Teachers' Knowledge in Vocational Education and Training.

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The problem of teachers' knowledge is a major focus of educational research. However, the research undertaken has predominantly been confined to teachers working in the school sector of education. For teachers in vocational education and training this situation is particularly problematic. Research about vocational teachers' work is both patchy and under-resourced. Often the work of teachers in vocational education and training is explained in terms of the insights gathered from research undertaken in other sectors of education and while accepting that these insights may well be relevant to vocational education and training there is a prima facie case for arguing that vocational teachers and the work they perform have a number of characteristics that distinguish them from teachers in other sectors of education. Furthermore these characteristics may well impact on the ways in which vocational education and training teachers come to recognise and operationalise their knowledge within teaching and learning. This paper reviews what we know of teachers knowledge and suggests ways in which the knowledge base of vocational education and training teachers may differ from that of other teachers. Finally, it proposes that investigations into the knowledge base of vocational education and training teachers may well inform the continuing tensions surrounding conceptions of knowledge in contemporary educational debate.

Introduction

This paper is in three sections. The first section outlines the current debate about educational research with specific reference to the implications for conceptions of knowledge highlighted by this debate. The second section deals with conceptions of teachers' knowledge, proposed by a number of educational commentators. The third section reports on the outcomes of a research project on TAFE teaching with specific reference to what it reveals about the knowledge base of teachers working in vocational education and training.

1. The Swampy High Ground- Educational Research

`there are those who choose the swampy lowlands. They deliberately involve themselves in messy but crucially important problems.........other professionals opt for the high ground, hungry for technical rigour.' ( Schon 1983:43)

When writing this in 1983, Schon was discussing the ways in which professionals go about investigating problems of professional practice.
Using his metaphor, today, all educational researchers, interested in investigating the problems of educational practice, seem to find themselves in a landscape that is both uniformly swampy and of the same elevation. Claims to certainty, no longer appear possible goals of educational research and traditional research paradigms seem, at best, to offer the possibility of only limited and partial explanations of educational practice.

Many educational researchers have left behind the notion that education has, at its base, a foundation of certain knowledge that can be used as a secure starting place for constructing new knowledge. `The traditional foundationalist or justificationist approach to epistemology has largely been abandoned in favour of a nonfoundationalist approach'.(Phillips, 1993; 58-59) and many educational researchers have also abandoned the notion that one educational research paradigm can justifiably claim superiority over another. (Calderhead 1993;14-15).

The relationship of educational research to educational practice has also come under scrutiny. Researchers question the usefulness of research to inform and transform educational practice and have suggested a number of explanations for, what they see, as the partial and limited impact of most educational research on educational practice.

Eraut (1985) proposes that the knowledge generated with the practitioner domain and the knowledge generated within the academic domain are given different valuations by the players. This, in turn, limits the `interpenetration' of these different kinds of knowledge within the theory-practice dualism. Ladwig (1994) and Zeichner (1994) nominate the unequal power relations and different motives manifested within the practitioner-academic research interaction and suggest that the relationship between researchers and the researched is often characterised by exploitation not collaboration. Robinson (1993) suggests that the problems occupying the minds of practitioners are different in kind from those occupying the minds of academic researchers and that academic research is often more concerned with describing the research problem than providing theories for practitioner action within the complex and uncertain world of practice. Similarly Oakes (1991) and (Salomon 1994) propose that educational research is largely conducted out of its social and cultural context, and is based on unjustified reductionist methodologies which underplay the important issue of `ecological validity'.

