-language of competence and knowledge. One can thus argue that it is possible to make use of wisdom as the end-state of translator education (Baltes & Freund 2003:33). The argument here is that wisdom can provide a

conceptualisation of what translators need to know and do to operate effectively within the complex world in which they operate. The discussion does not engage the history of the concept of wisdom, but refer the reader to Baltes' book for a thorough discussion of history and, especially, the various cultural and religious perspectives on wisdom (Baltes 2004). Wisdom is a concept that can be used with widely different meanings, especially when it is used in different disciplines. In this article, the aim is to develop wisdom as a meta-concept, which will inevitably link it to notions such as reflection. Baltes (2004:171) has indicated that one might call wisdom a "metalevel cognitive heuristics." A meta-level view on human affairs and the human condition, including professional practice and the education thereof, would imply that one in some sense specialises in the general.

Baltes (2004:17) mentions seven aspects of wisdom. It could amount to a definition of wisdom, but maybe one should not try to define an elusive concept such as wisdom too narrowly. The seven aspects are as follows:

- Wisdom addresses important and difficult questions and strategies about the conduct and meaning of life.
- Wisdom includes knowledge about the limits of knowledge and the uncertainties of the world.
- Wisdom represents a truly superior level of knowledge, judgment, and advice.
- Wisdom constitutes knowledge with extraordinary scope, depth, and balance.
- Wisdom involves a perfect synergy of mind and character, that is, an orchestration of knowledge and virtues.
- Wisdom represents knowledge used for the good or well-being of oneself and that of others.
- Wisdom, though difficult to achieve and to specify, is easily recognised when manifested.

Baltes (2004:133) then also typifies the types of knowledge found in wisdom:

- Wisdom is life-orientational and action-guiding knowledge dealing with a good life.
- Wisdom is holistic, integrative, and balanced knowledge regarding mind and human excellence.
- Wisdom is knowledge about limits and uncertainty.
- Wisdom involves pluralism and tolerance of diversity.
- Wisdom is experiential knowledge.
- Wisdom is justified knowledge and needs to consider multiple sources of knowledge including scientific ones.

Before taking up Baltes' notions on wisdom, I first need to argue that what he has to say about wisdom is applicable to translation studies. In fact, Baltes himself indicated this direction, quoting the work of Maxwell. He argues that "any scientist can use the concept of wisdom as a perspective, guidepost, or mental heuristic by which the process of scientific discovery ought to be planned or modified" (Baltes 2004:154). Wisdom also allows one to exploit the human condition in all its complexity as a criterion in scientific work, amongst others, translation studies. It seems to be clear then that the notion of wisdom allows the translation studies scholar and teacher a conceptual tool for considering more than the mere technical or the mere rational. One can thus rather call the abovementioned types of knowledge, as defined by Baltes, perspectives on knowledge or orientations towards knowledge, because as Baltes himself said, wisdom always denotes some form of meta-stance. It seems that one should thus not call wisdom knowledge of any sorts, but a meta-stance or a meta-perspective or a meta-ability on various forms of knowledge.

Firstly, the focus is on wisdom as life-orientational and action guiding, dealing with a good life. Baltes (2004:123) is of the opinion that information is "knowledge that is merely acquired and stored up." In contrast to this, wisdom is always operational knowledge. It is never mere knowledge for the sake of knowledge, but always geared towards an operation of some kind. It operates to forge a better life for the better common good. Wisdom is the fruit of intellectual capacity, which subsumes knowledge under the notion of good judgement (Baltes 2004:123), another concept to be explored further. It has the denotation of discrimination, of the ability to discern. It works on the assumption that some things are more relevant than others; some things have more significance than others, depending on the situation. It refers to the ability to read or judge a situation and then take decisions for action on the basis of that judgement. Baltes (2004:127) refers to various philosophical and psychological studies, especially situated cognition, which focus on judgement and decision-making. Wisdom then denotes the ability to make judgements which lead to decisions that orient one in life and guide one in action. This leads Baltes (2004:123) to saying that wisdom is both more and less than scientific and technocratic knowledge, and it is for this reason that efforts to treat wisdom as a high level of common-sense knowledge about the human condition may be an appropriate direction for scholarship to pursue. When translator teachers are discussing the outcome of the curricula they are devising, wisdom should feature as a guiding post for those outcomes. It was argued elsewhere (Marais 2008) that neither rational nor technocratic knowledge satisfies what I perceive to be the outcome of translator education. In some or other way, all knowledge and skill, also translation knowledge and skill are embedded in human value and judgement. Wisdom is relevant in discussing the meta-knowledge and meta-skill required by translators.

