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(Re)conceptualising Middle Years Pedagogy

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Introduction

This paper is a reflection upon, and theorisation of a possible cause for, the difficulty that was encountered trying to talk with teachers explicitly about their pedagogies during the first phase of a three year ARC funded research project, *Redesigning Pedagogies in the North*¹ (RPiN). The RPiN project is focussing upon the redesign of middle years pedagogies in ten state High Schools located in the northern suburbs of Adelaide, which include significant areas of poverty and social disadvantage.

During the first year of the RPiN project there were numerous activities designed to engage the middle school teacher-researchers from the schools in explicit conversations about their work as teachers in the 'north'. These conversations, in the form of written reflections, artefact display, group discussions and interviews, generated rich descriptions of the 'particularities' of daily life in these schools. Teacher-researchers spoke about the myriad challenges they face teaching in Adelaide's northern 'rust belt' communities, including classroom and behaviour management issues, dealing with a lack of funding and resources and trying to engage students in achieving educational outcomes which enable them to make real choices about their life trajectories. In these early discussions among the teacher researchers and with the university researchers involved in the project, there were ongoing difficulties in finding an adequate language to define and describe what was pedagogical about the ways that teachers responded to these challenges. For example, the teacher-researchers continually returned to the issue of 'relationships' with the young people in their classrooms as the key to teaching and learning which raised the question for us of whether, or how, 'relationships' could be seen as an aspect of pedagogy. We were faced with the challenge of both 'hearing' what the teachers had to say as being about pedagogy, and in relating what they said to conceptions of pedagogy being used in contemporary middle school literature. It became clear that being able to develop a shared concept of pedagogy that helped to mediate between teachers' reports and theoretical accounts was important if the teacher and university researchers were going to be able to describe, experiment with, and redesign the work of teaching and learning in the classrooms of the RPiN schools.

One possible early explanation for this difficulty of engaging in talk about pedagogy was considered to be one of terminology, as the South Australian Department of Education and Children's Services has historically used other phrasing, such as 'teaching and learning', in place of pedagogy. Over time, however, it became clear that the silences around pedagogy were more complex than a simple terminological slippage. It was clear that there wasn't a shared language for talking about pedagogy between and among the teachers and researchers, and that those terms that were used did not necessarily mean the same thing to all participants. This paper describes a heuristic framework developed as an attempt to provide a common vocabulary with

¹ This publication is an outcome of the collaboration of Chief Investigators from the University of South Australia working within the *Redesigning Pedagogies in the North* project: Assoc. Prof. Robert Hattam; Dr. Phillip Cormack; Prof. Barbara Comber; Prof. Marie Brennan; Dr. Lew Zipin; Prof. Alan Reid; Dr. Kathy Paige; Dr. David Lloyd; Assoc. Prof. Helen Nixon; Mr. Bill Lucas; Dr. John Walsh; Dr. Faye McCallum; Dr. Brenton Prosser; Dr. Kathy Brady; Mr. Sam Sellar.

which to discuss pedagogy as a collaborative university-school research team. The use of this framework to analyse teachers' descriptions of their work has helped us to understand better the difficulty in talking about pedagogy. It also helps to define some productive pathways for research about pedagogies as teachers' work, in order to heed Green's (1998, p.179) call for the development of 'more adequate, grounded views and understandings of *pedagogy*, as itself a specific concept'.

Recent Attempts to Research Pedagogy in Australian Schools

The *RPiN* project can be considered as a contribution to recent research in Australia, such as the *Beyond the Middle* report (Luke et al., 2002) and the *Queensland School Reform Longitudinal Study* (QSRLS, 2001; see also Hayes, Mills, Christie & Lingard, 2006), which attempted to elaborate a more complex set of pedagogical categories as a basis for researching and improving teaching and learning practices. Luke et al. (2002, p.9) argue that:

[c]urrent developments in several Australian jurisdictions and internationally shows [sic] that engaging teachers in peer-based reflection and self-analysis on pedagogy...can provide the grounds for systematic renewal at both classroom and school levels leading directly to improved learning outcomes for more students.

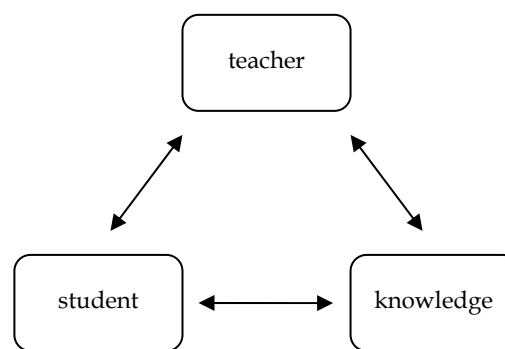
Also highlighted is the need for 'a much stronger emphasis on quality and diversity of pedagogy' (Luke et al., 2002, p.8) as a basis for educational reform in the middle years. The *QSRLS* (2001) study, and its elaboration by Hayes et al (2006), has contributed to a renewed emphasis upon conceptualising pedagogy and has been 'credited with the creation of the concept of productive pedagogies, which has become widely used nationally as a framework for describing classroom practice' (Hayes et al, 2006, p.xiii). Acknowledging the same difficulty encountered by the *RPiN* project, this framework was developed as an attempt to describe 'some of the richness, complexity and detail of classroom experience' which often remains hidden by teachers' descriptions of 'personal experiences layered by the particularities of time, location and relationships' (Hayes et al., 2006, p.32). If pedagogy is an important concept for processes of educational reform, then teachers and researchers need a common vocabulary in order to define what practices count as pedagogies and then to identify and critically reflect upon these practices in classrooms. Hayes et al (2006, p.81) argue that 'the concept of productive pedagogies provides [such] a vocabulary for teachers to discuss their pedagogies and reflect upon them'.

