

## Dancing at a Distance? Postgraduate Studies, 'Supervision', and Distance Education

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### Introduction

Australian universities, as with many of their counterparts elsewhere,  
are experiencing pressures to change from a variety of sources with a  
variety of intentions. These pressures to change are concerned with:

- the development of university education as part of a tertiary layer of mass education;
- the requirement for universities to derive more of their funds from non-government sources;
- the push to be more 'client-centred' and to have more 'open' and 'flexible' forms of 'delivery';
- the demand for further professionally-based credentials, including doctorates;
- the increase in the use of communications and computer-based technologies;
- the shift from collegial to corporate management approaches.

There are numerous interconnections and tensions between these

pressures for change. Our purpose in this paper is to explore briefly the particular ways they come to bear around postgraduate research supervision in universities, and to focus especially on the off-campus EdD program at Deakin University. The authors are involved in different ways with this program and also have supervision responsibilities for postgraduate research at Masters and PhD levels. Our experiences in distance education lead us to offer a critique of postgraduate pedagogies, especially the emerging technologically mediated forms of postgraduate pedagogies, in terms of the different ways they 'choreograph' the experiences and research of students, as well as the work of supervisors, and the relationship between 'choreography' and 'performance' in postgraduate research and training. Our focus will be on the supervisory pedagogies of postgraduate research rather than on postgraduate coursework.

The question of pedagogy is both fundamental to, and intensely problematical in, the emerging nexus between distance education and postgraduate studies, particularly in the context of new rhetorics of open learning, globalisation, and late- and post-modernity. In this paper we explore the concept of 'supervision' in relation to the distinctive nature of pedagogy, or teaching for learning, in distance education forms of postgraduate research and teaching. Understanding distance education through metaphors drawn from choreography and geography, we propose to consider postgraduate supervision as a specific form of pedagogy, conceived as a complex 'dance' of constraints and possibilities in mediated curriculum space. Deakin University's EdD program provides a focus for discussion here, taking into account current moves across education generally towards 'virtual' or 'on-line' forms of curriculum and administration.

Postgraduate Studies/Postgraduate Education?

Recent changes in the nature of postgraduate research and training are necessarily understood within the larger, more comprehensive context of general educational restructuring, and patterns of economic and

schooling reform that are at once national and global in scale and reference. The realm of postgraduate studies has become increasingly important within this larger picture of educational change, and indeed represents a major growth industry in this regard. Hence, postgraduate studies has come to be viewed as problematic, and as warranting closer scrutiny as well as more careful policing. The emphasis however tends to lie on matters of accountability and efficiency, on completion rates, ethical and administrative procedure, formal rights and responsibilities, and on what has been called the 'new contractualism'; in short, on bureaucratic rationality.

What is often overlooked or underplayed in accounts of postgraduate studies is that, just as in the university more generally, given indicators such as promotion patterns and funding priorities, emphasis in practice tends to find more squarely and emphatically on 'research' rather than 'teaching'. The former is more highly regarded than the latter, and is certainly better rewarded. This can perhaps be appropriately expressed as a systematic valorisation of the one over the other, and is arguably something that continues to structure the debate in recent times, despite both official and unofficial disclaimers to the contrary and increasing attention given to matters of completion rates and the like, evidenced for instance in headlines such as 'Supervision targeted in postgrad failure' (Campus Review, March 23-29, 1995, p 12). More formally, this can be considered within the terms of a binary logic or economy, a structured system of relations, investments and priorities whereby research is valued at the expense of pedagogy. The 'research/pedagogy' binary links up in turn

with other binary sets, among which are 'knowledge/identity' and 'man/woman'. The significance of the latter set is that, within the university as elsewhere in education, there is a marked division of labour and privilege between men and women, which is usefully considered as a specific manifestation of the gender régime of schooling (Connell, 1985b). In linguistic terms, it involves a systematic privileging of the ideational function over the interpersonal functional in the discourse structure of higher education (Halliday, 1978). Our point is that, within this particular formulation, a structured relationship may be observed among the terms 'research', 'knowledge', and 'man' (or 'the masculine'), on the one hand, and on the other, among those of 'pedagogy', 'identity' and 'woman' (or 'the feminine'). Moreover, the first field of relationships is systematically or structurally valued over and against the second; indeed, the latter field is negatively valued, or positively devalued, in this regard.

Indeed, there is a sense in which pedagogy as such is appropriately described as the 'absent presence' in postgraduate education. Certainly this is the case with the figure of the teacher, bearing in mind that there is a tendency often to generate tenuous practical and theoretical

distinctions between 'teaching' and 'pedagogy'. Postgraduate education is about research first and foremost, more often than not within circumstances of mentoring and apprenticeship, and about learning—that is, learning about research, as well as how to do research and how to be a researcher; this, in addition to, or complementary of, work in a specific discipline or realm of knowledge and praxis. Supervisors in this perspective are not so much 'teachers' as they are 'researchers', and certainly their role and status as researchers takes precedence over their identity and work as teachers. Furthermore, as is increasingly evident in the literature, supervisors are rarely taught how to supervise and how to conduct themselves as supervisors, as teachers and trainers of postgraduate students and novice or apprentice researchers. Among the issues this raises are the following: What is the teaching involved in postgraduate supervision? What to teach? How to teach? These are crucial curriculum questions, and yet all too rarely asked in the context of postgraduate studies.