Postmodernist and poststructuralist discourses, in the social sciences, have added a new dimension to the problem of educational research. Postmodernists question the very legitimacy of any discoverable independent reality existing outside subjectivity and are suspicious of
any claims to generalisable theoretical understanding. Some also refute the notion that there is any adequate means by which subjective realities can be represented, communicated, evaluated or compared (Baudrillard 1983). Poststructuralists treat all knowledge claims as text. Their contention is that people do not exist in any objective reality but rather in an everyday world of representations (Lash 1990:12). Realities are always 'simulacra' consisting of shifting words and images that are already reproductions. Thus for the poststructuralist there is no single privileged reality but rather multiple and contradictory representations of reality, created entirely from the meanings attributed by those who perceive them. Knowledges are merely conventions negotiated through contextual agreement and reality is the result of the social processes accepted as normal within a specific context. (Fish 1989:34). Perhaps the most problematic postmodern view, at least for researchers, is contained within the idea of linguistic convention (Eagleton 1983: 105). Here language is seen as relative and arbitrary and reality a universe of discourse, a rhetoric based on action that is itself only discourse (Aronowitz 1988:432, Latour 1987:37). 'There are no independently identifiable, real-world referents to which the language of social description is cemented.'(Gergen 1986:143) By denying the possibility of intercommunicative agreement over meaning the tools of social research are withdrawn and research itself condemned as futile.

Contemporary Educational Research

Given this apparent crisis in educational research, many researchers,

are rejecting the rules of stereotypic research paradigms, labelled by Gibson (1986) as the positivist, phenomenological and critical. The paradigm war, so much a part of the politics of educational research, is no longer seen, by many, as producing anything useful for education.

McGee & Lyne (1987;383), for example, suggest that scientists rejected the positivist research paradigm sometime ago and that this paradigm is 'kept alive more in the minds of opponents than in the daily practice of scientists'. Hammersley & Atkinson (1985;3-12) critique both positivism and phenomenology arguing that 'research methods must be selected according to purposes; general claims about the superiority of one technique over another have little force' and critical research is accused of failing to sufficiently address the issue of verification of evidence and is, thus, inadequate in persuading its research audience.

'I am not suggesting that empirical observations are not made by these discourses, but I am questioning the degree to which radical sociologies have presented observations in a form their Others might recognise as 'evidence' supporting the claims they make.' Ladwig (1994; 84)
It seems that many contemporary educational researchers are rejecting paradigmatic purity in favour of pursuing their research within the increasingly flexible parameters set by diverse research paradigms.

Adapting McCutcheon's schematic representation of research, (Day, Calderhead & Denicolo 1993;14) all contemporary educational research can now be conceptualised as falling somewhere within a diamond shaped field of research practice, with each corner representing a particular paradigmatic research tradition.

Claims to foundational knowledge are, commonly, not part of the contemporary research agenda, and researchers are choosing a more eclectic range of research methods. Calderhead(1993;13-14) suggests that contemporary educational research, in fact, often combines elements of some or all of the research paradigms and is rarely restricted to a single paradigmatic position. In many cases new knowledge, developed by the efforts of researchers, is now judged not in terms of its truth but its performativity in practice.

Educational research is entering a much more pragmatic phase, and is, according to Hammersley and Atkinson, returning to an earlier period of sociological research when a variety of research techniques were 'generally used side by side, often by the same researcher.' (1985;3). Thus, it appears that the contemporary retreat from the pursuit of foundational knowledge, suggested by Phillips, (1993; 58-59) is mirrored in educational research by a retreat from paradigmatic fundamentalism.

2. Research on teachers' knowledge

Research concerning teachers' knowledge has often focused on investigating two knowledge domains, subject matter knowledge and pedagogical knowledge (Cochran K, Deruiter J. & King R, 1993;263)

Educationalists have argued the importance of one or other of these knowledge domains in terms of developing teaching expertise and each domain has, at one point or another, been privileged over the other by teacher training programs.

Subject matter knowledge is viewed, by many, as being built up by the accumulative work of the academic disciplines. Moreover, these disciplines, tend to have a foundationalist approach to knowledge and are posited as providing a priori theoretical certainty to human actions. Pedagogical knowledge, on the other hand, is commonly
conceptualised as merely the application of theory, derived from the other disciplines, to educational practice.