While acknowledging the importance of the *productive pedagogies* framework as an attempt to provide this common set of pedagogical categories, we have been struck by the emphasis in this conceptual frame upon the *products* of teaching with comparatively little attention to the actual *practices* of teachers that might lead to these observable outcomes. As such, it does act as a useful tool for critically reflecting upon the outcomes of classroom practice, but we have found it less useful for engaging deeply in the difficult task of defining what practices count as pedagogies – what do pedagogies look like during their actual practice? This is understandable considering the framework was initially conceived as 'a coding instrument for undertaking structured classroom observations' (Hayes et al, 2006, p.76). As such, it provides an excellent tool for reflecting upon pedagogical results or products but still seems to fall short of providing a language for describing the actual movement of pedagogy. For example, the intellectual quality strand of the productive pedagogies identifies six pedagogical categories, including *deep knowledge* and *deep understanding*. But what are the teacher and students actually *doing* to generate deep knowledge and understanding? What pedagogical processes are involved? While these processes could be inferred from the

questions used as prompts by the researchers during classroom observations and the examples of practice that emerged from these observations, this framework still appears to lack a particular vocabulary for describing the actual *movement* of pedagogy, instead focussing upon the observable products of this movement. In order to consider the difficulties apparent in successfully describing practices or processes, it is necessary to consider the concept of pedagogy in more detail.

The Concept of Pedagogy

In his influential article ‘Why Pedagogy?’, David Lusted (1986, p.2) highlights the importance of pedagogy as a concept that ‘draws attention to the *process* through which knowledge is produced’. This process, Lusted continues, ‘is desperately under-theorised’ (1986, p.3). While the recent research described above has made significant contributions to redressing this under-theorisation, it still fails to address the process in the same detail as it does the products. Lusted emphasises process and conceptualises pedagogy as the ‘nature of the relations’ between teacher,



Pedagogy: Lusted's (1986) triadic relationship

learner and knowledge in a manner that ‘recognises the productivity of the relations, [rendering] the parties within them as active, changing and changeable agencies’ (Lusted, 1986, p.2). This conceptualisation is valuable as it emphasises the dynamic, situated nature of learning embedded within networks of relationality. If we wish to develop a vocabulary for discussing pedagogy explicitly, it is therefore necessary to identify the different possible modes that this relationality may take during teaching and learning events.

Lusted (1986, p.4) argues that ‘knowledge ‘is produced in the process of interaction...between teacher and learner at the moment of classroom engagement’ – it ‘is not the matter that is offered so much as the matter that is understood’. This provides an initial clarification of Lusted’s understanding of his triadic relationship by qualifying knowledge as the productive result of the transformation of teacher and learner through interaction, rather than as the content for transmission from one agency to the other. This transformative interaction is also ‘inevitably a power relation’ (Lusted, 1986, p.5). This raises a crucial problem for pedagogy in the form of Lusted’s triadic relationship. If the teacher and student must interact for learning to occur, engaging in the two-fold process of transformation of the learner and the production of knowledge as understanding, then this implies a subjection of ‘their identit[ies] to degrees of exposure attendant upon the task of serious learning’ (Lusted, 1986, p.6). As learners, both student and teacher must be willing to subject their Self to critical reflection in order for transformation to occur. They must be willing to let go of who they are in order to become other. This implies a continual process of becoming in which the learner is [trans]formed into a new Self. The conditions and nature of the power relations under which this transformation occurs are all important. As the differential in power relations increases between teacher and student the process of transformation becomes less negotiated and more ‘risky’ for the student, who may feel the required transformation as a violence against a cherished Self. Lusted (1986, p.6) highlights this difficulty:

[g]roups whose identity is less secure and/or operate in the conditions of relative powerlessness or oppression are, reasonably, not too well disposed to the process of self-scrutiny, especially when 'guided' by quite 'others' called teachers.

