

## Educational Research, Teacher Education, and Practical-Theory: Towards an Account of Poststructuralism and Pedagogy

Bill Green and Jo-Anne Reid

Faculty of Education  
Deakin University  
Geelong, Victoria

paper presented at  
the 25th Annual National Conference  
of the  
Australian Association for Research in Education  
Hobart, November 26-30, 1995

DRAFT

### Abstract

Poststructuralism is no longer novel in the work of educational researchers and teacher educators, or in curriculum inquiry and praxis.

Nonetheless its incorporation into educational discourse has been uneven and complex, and sometimes contradictory, and its institutionalisation can be viewed as somewhat of a domesticating move.

It has also arguably entered more into the 'content' side of educational discourse than into the 'process' or 'methods' side, or as 'form'. In English teaching and language and literacy education, for instance, this is manifested in reconceptualisations of reading and writing and of texts and textual practice, and not so much in the realm of teaching and learning as such, whether in terms of the classroom or

of teacher education. Yet it can be argued that teaching and learning, broadly conceived (as 'pedagogy'), is the organising frame for reading and writing (or 'literacy'), as first-order contextualisation for textual practice. This suggests that it is important to give more explicit attention, expressly in this case within the terms of what has been called the 'poststructuralist turn', to matters of pedagogy per se, and hence to notions such as programming and classroom organisation and management, conceived specifically as 'practical-theory'. A useful exemplar of this is small-group work, a productive though always ambivalent technology of curriculum and schooling.

## Introduction

In this paper we begin to explore the implications and challenges of poststructuralism for reconstituting pedagogy as an institutional practice, taking particular account of small-group forms of collaboration, interaction and ('distributed') learning in school and classroom culture. Our argument is that poststructuralism, as a distinct field of theoretical and philosophical inquiry, represents an extremely useful resource for educational research in teacher education.

Our concern here is with what has traditionally been described as 'methods' courses in teacher education, mainly at the pre-service level but with implications also for in-service and professional development work oriented towards improved classroom practice. All too often such courses are seen as more or less instrumental, and as necessarily requiring so-called 'practical' experience and expertise. Hence the emphasis in staff appointment in this area is traditionally based on recent and sometimes continued classroom contact. In itself, that is not something we want to quarrel with. But we do want to suggest that while it might be desirable it is by no means sufficient as a criterion for determining the tutelary conditions under which prospective teachers and teachers undergoing further training might best operate. Indeed there is a sense in which such courses and their associated programs are still viewed as of low(er) status in the scheme of things.

On the one hand, much is made of the enormity of the task of 'methods' teaching, its difficulty and its necessity, and yet, on the other hand, it is widely felt that such experience cannot help but be inadequate in terms of the 'real world' of teaching, classrooms and schools.

Furthermore, as various commentators have argued, teacher education remains marginal to the doctrinal and disciplinary community of mainstream educational research. It is perhaps not surprising, then, that little has been done in recent engagements with new theoretical perspectives to tackle pedagogy per se, and engage with it as a key concept in professional development and teacher education. As in the university culture more generally, 'research' is characteristically privileged over 'pedagogy', in 'theory' and in 'practice'.

For many years now we have sought to introduce poststructuralist perspectives into our teacher education work, particularly with regard to English teacher education, at both the primary and secondary levels.

While it would clearly be impossible to avoid taking this into account in looking at matters such as subject-specific literacies (Green and Lee, 1994) or the significance of literary studies in English teaching (Green, 1990, 1995), or writing pedagogy (Gilbert, 1989), we have been struck by the relative absence of such inquiry and debate in considering, critiquing and reconceptualising matters such as programming and curriculum design, discipline, and classroom management. Even where explicit attention has been given to the term 'pedagogy', as for instance in recent work on 'reading pedagogy' (Baker and Luke [eds], 1991), there is a persistent sense in which such work is more concerned with 'reading' than with 'pedagogy', or with 'pedagogy' as somehow immanent to 'reading'. The actual classroom doesn't figure much in such lines of investigation and research, except as a site of study (and, in some cases, political intervention). Although this work continues to inform our own practice, we would argue that it is quite misleading to see such work as sufficient, and sufficiently materialist or 'pragmatic', to the task of (in)forming student teachers and the like. What is needed is a comprehensive research programme directed towards the formulation of what we want to describe as 'translation-discourse' and 'practical-theory' in and for teacher education. This would recognise and privilege notions of negotiation, mediation and synthesis, as well as practice, dialogue and 'partnership' - all of which we find implicit in the project of the

National Schools Network, which represents therefore a crucial reference-point and audience for the arguments and proposals we are initiating here.

#### On poststructuralism

What is meant in this context by the term 'poststructuralism'? An increasing number of introductory and other accounts are now available in the specific context of education studies (eg Cherryholmes, 1988; Lather, 1991; Davies, 1991). As well, there are more and more accounts coming onto the market of the often linked term 'postmodernism' (eg Usher and Edwards, 1995), although confusion and controversy still reigns about how these two terms relate and about their relative importance and priority. We see poststructuralism as a specific body of theory and philosophy largely associated with Europe, particularly France, since the 1960s and 1970s. As such we see it as both informing and substantively contributing to what has been described as the postmodern turn, and the emergence of 'the postmodern' as a key term of reference with regard to momentous cultural-ideological and political-economic shifts in developed (post-)industrial societies and the world order more generally.