Wilson proposes four disciplinary categories for knowledge; the enabling disciplines (philosophy, mathematics, language, etc.); the disciplines concerned with the natural world (physics, chemistry, biology, etc) and the disciplines concerned with the human world (the arts, the social sciences). He claims that his fourth category, the disciplines concerned with practice in the human world (engineering, medicine, law, education, etc.) has not, traditionally, been given the same academic status or importance as the others and are categorised as being derivative in nature and therefore incapable of contributing much to the growth of human knowledge.

Using Wilson's categorisation the 'subject content knowledge' of school teachers falls within one of the first three disciplinary categories. Teachers in schools are seen as subject matter experts and are often labelled in schools by their discipline. They become science teachers, geography teachers, language teachers etc. 'Pedagogical knowledge' is different, according to Wilson and falls within the final disciplinary category and is thus perceived as being of a lower status in terms of its ability to contribute to new knowledge.

The problem of this perception has been addressed by a number of educational researchers. Constructivists, for example, argue that all knowledge is actively created by the knower and not passively absorbed. Knowledge never reflects 'an independent, pre-existing world outside the mind of the knower' (Lerman 1989;211) but is 'an ordering and organisation of a world constituted by our experience' (von Glaserfeld, 1984;24) Constructivists argue that teachers and the people they teach, construct their own understanding of the world and this learning represents the attempt by both teachers and learners to organise a functional, viable and explicable environment.

Constructivism rejects the objectivist account of knowledge that characterises many of the subject disciplines, arguing that the world can never be objectively known. Subject content knowledge becomes problematic for constructivists. They seek explanations to account for the stability of social knowledge and the mechanisms by which this knowledge is communicated and understood by individuals and social groups. Thus constructivists problematise all of Wilson's disciplinary categories by suggesting, in effect, that all knowledge is in one way or another pedagogical.

Shulman (1986, 1987) attempts to explain the relationship between subject content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge in a different way. He proposes the addition of a unique knowledge domain for teachers; pedagogical content knowledge. He also adds knowledge of learners and
knowledge of environment, though these categories receive less attention.

He suggests that 'expert teachers' cannot be defined, solely, on the basis of being either 'subject matter experts' or 'pedagogical knowledge experts' but are defined by their ability to continually reconstruct subject matter knowledge for the purpose of teaching. Thus teachers continually restructure subject knowledge and pedagogical knowledge and therefore construct a unique knowledge domain.

Cochran K E, DeRuiter J A & King R A (1994 263-264) broaden this conception further arguing that this unique construction should not be limited to the synthesis of subject matter knowledge and pedagogical knowledge but must also include Shulman's other domains; knowledge of the learner and knowledge of the educational and social environment. They therefore take the view that all knowledge is brought together and reconstructed within pedagogical practice. Both Shulman and the constructivists propose a knowledge gestalt occurring within pedagogical practice, with each knowledge domain merging with the others to create what might be described as a unified domain of pedagogical understanding.

3. Teacher's knowledge in vocational education and training

Educational research on teacher's knowledge has predominantly been focused on teachers working in schools. The question of its applicability in the vocational education and training sector has received little attention. In this section this issue is addressed. The paper suggests that there are a number of differences between teachers working in the school and vocational education and training sectors and that these differences impact on conceptions of teachers' knowledge. It also suggests that a preliminary analysis of information gathered during the project 'A High Quality Teaching Workforce for TAFE NSW' sheds new light on conceptions of knowledge posited by the work of Wilson, Shulman and the constructivists.

Australian TAFE teachers- a brief background

The special nature of the Australian TAFE teaching workforce has long been recognised. (Chappell C S, Gonczi A and Hager P (1994). TAFE
teaching unlike other professions is never an occupation of first choice. TAFE teachers are always recruited on the basis of having developed expertise within another occupation. Thus TAFE teaching always involves people who have made one or more career moves and who bring with them a range of knowledge, skills and other abilities derived from their work environment. Beginning TAFE teachers are also generally older than their equivalents in other professions and bring to their educational sector a wide range of life experiences that may assist them in their teaching career (Chappell C S 1992:8-18). Generally TAFE teachers have a stronger commitment to practice than theory. They often maintain connections with their own industry based occupation and generally have a utilitarian view of education and training.