By defining learning as transformative interaction subject to differential power relations, Lusted introduces an ethical relationship between Self and Other. However, Self and Other must necessarily be resisted as stable subject positions. Green (1998, p.185) provides a critical reading of Lusted that highlights the need to conceptualise transformation as a process in which all three agencies 'are subject to transformation; all undergo "crisis" and "change" as a direct result of their interaction; all are rendered different accordingly'. Both teacher and student must continually subject their identities to a destabilising crisis that is productive of new knowledge. Comber and Kamler (2005) emphasise this point, highlighting the need for teachers of disadvantaged students to prioritise their own transformative 'turn-around' in order to construct new knowledge of their students that can counter deficit assumptions about their potential as learners. As Boomer (1992, p.277) suggests, both teacher and student are learners interacting in a 'sophisticated co-existence which never quite reaches the finality of "belonging"', and in which 'looking closely' and suspending judgement are important precursors to knowledge production. Both teacher and student need to resist having their 'constructs harden' and 'believing [their] own or someone else's latest summation' (Boomer, 1992, p.277) in order to maintain a continual becoming. Maintaining this open vulnerability at the level of teacher and student subjectivity is necessary in order to allow the 'imagining' and possibility of a transformative learning interaction, rather than trying to 'weld on' (Boomer, 1982, p.120) new knowledge.

As an addition to Lusted's conception of pedagogy, Boomer's (1982, 1992) work has also been a useful resource for our work in describing pedagogical processes and has foreshadowed the more recent emphasis upon pedagogy in Australian educational research (Green, 2003). Boomer developed generative heuristics for practice-based conceptualisations of the teaching and learning process which have proved useful as a vocabulary with which teachers can begin to describe their pedagogies in greater complexity. The term 'negotiation', used in reference to Boomer's concept of 'negotiating the curriculum', occurred frequently in teacher's self descriptions of their practice. However, this term was often used without elaboration and it was unclear what teachers meant by it. Therefore, a central concern for us while developing the six recursive pedagogical processes was to build on the work of earlier frames to generate more detailed and shared vocabularies for discussing pedagogy with teachers.

Developing a Vocabulary of Pedagogy: A Framework of Six Recursive Pedagogical Processes

As an elaboration on the work of Lusted and Boomer, as well as the *productive pedagogies* described by Hayes et al, we developed a heuristic which identifies six pedagogical processes: *researching*, *designing*, *communicating*, *transforming*, *performing* and *reflecting* (see figure below). These processes were synthesised by reviewing a range of literatures concerned with teaching and learning, in order to provide teachers with conceptual 'handles' for discussing and reflecting upon their pedagogies. We were particularly influenced by the focus on pedagogies as an aspect of teachers' work, as described by Comber (2006), and attempted to incorporate some of the language of the teachers in the descriptions of each (see italicised words below the title in the boxes). They are broad processes which are suggested as descriptive rather than proscriptive resources – they were designed to enable reflection upon the process of pedagogy as a prior step to an analysis of what

teachers (and students) do. Importantly for us, the processes also needed to be inclusive of the range of practices the teacher-researchers reported using in their classrooms – they needed to be usable by the teacher of Mathematics, as much as by the teacher of English, and they needed to include so-called ‘traditional’ approaches as much as more progressive ones.

As a framework, these processes are therefore complementary to others such as the *productive pedagogies*, allowing teachers to consider what modes of interrelation in their classroom lead to outcomes such as *deep knowledge*. For example, Hayes et al. (2006, p.43) provide some clues to what practice is required when they suggest that *deep knowledge* results from developing ‘systematic, integrated or holistic understandings of concepts’ (Hayes et al, 2006, p.43). According to the processes delineated below, deep understanding is generated when students are involved in the process of *transforming*, which Cope and Kalantzis (2000, p.248) describe as involving strong student engagement in transferring ‘meaning to another real-world context and making it work’. Another way of characterising this framework is as a ‘supplement’ to other frames. We use supplement here in the sense outlined by Derrida (1976, p.144-145) in that it both enriches and troubles these other frames, hopefully provoking further discussion and development of the concept of pedagogy with and for teachers. For example, by describing these processes as constructed and performed by teachers and students in concert, it is difficult to use this as a frame to simply evaluate teaching ‘effectiveness’—it forces us to ask how pedagogy is a practice that is only formed in a relationship (also allowing us to honour the teachers’ concerns about relationships in the *RPiN* project).

Researching	Designing	Communicating	Transforming	Performing	Reflecting
Students and teachers research community and personal funds of knowledge in order to negotiate rich and connected curriculum tasks	<i>Planning, Negotiating</i> Students and teachers negotiate and collaborate to design learning activities, assessment structures and classroom operation	<i>Instructing, Teaching</i> Students and teachers communicate through a variety of modes to share understandings and offer explicit instruction	<i>Practising, Exploring, Investigating</i> Students actively interact with their worlds and transform knowledge gained through this interaction into a variety of media	<i>Testing</i> Students perform their learning and act upon their worlds in high stakes situations for a variety of school and community audiences	<i>Assessing, Evaluating</i> Students and teachers reflect on their learning, celebrating successes, ‘feeling the quality’ and identifying future challenges

The framework was also designed to represent these six pedagogical processes as being recursive rather than as a linear method beginning with researching and proceeding through each process to a culmination in reflecting. While it is obviously possible to characterise teaching and learning events - both individual lessons and across a unit of work - in such a way, we were interested in representing pedagogies as practices that involve jumping between and revisiting different processes based upon the nature of each learning event and its context. We have therefore indicated in the following discussion through the use of bold print where a particular process articulates with another, in a non-linear manner rather than as the next step of a continuum.