Baltes (2004:127) takes forward the argument by saying that the humanities is increasingly gaining understanding into the extent to which human cognition or reasoning operates in an action context. He cites the continued refinement of pragmatism and its consequences for the structure and function of rationality, as well as social constructivism as two examples of this development. In translation studies in higher education, Kiraly is an example of a socio-constructivist approach, emphasising the fact that knowledge is created in social settings, in the social group of translators (Kiraly 2000, also see Robinson 2003). Baltes (2004:127) draws the conclusion that “pure” reasoning based on idealist conceptions is at best a special case of human rationality, neither the best nor the most efficient. Wisdom entails that one acknowledges the limited scope of rational knowledge and the necessity to take into account the role that other forms of knowledge play, also in translation. For instance, the debate about a translator’s “feel” for language and the applicable choices is a longstanding one (Robinson 2003).

Another related insight offered by the concept of wisdom is that it is counter empiricism (Baltes 2004:9). The aim is not to argue that empirical science or knowledge has no role in translation, translation studies or translator education. On the contrary, it is an extremely important facet of these fields of study. However, wisdom is not limited to empirical knowledge, but it makes room for the realisation that technical rationalistic thought alone cannot solve all problems, neither in translation studies nor in other disciplines. It is precisely the trans- or multidisciplinary nature of wisdom (Baltes 2004:10) which makes it ideal for using in translation studies, which is by definition a complex phenomenon/field of study. In the field of education, wisdom denotes the ideal, the human focus. Baltes (2004:108) indicates that Kant has repeatedly emphasised that wisdom entails more than science, which means that it includes knowledge which is based on other principles and sources of evidence. Practical reason has to be added so that mind and character work together to produce moral action, also moral translational action. In translation education, knowledge about translation has value, but limited value. Translator students have to be mentored to become wise professionals who will be able to make judgements to guide their actions. They will need the ability to take into account a variety of types of knowledge, judge the relevance of each, and decide how to relate these types of knowledge to one another. What is more, they will be confronted by a variety of values on which they will have to make a judgement. For example, in the South African context, translators are always confronted by a value issue when they have to decide on terminology. Do they take over words from English, which can be seen as a language that promises economic progress, or do they create or look for existing indigenous words to enhance the particular language and its terminology. The decision inevitably entails a value judgement, which needs to be appropriated in each individual case. This calls for wisdom, the ability to make life decisions in an extremely complex context.

Furthermore wisdom relates to reality and, specifically, the non-ideal nature of reality (Baltes 2004:10). In disciplinary knowledge, that is, theoretical knowledge, reality is reduced to the variables or invariables as predicted or determined by the theory or the discipline, or what is popularly known as the ivory tower. The notion of wisdom allows the scholar and the translator to relate to reality as a non-ideal phenomenon. The complaint is often heard, not only in translator education, that students are not able to cope with reality after undergoing a thorough theoretical education. This chasm between theory and reality can be bridged by the notion of wisdom. Wisdom deals with difficult situations or problems in the human condition. It always refers to creative ways of solving these problems. The gain in this approach is that wisdom is always geared toward the common human good (Baltes 2004:16). It has the potential to add a humane touch to scientific endeavour, to always keep in mind the human context within which education operates, and to explore new concepts of humanity, e.g. from an African perspective, as far as scientific efforts are concerned. In this regard, African notions of humanness could be explored to enhance the understanding that translation studies have of humanity, humaneness, and wisdom (Baker 2006:1-2).