An early exception is Connell's (1985a) account of PhD supervision which begins thus:

Supervising a research higher degree is the most advanced level of teaching in our education system. It is certainly one of the most complex and problematic—as shown by the very high drop-out rate of students at this level. It is also one of the least discussed (Connell, 1985a: 38).

As he writes, supervision at this level is 'a genuinely complex teaching task', observing further that '[t]his complexity is not often enough acknowledged' (Connell, 1985a: 38).

Such a gap in the literature is perhaps more understandable when it is considered that, until relatively recently, teaching itself has been considered mainly within the instrumental language(s) of instructional design and curriculum development, whether technicist or humanistic in orientation, and little attention has been given within this framework to the concept of pedagogy. In a now classic intervention in this regard, Lusted (1986: 3) in observing that pedagogy was, as he put it, 'desperately under-theorised', argued the importance of understanding pedagogy conceptually, in these terms:

Why is pedagogy important? It is important since, as a concept, it

draws attention to the process through which knowledge is produced. Pedagogy addresses the 'how' questions involved not only in the reproduction of knowledge but also in its production. Indeed, it enables us to question the validity of separating these activities so easily by asking under what conditions and through what means we 'come to know'. How one teaches is therefore of central interest but, through the prism of pedagogy, it becomes inseparable from what is being taught

and, crucially, how one learns (Lusted, 1986: 2-3.)

His concern was with media pedagogy in the broad sense, although he was also concerned with cultural theory including within what he called 'elite realms of thought'. However, the relevance of such arguments to postgraduate education in other fields, such as education studies, is also very clear. What is striking, in fact, is that the move to postgraduate studies, and particularly higher research degree work, seems to involve, rhetorically at least, a shift in orientation from teaching and the teacher to learning and the learner, to be understood now and increasingly within a more explicit 'research' framework. In a curious sense, the figure of the teacher slips away, while that of the learner moves into prominence in its place, as an educational agent. Yet at the same time, paradoxically, there is even more emphasis placed on the figure of the supervisor, both bureaucratically and symbolically. The point is, the 'teacher' and the 'supervisor' are different figures; there is a sharp break, symbolically, between them. Hence the significance of Connell's (1985a: 38) observation that '[o]n their side, many staff don't see supervision as teaching. Similarly, 'learning' becomes 'research', or something other than learning per se; and indeed, in some cases, 'training' becomes the preferred term with regard to the in(tro)duction of the novice researcher into the culture of research. The effect of all this is to create a (pre-)disciplinary transitional or liminal space that is fraught with tension, ambiguity, contradiction and complexity.

In the specific case of postgraduate studies, it is also important to take into account what is different and distinctive about pedagogy at this level. That is to say, while postgraduate pedagogy has much in common with other forms and levels of pedagogic practice, what must also be accounted for is its specificity. The very fact that it is an academic activity at the highest level of institutionalised education is important and indeed crucial in this respect. Hence, while acknowledging that there is an 'emotional dimension' in the supervisory relationship, Connell (1985a: 41) points nonetheless to the significance of intellectuality and knowledge-production: 'At the core of the relationship is a intellectual relationship between student and supervisor'. If the relationship works well, he continues:

There can be a shared intellectual development in which both parties gain some new perspectives and the result of their joint labor [sic] is some public gain in knowledge (Connell, 1985a: 41).

That is to say, the intellectual relationship is at the very heart of postgraduate pedagogy, with the work of the postgraduate student (in association with the supervisor) to be understood as a higher-order academic-intellectual project. In this respect it is the (re)production of not only knowledge but also identity that is at stake in postgraduate pedagogy, with knowledge production decisively articulated with identity production. Importantly, however, the

supervisor functions as both representative of and a relay-point or mediator with regard to the discipline or field in question. It is not so much what the supervisor literally 'transmits', pedagogically, as what (s)he enables by way of setting up a critical exchange or dialogue between the student and the discipline. This may occur, further, as

much in the model that the supervisor represents as in what (s)he actually says and does. In that sense, notions such as mentoring and facilitation become critical, and distinctive, features of postgraduate pedagogy, with a corresponding diminution of the informational and instructional functions. Further, what distinguishes postgraduate pedagogy in this regard from teachers' work at the level of schooling is a change in the nature of its disciplinary, as opposed to its developmental, character (Connell, 1985b). Disciplinary formation and (re)production is achieved by a largely symbolic relationship with a supervisor, as One-Who-Is-Supposed-to-Know. In that sense, there may well be very little actual 'teaching' in postgraduate pedagogy, although the supervisor figures heavily as a significant 'absent presence' in this regard.