Since the Kangan Report of the nineteen seventies, Australian TAFE teachers also work in an educational culture that values the social goals of access and equity, personal development, second chance educational provision and the educational needs of individuals and communities. They also work in a culture that, since the reforms of the nineteen eighties, emphasises the economic goals of increased industrial efficiency and contemporary skill development. TAFE teachers also work in a wide variety of locations and contexts. They work with individuals, groups, industries and communities. They work both inside and outside TAFE colleges. They work with a diverse range of learners. They work with the employed, the unemployed and those seeking to change employment. They work with the advantaged and the disadvantaged. They work with full time, part time and distance education learners and finally they work in a profession whose membership, is made up of individuals with, arguably, the most diverse educational backgrounds of any profession.

Overview of the project.

A component of the Education and Training Foundation (ETF) funded project, involved developing a professional competence profile of NSW TAFE teachers. A number of data gathering methods were chosen to maximise the probability of capturing both performance aspects of competent practice and the attributes that underpin competent performance. This decision was based on the theoretical work of Gonczi A, Hager P & Oliver L (1990) and the experiences of a number of professions who had developed professional competence profiles.

The research methods chosen included a literature review, a practitioner workshop, a questionnaire, critical incident interviews and general interviews. The practitioner workshop, questionnaire and general interviews focused on both performance aspects of practice and the attributes that underpinned practice, while the critical incident interviews were used as a validation device for the emerging
description of practice.

Issues concerning vocational teachers' knowledge

As a number of commentators have pointed out (Walker J, Hughes J, Mitchell J and Traill R 1995;13-14) the quality of teaching has recently received a great deal of attention from governments and other influential bodies in many countries. In Australia this interest has lead to the preparation of a number of reports and projects dealing with the professional competence of teachers. Within the last five years the National Project on the Quality of Teaching and Learning has commissioned a number of projects to describe the competence required of teachers working in the school sector and the Australian TAFE teaching sector has also been subject to similar analysis.(Hall 1990, 1991, Scarfe 1991, VEETAC 1993).

One of the outcomes of the review of this literature is that the school sector and the vocational education and training sector appear to place a different emphasis on knowledge in the professional practice of teachers.

Descriptions of the competence of school teachers emphasise and make explicit the subject content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge required by teachers. (Preston & Kennedy 1995, Boston 1993, Eltis & Turney 1993 ). By way of contrast the literature to do with the competence of TAFE teachers generally avoids making explicit reference to their content knowledge. (see Predl, Hall, Victoria). When knowledge is referred to it is generally implicit and can, often only be inferred from the descriptions of practice. References to skills are much more common than references to knowledge and 'Knowing how' appears to be of more significance in the descriptions of vocational education and training teachers than 'knowing that'.

As it seems unlikely that school teachers or TAFE teachers would dismiss the importance of either skills or knowledge in descriptions of their practice this difference in emphasis requires an explanation.

One possibility is the continuing influence of the Socratic dichotomy, commonly held to characterise the differences between vocational and general education. Body vs. mind, hand vs. head, manual vs. mental, skills vs. knowledge, applied vs. pure, knowing how vs. knowing that, practice vs. theory, particular vs. general, and training vs. education provide the flavour of this dichotomy. Perhaps the different emphasis placed on knowledge and skills by each sector is merely the celebration of this dichotomy within their description of professional practice. While this explanation is possible it may also hide more than it reveals about these differences in conception.
Conceptual differences about teachers' knowledge

The implicit nature of TAFE teachers' knowledge, expressed by writers, was confirmed early in the project. During the piloting of the questionnaire, TAFE teachers were frustrated by the question 'What knowledge do you use in your teaching?' Comments such as 'too hard to answer' or 'too much to name' were made, while others wrote down comments such as 'my knowledge of the work environment' or 'my work experience' or 'knowing the students' or 'teaching methods'. Pedagogical knowledge could be clearly inferred from the responses provided but examples of subject or content knowledge proved more elusive.