Wisdom enables one to talk about the complexity of life and, in this case, translation. I have argued elsewhere that translator education has to educate students to deal with the complexities of translation work (Marais 2007a). In another context, it was pointed out that the agency role afforded to translators in recent years asks for the ability in translators to interpret extremely complex communication situations and make judgements on the basis of their understanding of the situation (Marais 2007b). Translators have to consider all possible forms of causation (Chesterman 2005). For instance, to use Baltes' (2004:87) words: "to recognize that human behaviour is both and all: active and passive, determined and open, intellectual and emotional." Baltes (2004:138) further discusses transversal reason, which according to him is inherently uncertain, both about conclusions and about perspectives. He indicates that the special strength of transversal reason is to see the "whole" and to keep multiple perspectives in mind without reaching definite conclusions when they are not possible. In fact, Baltes (2004:138) argues that wisdom is not only moving beyond uncertainty and the conflict between perspectives. It rather includes the uncertain and the conflictual as part of its agenda.

This will then lead one to claim that wisdom deals with limits, the limits of rational thought, technical skill, and life circumstances, amongst others. Current thought about wisdom would then hold that simple conceptions of perfection or idealisation are not viable any more. Baltes (2004:141) quotes Oelmüller who says that wisdom may offer not the last answers and solutions, but the best possible answer within the constraints of limited knowledge and uncertainty. It has often been argued, by amongst others Robinson (2003) that translation

always entails trade-offs. One often has to weigh linguistic, textual and cultural choices that make equal claims, and then one is forced to choose between the options because one is seldom able to use both options in a translation. The tension between form and content is a simple example of the constraints within which translators work. Wisdom pertains to knowledge that is informed by general perspectives, which are applied to as well as possible in a concrete situation. One response to a situation of uncertainty, then, is not to necessarily know the proper way, but to know which way is wrong. Within a complicated world of work, translators may not always know which choices to make, but being wise would entail knowing which choices not to make.

The fourth notion pertains to the way in which wisdom is able to account for complexity, or rather, to guide one in complex situations. Baltes (2004:137) puts it elegantly: wisdom is knowledge about the good and the bad, and about ways to solve the conflict resulting from the fact that human nature is biologically rigged in both directions. Complexity here includes the complex relationships between the general and the particular. One of the strengths of possessing holistic, integrative, and balanced knowledge is its flexible application to specific instances, to quote Baltes (2004:137) once more. Reflecting about wisdom assists us in keeping our minds open to the complex realities of life; it protects us from elevating logic and formal rationality to the only and final yardstick of human existence and social policy. For translation studies, this is extremely relevant, taking into account the complex nature of the translation process, the complexity of mediating between cultures, the sensitiveness of ideological issues in communication (Baker 2006), and the responsibility of being an agent who has recourse to knowledge that not all partners in the communication process has, i.e. source and target text. It relates to the loyalty Nord (1997:123-128) has identified, but subsumes loyalty under the ability to wisely judging before deciding where loyalty lies or which form the loyalty has to take.

In another article, Kunzmann and Baltes (2003:330) put forward three arguments why the study of wisdom can be of use to issues of intelligence. The one most relevant to the point of view in this article is the third, namely that wisdom pertains to knowledge about dealing with complex, real-life situations. It encompasses intellectual, emotional and social perceptions of problems and solutions to it. They indicate that studies in the field have proved that wisdom is multidimensional in nature (Kunzmann & Baltes 2003:330), that wisdom is viewed as the integration of the rational and the emotional, and that it pertains to contextual, historical, dialectic, balanced, and holistic knowledge (Kunzmann & Baltes 2003:341).

To a certain extent, pure theoretical knowledge has played itself out (Gibbons *et al.* 1994; Schön 1987:4). On the one hand, it is often seen as limited due to its purely rational base. On the other hand, it can be seen as too general, removed from real-life problems. Baltes (2004:134) quotes Kekes who claims:

“To understand wisdom we have to understand its connection with knowledge, action, and judgment.” Wisdom is experiential knowledge, in favour of which someone like Dewey has argued many decades ago. For precisely that reason, wisdom is so valuable, because it can only be acquired through many experiences, which takes time — something all humans have a limited amount of.