What happens in the case of distance education forms of postgraduate research and training? What is peculiar to the situation of postgraduate studies in the distance education mode? The first thing to be said that the supervisor is even more, and more literally, an 'absent presence' in this regard. By definition, (s)he occupies and operates in a different locality, geographically, a different place, which however can and must also be understood institutionally and epistemologically. But (s)he also works from and within a different temporality as well. Proximity and distance map onto presence and absence as structuring principles, and the distinctive social relations of postgraduate pedagogy need accordingly to be understood in terms of changed realisations and deployments of space, time and the body, as well as different forms and modes of communication and exchange.

Here Giddens's (1984) account of the social relations of what he calls co-presence is apposite. He understands co-presence in terms of 'situated contexts of interaction-interaction with others who are physically present' (Giddens, 1984: 64), and as 'anchored in the perceptual and communicative modalities of the body' (Giddens, 1984: 67): 'The social characteristics of copresence are anchored in the spatiality of the body, in orientation to others and to the experiencing self' (Giddens, 1984: 64). Co-presence depends on bounded space-time configurations, and hence on forms of (en)closure-as pertains for instance in classrooms. Distance education involves changed circumstances of social and pedagogical relationship, and hence for Giddens (1984: 37) 'social mechanisms distinct from what is involved in contexts of co-presence'. This can be understood, literally, as displacements of pedagogic bodies in time-space.

What does this imply, sociologically and philosophically? The first shift is from conditions of 'co-presence' to those of, in effect, 'no presence', or rather, 'absence'. This is distance education in the correspondence and print modes of delivery. The use of broadcast technologies, particularly television, and other forms of communications technology, most notably telephony, represents a further intermediate and perhaps even transitional condition. Developments such as email and CMC push into rather different ontological and pedagogical different spaces. This is because they offer the possibility for both synchronous and asynchronous forms of communication, in what might be called conditions of 'virtual presence'. This brings together new conjunctions of 'presence' and 'absence'. For the moment this can be described simply in terms of 'absent presence', although just a moment's reflection will indicate the extent to which it is increasingly not so easy distinguishing between 'presence' and 'absence' as matters of priority and value. For Sharp (1993), a new social form is emerging predicated on the interpenetration and co-existence of 'interaction' and 'extension', with however increasingly the latter having priority over the former. As he writes:

As the settings of interaction coexist with the extended forms, as the latter become the dominant term, the effect is a reshaping of the horizons of persons engaged in interaction as such. Interaction continues on, but increasingly as the necessary condition for a practice of everyday life which is increasingly framed by a different form of the social (Sharp, 1993: 236).

This then is the implication and effect of the move towards email, CMC and the like. On the one hand it represent new circumstances for the co-existence and interpenetration of the socio-pedagogic principles of interaction and extension; on the other, it transforms interaction as such, and introduces new forms of 'interactivity'. Managing these changed forms of relationship and communication, while maintaining the distinctive academic-intellectual project that marks postgraduate work, is the task par excellence of off-campus postgraduate pedagogy as well as its major problematic. How is it possible to develop and sustain the peculiar kind of tutelary relationship that is involved here? What mechanisms exist to enable this? How to understand and deal with the constraints, in all their productivity, that characterize what can be called extended pedagogic relations of this kind?

#### Models of Supervision in the EdD Program

What distinguishes the EdD from other similarly-designated doctoral programs is its distinctive character as a research-oriented degree. It combines a structured sequence of units (Phase 1) designed to inform and lead up to the presentation of a proposal document at a formally-constituted colloquium, followed by the preparation and

submission of a Research Folio (Phase 2). It differs from other higher degree research work, as in the PhD, in the distinctive nature of the Folio as an organised collection of original productions as opposed to the single extended (written) document of the PhD dissertation. As well, the EdD involves a different understanding of research, its nature and purpose(s), and rather than geared towards knowledge-production per se, is intended to contribute to and enhance both knowledge and practice in regard to specific educational sites. (In that regard it is perhaps better designated as oriented, in a quite specific sense, towards research as praxis, or more simply still as praxis-oriented.) Further to this, the nature of the distinctive 'project' that characterises postgraduate research work in general is necessarily different in the case of the EdD. Rather than focussed on or addressed to a research topic, in the conventional academic-intellectual sense, it is tied more directly to what might be called a 'topos', a specific place or site of educational-institutional work. To some extent, therefore, this question of research distinctiveness is a matter under constant negotiation between students, supervisors, the EdD course team, and the Graduate Office of the Faculty and the University.

The notion of supervision has figured significantly in discussions and debates associated with the development of the EdD, since it is clear that the degree requires a changed understanding of the supervisor's role and of the relationship between students and supervisors, as well as among students and supervisors. A commissioned document was prepared specifically in relation to the EdD, outlining 'principles, entitlements, responsibilities and roles' (Saville, 1993), and this has been the main reference point for the one formal account of the program published to date (Brennan and Walker, 1994). More recently, there has been a further policy elaboration of the Folio and related examination issues, which serves to clarify and consolidate the distinctive character of supervision vis-a-vis the EdD, and what we want to do now

is use these various documents as the basis for examining models of supervision and pedagogy in this particular instance. The point to stress here is that while, in practice, there are invariably different 'models' of pedagogy in play in the program, in a policy sense there is effectively just one currently in place, albeit perhaps by default. Our concern is ultimately with making visible and available a range of 'models' in this respect, hopefully allowing for different supervisory-pedagogic 'styles' as well as for improved educational practice and provision more generally<sup>1</sup>.