For the moment, we want simply to identify three figures who represent for us the distinctive discourse of poststructuralism: Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida and Jacques Lacan. Foucault and Derrida are widely acknowledged as key figures in this regard, although in practice more emphasis and attention is given to Foucault, for reasons that warrant some reflection. Lacan is much less widely known in this context, nor is his work drawn upon to any great extent as a theoretical resource for education studies and particularly teacher education. With regard to Foucault and Derrida, Weedon's (1987) account remains a useful starting point. As she indicates, poststructuralism can be understood as "a theory of social meaning and power" (Weedon, 1987: 27). The relationship between meaning and power, understood firmly within a historical-metaphysical framework, lies at the very heart of the poststructuralist project. Conventionally, Derrida is more usually associated with the concept and problematics of 'meaning', while Foucault is associated more with a renewed sense of the nature and significance of 'power' as a category for social analysis and understanding. Yet in an important essay Derrida has written expressly of the relationship between 'force' and 'signification', in a way that suggests such easy compartmentalisation is neither inevitable nor particularly helpful. Although it is not the case that power and meaning can be mapped neatly onto force and signification, there is still an important sense in which the work of these two major theorists might usefully be read as offering similar but different perspectives on a common set of issues and problems. For the moment, though, let it suffice to say that both Foucault and Derrida can be understood as contributing decisively to the distinctive project that is characteristically identified with poststructuralism. Each is in a sense complementary of the other's strengths and weaknesses vis-a-vis educational practice and politics, understood as a matter of the complex intrication of meaning and power.

#### Power-knowledge-desire

The now familiar 'power-knowledge' couplet has been Foucault's distinctive contribution to the lexicon of social and educational analysis. Within a revised account of power that emphasises its productivity and its relational character as against what he calls 'the repressive hypothesis', Foucault has argued that knowledge production proceeds as immanent to power relations and as emphatically social and historical in nature. This has been extremely important and generative, and especially so when it has been articulated with neo-Marxist

accounts of power and economy. But what is missing in the Foucaultian perspective is a sense of the complex interweaving and intrication of psyche and the social world, or the 'inner' and 'outer' dimensions of social subjectivity and social practice. Any notion of interiority is rigorously denied in such work, and that would therefore include matters of affect and emotionality and indeed of desire and investment.

What is needed to complement and extend the programmatic rationality

of such investigations, then, is a way of properly acknowledging and theorising irrationality, or the operations of the unconscious in social life, textual practice and intellectual-academic activity. Hence a better, more comprehensive and complete formulation here is 'power-knowledge-desire', and it is this that informs the arguments and remarks that follow.

#### Discourse and subjectivity

Absolutely crucial to understanding curriculum and pedagogy, in schools and in teacher education alike, is the poststructuralist understanding of discourse and subjectivity, and the relationship between them. In particular, subjectivity is to be conceptualised within such frameworks and perspectives as formed within discursive practice, and as constructed in and through discourse. Rather than subjects producing or 'authoring' discourse, as in the usual humanist understanding, they are themselves positioned and produced as such. The value of the concept of subjectivity here is that it to be understood as emphatically social right from the outset, and as bringing together and effectively transcending the limitations of the 'individual-society' dualism; in doing so, it cuts across the disciplinary division of labour between psychology and sociology as organising contexts for educational theory and practice. In Donald's terms (1985), it brings together the concepts of 'subjection' and 'subjectification', and hence the senses of 'being formed as subjects' and of 'being subjected to', and hence allows for due consideration to be made of power.

Teacher education can therefore be understood, as with schooling, as quintessentially 'a practice producing subjects': that is, it is crucially concerned with the initial and continuing formation of 'teaching subjects', or of teachers as knowledgeable and capable educational agents. Subjectivity is understood as a collection of qualities and attributes making up the agent in question, and drawing in notions such as character, personality and 'self', and social identity more generally. This involves bringing together in a perhaps uneasy and even contradictory synthesis or 'settlement' particular knowledges and concepts, as well as understandings; particular skills and capacities; and particular attitudes, values and dispositions. A purpose-built collocation, in short, of 'knowing how', 'knowing what' and 'knowing why', within a distinct professional-industrial framework of (self-)understanding and social practice.

Discourse here is understood as an organised ensemble of social relations and social practices which, worked together, project particular forms of subjectivity. Crucial to this notion is the importance of language, signification and the Symbolic Order - what has been called variously 'the linguistic turn' and 'the textual turn'. Although discourse is not to be identified with language, in the usual sense at least, a close and arguably necessary relationship exists between language and discourse, both as concepts and as forms of practice. Derrida (1978) links both of these terms via his early

account of structure and of what he calls "the structurality of structure", in what is now regarded as a classic assertion of poststructuralist theory and philosophy. As he indicates, a radical crisis of representation follows upon what he describes as a 'rupture' in the history of structure, meaning and metaphysics, whereby for the

first time "the structurality of structure [began] to be thought, that is to say, repeated" (Derrida, 1978: 280), and recognised as such. The very condition of classical structuralist thinking, its reference back (and forward, for that matter) to an organising, authorising centre, became itself problematised and destabilised. This was the moment par excellence of discourse, of textuality, of disruption, danger and the ineluctability of difference,

the moment when language invaded the universal problematic, the moment when, in the absence of a center or origin, everything became discourse - provided we can agree on this word - that is to say, a system in which the central signified, the original or transcendental signified, is never absolutely present outside a system of differences. The absence of the transcendental signified extends the domain and the play of signification infinitely (Derrida, 1978: 280).