It takes direct experiences, in a wide variety of life circumstances including challenging ones, to move toward wisdom. This factor may become most explicit when the issue is one of application of wisdom-related knowledge in practical situations requiring judgment and advice. Why? Without rich, direct, life-based experiences, it would be difficult for wisdom to demonstrate one of its essential characteristics: the generalization of general principles to a specific instance. Such generalization is based on the coordination of scope with domain-specific depth (Baltes 2004:142).

I have indicated earlier that the scientific conception of rationality is too narrow to capture the full spectrum of knowledge that needs to be brought to bear on wisdom. Some of the foundational bases of wisdom lies in cultural traditions and common-sense knowledge, not in science (Baltes 2004:145). This move beyond mere rationality opens up the possibility that, especially in the African situation, indigenous knowledge and African-specific approaches to languages and interlingual communication may be explored. For instance, one can ask how written modes of communication can be translated for audiences with a predominantly oral orientation.

One other development in current-day philosophy is also noteworthy in this regard. Some philosophers, who use the concept of wisdom as a mental cue, now try to integrate philosophical traditions beyond the Western world. One example that Baltes (2004:128) mentions is a Multicultural Philosophy Reader that appeared under the title *Voices of Wisdom*. In this volume, Baltes detects a larger attention to Asian, African, Buddhist, and Hindu conceptions. He interprets this as probably an indirect criticism of Western philosophy (Baltes 2004:128). One could contend that it should be read as a direct criticism of Western philosophy/rationality. In her exposition of power in translation, Baker (2006) uses narrative precisely to indicate that ideological positions are not purely rational or logical in nature. It is precisely for this reason that ideological positions are so incompatible, and it is precisely for this reason that reason or rationality fails to solve problems. One needs to realise that wisdom, the ability to act for the common good, does not arise only from the intellect, but from emotions, perceptions, and values too. It does not arise only from theoretical, Western-type knowledge, but also from an integration of various forms of knowledge, as Schön (1987:13) has indicated. A quote from Baltes (2004:131) illustrates the point eloquently:

In other words, besides scholarly and scientific knowledge, there are bodies of knowledge that derive their validity and meaning from

personal experiences and processes of socialization such as common-sense knowledge about people and their minds and behavior, about values and motives, and about cultural and ethnic differences in ways to think and feel. Many of these bodies of knowledge are not tested by the “scientific method”; nevertheless they are significant for the conduct and interpretation of life and may be true in the empirical sense, although we may not know the extent to which they are true.

One would, however, not discard traditional Western science in total, because as Baltes (2004:145) wisely comments: If wisdom deals with important matters of life, it would not be wise to forgo “scientifically grounded” means to reach the stated goals.

Baltes comments on the fact that proverbs are often contradictory, e.g. “Experience is the mother of wisdom” vs. “Experience is the mistress of fools.” He proposes that the tension and contradictions among maxims are neither nuisances nor Delphic mystifications, but fundamental to their operation as counsel (Baltes 2004:150). In the type of logic operational in wisdom, paradoxical proverbs are both held to be true; wisdom relates to the ability to relate a particular proverb to a particular situation, to know when to use which one, and to know how to make use of a particular proverb. Translators need to be able to deal not only with complex situations, but also with contradictory ones, or situations in which contradictory perspectives may all be true. True wisdom sayings would need to incorporate contradictions and conflict combined with a reflective position (Baltes 2004:148). In this sense, wisdom relates strongly to Schöns’ reflective practice and to calls both in general theory of higher education and translator education in particular for reflective practice (Schön 1987, Brockbank & McGill 1998; Kelly 2005). If one thing has been ascertained in the field of translation studies, it is that translation is a complex phenomenon dealing with complex decisions in complex communication situations. To this one can add the idea, held by most translation scholars, that translation is an interdiscipline. This implies that several disciplines are required to understand translation as a concept. In my understanding, wisdom is well-gearred towards dealing with this complex state of affairs as it pertains to translation. It is precisely the ability of wisdom to incorporate various forms of knowledge that allows for its usability, seeing that wisdom itself is an interdiscipline (Baltes 2004:125).