A central claim in developing and defending the EdD has been that it serves to 'challeng[e] understandings of supervision' in postgraduate studies (Brennan and Walker, 1994: 226). There are several aspects of this. Firstly it is highly significant that the focus of the work done towards the degree is on the specific albeit changing nature of the



educational workplace, essentially one's own, at least professionally. That is to say, the emphasis is on educational practice, both as (and within) an organisation and as (and within) a form of work. This means, further, that it is likely to be much more communal and collaborative than is the usual case with higher degree research, which tends to occur away from the worksite as such, or indeed the research site. By definition, students are likely to have more knowledge and experience regarding their own site(s) of work/research than is the usual case for postgraduate students, as well as in relation to their supervisors. Finally, given the differentiated nature of the Folio it may well be that a student works with several minor (or 'local') supervisors in the course of completing the degree, albeit under the general coordination of a major (or 'global') supervisor. What this means is that the relationship between student and supervisor(s) needs to be understood and indeed reconceptualised more in terms of 'negotiation' rather than 'direction', and moreover as less 'private and privatised' than is the usual case in postgraduate studies, with a less hierarchical and more reciprocal structure of authority (Brennan & Walker, 1994: 227).

In the first instance what this involves can be seen as simply an elaboration on what is arguably implicit in postgraduate pedagogy more generally, at least rhetorically, in terms of a shift towards student independence and autonomy. In curriculum-theoretical terms, this can be expressed as a movement from a 'transmission' mode to an 'interpretation' mode (Barnes, 1976), with a further move to be understood within the terms of 'negotiation' (Boomer et al, 1992)-in effect, from 'teaching' to 'learning', and then onto 'teaching-learning' (Green & Morgan, 1992). This latter needs to be understood, further, as both a necessary relation and a dynamic unity, and as involving a reworked conceptualisation of teaching as a context or environment for learning. This might well be a useful and succinct way of understanding the term 'pedagogy', that is, as 'teaching-for-learning'. As such it involves elements and phases of both 'transmission' and 'interpretation', of 'teacher-centredness' and 'learner-centredness', realised in and through a distinct pattern of practice over time.

In actual fact this is harder to achieve, as a precarious kind of 'balancing act', than the simple counterposing of the terms 'negotiation' and 'direction' here would seem to imply. A supervisory pedagogy based allegedly on principles of 'interpretation' and 'negotiation' might well be more subtly 'directive' than is immediately apparent, along the lines of Bernstein's (1975) work on 'invisible pedagogies'. '(In)direction' still carries embedded within it the notion of 'direction', and certainly there remains at least implicit in the EdD a traditional understanding of curriculum as 'leading' somewhere, as teleological and indeed linear, with both a beginning and an end, an origin and a destination, notwithstanding a certain

'fuzziness' in this regard. However it is also certainly the case that

the whole question of 'design' becomes at once more complicated and more problematical here, and as necessarily realised in and through practice-in large part, the practice of exchange, dialogue and negotiation between student and supervisor(s).

Part of what is at issue in assessing the images and models of supervision and pedagogy in the EdD emerge from considering the manner in which the very terms, 'supervision' and 'supervisor', have been deployed to date. For instance Brennan and Walker (1994: 227) make the following point, with reference to the changed circumstances of EdD supervision: 'In relation to their own work, the student is more likely to have the over-view (super-view) than the super-visor'. They also indicate that terms such as 'student' and 'supervisor' have, to date, been used 'out of habit and for the sake of convenience', while acknowledging that 'this has the effect of disguising difference'. This is consistent with Saville's 1993 discussion paper, which in many ways identifies closely with the original spirit of the EdD. Saville (1993) recommends that 'the system of student support currently described as 'supervision' be reformed to more adequately reflect the thrust of the principles and design of the programme'. Rather than the term 'supervisor', he suggests in its place the notion of 'programme consultant', in association with 'a range of appropriate consulting tutors' (Saville, 1993: 13)<sup>2</sup>. The separation here is between 'supporting a student's development and making prescriptive assessments of their work', or in Connell's (1985b) terms between the 'disciplinary' and 'developmental' sides of teachers' work. The value of such a formal separation lies in providing a solution to a problem with specific regard to postgraduate supervision: the fact that '[t]he supervisor has to be at different times both a supporter and a critic of the student's work, and sometimes the two together' (Connell, 1985a). This clearly demands considerable sensitivity and skill, pedagogically. Yet it also presupposes a particularly complex supervisory-administrative structure, with a culture in place that encourages and supports interaction and collaboration among different academic staff and due consideration for the need for equity in terms of the allocation of workload and credit. Saville's model puts the onus of evaluation and assessment onto the 'consulting tutor(s)', which could have the unfortunate effect of seeming to replicate and defer to the time-honoured university system of a strong division of labour between 'lecturers' and 'tutors'. Unless safeguards were built into the system in this instance to ensure that the roles of 'programme consultant' and 'consulting tutor' were equally distributed among the academic staff involved, some would find themselves more oriented toward one rather than the other sides of the 'supervisory' work in question here. That might well be acceptable, provided that it is a matter of principle and choice, and formal recognition built into the system along the way. But it could also lend itself to various forms of exploitation, however unintentional that might be. Of course assessment and evaluation here do not coincide with examination, and the possibility of developing a genuinely collaborative culture of supervision needs also to be

acknowledged.