One of the consequences of this rupture is that the absolute link between science and representation is henceforth broken and dispersed forever, at least as an article of faith. This in turn means that truth, meaning and knowledge become caught up inescapably in the play of the world - in a word, worldly. Among other things, science becomes recognisable and intelligible as a social institution, and as a social practice caught up in the (re)production of shifting networks and formations of power, knowledge and desire. Introduced ineradicably into the scene of calculation henceforth are notions of undecidability, complexity, multiplicity, 'chaos'.

#### On pedagogy

How does this account of poststructuralism help in teacher education, then? What does poststructuralism offer in regard to teaching prospective and practising teachers, and in learning how to teach and how to become a teacher? Our concern here, to reiterate, is not so much with content considerations, and with taking into account the manner in which poststructuralist perspectives in specific subject-areas such as history, science or English etc impact on what is to be taught and learnt ('what to teach'). Rather, we are interested in the form of teaching, and the manner in which teaching occurs - 'how to teach', in short. That no easy or straightforward distinction is either possible or desirable between understanding what to teach and how to teach (eg Hamilton and Gudmundsdottir, 1994) does not lessen the value of asking such questions, provided that they are seen as related in important ways. In this case, our view is that pedagogy embraces both such questions, which implies in turn the priority of pedagogy

over curriculum (this latter term understood here as referring to 'school knowledge' or 'curricular knowledge', most commonly realised in the form of the school-subjects). In this section, then, we want to initiate a more systematic inquiry into the concept of pedagogy itself, as at once absolutely central to teacher education and the educational enterprise more generally and yet still, as Lusted (1986: 3) put it almost a decade ago now, "desperately under-theorised".

Lusted's now classic and oft-cited text is, in fact, an appropriate starting point for such discussion. As he writes: "Why is pedagogy important? It is important since, as a concept, it draws attention to the process through which knowledge is produced". We might now want to add to this the notion of 'context' (ie 'the context within which knowledge is produced'). He continues thus:

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).

Lusted indicates how pedagogy must be understood as both transformative and productive, in terms of 'consciousness' as well as practice. 'What to teach' and 'how to teach' thus clearly come together in such a formulation, along with attention to learning and the learner ('who is to be taught') - moreover, these are always emphatically 'situated' matters ('where', 'why, etc).

We see pedagogy as a concept as referring specifically to teaching and learning, as dynamically interrelated although necessarily not identical or isomorphic activities. Moreover, pedagogy is to be understood therefore as 'teaching-for-learning', in the sense that 'teaching' is best conceived not so much as the cause of 'learning' but rather as its context. As such it involves elements and phases of both 'transmission' and 'interpretation', of 'teacher-centredness' and 'learner-centredness', and of 'negotiation' as a social-dialogical activity, realised in and through a distinct pattern of practice over time.

Further, pedagogy must be understood as a hybrid concept, bringing together elements of 'art' and 'science', 'theory' and 'practice'. For Levine (1992), for instance, pedagogy is to be understood as a "complex of thinking, feeling, information, knowledge, theory, experience, wisdom and creativity which are the inherent, acquired and continuously-honed qualities of individual good teachers". She also sees 'pedagogy' as implying that teaching is "a theorising profession

offering scope for the building of theory and practice out of its essential elements via processes of reflection, analysis and synthesis - a profession capable of development, renewal and rigorous intellectual activity in its own right" (1992: 196). As she puts it:

Where are the concept-framing words which indicate that teaching is an integrated set of practices based on understanding of pupils' actual lived experience and modes of learning? Where are the words to indicate teaching as an extensive understanding of educational theory interrelated, in practice, with a wide range of classroom management skills? (Levine, 1992: 197).

For Gore (1992), pedagogy must be understood as embracing both social and educational vision, and specific instructional strategies and skills. Simon describes the concept of 'pedagogy' as "a science of teaching embodying both curriculum and methodology" (1985: 78). These are all useful contributions to developing a theoretical account of pedagogy, as is more implicitly the work of Boomer (1982, 1988, 1992). The question remains, though: Why is there an absence in this regard in the field to date, in Australia as much as in Britain and, albeit somewhat differently, the United States? What is it about 'pedagogy', as a concept and a practice, that warrants or explains its marginal status from the point of view of educational studies and educational research? And further: How might pedagogy be re-defined and re-assigned a significant value within the practice of postmodern teacher education?

Simon (1985) argues that the British education tradition (arguably still extremely influential here in Australia) lacks what he calls a carefully theorised pedagogy - a 'science of teaching'. He claims this has never been developed in British teacher education systems, and that in contrast to other Western countries the concept of pedagogy is "alien" to educational thinking. He argues that this is because of the

class-dependent history of schooling and teacher education in Britain - a point reiterated by Levine (1992: 197). Teacher education developed rather differently in the US, where the science of teaching 'methods' flourished. In both contexts, though, it was eugenics-based, psychologicistic notions of intelligence rather than research into the practice of teaching, which served to create the 'scientific' basis on which the academic-professional field of teacher education was built, and built credibility for itself within the universities. In this way the subject matter of teacher education has not in fact been 'pedagogy' but psychology, curriculum theory, assessment, 'method' and, quite separate from all these - even physically so, being located in schools - the Practicum. Educational testing, grading, and measurement of normal and deviant populations of children became the bread-and-butter of educational research and teaching in British universities - and psychology, rather than pedagogy, became the

'science' of education.