This argument can be concluded with two further observations on wisdom. The one is the need for empirical research on the notion of wisdom in translation studies. Baltes (2004:165) made use of Kant’s and the British empiricists’ principle that new theoretical efforts at wisdom needed to pass through the gate of science. The claims that were made about wisdom in translation studies and translator education need to be tested against empirical and experimental evidence. It is proposed that this is the implication of this rather philosophical article: empirical studies need to be done to ascertain what, if

any, of the features of wisdom are found in experienced translators. Longitudinal studies need also to be done to ascertain whether proposed educational choices and endeavours have the required effect. This connection between wisdom and empirical evidence opens up the possibility of connecting wisdom and particular disciplines, as Baltes has illustrated in his book (Baltes 2004).

Baltes (2004:200) closes by identifying six domains which lead people to label a person as wise. These domains can be applied to translators and they should be tested in future empirical research:

- understanding presuppositions, meaning, and limits;
- resisting automatisations of one's own thoughts, but seeking to understand it in others;
- judiciousness as primary intellectual style;
- understanding of ambiguity and obstacles;
- the desire to understand what is known and what it means, and
- depth of understanding, needing to find appreciation in context.

As Baltes (2004:210) had said: the benchmark of philosophical analysis is the utopian ideal, the benchmark for everyday people is excellence in comparison with other everyday people. One needs to study the wise ways in which ordinary translators work so that their wisdom can become available to other ordinary translators.

3. WISDOM AND NARRATIVE

Narrative has become an influential field of study, even in translation studies (Baker 2006). In this case, the reference is to narrative as a meta-code (Baker 2006) as basic to human cognition (Kort 1988).

In her application of narrative theory to translation studies, Baker argues that all knowledge is mediated by narrative. Narrative mediation implies perspective and value. This means that, in situations of conflict, one would not be able to have recourse to an objective or real set of facts by which to settle the conflict. All conflicts are conflicts of narratives, conflicts of my story — with all its values and perspectives — versus your story — with all its values and perspectives. As such, this approach is fundamentally post-modern, moving away from the modernist assumption that one is either able to gain access to “the” truth or that one can mediate between conflicting viewpoints on the basis of rationality. Narrative pertains to a much deeper level of existence, a value-laden existence, for which mere rationality is unable to account (Baker 2006:163). In the final chapter of her book, *Narrative and conflict*, she addresses the assessment of narratives. The reason why Baker addresses the assessment of

narratives is to ascertain whether there are “sensible means for us to establish whether we should subscribe to or challenge any specific narrative” (Baker 2006:141). The contention is that she is looking for wisdom here. How do readers and translators as readers relate to the fundamental claims that narratives make on them? How do translators take sides or remain neutral in the global ideological battles also raging in the translation world? Baker answers her own question by proposing a model by which to assess narratives, which she explicitly argues is not purely rational (Baker 2006:142).

One point made by Baker, namely that Fischer’s narrative paradigm implies that narratives reinforce the values of the audience (Baker 2006:162), needs to be taken up here. She rightly criticises this position. I contend that wisdom, defined by Baltes as the orchestration of mind and virtue for the common good, offers one way out of this dilemma. Per definition, wisdom is the ability to hold in balance a number of perspectives, not to be blind to alternatives. Per definition wisdom does not only consider rationality and traditional logic. Per definition, wisdom holds to a conception of reality as tentative, provisional, limited, complex, etc. And then wisdom moves further to the expertise to be able to function or perform action on the basis of an assessment of conflicting paradigms or narratives. Wisdom is, amongst others, a meta-cognition, meta-decision, meta-judgement. A wise person should thus be able to function or act within a situation in which competing narratives operate. Wisdom is per definition the category that enables one (a translator) to take decisions that have implications for the lives of others, decisions that deal with the complex claims that ideologies make on the lives of people.