It is still the case, however, that an initiative such as this, formally separating out the disciplinary and developmental functions of supervision, by no means assures a 'more balanced symmetry of authority', although it may well provide '[a] basis for negotiating a research focus'-as well as a research design-'that is quite different from the way such processes usually evolve in the PhD' (Brennan & Walker, 1994: 227). Simply refusing the term 'supervision' and 'supervisor', or perhaps seeking rather to defuse their connotations, may well be neither sufficient in this regard, then, nor desirable.

Instead, 'supervision' needs to be more explicitly recognised as a concept-metaphor, as implied in the above reference to 'over-view' and 'super-visor', and hence the evocation of notions such 'over-seeing' and 'overseer'. The mistake would be to assume that the structure of authority, (epistemic, institutional, and what might be perhaps appropriately called charismatic) can ever simply be put aside in this manner. This might be expressed as a tension arising from the liberal framework within which such discussion often proceeds, as is arguably the case in this instance. A more Foucauldian perspective would be far more sceptical and wary of such moves, and in working with and from a different understanding of power and authority seek among other things to exploit the possibilities, administrative and pedagogic, in the image of the panopticon. 'Supervision' in this sense is better grasped as a 'pan-optics' of pedagogic power, with due regard for its productivity in terms of securing the best conditions for postgraduate research and training and hence for the formation of appropriate research(er) subjectivities. Here postgraduate pedagogy might well be better understood as a matter of artfully arranging the educational environment for the novice researcher, with 'environment' conceived here as inclusive of resources, information, accommodation, different or multiple perspectives, expertise, networks, 'direct instruction', and so on.

At the same time it is undeniable that the usual situation with regard to the authority relations of postgraduate studies and supervision does not and cannot hold in the EdD. The students are often older and more experienced, sometimes earning more than their supervisors, and more often than not holding down positions of considerable responsibility and authority in their own workplaces. Hence: 'In the EdD the student is less vulnerable (retaining the supports provided by home and work), retains expertise in their own area and better placed to arrive at a negotiated contract with the supervisor' (Brennan & Walker, 1994: 227). Or as Saville (1993: 4) puts it:

One of the features of the EdD programme which marks it out from other higher education activity is that it involves practitioners who are already likely to be experts in their own field, who are well qualified

and carry a wealth of experience.

Correspondingly, the team of supervisors ('consultants', 'tutors') draws its authority from a combination of their general and specific research experience and skills, their 'insider' status and knowledge of the academic institution, and their substantive forms of disciplinary and field-specific expertise and understanding. This then is the basis for their negotiated relationship, based on due acknowledgement of students' and supervisor's respective experience and expertise, within what is described as a 'contract of engagement' (Saville, 1993: 5). As much as anything else, then, supervisors operating within such a program framework need to listen more, and more carefully, to 'stories from the field', accounts of practice, in all their complexity, 'otherness', and recalcitrance.

Yet it is also the case that the team, and individual supervisors, retain considerable authority over and beyond that of their students. This is by virtue of the fact that they are usually equipped with what is at once a 'meta-language' and a 'meta-practice' of research, which gives them a different perspective even on those areas of practice and experience in which student are 'expert'. While 'teachers' and 'learners', 'supervisors' and 'students'-researchers all-are likely to learn much from each other, it remains far from symmetrical, in many instances at least, although the situation may well approach such a state in the course of the degree. The very fact that students undergo

a first Phase of the program, leading up to the presentation and defence of a Proposal, suggests that it is unwise to overly generalise or idealise, the prevailing authority relations; and it may well also be that subsequent work leading up to the submission of the Folio similarly involves different and varying assignments of authority and autonomy, openness and closure.

Dancing at a Distance; or, Towards Telepedagogy?

Furthermore, the opportunity clearly exists in these circumstances to work positively and productively towards a more explicit pedagogy based on the principle of negotiation, which is a matter well worth on-going discussion, inquiry and action research. What we want to do now is explore some aspects of conceptualising pedagogy through the metaphor of dance, extending our inquiry to take in matters to do specifically with postgraduate studies and distance education, using Deakin's postgraduate research and studies program as both a basis for discussion and potentially a field of application.

A prospective off-campus PhD or EdD student in the Deakin University Graduate School of Education-as with other similar prospective students in other discipline areas and universities-faces what appears to be almost the ultimate in independent study. Although we do not offer

supervision in all aspects of Education, the array of areas is so broad and diverse that the prospective student has what must appear to be a daunting prospect ahead in terms of their choices. It is rather like an aspiring dancer seeking to dance, professionally: what company; what choreographer; and what audience? From the initial choice of topic, and perhaps methodology, flows a sequence of decisions which eventually leads to a Principal and an Associate Supervisor, or their analogues in the case of the EdD, to be appointed. Even here, there is considerable openness about what can be studied; although the EdD and PhD have different dance styles, the choreography which can be accommodated within them is quite diverse.