Researching

Teaching has always been, at least in part, about taking valued knowledge and skills described and prescribed in curriculum and policy and considering how to bring these to students so that they can learn them and take them up. Teachers are expected to have strong disciplinary knowledge and skill and be up to date in terms of the expectations of the curriculum. However, the knowledge of what students should or could learn cannot be simply taken from the syllabus statement. To make the knowledge and skills students need to learn *alive* to them, teachers also need to know how they work in the world beyond the school and be able to relate them in some ways to students’ lives in the here and now. Teaching, from this perspective, is a constant process

of research into how their disciplinary fields work in the world and how this is impacting on curriculum and policy.

As well as understanding what students *need* to know and do, teachers also use a sense of what students *want* to know and do, the questions and concerns that activate their minds and the aspirations they have for their lives. Teachers use knowledge about the resources students bring to learning that can be a bridge to the valued curriculum. This involves teachers working with students to research community and personal knowledges in order to negotiate rich and connected curriculum tasks. Researching involves teachers opening themselves to their students' lifeworld knowledges, both in order to see their students in a new light and to draw upon these lifeworld resources during curriculum design. Every child brings a wealth of knowledge to school in their 'virtual schoolbags' (Thompson, 2001) and researching involves opening up these schoolbags so that teachers can become aware of their students' potential: seeing students 'in different contexts with a new lens' (Comber & Kamler, 2005, p.9). The success of the other five processes largely depends upon teachers (re)orienting themselves to students in this way.

Researching is not just done by teachers and on students, but involves teachers and students working together and offers valuable opportunities for students to interact with their communities, gathering and **transforming** knowledge in order to **perform** texts that communicate the cognitive resources they bring to school and which exist within their communities.

Researching therefore involves discovering a range of resources present in the classroom that can be used to negotiate relevant and connected units of work. Gonzalez and Moll (2002, p.623) argue that pedagogy 'must be linked to the students' lives and that the details of effective pedagogy should be linked to local histories and community contexts'. These 'funds of knowledge' drawn from students' lives and community contexts represent 'a positive...view of households as containing ample cultural and cognitive resources with great, *potential* utility for classroom instruction' (Moll, Amanti, Neff and Gonzalez, 1992, p.134). Using these resources as a basis for the negotiated **design** of curriculum ensures important and authentic contexts in which students can **perform** their learning, strengthening the connectedness and relevance of curriculum tasks.

Designing

In changing times, there are no stable forms of knowledge or social structures which serve as a secure basis for appropriate learning topics or activities. Learning processes need to take account of changing forms of representation (moving away from slow-changing print into fast-changing multimodal forms), socio-cultural differences according to place, and so on. Kress' (2000) observation about literacy, that '[i]ndividuals are now seen as the remakers, transformers, of sets of representational resources – rather than users of stable systems', can equally be applied to curriculum more generally. This means that 'one-size-fits-all' activities, assessment and resources are not adaptive enough to changing times. Teachers and students are curriculum designers.

This process involves students and teachers negotiating and collaborating to design learning activities, assessment structures and classroom operation. While all of the six processes involve negotiation, it is most evident during this process, where students and teachers plan the learning journey together. This planning involves the conceptual work students and teachers will

undertake – the knowledges with which they will engage – and the physical implementation of the learning – where, how and in what way they will undertake the learning journey. Designing builds upon the resources identified during the **researching** process to connect the curriculum content to students' lifeworld knowledges and community contexts. It is also informed by prior **reflecting** processes in order that future curriculum units provide opportunities for students to exercise their strengths and recent learning through involvement in challenging and rigorous **transforming** that will result in the experience of new successes. Designing therefore provides a site for students and teachers to align their learning intentions to maximise the connectedness, relevance and value of their learning (Boomer, 1992).

The physical or logistical aspect of the designing process involves students and teachers negotiating classroom structures, learning and behaviour expectations, and the venues and methods that will be used for **performing** and **reflecting** upon the learning. The teacher will set certain limits, depending upon the context of the learning event(s), within which negotiation can take place concerning whether students will work in groups or individually, how students will utilise spaces for their learning, both within and beyond the classroom, and the range of modes that can be used to perform their learning. This process may be undertaken at the start of the year to establish specific classroom practices and systems (Rivers, 1976) and will be continually returned to when designing new curriculum units and learning journeys.

Communicating

Students and teachers communicate through a variety of modes to share understandings and offer explicit instruction. While all of the pedagogical processes emphasise that everyone within the classroom is a learner-teacher, the teacher does bring their own body of knowledge to the classroom, specifically in relation to the school as text, and describes the codes students must be conversant with if they are to succeed within educational institutions, and certain content knowledges. Forms of communication in the form of modelling practice and 'telling secrets' – where teachers 'come clean about short cuts, various other ways of doing something and mistakes they have made themselves' (Boomer, 1982, p.119) – are an important aspect of this process, involving the use of 'meta-languages' (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000) to overtly instruct and make explicit a variety of skills and techniques that students will use when **transforming**. However, it is important to remember that the knowledge the teacher brings to the pedagogical encounter should be open to reformation and reconsideration during dialogue with students (Shor & Friere, 1987).