Although US educators like Franklin Bobbit did go on to develop curriculum 'methods' courses in the universities, Collins (1994: 8) notes that this highly influential work "put forward late nineteenth century, high-Modernist ideology as scientific truth about correct classroom practice", and merged with the classically modernist view of teachers' work as 'labour' in the Fordist school. If teaching is viewed in this way, teachers needed to be 'trained' rather than 'educated'. Teaching in such a framework is clearly a technical skill.

It is an aspect of the 'rational' movement of curriculum, from conception to execution, with teachers assigned more the latter stages of this 'line-management', hierarchical model of educational practice.

For these reasons, emphasis on pedagogy in teacher education has remained either a matter in and for 'the schools', or for particular curriculum methodology ('methods') courses. This has strengthened the almost mythic, but certainly and experientially real, gap between 'theory' and 'practice' in the preparation of teachers - a gap that has to be bridged, in our view, in and by a translation discourse which is realised in and through the teacher's programming practice.

Reflection on Simon's historical description of the development of teacher education adds considerably to our ability to see where the present turn to National Curriculum development and Competency Based Training for teacher education in Australia, for instance, might lead us. Holding firmly to his view of teaching as a 'rational' and 'scientific' process, Simon welcomes the turn to National Curriculum in Britain and its associated forms of 'testing', assessment and evaluation. In doing this, he claims that the psychologistic concern with child-centred curriculum and teaching has never been successful, or even achievable in schools.

If each child is unique, and each requires a specific pedagogical approach appropriate to him or her and to no other, the construction of an all-embracing pedagogy, or general principles of teaching, becomes an impossibility (Simon, 1985:98).

Clearly Simon is concerned here with developing and arguing what has been described, following Lyotard (1984), as a 'meta-narrative', an over-arching, totalising and generalised account of teaching; and it is also clear then that such ambition falls squarely with the project of modernity and the discourse of modernism. That is to say, Simon's account of pedagogy is firmly located within modernist logic and logocentric metaphysics, and hence within a familiar Marxist understanding of (and commitment to) the intrication of enlightenment and emancipation. As such, it is immediately open to re-reading and

re-articulation from the point of view of postmodern(ist) frameworks

of analysis and the poststructuralist critique of science, along the lines offered by Lather (1991) and Usher and Edwards (1994) for instance.

The important point to make here, though, is that pedagogy is a transgressive concept (or 'activity'), in the sense that its proper and most adequate reference explicitly and necessarily cuts and plays across boundaries and disparate domains. It needs to be understood as a synthesising, mediating concept, bespeaking a distinctive form of practice. For McNamara (1991), this involves grasping the extent to which pedagogy as a formal body of knowledge (a 'science') needs to be supplemented by and integrated with what he calls "vernacular pedagogy". As he writes, "formal pedagogical knowledge (which I define as that pedagogical knowledge generated by systematic and rigorous research)" must be 'welded' with

vernacular pedagogical knowledge (which I define as the working pedagogical knowledge developed by teachers through their experience) if the study of pedagogy is to have an important contribution to make in developing more effective teaching within the particular circumstances of ordinary classrooms (McNamara, 1991: 298).

It is this hybrid, transgressive, 'eclectic' (Levine, 1992: 200) and dynamic character of pedagogy that needs to be more rigorously accounted for in educational research, and drawn accordingly more systematically into teacher education. Poststructuralist theory and philosophy opens up the possibility of developing a (de)constructive critique of current educational discourses and institutions that better reveals the complexity of pedagogy as a situated social practice concerned fundamentally and distinctively with meaning-making and the exercise of power. This is because it allows for pedagogy to begin to be grasped as, at once, 'teaching' and 'learning', 'theory' and 'practice', 'art' and 'science', 'competence' and 'performance', - all informing and feeding back into each in a complex reciprocating action.

Above all it enables us to make due consideration of its necessary complexity. Naming that complexity, reckoning it henceforth into all our calculations - a move entirely consistent with the dangerous 'logic' of poststructuralism - may well be a crucial first step in moving towards more informed and effective educational practice, in classrooms and in teacher education.

#### On small group work

The complexity of the field of teacher education is manifested as student-teachers participate in the fragmentary worlds of campus, school and classroom, where they are continually being acted on by, and being reconstituted within the practices and power relations of the particular discursive regimes in place at each site. The range of contradictory discourses struggling for supremacy in the field of curriculum may work to construct the subject and the practice of the teacher in limiting and unproductive ways - unless she is able to act

on them as well as in them. As Davies (1991: 14) notes, one source of this dramatic conflict can be accounted for in the idea of 'bodily inscription'.

If one's body has learned to interact with the world in certain ways, then these ways may need more than access to a new discursive practice to change them. Or the means of translating an idea into everyday practice may not easily be achieved, one's life-practice-as-usual, or life as the practical expression of old familiar discourses always coming more readily to hand.

The idea of pedagogy as 'bodily inscription' is important here, because it is only through 're-inscribing' the body-knowledge of student-teachers that changes in practice (and discourse) can occur. It is not difficult to see how the 'old familiar discourses' of teaching and learning practice are learned from years of watching teachers in operation (Britzman, 1992), of 'being there' in classrooms while teaching was carried out, and becoming familiar with well-practiced ways of teacher behaviour - ways of speaking, walking, sitting, 'treating' the spelling list, ruling up the blackboard, organizing the day and so on. This is close to what Connelly and Clandinin call 'personal practical knowledge', or 'the knowing of a classroom'. As they write:

Where is personal practical knowledge? It is in the person's past experience, in the person's present mind and body, and in the person's future plans and actions. Knowledge is not found only "in the mind." It is "in the body." And it is seen and found "in our practices" (Connelly and Clandinin, 1988: 25).