The use of metaphors from dance is not simply for illustrative convenience. There are some powerful connections for us between the concepts within dance and those of postgraduate supervision, especially through distance education. This has already been considered with reference to the image of 'choreography' (Evans, 1988). The choreography of postgraduate research occurs at several levels. We have touched on what might be called the intellectual or academic level when we refer to the openness of research possibilities and the gradual closure which occurs as the prospective student makes choices to which the institution responds. For us the dance continues throughout the postgraduate student's career, as they open into new areas of reading, theory and research, but also close down on to what they will do for their study and eventually 'write-up' for their examiners.

But in distance education, and no less so in postgraduate research, the choreography occurs in terms of a dynamic interplay of both the presence and absence of particular performers, and also the time-space relations which obtain. As explored elsewhere (Evans, 1988), drawing on historical and cultural understandings 'leads to an appreciation of distances as not only physical time-space, but also as social constructions which are deeply embedded in contemporary culture and in each individual psyche'. Evans continues thus:

Pred argues that, 'Place always represents a human product; it always involves and appropriation and transformation of space and nature that is inseparable from the reproduction and transformation of society in time and space' (Pred, 1985: 337). Giddens presses this social analysis

further by stating that social theorists need to recognise the 'situatedness' of social interaction in time and space (Giddens, 1984: 110). In effect, concepts of time and space are taken for granted and unproblematic in most social analysis and one might also add, in analysis of distance education. Yet it is obvious that time and space, and their allocation and organisation, mean different things to different people (Evans, 1988: 4).

It was Pred's earlier use of the phrase 'the choreography of existence'

(Pred, 1977) which prompted Evans to conceptualise the 'dance of distance education', not merely as a time-space movement, but also as a choreography of presence, absence and co-presence (Evans, 1989). For postgraduate distance students, the choreography concerns as much their senses of absence from the place of their university (where their supervisors, the library, the administration etc exist), as much as a sense of presence within the 'virtual place' of a postgraduate student community. As postgraduate distance students, they have made a connection, both through time-space and through their social, economic and educational circumstances, between themselves and their university. The problem for the university becomes one of maintaining 'connectable' time-space relations through which the students can negotiate and achieve a satisfactory educational experience.

More recently, debates about globalisation have focussed on the ways in which new communications and transportation technologies have contributed to 'time-space compression' (Giddens, 1994: 7). Although time-space compression can be seen as the core of globalisation, it is the social and cultural consequences and potentials of globalisation, including its time-space features, to which education, especially distance education, is reflexively connected (Evans, 1995). Distance education, as the term suggests, has always been concerned with issues of space and place in order to enable learners to study away from specific educational sites-what might be called pedagogic action at a distance. However, it has also been concerned with time, too, in the sense that the students have broadly been able to set their own daily or weekly learning schedule, although conformity to academic-administrative schedules of semesters, examinations, etc is normally required.

Postgraduate research at a distance (as well as on-campus, for that matter) is usually even more open than coursework studies. The dance is less restricted by the choreographic styles and formats of academic schedules, or curriculum and pedagogical structures. The postgraduate research dance is limited in its choreography by the rules of discipline and methodology, and of institutional requirements for enrolment, theses etc. However, the postgraduate research student is conventionally more of a solo dancer given a space and authority to create and perform. Moreover, the dance is not just a movement in time-space, a 'dance of the body', but it is also an intellectual and academic performance, a 'dance of the mind'; an intellectual performance which, according to the choreographic rules of the PhD, is expected to be 'a significant contribution to knowledge'. In another sense, it might also be understood as a dance of 'bodies of knowledge', with the knowledge, experience and situation of students in interplay with those of academic staff and the institution more generally. This is even more particularly the case with the EdD.

In the above respect, the Deakin EdD represents a new choreography which has its own time-space and academic-intellectual 'dances'. In its

most recent forms, it uses the computer and telecommunications media of globalisation to encourage the dancers to work in their own (home/work) spaces and in virtual spaces to create distinctive doctoral dances

which owe much to the academic genre of the PhD, but which also reflect the professional spaces within which EdD candidates characteristically work. The focus is on the structuring of research pedagogies and curricula, and the mediation of the choreography. The first years(s) might be seen, therefore, more of a 'dance workshop' where the students practice and perform together in real and virtual spaces. The final years move more to solo 'performance'.