At times, communicating may take a more traditional form in which the teacher addresses the class as a group prior to them engaging in an activity, while at other times it may involve the teacher responding to requests for support from individuals or groups, conducting mini-lessons for targeted students, or teaching more informally through general talk. Therefore, communicating may often occur as a reiterative intervention into the **transforming** process, as the teacher observes and assesses students as they work and interrupts to scaffold, instruct and provoke further thought and action when appropriate. Students are also involved in communicating when, as part of **researching** and **performing** processes, they are involved in teaching others both within and beyond the classroom, about their funds of knowledge.

Transforming

Central to learning is the process of the student taking knowledge and/or skills that are enacted by others and making these their own. Traditional pedagogies such as memorisation and drill are examples of students taking knowledge and transforming it into a form through which it becomes known to them. We know that learning is a social process, involving interaction with others and collaboration, especially with those who are more expert than the learner. While talk is a key mode for learning in the classroom, as in all walks of life, other modes such as the visual, the aural and physical manipulation are also significant. The process of ‘transforming something from talk into...writing requires a more rigorous attention to meaning and various forms of translation’ (Boomer, 1982, p.120), than simply listening to the talk alone. Students learn by developing new abilities to perceive and interact with their worlds through *action*, not by simply receiving ‘knowledge’. Transforming therefore involves students ‘reading’ texts in one of any number of modes and drawing upon them to actively translate and produce new texts or objects in a different mode. Students are engaged as producers, working with school and community knowledge ‘so that [they] can *act* upon it and indeed *rewrite* parts of it’ (Boomer, 1982, p,121). Transforming provides a valuable site for students to practise a variety of emergent capabilities and understandings – indeed, enact new identities formed through this process – and to synthesise abstract conceptual understanding from ‘hands-on’ interaction with particular knowledges.

Cope and Kalantzis (2000, p.248) describe this process as ‘transformed practice’, emphasising strong student engagement in transferring ‘meaning to another real-world context and making it work’ and ‘making the connections, recognising influences and cross-references of history, culture and experience’. Transformed practice spans a continuum from reproduction to radical innovation upon the text or object being worked with, depending upon the purpose and context of the learning event (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000). This process is therefore a crucial aspect of any pedagogy involving students in building their worlds and rich, connected understandings of them. Transformation will often occur within other processes as students translate their practice into meta-cognitive **reflection** upon their learning and **performing** their learning in a variety of modes.

Performing

At different stages in the learning process, there is a need to consider how well the learning is going and to demonstrate that learning to oneself as learner, and to others who can provide feedback. In traditional approaches to pedagogy, learning is tested with the teacher acting as arbiter of the quality of the learning, but more recent work on authentic assessment has emphasised new dimensions to the act of assessment. Authentic assessment is marked by 1) an explicit link between the curriculum and what is assessed; 2) involvement of students and community, as well as the teacher, in judging performance; 3) looking beyond the school so that learning is assessed in real-world circumstances; 4) promoting complex thinking and problem solving; 5) emphasising active performance of learning; and 6) taking account of differences in the knowledge and resources of different groups of students (Cormack, Johnson, Peters & Williams 1998.)

The assessment of students’ learning therefore takes account of the **design** intentions built into the activities undertaken. Students and teachers are aware of the criteria for success, and often rubrics are developed which provide a guide as to how the performance will be judged. Students

are involved in **transforming** knowledge and skills into new contexts and the performance of learning is designed so that the students have a strong stake in the success of the outcome. In such circumstances, the success or otherwise of the learning will be evident to the learner and, more broadly, in the way that the performance is received by its intended audience (or reader, viewer etc.). Often students will be assessing their own and each other's work. The process of performing learning is a foundation for being able to **reflect** on the worth of what has occurred in the classroom and for consideration of future learning and teaching that is needed.

Reflecting

Students and teachers collaboratively reflect upon each aspect of the learning journey. Taking the time to reflect upon 'the quality of what has been achieved is a way both of consolidating learning and of increasing the likelihood of improved performance next time' (Boomer, 1992, p.43). Reflection involves teachers and students collaboratively describing their learning journey to celebrate successes and to identify any obstacles to their learning, so as to better negotiate them next time. This process therefore connects strongly to the **designing** of future learning as well as providing a useful site for building student-teacher relationships through informal **research** of each other's desires, aspirations and fears as learners-teachers.

Boomer (1982, p.121) describes reflection as 'an essential feature of human life...we all need to feel the quality'. This emphasis upon the *felt* signals the quality of the reflection that is undertaken. If the learning has been rigorous and challenging, relevant and connected, then students and teachers will be able to feel their achievement and draw upon it as an inspiration and motivation for future learning. If the learning has not been so successful, then the time for reflection should act as an important space for critically discussing what hasn't worked, why this might be, and what might be done next time. Finally, reflection need not be the last part of learning – by using a range of strategies, this process can offer students a chance to practise **transforming** and **performing** a range of texts for a variety of audiences.