Access to new theories of educational practice in lectures, readings and workshops of a teacher education course will almost certainly not be enough to enable the student-teacher to simply transform or transmediate these from the realm of information into action. A particular case in point has been the case of small group work, which we will now go on to discuss as an exemplary instance of the potentially useful role poststructuralist theory can play in the understanding reconceptualisation of educational practice, especially in times of rapid and rapidly accelerating change. What then can poststructuralist theory tell us about small group work in the classroom that we haven't already known before, or never thought to ask?

#### Rethinking 'the classroom'

First of all, of course, the notion of 'the classroom' cannot be taken for granted. There is no such thing as 'the classroom' for which small group work is necessarily designed, and of course there never was, although the scientific will to master and understand the natural and social world was able to characterise classrooms in all their

complexity as understandable, indeed knowable, under such a name. Usher and Edwards (1995:37) show how the Kuhnian emphasis on the social construction of knowledge enables us to see how rational views of science have seen knowledge as 'mastery', and how the elimination of difference was and is an essential aspect of any claims to know in terms of scientific rationality. As they write, once we make a claim that perhaps "there is no uniquely privileged position from which to know but a number of different positions each with their own standards", then the possibility of an authorising centre is destroyed. This of course in turn "implies that difference and heterogeneity cannot be eliminated and knowledge and truth cannot be possessed and mastered".

The classroom, as a generalised concept, then, cannot hold in terms of any discussion of teaching and learning practice. 'Classroom teaching and learning' must always occur in a particular classroom, in a particular social and material place. This of course allows us to judge all of the normative and rational criteria for successful small group work in relation to the local situation of practice. If this class of these twenty six students includes as members of the group eight students whose home language is not English, eleven who are working part time to sustain their attendance at school, and even one who has an alcohol problem, then this classroom is clearly not the same as, nor even similar to, this other class of twenty six which may only

have three part-time workers in the group. In the second classroom, small group tasks may be more easily set for completion at home, for instance - not with any degree of certainty that this will happen, or that it can be predicted - but with at least the potential for it to be a possibility.

A Foucaultian rereading of the discourse of small group work - such as that exemplified in our own work over the years (Reid, Forrestal and Cook, 1989) - allows us to understand better, and thus better explain, why the emphasis on the practice of material bodies in the bounded spaces of classrooms in such an account has been so necessary and important. That the classroom is a bounded space, for instance, is suddenly significant. Representations of 'the classroom' in discussions of small group work have shown the classroom as a rectangular, box-shaped area with only one major exit. The classroom is thus cut off from the outside world. Every body and everything that enters (or leaves) must do so through the door, thus providing frames of action in time and space around what happens in this classroom space - the lesson. Now we have all been in classrooms where either bodies or things have entered or left the room via openings other than the door, and we have probably all seen and understood these as transgressive - as needing to be disciplined (or even punished) in order to be brought back within the bounds of 'normal' classroom behaviour.

### Bodies in classrooms

'The classroom' is, indeed, a disciplined space, in all senses of the word (Hunter, 1994). It functions within the panoptic of school as a 'cell' - connected via the corridors or the PA system to the central monitoring and controlling power which controls the "organization of space and the distribution of activities through time" (Griffith, 1992). While the classroom is thus a unit in the physical and organizational division of the school population, small group work functions also to divide the class itself into smaller units to be managed. As one of us has shown elsewhere, a significant part of the teacher's work in the very first weeks of school can be seen as explicit 'disciplinary work' aimed toward shaping the individual bodies of students into the corporate 'student body' of the school and classroom (Reid et al., 1994, Kamler et al., 1995). This disciplinary work takes up a large proportion of teaching/learning time for young children in school, as they learn to 'sit up straight', 'face the front', 'keep their arms, feet and elbows to themselves' and raise their hands in the air before they talk. This sort of discipline is well-recognised as part of McNamara's "vernacular pedagogy" discussed above, and yet it has little or nothing, necessarily, to do with the sort of disciplinary knowledge that teachers are also charged to teach.

With regard to small group work, then, it is clear that many teachers may be attempting to implement small group work, without the 'body knowledge' of how to act as a member of (or as a teacher of) a classroom comprised of a set of (smaller) corporate groups.

One important facet of this body-knowledge for teaching with small groups is to do with monitoring the talk and activity of students as they are engaged in their work together. This links directly with the Foucaultian notion of the teacher as the 'eyes and ears' of the institution, observing and guiding the students under her panoptic gaze into the good subjects of her discipline. The purpose of the gaze, in these terms, is like that of the teacher itself: it aims eventually to become redundant, as the norms and truths of the institution become internalised in the 'normal', well-disciplined individual student subject. Most discussions of small group work in classrooms, including our own, pay attention to the need for the teacher to be a careful

'monitor' of small group talk, in order to make sure that students are 'on task', 'not having difficulties', and 'working'. The assumption here of course is that without the disciplinary monitorial gaze of the teacher they won't be. They are not yet able to be 'their own best gaolers' (Griffith, 1993) within the small group cell.

This is a complex matter in terms of poststructural analysis, insofar as it implies a shift from the explicit panoptic position of the teacher situated "at a precarious fulcrum in the network, at once the most seeing and the most seen" (Schmelzer, 1993: 131), towards a

teacher positioned on the margins of the small group itself, on the periphery of the learning action -- always Other to the small group of students. In Derridean terms, we might even consider the work of the teacher of small group work as 'teaching under erasure' -- always deferred, signifying something else, something that might be, but is not yet, or not now.