Because of the difficulties encountered by teachers, attempting to answer this question, it was removed from the questionnaire and established in the semi-structured interview schedule. In the interviews, teachers again answered this question by using specific examples taken from their vocational and teaching experience and often needed clarification questions being asked by the interviewer. It seemed that teachers either saw this content knowledge category as a given or did not see it as a distinct category of knowledge.

TAFE teachers appeared not to conceptualise their knowledge in terms of subject matter knowledge though they clearly identified pedagogical knowledge as an important knowledge category.

Possible explanations

There are perhaps a number of reasons for this. Teacher education programs, designed for preparing school teachers, emphasise knowledge of subject matter. It is seen by many teacher educators as a crucial component of good teaching (Ball & McDiarmid 1990) Typically these programs address a teacher's subject knowledge requirement in two ways. At the undergraduate level the teacher's subject specialisms are incorporated as a major component of the degree and at the post-graduate level are assumed as being already present by way of the teacher's first degree. In either case these subject specialisms are, usually, discipline based and after graduation teachers are seen as subject specialists within schools. As was discussed earlier, this subject matter is typically characterised as representing a body of generalisable knowledge that has been codified and accepted by scholars using discipline specific criteria that determine what is worthwhile knowledge within the discipline.

By way of contrast, TAFE teacher education programs, typically, pay little attention to this area of teachers' knowledge. This may be because in Australia, teachers are employed by vocational education and training systems primarily because they are deemed to already possess
the theoretical and practical knowledge of their vocational area. Candidates are selected for employment and training because of their vocational qualifications and successful work record. Another possibility is that many vocational specialisms are not represented in the tertiary education sector and consequently teacher education programs, are unable to draw on any 'in-house' expertise in these areas. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, in terms of this paper, the specialist knowledge used by vocational education and training teachers is typically not seen as equivalent to the subject matter knowledge of school teachers. Unlike maths, biology, english or social science, this component of vocational teachers' knowledge falls outside of Wilson's first three categories (the enabling disciplines, the disciplines of the natural world and the disciplines of the human world) and is firmly embedded in Wilson's fourth category, practice in the human world. It therefore receives considerably less academic interest than the disciplines that make up the other three categories.

Thus all of TAFE teachers' knowledge, including content and pedagogical knowledge, lie within Wilson's practice based discipline category. This in itself may explain why TAFE teachers' specialist content knowledge remains largely unnamed, not least by TAFE teachers themselves. This knowledge is not based on a history of academic tradition. It makes no claim to definitive or foundational knowledge. It is interdisciplinary in origin, contingent, continually influenced by environment and experience and is oriented to practice not theory.

This suggests a substantial difference between the knowledge base of school teachers and vocational education and training teachers as a return to Shulman's knowledge categories may show.

Shulman's categories revisited

A number of commentators have suggested that it is unclear whether Shulman's conception of pedagogical content knowledge is based on an objectivist or constructivist view of knowledge (McEwan and Bull 1991 316-334). Perhaps part of the answer, to this ambiguity, can be explained using Wilson's conception of disciplines. School teachers subject matter knowledge lies firmly within the discipline categories that are given high academic status. This knowledge is seen as more theoretical than practical and grounded in the search for generalisable and objective knowledge.

Pedagogical knowledge, on the other hand is seen as being largely derivative having little potential for expanding the limits of theoretical and generalisable knowledge. When Shulman brings these different knowledge domains together and interweaves them into a third unique knowledge domain what status and orientation does this new knowledge domain inherit? Does subject knowledge lose its status by being reinterpreted and incorporated into pedagogical knowledge or does pedagogical knowledge gain status by being incorporated into the
generalisable knowledge that is conceptualised as foundational and often objective by the other disciplines? Blending these two categories into a unique knowledge base poses real difficulties in terms of the different status the component knowledge domains possess.