Talking About Pedagogy Using The Six Processes

The framework of recursive pedagogical processes was presented to the RPiN project teacher researchers at a research team roundtable early in 2006. It was presented along with examples that could be found from video or from examples gleaned from the literature. For example, the process of reflection was illustrated by showing a short excerpt from the French documentary *To be and to have* (Sandoz & Philibert 2002) where the teacher reviews children's work at forming letters in a handwriting lesson. An example of communicating – with a focus on helping children develop a way of thinking and talking about their own thinking processes – was shown from a video developed for a course at the University of South Australia (Wilson 2004). For each process, we incorporated as much of the related vocabulary as possible from what teachers had been saying within our meetings and from related literature. Two examples of such lists of synonyms for our processes are shown below.

Communicating	Performing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instructing • Explicit teaching • Making and providing resources • Modelling • Describing • Showing • Peer teaching • Talking/discussing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Testing • Assessing • Demonstrating • Reviewing • Judging • Feeding back • Exhibiting • Showing

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Viewing • Talking about language • Talking about thinking • Guiding 	
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Following the presentation, teachers discussed the labels with each other and the authors. The main feedback was that it was quite useful for all the teachers to have a common language for talking about the teaching processes they employed. Another comment by a significant number of teachers was about the aspects of pedagogy they felt were ‘light on’ in their own practices. In this regard, ‘reflection’ was most commonly identified as a process that tended to be squeezed out of their practices due to other pressures. Subsequently a number of teachers decided to focus on reflecting in their classroom research projects, although the full range of processes was taken up across the group of teacher researchers. At the time of writing this paper, we do not yet have the data from the teacher researchers’ projects, so we do not yet know what aspects of their pedagogy ended up being important in their actual conduct, nor the language that they use to describe what they have done. We did, however, have access to the teachers’ discussions from earlier in the project (and before we introduced this framework), so we decided to conduct an analysis of their descriptions of their work to see what they focussed on and how they labelled what they did. The results of this analysis are discussed in the next section.

Using The Six Processes To Analyse Teachers’ Pedagogical Talk

The six processes were also used as a frame for reading teachers’ self description of their practice in order to analyse what kind of pedagogical practices were being described and which were not. A data set of teacher biographies was collected during the early stages of the *RPiN* research, in which our collaborative teacher-researchers self-reported on a range of questions concerning their teaching approach. A textual analysis of teacher responses to these questions was undertaken in order to identify all of the verbs and their collocations which teachers used while describing their practice. This method allowed us to focus upon what teachers reported actually *doing* during within the pedagogical relationship. What is immediately noticeable from this analysis is that there is a number of commonly recurring labels for teachers’ practices. These labels are typically nominalisations of, or categorisations of collections of, practices and include ‘negotiation’, ‘explicit teaching’, ‘feedback’, ‘discussion’ and ‘direction’. Such concepts, we argue, can be usefully thought about as ‘black boxes’² which often remain taken for granted and unexamined, thus allowing a huge variety of practices to be employed (or not) in their name with consequent difficulty in developing common understandings and communications about these practices. Our purpose in analysing teachers’ talk about pedagogy, and in introducing some common concepts which could be explored, taken apart, argued over and put back together³, was to make a space for conversation and research about teaching between and among school-based and university based-researchers because we are not sure that understandings of pedagogy are shared in either group, let alone between groups.

Once tabulated, the verb phrases from the teacher biographies were categorised within the six pedagogical processes to see which areas were emphasised within teachers’ discussion of their

² We acknowledge Goodson and Anstead’s (1995, p.33) use of this term. In their paper on the history of education they refer to the concept of the ‘school’ as a ‘black box’. Histories of education, they claim, “fail to analyse the internal nature of schooling [and] merely accept the school as a ‘black box’, unopened and unanalysed, ignoring the vast potential for internal variety and change”.

³ Interestingly such practices of disassemblage and exploration were labelled ‘bushcraft’ by Boomer (1982, p.119)

pedagogy (where a connection to pedagogy wasn't clear the verb phrase was omitted, and so we finally had 134 that were included in our analysis). The following table provides a snapshot of the teachers' descriptions that could be connected to our heuristic:

Examples of verb phrases used by teachers connected to the six pedagogical processes heuristic