However, what is increasingly apparent to us is that the image of choreography, understood in these terms, is partial and perhaps even both limited and limiting. This is not because the overarching image of dance is necessarily inadequate; rather, it is how dance as a concept-metaphor is itself realised, or exploited, specially in its relation to pedagogy. Supervision as choreography relates more readily to traditional forms of distance education, where the technologies of written language and textuality predominate, more recently with the supplements of telephony and audioconferencing and sometimes videoconferencing. It is, moreover, akin to traditional notions of teachers' programming as curriculum planning, with writing preceding and also seeking to represent and structure the speech events of teaching and learning (Reid, 1995). In distance education, conventionally, what is 'choreographed' is more specifically the learning activity—that is, learning as performance. 'Teaching' as such is much less marked. However, with the cultural and pedagogic shift from print to digital-electronics, new relations and forms of 'speech' and 'writing' (or, in the terms employed previously, 'interaction' and 'extension') emerge, and new considerations of and possibilities for both teaching and learning.

What is needed therefore is a richer, more complex picture of distance education modes of postgraduate pedagogy, involving in effect a dialectic or dynamic interplay of choreography and performance. That is to say, postgraduate pedagogy conceived within a dance metaphor, especially given its new 'on-line' forms such as represented in Deakin Interchange and the EdD, is not simply to be understood as a matter of choreographing research performance. Rather, the opportunity exists to develop a direct and dynamic relation between 'choreography' and 'performance', with the pedagogical exchange relationship conceptualised as the 'dance' itself, in prospect and retrospect as well in its lived experience. This does not mean that a condition of simultaneity and co-presence obtains in postgraduate pedagogy of this kind. In philosophical terms there is always *différance*, over and beyond that which characterises social exchange generally<sup>3</sup>. What it does mean is that it is not enough to work solely in the mode of the choreographer, metaphorically, imagining the (learning) performances of

others, elsewhere. More attention needs to be given to pedagogy expressly as performance, specific here to the mediated circumstances of distance education. Performing pedagogy here combines the notion of actual pedagogic practice with that of its display-actively working pedagogically and, in doing so, demonstrating what that involves, or what such practice looks like. Among other things, what this in turns suggests is that administrative-institutional structures must be such as to allow more readily and flexibly for meaningful and effective exchange between the moments of 'conception' and 'execution', preparing and administering courses and teaching them-that is, between 'choreography' and 'performance'. This is likely to encourage more systematic attention to 'teaching' and to pedagogy than is often the case in distance education modes of operation and delivery. It also implies, in this case, a re-assessment of what constitutes specifically pedagogic practice in postgraduate studies.

The aptness of performance as a metaphor for pedagogy here is usefully

linked to the work of the Australian educator Garth Boomer. Responsible more than anyone for developing and advocating a pedagogy based on negotiation, more particularly at the school and classroom level, he was fascinated by the dance metaphor, drawing from models of child development, language learning and teaching. As he writes, apropos of the distinctive 'pedagogical' relationship between caregivers and young children, with the latter seen from the outset in proficiency terms:

The dance has begun. And the child leads more than the adult. At the first signs of a new child's steps, however, the adult enters into the dance and shows variations upon the theme, demonstrating new possibilities, and naming what is happening, weaving around the new act with new words (Boomer, 1988: 69).

Elsewhere he observes:

The metaphor of the dance helps me to represent the idea that although one person, the teacher, may have formal permission to lead, the other person, the student, can and does lead as well, in ways which can be mirrored and then elaborated by an imaginative partner. Whether one is looking at one-to-one interactions... or at teachers with a whole class..., it is possible to see a blend of artistry and science which is akin to the dance (Boomer, 1988: 6).

While it would clearly be unwise to generalise from early childhood education to postgraduate studies, nonetheless there is a valuable analogy here that is worth working with.

What is important in the image is the exchange, first of all, the to-and-fro, give-and-take movement of teaching and learning, and the manner in which the 'teacher' is presented as both framing and



responsive with regard to the 'learner'. Part of what is involved here is captured in Vygotsky's notion of a 'zone of proximal development', or 'ZPD', as Tiffin and Rajasingham (1995) summarise it in their recent account of 'telelearning': 'Stated simply, the ZPD is the difference between what a person can do by themselves and what they could do with help from people more experienced than themselves' (Tiffin & Rajasingham, 1995: 22). What needs to be considered here more explicitly though, is the notion of shifting ZPDs, whereby at different times and stages of the degree different forms of relation and exchange are involved and called for, and different patterns for 'foregrounding' and 'backgrounding'.. Partly, too, and relatedly, it is the notion of dialogue that is at issue. A familiar enough notion in the distance education literature, it may well be that the move from correspondence/print to greater emphasis on digital-electronic forms of orality and interactivity (albeit within a persistent culture of literacy) offers new perspectives and possibilities in this regard.

It can be taken further, though. Metaphors and concepts drawn more specifically from computing become apposite, such as the idea of the 'interface'. For Laurel (1993), human-computer interaction is facilitated by thinking in terms of dialogue or, in her terms, 'conversation'; in such a perspective, 'common ground' becomes particularly important as a concept enabling a meaningful, reciprocal exchange. Her understanding of 'dialogue' is quite striking in this context, and is worth citing at length:

It takes two people working together to play a duet, shake hands, play chess, waltz, teach, or make love. To succeed, the two of them have to coordinate both the content and the process of what they are doing. [Two people, eg] Alan and Barbara, on the piano, must come to play the same Mozart concerto. This is coordination of content. They must also

synchronize their entrances and exits, coordinate how loud to play forte and pianissimo, and otherwise adjust to each other's tempo and dynamics. This is coordination of process. They cannot even begin to coordinate on content without assuming a vast amount of shared information or common ground—that is, mutual knowledge, mutual beliefs, and mutual assumptions [...]. And to coordinate on process, they need to update, or revise, their common ground moment by moment. All collective action is built on common ground and its accumulation (cited in Laurel, 1993: 3).