This dilemma does not feature in any discussion of vocational teachers knowledge. Specialist content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge are seen by many teachers as being located within Wilson's practice based disciplines. There is therefore no academic tension created by proposing that content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge are integrated and changed into pedagogical content knowledge.

Preliminary interpretations of the critical incident interviews conducted with TAFE teachers also suggest that teachers also use Shulman's knowledge of learners and knowledge of environment as crucial knowledge domains. There are numerous examples in the transcripts of interviews that indicate that knowledge of the learner together with knowledge of the industry or vocational and social environment are seen as important components by TAFE teachers in their 'decision making' activities. None of these knowledge domains therefore are viewed by TAFE teachers as falling inside Wilson's first three categories of discipline based knowledge. TAFE teachers place great emphasis on experience and practice in the world and a preliminary analysis suggests that these teachers do not judge their knowledge in terms of its claims to objectivity, certainty or foundationalism but use performativity in practice as the criterion for judging the efficacy of teachers knowledge and this emphasis on experience and practice supports a constructivist account of knowledge development.

The data collected, by this project also suggests that Shulman's knowledge categories are problematic when used to develop a complete picture of the way teachers practice in their pedagogical world.

An example taken from one of the critical interviews may illustrate this.

A teacher is concerned that a student in Stage 3 of a commercial cookery course will fail because his written work is almost illegible. The teacher also recognises the student's excellent practical skills. He decides to talk with the student.

PETER

At first the student felt very threatened by this and apprehensive and wondering what’s going to happen to him and all this sort of thing and was just sitting in my office feeling really quite frightened by the whole thing especially as this was coming up to last few weeks at college.
So to break down the barriers we discussed his work and he said he was working in a restaurant; family life - he said he didn't have much family life because he was by himself. He had a girlfriend but umh then I found out that he'd migrated and he'd only learned to speak English in the past 2-3 years and was working in a place in ********** for his room and food so he was really being used, you know, and his boss promised him a good salary if he passed the course and gave him a good job and all that sort of thing. I said well if your boss has promised you a good future the that's enough motivation to get started and let's really get stuck into it and get you help And he said Oh also my girlfriend said she's going to marry me if I get that good job (LAUGHTER).

Yea I said do feel you're being used and abused? He can't get married because he hasn't any money. Oh it was rather funny, and I thought well this is motivation to succeed surely, you know promises of getting married, getting paid and everything else and so he started getting very keen. So anyway apart from the course a great deal of help was around because we were willing to do whatever was necessary to pass so I went to see Adult Education and interviewed, got an interview there for him and we organised a lady called 'Kathryn'-pseudonym- who's our Adult Ed. person, not mentioning any names but she is excellent with the students - second language learners.

So I decided to go along - I'd better go with this guy and make sure he gets there. So I went with the student to show a bit of support and after the meeting we decided that it would be a team effort that the three of us would work on him. It was a tremendous amount of extra work. I didn't know what I was letting myself in for. Whereas Adult Ed required in advance all my lesson plans for the next 18 weeks Lucky I'd taught this subject for about 5-6 years so all my lesson plans were there...thank God! Umh also I had to organise revision quizzes which I usually have there but not to the degree that they wanted them so the quizzes had to be so that she could sit down and use the revision quizzes in that time which she was allocated. Also I had to drum up a lot of test questions, old ones that were out of date and so I had to supply all those.

* INTERVIEWER
So this for you in a sense then Peter was almost like preparing for another class?
*PETER
Oh more! More because things ...for a start the tutor had no ...so you know she's got a pretty fair idea, she's been teaching for a while but didn't have the knowledge to go through the French and culinary terms and the work flows and the revision so I had to supply her, sort of teach the tutor if you know what I mean so she could teach the guy because he couldn't comprehend he couldn't really write that well. You
know if you asked him to sit down and write a simple menu of each dish - he could tell you - but he couldn’t write it so that was a problem. But he was very good, he had a good memory so that was something. He was obviously a very intelligent guy but as far as his English capabilities were....you know as I said he had only just learned to speak English.