Secondly, a point made elsewhere needs to be reiterated. The point was that narrative itself is an instance of wisdom (Marais 1998:145-167). The argument was that wisdom is not only contained in proverbs and maxims, but also in narrative. It was indicated how in Old Testament narrative, narrative was interconnected with the wisdom paradigm. One could thus view narratives as extended proverbs, illustrating how notions of wisdom or folly are played out in personal histories. The reason for this possibility is that narrative is able to espouse notions of logic and causality other than Western rationalistic thought. It was indicated how perspective, paradox, and juxtaposition are forms of logic utilised in the narratives read for that study. I now take my argument one step further by arguing that a theory of narrative, such as Baker’s, of necessity needs wisdom as a concomitant concept. It is not enough to state the existence of narratives as constructing reality. It is also not enough to give guidelines on how to assess narratives. What translators and translator education need is to develop wisdom, that is, a concept that allows translators to operate in such a way that the common good is attained. What the common good is has to be decided wisely in each case.

4. WISDOM IN TRANSLATOR EDUCATION

It has been argued in this article that wisdom should be the notion informing one's view of a translator's competence. The first implication is that if a translator was wise, s/he would be able to handle the complex decision-making and judging processes required on a regular basis. In particular, translators should be wise in order to make judgements on complex communication and interpretation situations. They have to have the ability to bring together complex bodies of knowledge, taking into account the unique requirements of each translation situation. They have to be able to discern the perspective and values playing a role in a particular translation situation and judge the relevance of knowledge they have for that situation. They have to judge the skills they have available, which to use in a situation, and which to discard.

To my mind, the need for the ability to handle complex decision-making reinforces the motivation for social constructivism as a learning philosophy. It also requires the divide between theory and practice in translator education to be bridged. I have indicated elsewhere, that community service learning offers excellent opportunities for students to observe and take part in the whole translation process (Marais 2007a). Wisdom requires science to interact with society in solving real problems that would transform the lives of real people.

The second implication of a developmental theory of wisdom is that the nexus of conditions that can be expected to promote wisdom are multivariate and systemic, to use Baltes' (2004:180) words. Cognitive, social, and institutional forces have to cooperate in synergy with their temporal and spatial dynamics to result in wisdom. Translator education thus needs to expose students to a variety of forms of knowledge and learning experiences to foster this type of integration. It requires that the outcomes of a translation course should include more than the mastering of mere technique, but also more than the mastery of mere declarative knowledge. It is precisely by practicing, under mentorship and guidance, how to mediate difficult communicative situations by bringing to bear upon the situation knowledge and skill that students hone their wisdom. Curricula for translator education should thus contain routine translation work, but it should definitely also include more taxing work such as translations which present ideological and/or cultural difficulties, translations where target readers require specific choices, and translations where the translator has to negotiate complex power relationships in defining the brief, e.g. Bible translation.

A certain level of general education seems to be a must for the emergence of wisdom, because without it, the collective goods of the past that are necessary for the insights of wisdom in present situations would not be accessible. Baltes (2004:180) here refers to the work of Dewey, who has long ago favoured pragmatism and experience in the teaching of life skills and the project of education.

Wisdom further holds that people with higher levels of wisdom should take on the enhancing role of mentors, “coaches”, or social convoys in the achievement of wisdom. Baltes (2004:179) refers to Rogoff who claims that wisdom involves apprenticeship, not technical apprenticeship, but apprenticeship in acquiring this “thing” under the guidance of more experienced, i.e. wise, mentors. He further argues that wisdom is expected to be dependent on the orchestration of the social good in the optimisation of human development (Baltes 2004:179). This observation, once again, ties up very closely with that of Schön’s (1987) reflective practice in which students operate under mentorship of experienced practitioners.

In the field of translation studies, Baltes’ notions of wisdom need to be tested empirically. One would most probably need longitudinal studies over a number of years to see whether and how students’ wisdom develop. One also would need comparative studies to see if and how different pedagogies lead to different levels of wisdom. In this regard, the most challenging aspect would be to find experts from psychology with whom to cooperate in drafting questionnaires to test wisdom in translators.

5. CONCLUSION

This article proposes the notion of wisdom to function as the end-state of translator education, conceptualised as a holistic development of professionals. The education should thus lay the basis on which wisdom can develop with experience.

In my view, wisdom allows one much greater freedom than rationalistic thought in discussing the complexities of life. It also allows one to look further than Western paradigms of thought and life to enrich the experience of translators (Nel 2007). Translation, which operates at the interface of cultures and languages, will be enriched by basing itself on wider paradigms of existence.

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