#### Teaching for small group learning

The classroom is fragmentalised, no longer a corporate body, with teacher and students performing their normal (and normalising) functions. And in such an 'abnormal' state, traditionally inscribed classroom bodily discipline is inappropriate. The teacher monitoring small group work does not want her students to raise their hands before speaking. She does not want to turn her panoptic gaze upon the individual student voice, and judging it, show it how it may judge itself. Here, she does not want to hear the individual voice at all. She is listening for tone, for timbre, for what she can recognise as markers of learning and active engagement. The important point is that she cannot gain this sort of information if she is placed at the fulcrum of the classroom network -- she cannot be the eye in the panopticon if she is not in the 'centre', and she cannot observe and listen to the small group if she is not on the 'margin'. Thus the teacher/outsider must attempt to hide her otherness - and disguise herself as a benign part of the environment rather than the explicit centre of power. She crouches beside a group to intervene or take part in their discussion rather than standing over them, for instance. Her ears attend to this piece of small group talk while her eyes are scanning the whole room to see how that group is operating, even while her hands may perhaps be distributing paper, pinning up work, or arranging the VCR. In caricature thus, it looks and feels like chaos. The quiet, regulated lines of classroom communication and control have broken down. The teacher is not in control. There is no scientific order.

Recent criticisms of small group learning as a new educational orthodoxy, for instance, correctly argue that "the classroom is best organised on a collaborative basis some of the time" only (Stables, 1995: 61), and that there are grounds for reappraisal of small group work as it has been taken up as a doctrinaire teaching method. One of these grounds is that students need a break from the chaos and unpredictability of small group work, and need time for quiet, personal reflection and the restoration of Order. The particular perspective that poststructuralist theory provides can assist us in answering these criticisms, while at the same time underlining the need for continued challenge to the norms implied in any orthodox institutionalised practice. To paraphrase Foucault, here, we would argue that small group work is not bad, but that it certainly might well be dangerous. While critics such as Stables acknowledge that "there can be no doubt at all that pupils do learn through discussing in small groups" (1995: 62), he cautions that this is not evidence that they couldn't also have

learnt faster, or in different (more ordered) ways. As he notes, what persuasive accounts of successful small group talk do not show is

... the group at work. We know that at one given moment an individual says a particular thing. We do not see what the others are doing. [...] We are often presented with the words of one participant apparently uttering something which crystallises the learning that has taken place - but we do not see whether the others are even listening, and even if we could, we could not gauge the effect of the summing up on them (Stables, 1995: 62, original emphasis).

This of course is why the role of the teacher as monitor is so crucial to the success of small group work. Not as the "paradigmatic guardian of the flame and the individual whose avowed autonomy metonymically signifies the double purpose of the institution - to preserve an embedded knowledge system and to encourage individual intellectual productivity" (Schmelzer, 1993: 131), but as the Other to the student group. In poststructuralist terms the teacher in small group work is not the insider looking out for indiscipline, but the outsider looking in on difference, diversity and unpredictability. Managing this 'mess' (Green, 1991) is the work of the classroom teacher. A poststructuralist understanding of how and why small group work is necessarily unpredictable and ungovernable, in the strictest sense, allows us to understand this as a strength to be built upon, rather than a deviance to be reigned in and controlled. Once this understanding is in place, then attention to the pedagogy of small group work can be understood in its difference from traditional classroom norms, and in the different forms of disciplinary work that it entails.

#### Poststructuralist theory for pedagogy

In our formulation of pedagogy as practical-theory, the teacher in the classroom is concerned always with production of management and learning, in a triple sense. Her focus may be either on student learning, on her management of learning ('teaching'), or even, quite distinctly, as in the illustrations above, specifically on management and discipline per se. As we have also shown, this may entail management of either the student body, of students' bodies, or of small groups of student-bodies. This has been represented in our teacher education work as a pair of intersecting axes, thus:

For the teacher, the discipline of the student body is clearly quite different from the discipline of Biology. Yet this model allows us to see the shaping of student-biologist bodies just as much as a matter of learning as it is of management. Similarly, the discipline of Biology is just as much a matter of management as it is of learning. Yet in

neither case is this always, or necessarily so. How the teacher manages the teaching and learning of biology can therefore never be seen as a linear-rational, scientific process of first planning and then implementing a series of activities. Its locus on such a graph is unpredictable, and different for every classroom, every time. It must be traced through the development of classroom practice in practice, not in the rational design, rehearsal and search for evidence of the attainment in students of pre-specified learning outcomes. Such a scientific approach essentialises both students and teachers, suppresses cultural and social difference, and ignores the complexity of the social space of classrooms.

We see the 'synthetic practice' of programming (Reid, 1995) as a means of acknowledging and dealing with the uncertainty of classrooms, and want to argue that programming may be best understood in terms of what Lucy Suchman (1987) has called "situated action", where the particular

physical, emotional and social situation of any practice is always crucial to the interpretation of actions because actions are always 'situated' in particular social and physical circumstances. Programming as situated action acknowledges classrooms as contexts of manifest complexity and uncertainty, and recognises that classroom teaching and learning can never be scientifically planned. "The organisation of situated action is an emergent property of moment-by-moment interactions between actors, and between actors and the environments of their action" (Suchman, 1987:179).