So we got over that barrier so it meant a lot of demands on me for the student. I had to plan ahead each week, talk to the tutor, and this is done a lot in my own time but I was just determined to get this guy through and he was quite happy about that and we ended up with quite a great result really.

*INTERVIEWER
Did you?

*PETER
Yes we did - yes especially when his English was limited and he had all sorts of other problems. I suppose looking at the other question there - my thoughts and feelings about the whole thing umh let me think. I migrated to Australia a few years ago....and I suppose we had something in common there really. He was a migrant and I was a migrant. When I arrived I could speak English. When he arrived he couldn't speak English that was the difference. I had the skills to survive because I could talk to people and do interviews and everything else - he didn't have that. And when you learn English...from experience talking to people that have learned English working in a restaurant is quite strange. It's a bit like 'kitchen' English really LAUGHING so yea I knew it quite well. I went to Marseille a couple of years ago and had the terrible feeling of walking down the street and someone speaking to you -with limited French- or even going to a Post Office. You rehearse before you go in !

An analysis of this conversation using Shulman's knowledge categories reveals that this teacher, indeed, uses examples of different knowledges from these categories, however the teacher's action or practice cannot be fully explained with reference to the constructed knowledge contained within these categories.

Content knowledge
Knowledge to go through the French and culinary terms and the work flows

Pedagogical knowledge
Lucky I'd taught this subject for about 5-6 years so all my lesson plans were there

Pedagogical content Knowledge
You know if you asked him to sit down and write a simple menu of each dish - he could tell you ..... talking to people that have learned English working in a restaurant is quite strange. It's a bit like 'kitchen' English

Knowledge of learner
his boss promised him a good salary if he passed the course and gave him a good job and all that sort of thing. I said well if your boss has promised you a good future the that's enough motivation to get started and let's really get stuck into it and get you help

Knowledge of environment
So any way apart from the course a great deal of help was around because we were willing to do whatever was necessary to pass so I went to see Adult Education and interviewed,............

The action of this teacher, in this instance, was not based solely on using the constructed knowledge base occupying these categories. His decision to act incorporates a dimension of knowledge overlooked by Shulman. This additional knowledge domain could be called knowledge of self.

Knowledge of self
Peter acted in this instance because of his commitment and empathy towards the student in this predicament and there are numerous examples in the transcript that illustrate this dimension of this interaction. the student felt very threatened by this and apprehensive and wondering what's going to happen to him and all this sort of thing

I found out that he'd migrated and he'd only learned to speak English in the past 2-3 years and was working in a place in ********** for his room and food so he was really being used, you know,

we were willing to do whatever was necessary to pass

So I went with the student to show a bit of support and after the meeting we decided that it would be a team effort that the three of us would work on him.

I migrated to Australia a few years ago....and I suppose we had something in common there really. He was a migrant and I was a migrant. When I arrived I could speak English. When he arrived he couldn't speak English that was the difference

I went to Marseille a couple of years ago and had the terrible feeling of walking down the street and someone speaking to you -with limited French- or even going to a Post Office. You rehearse before you go in !
This commitment seems to spring from a sense of empathy toward this student based on the personal experience of being a migrant and through the process of experiencing the difficulties of getting by in a country in which your language skills are limited. This self-revelatory feature of the transcript suggests that knowledge of self may well trigger the use of the other knowledge categories when determining pedagogical action. This self-knowledge appears to be personally and experientially constructed and may well determine if, how and when other knowledge categories are brought into determining the direction and form the teacher's intervention might take.

A more detailed analysis of all of the critical incident interviews will need to be conducted before any conclusion can be reached concerning the viability of this proposed new knowledge category. The question of how this knowledge category is constructed also requires further research. The analysis of this data is continuing.

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