Researching (23 verb phrases)
Examples of researching process were evident in these descriptions where teachers emphasised the importance of 'gaining prior knowledge', 'getting to know the students' and 'engaging [students] in things you know they are interested in'. This research process is important for both teacher <i>and</i> students, as described by one teacher who emphasised the need 'get to know the students [and] let them get to know me'. Another emphasised the need to 'recognise community expectations and local resources that can be used'.
Designing (34 verb phrases)
Teachers frequently used the term 'negotiation' to describe aspects of the designing process, as well as describing classroom and lesson design such as 'chunking lessons' and organising desks and seating arrangements. One teacher suggested that a significant challenge was being 'able to enthuse kids with an interesting curriculum', highlighting the importance of designing and planning for learning for the success of other processes.
Communicating (52 verb phrases)
The communicating process was the most heavily represented in the <i>RPiN</i> teachers pedagogical self description with a strong emphasis upon 'talking to students', 'a lot of talking', asking and answering questions and 'showing things in a practical way'. These responses highlighted the relative ease with which teachers are able to describe their most visible contributions to the pedagogical relationship, which were often teacher talk, questioning and listening to students.
Transforming (12 verb phrases)
Transforming was infrequently described in the <i>RPiN</i> teacher biographies. Broad terms such as 'scaffolding' were often used, and phrases such as 'seeing a change in [students'] lives' or 'challeng[ing] their own knowledge base' highlighted the intent on the teacher's behalf to stimulate the process of transformation. Teachers were able to talk about the importance of 'getting [students] to challenge what they know and say' and 'get[ing] the students thinking' but lacked a vocabulary with which to more explicitly describe how they worked pedagogically to achieve this.
Performing (5 verb phrases)
Performing was infrequently described by teachers and, where it was discussed it was in terms of texts that students produced, 'oral presentations' or 'display[ing] student work'.
Reflecting (3 verb phrases)
Reflecting was infrequently represented in teachers' pedagogical self descriptions. Three teachers did discuss the importance of 'getting feedback', 'asking students where they could improve' and 'summarising where we are up to in the learning plan and assessment tasks'.

Overall, a pattern is evident, with the first three processes – researching, designing and communicating – being significantly more represented in teachers' description of their teaching than the last three processes – transforming, performing and reflecting. While we aren't proposing the six processes as a linear progression, there is an important shift in the middle of the framework between communicating and transforming which is at the conceptual heart of pedagogy as described by Lusted. It is between these two processes that the transformative interaction takes place and it is also at this transition that teachers' talk about pedagogy rapidly diminishes into silence.

The Unknowability of the Other

It would appear that the zone between communication and transformation marks a transition from speakability to unspeakability for teachers. The transition between these two processes, however, is a significant site across which the *movement* of pedagogy occurs. It is therefore important to consider this transition in more detail. Lusted's definition of learning as knowledge production emphasises what is understood by the learner rather than what is transmitted by the teacher during this phase of the pedagogical relationship. As Green (1998, p.179) observes, the content which is communicated need bear no causal resemblance to what is understood: teaching is better conceived 'not as the *cause* of learning but rather as its *context*'. However, it is necessary to further complicate the concept of 'understanding' in order to consider a more fundamental problem that may prevent teachers from talking about the movement of pedagogy as transformative interaction.

In *Postmodern Ethics*, Baumann (1993) develops a Levinasian ethical position based upon a concept of the Other which implies a fundamental gap of unknowability. This concept of the Other is useful for considering the pedagogical relationship between the agencies of teacher and student. Baumann (1993, p.147) describes ‘understanding’ as the common sense position taken during interaction with Others:

what I see, you see, the objects of seeing being ‘the same’ for whoever looks at them...what I mean by these words I have uttered – these words also mean for you who hear them; we *understand* each other.

Of course we understand what we see and the words that we hear, but whether we understand ‘each other’ is a much more complex proposition. Baumann (1993, p.147) argues that knowledge does not arise through understanding, but through *mis*-understanding, when our expectations are frustrated and we are forced to make meaning of circumstances that are abnormal:

Understanding is natural and normal, *mis*-understanding *un*-natural and abnormal. It is the *mis*-understanding that requires explanation, makes us pause and think, sets minds moving, triggers the process of conscious knowledge-building.

In this way Baumann defines understanding as a natural position of stasis in contrast to *mis*-understanding which produces an unsettling that triggers a process of becoming towards new understanding (Green’s ‘crisis’ and ‘change’). The transition between the communication and transformation processes could therefore be considered as a zone of *mis*-understanding, which is integral to learning but which also makes the transformative movement difficult to track and put into language. The transformative interaction between teacher and student passes back and forth through this zone of *mis*-understanding. Boomer (1992, p.279) describes this interaction as a dance

between teacher and taught [which] represents a continuing negotiation of meaning. Misunderstanding or rather partial understanding is inevitable but the quest to build progressively better mutual understandings is at the heart of teaching and learning.

The notion of ‘mutual understanding’, however, is again too simplistic. The teacher is able to describe their intentions, the content they have communicated and the methods they have used. They can also consider – via ‘assessment’ – the knowledge that the student-Other has produced once the movement of *mis*-understanding has settled into new understanding. However, despite ‘common sense’ understanding of these practices, performing and reflecting upon learning never give the teacher and student access to a pure ‘mutual understanding’, which would be an end to the productive tension of *mis*-understanding that is so crucial to learning. Rather, they can seek better and better representations, however these are only their own *produced* knowledge of each other. Both teacher and student are always separated by ‘a distance between the Other as she-may-be-for-herself and the Other [the teacher is] for’ (Baumann, 1993, p.90). This makes it very difficult for the teacher to discuss pedagogy during this crucial stage of transformative interaction, as only their own intentions and actions and the way in which the learner reacts to these are readily ‘visible’. It is therefore much easier to describe how one has prepared for learning or what one has done in the classroom than to try and assess how the movement of pedagogy actually proceeds across the zone of *mis*-understanding. Knowledge about which interactions are actually resulting in learning and what form this learning takes (intended,

incidental or resistant knowledge) can only be produced – rather than directly accessed – by the teacher.