As Suchman notes, our plans allow us to bring past experience and projected outcomes to bear on our present actions by causing us to abstract uniformities across situations. This still involves forward thinking, and more importantly, pre-writing of the action that 'in abstract' is represented in the programme. But it is not preparation of the 'deliberate' scientific, objectives-driven programmes and lesson plans that so often constitute professional writing of this sort. Instead it is a narrative - a storytelling - an imaginative preconstruction of a classroom in action. Further, as the efficiency of our plans turns on their recursiveness, their relation back to the unique circumstances and always-negotiated practices of situated action, so programming is in effect, never 'finished'. It is always in process, always under evaluation, always in development. As Usher and Edwards (1995:37) note, in rationalist theories of pedagogy, the emphasis on reason

conceals a desire which is deeply suppressed. Le Doeff (1977) argues that in philosophy the place of desire is marked by the implicit recognition of lack, that there is always something which yet remains to be known.

The desire to learn, then, may be understood as recognition of a lack

of knowledge, and, in Foucaultian terms, of the lack of power that this entails. Such a poststructuralist analysis allows us to reconceptualise the teacher programming for small group work in Biology as setting up the management and learning involved in student discussions and written work that causes them to engage with the discipline of biology - to arouse desire, and cause them to want to learn. This too, is certainly not bad, but it clearly may be potentially dangerous to those institutions, including schools, which are wanting to preserve embedded systems of knowledge, codified and distributed in particular ways. What does this mean, then, for teacher education, or rather, for the practice of teacher education?

#### Poststructuralism for teacher education

Process-oriented views of teacher education often present the teaching 'arts' as skills to be learned through apprenticeship, meditation, reflection and action (Greene, 1984), and for this reason they always run the risk and involve a real danger of encouraging the reproduction of existing relations of power and knowledge within the school system. Such notions do, though, resist and contradict the notion of teaching as a set of rationally determined skills, to be dissected, practised and tested as 'competencies' for teaching. Shulman (1987) provides a taxonomy of teacher education that nominates eight areas of knowledge required by beginning teachers if they are to be able to teach successfully in schools. These do not need elaboration here, and can be listed briefly as

- a) content knowledge
- b) general pedagogical knowledge
- c) curriculum knowledge
- d) pedagogical content knowledge
  
- e) knowledge of learners and their characteristics
- f) knowledge of educational contexts
- g) knowledge of educational ends, purposes, values, and their philosophical and historical grounds

Recent research by Walker et al. (1995: 19) has suggested that there is a need for the addition of a further category of knowledge to this taxonomy, that of

- h) knowledge of workplace responsibilities [...] defined as 'administrative roles and classroom management, and other relationships in the workplace'.

What is clearly missing from this list when viewed from a poststructuralist perspective is a notion of practice - particularly of practice understood as the pragmatic action of putting together all these different sorts of knowledges, the synthesising practical-theory that we have elsewhere characterised as programming (Reid, 1995).

Indeed, Walker et al. (1995: 17) take a particular stance on this matter:

Rather than viewing practicums as a type of knowledge and therefore constituting or conveying a further category of knowledge, we conceptualised them as contexts of teacher education (as contrasted with on-campus formal learning); that is, as a means of conveying or developing knowledge. The practicum itself was thus not considered to be an element of knowledge warranting a category on the taxonomy.

Knowledge about teaching is thus coded and marked here as 'prior' knowledge, related to McNamara's (1991) sense of 'formal' pedagogy. All traces of the 'other', the 'vernacular' pedagogy of material practice in classrooms are thus placed second in a perpetuation of a Derridean dualism : theory /practice. In this way, teacher education is set to remain firmly grounded in a modernist, scientific rationality that sees a need to teach curriculum planning, for instance, separately from classroom management, and to take upon itself the responsibility for the 'ideational' aspects of teacher education while leaving the 'practical' aspects up to the schools.

#### Conclusion

We have attempted to show here is that the perpetuation of the 'theory/practice' distinction in our practice as teacher educators is perhaps the major conceptual problem in education at the present time. As Britzman's (1992) poststructuralist analysis of learning to teach has clearly demonstrated, "practice makes practice" We have argued that in our practice as teacher-educators we need to pay specific attention to the nature of the transaction and negotiation between theory and practice, text and action, curriculum document and classroom, idea and instantiation. Our task now is to learn to understand this problem, and more importantly, deconstruct it through the realisation of practical-theory in the performance of pedagogy.

What has emerged for us from this consideration of poststructuralist theory in relation to teacher education, then, is the need and value of rethinking and re-theorising the notion of practice. This is, and should be quite properly, a significant concern and problem, and in beginning to explore the possibilities provided by poststructuralist theory we have found a means of attending to and dealing with the hard questions of pedagogy as complex, contradictory and (ir)rational practices. These are the questions that 'don't quite fit' our usual neat and scientific taxonomies of knowledge. In this paper we have shown that it may only be through the re-consideration of pedagogy in

poststructuralist terms that such questions can be addressed adequately within teacher education.

Furthermore, there is an important sense in which pedagogy might

therefore be understood as a postmodern concept par excellence. Viewed in part through the distinctive lenses of poststructuralist theory and philosophy, it becomes clear that it is far too complex, properly conceived, to be captured or contained within modern(ist) scientific framings, or indeed within the discourse of modernism more generally. The implications for teacher education are considerable. If pedagogy is indeed, as we have proposed, the epitome of a distinctively postmodern practice, we need to demonstrate convincingly that it is one that has received far too little attention in real terms, and its further investigation and elaboration may well require the assistance of theoretical resources such as that offered by poststructuralism if it is to be reconstructed as central to the educational project of teaching and learning.