As she writes:

The notion of common ground not only provides a superior representation of the conversational process but also supports the idea that an interface is not simply the means whereby a human and a computer represent themselves to one another; rather it is a shared context for action in which both are agents (Laurel, 1993: 4).

The similarities with (postgraduate) pedagogy, as understood in this context, are patently clear. How then is 'common ground' in this instance to be secured? It cannot be legislated, of course. Rather, it needs to be negotiated and constructed over time, in the form of a relationship that is partly tutelary and partly collegial-in itself, a complex and delicate balancing act, and perhaps even an intricate dance of (im)possibilities.

When it is recalled, further, that what is at issue in distance education, especially in its emergent electronic form, is a new realisation of interactivity, new social relations and social practices characterised by technological forms of extension and mediation, 'human-computer' interaction of this kind becomes more readily recognisable as transfigured and transformed 'human-human' interaction. The 'computer' is standing in for, in the place of, the human agent, and hence is enabling communication as well as, in this case, curriculum. Working on-line, whether as a supervisor or a student, means conducting and negotiating a pedagogical and intellectual relationship at a distance, both literally and symbolically. Teaching for learning in these circumstances-which can perhaps be best described as 'telepedagogy'-involves performing appropriately the (inter)activities most conducive to learning and research, training and development. A telepedagogy for postgraduate studies works explicitly with the new forms and principles of interaction and extension, seeking to further both the intellectual project and the identity-work that is at the heart of postgraduate research. The point is, however, this must encompass both an informed social vision and appropriate and effective instructional skills and strategies. Understanding this is a necessary task in better realising the complex and intricate(d) dance of postgraduate pedagogy.

Within this, further, particular attention needs to be given to the notion of 'presencing' (and indeed, 'co-presencing'), as an active verb referring to the obligation and the practice of 'being there', of entering into a genuine exchange relation that, however mediated and indeed simulated, has the existential quality of the 'encounter'. In Giddens's (1984: 36) terms: 'Relations in conditions of co-presence consist of what Goffman has aptly called encounters, fading away in time and space'. The new undecidable conditions of 'presence-absence', of 'virtual reality' and 'cyberspace', characterise and generate a distinctive postmodern social space, with radical implications for reconceptualising education in and for an emergent information society. In this respect, what we have named here as telepedagogy, in the service of new forms of postgraduate research and training, needs to be

linked directly albeit critically to the notion of tele-presencing technologies, of which current and existing modes of CMC and multimedia are hesitant and faltering first steps into the future.

## Conclusion

The dance metaphor is complex and contentious enough in seeking to account for pedagogy generally, let alone postgraduate pedagogy. This difficulty is further compounded by extending it to the relationship between distance education (or 'open learning') and postgraduate studies—for some, already a profoundly 'unnatural act'. What must be acknowledged, then, is that it is presented, in this context, more as an image of possibility than as a fait accompli or as a realised commonplace in the practice of supervisors in the program in question here. It is intended therefore as a resource for and a provocation to further discussion and debate, in an area that is still in various ways either 'desperately undertheorised' or else captive to the articulated logics of the Market and the Machine.

Attending to pedagogy, its nature and quality, is a necessary first principle in meaningful and effective innovation in postgraduate research and training. That includes innovative practice in higher degree professional education and the implementation of sophisticated CMC systems, such as characterises Deakin's EdD as well as, increasingly, its postgraduate studies program in education more generally. Deakin is not alone in this endeavour, of course; it would be fair to say that there is a broad shift, institutionally, towards more actively practice-referenced, technologised modes of educational delivery. Unfortunately what seems all too often the case is the implicit or explicit valorisation of technology over pedagogy, and the predominance of 'technical' interests in educational restructuring and curriculum change. The task remains now to develop richer, more complex accounts of pedagogic practice in postgraduate educational contexts, both on- and off-campus.

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- 1 For instance, Burns, Lamm and Lewis (1994) outline three major orientations to, or 'models' of, postgraduate supervision:

'thesis-oriented', 'professional development-oriented', and  
'person-oriented'.

2 That such a move may well be characteristic of the rhetoric and ideology of this kind of development in postgraduate studies is indicated in Gregory (1995), who notes that the University of Bristol EdD works with "an 'Advisor' rather than 'Supervisor' model" (Gregory, 1995: 181).

3 'Différance' is a key term deployed by Jacques Derrida (1982) in his philosophical work and, as he uses it, it brings together the notions of 'difference' and 'deferral' in a manner arguably to educational practice. Giddens (1984) makes explicit use of the concept in his account of time-space.