It is therefore possible to divide the six pedagogical processes into three different orders, with the communication-transformation pair at the centre. Researching and designing describe the preparation for learning as teachers and students attempt to identify and plan for a *mis*-understanding which ‘triggers the process of conscious knowledge-building’. Performing and reflecting describe processes whereby teacher and student attempt to find out what has been newly understood as a result of this *mis*-understanding – they produce an understanding *of* each Other rather than accessing the Other’s understanding. The processes comprising the middle pair, communication-transformation, are hinged either side of a zone of indeterminacy that is always to some degree unknowable. The shuttling to and fro between these two processes occurs irreversibly through passages of *mis*-understanding that are at the very heart of the pedagogical relationship. The emphasis within the *RPiN* teacher-researchers’ self-reports on teaching practice highlights teachers’ ability to describe how they have prepared and what they have contributed to the pedagogical relationship. However, once the transformative interaction begins to pass through this zone of *mis*-understanding, such description becomes increasingly difficult. This doesn’t account, however, for the lack of description regarding performing and reflecting processes. Our suspicion is that there are so many difficulties in actually engaging students in disadvantaged schools in transformational learning in the mainstream curriculum that it is on the preparatory processes of research and design that teachers concentrate. The *RPiN* teacher researchers’ focus on ‘relationships’ was, perhaps, a reflection of this emphasis on getting children to the table, so to speak, to get them ready to learn. In addition, there are so many different responses by such students to the curriculum offered that there is a huge spread of outcomes to be performed and reflected on. And always there is the pressure to move on to the next set of inputs and content which drives teachers back to the processes of research and design that mean that performance and reflection are quickly glanced at, or even passed over altogether. Such statements are speculative, however, and remain to be explored further with the teacher researchers.

Conclusion

The *RPiN* project and other recent Australian educational research has highlighted the difficulty of engaging teachers in complex and detailed discussion about their pedagogies. While recently developed heuristics such as the productive pedagogies (QSRLS, 2001) have made important contributions towards identifying and describing pedagogies, they still seem to focus more upon the products rather than the actual teaching and learning processes. The six pedagogical processes described here have been developed as an attempt to provide a work focussed vocabulary with which researchers and teachers in the *RPiN* project can talk about the movement of pedagogy at the micro scale of interaction between student, teacher and the knowledge they produce. It is offered as a ‘supplement’ to other frameworks such as the productive pedagogies framework, with an understanding that its potential value lies in helping to clarify the problem: what do pedagogies look like and how can we talk about them in order to target them as a site for experimentation and redesign?

We have found the six processes useful for this purpose, allowing an analysis of teachers’ pedagogical self descriptions, which highlighted a strong emphasis upon the researching, designing and communicating processes and relative silences regarding the transforming,

performing and reflecting processes. We have suggested that there is a more fundamental problem that occurs between the processes of teacher and student communication and the transformations of both agencies that result. We have highlighted a zone of *mis*-understanding between communicating and transforming which acts as a crucial trigger for learning but which also makes it difficult to pin down the actual pedagogical processes that produce this learning. The difficulty we have encountered trying to talk about pedagogy with teachers may be connected to the unknowability of the Other during processes of shared meaning making within Lusted's triadic pedagogical relationship, resulting in less ability to describe pedagogical processes which are predicated upon the passage through *mis*-understanding. There is also further work to be done with teachers in these schools with regard to performing and reflecting, which while crucial to learning seem to be under-represented in teachers' talk.

Finally, we would like to acknowledge that heuristics such as the six pedagogical processes framework are as potentially dangerous as they are useful. While we have had early positive outcomes using the framework with teachers and as a lens for data analysis, it is still a reduction of the movement of pedagogy which breaks up this complex and fluid process between teacher and student into 'arbitrary' categories that facilitate description. It is useful to recall James' warning that

when the reflective intellect gets at work...it discovers incomprehensibilities in the flowing process. Distinguishing its elements and parts, it gives them separate names, and what it thus disjoins it cannot easily put together. (James, 1996, p.347)

There is always a risk in codifying complex classroom interactions into simplified models or frameworks and we would emphasise that these should always be approached with due recognition of what is always lost in abstract re-framings of complex processes. The best protection from such risks, we argue, is through engaging in the coding and categorising with teacher researchers who are always faced with the complex orchestration of teaching and learning as a whole. Through such mutual exploration, we can not only see if and how the heuristic helps teachers to (re)conceptualise their practice, we can also see if classroom practice helps to (re)conceptualise our theories of pedagogy.

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