#### References

- Atkinson, Paul (1985) *Language, Structure and Reproduction: An Introduction to the Sociology of Basil Bernstein*, London, Methuen.
- Baker, Carolyn and Luke, Allan [eds] (1991) *Towards a Critical Sociology of Reading Pedagogy*, Papers of the XII World Congress on Reading, Amsterdam/Philadelphia, John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Boomer, Garth [ed] (1982) *Negotiating the Curriculum: A Teacher-Student Partnership*, Sydney: Ashton-Scholastic.
- Boomer, Garth (1988) *Metaphors and Meanings; Essays on English Teaching* by Garth Boomer, Bill Green (ed.), Hawthorn, AATE.
- Boomer, Garth, Lester, Nancy, Onore, Cynthia and Cook, Jon (1992) *Negotiating the Curriculum: Educating for the 21st Century*, London and Washington, DC: The Falmer Press.
- Bowers, Chet. A. and Flinders, David J. (1990) *Responsive Teaching. An Ecological Approach to Classroom Patterns of Language, Culture, and Thought*, New York, Teachers College Press.
- Britzman, Deborah P. (1991) *Practice Makes Practice: A Critical Study of Learning to Teach*, Albany, State University of New York Press.
- Cherryholmes, Cleo (1988) *Power and Criticism: Poststructural Investigations in Education*, New York and London, Teachers College Press.
- Collins, Cherry (1994) *Curriculum and Pseudo-Science: Is the Australian National Curriculum Project Built on Credible Foundations?*, Occasional Paper No. 2, Australian Curriculum Studies Association.
- Connelly, F. Michael and Clandinin, D. Jean (1988) *Teachers as Curriculum Planners: Narratives of Experience*, New York, Teachers College Press, and Toronto, OISE Press at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education.
- Davies, Bronwyn (1991) 'The Concept of Agency: a Feminist Poststructuralist Analysis', *Social Analysis* No. 30, Special Edition: Postmodern Critical Theorising, edited by Anna Yeatman, December, pp. 42 - 53.
- Derrida, Jacques (1976) *Of Grammatology*, [Trans. Gayatri C. Spivak], Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Derrida, Jacques (1978) *Writing and Difference*, Trans. Alan Bass, London and Henley, Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Donald, James (1985) *Beacons of the Future: Schooling, Subjection and Subjectification*, in Veronica Beechey and James Donald (eds) *Subjectivity and Social Relations*, Milton Keynes, Open University Press, pp. 214 - 249.

Foucault, Michel (1977) *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (trans. Alan Sheridan), London, Penguin Books.

Gilbert, Pam (1989) *Writing, Schooling and Deconstruction: From Voice to Text in the Classroom*, London and New York, Routledge.

Gore, Jennifer (1993) *The Struggle for Pedagogies: Critical and Feminist Discourses as Regimes of Truth*, New York and London, Routledge.

Green, Bill and Reid, Jo-Anne (1986) 'English teaching, in-service and action research', *English in Australia*, No.75, March.

Green, Bill (1990a) *A Dividing Practice: 'Literature'*, *English Teaching and Cultural Politics*, in Ivor Goodson and Peter Medway (eds), *Bringing English to Order: The History and Politics of a School Subject*, E.Sussex, Falmer, pp.135-161.

Green, Bill (1990b) *Imagining the Curriculum: Programming For Meaning in Subject English*, *English in Australia*, No. 94, pp.39 - 58.

Green, Bill and Lee, Alison (1994) *Writing Geography: Literacy, Identity and Schooling*, in Aviva Freedman and Peter Medway (eds), *Learning and Teaching Genre*, Portsmouth NH, Boynton/Cook Heinemann.

Green, Bill (1995) *Post-Curriculum Possibilities: English Teaching, Cultural Politics, and the Postmodern Turn*, *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, Vol. 27, No. 4, pp. 391 - 409.

Greene, Maxine (1984) *How Do we Think about our Craft?*, in A. Lieberman (ed.), *Rethinking School Improvement: Research, Craft and Concept*, New York, Teachers College Press, pp. 13 - 25.

Griffith, Peter (1992) *English at the Core: Dialogue and Power in English Teaching*, Milton Keynes and Philadelphia, Open University Press.

Hunter, Ian (1994) 'Four Anxieties About English', *Interpretations*, Vol. 27, no. 3, December, pp. 1 - 19.

Kamler, Barbara, Maclean, Rod, Reid, Jo-Anne and Simpson, Alyson (1995) *Shaping Up Nicely: The Formation of Schoolgirls and Schoolboys in the First Month of School*, DEET Gender Equity and Curriculum Reform Project, Canberra, Australian Government Publishing Service.

Lather, Patti (1991) *Getting Smart: Feminist Research and Pedagogy With/In the Postmodern*, New York and London, Routledge.

Levine, Josie (1992) *Pedagogy: The Case of the Missing Concept*, in Keith Kimberley, Margaret Meek and Jane Miller (eds), *New Readings: Contributions to an Understanding of Literacy*, London, A. & C. Black.

Liotard, Jean-Francois (1984) *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*,

Lusted, David (1986) 'Why Pedagogy?' *Screen*, Vol.27, No.5, September-October, pp. 2 - 15.

McNamara, David (1991) 'Vernacular Pedagogy', *British Journal of Educational Studies*, vol. XXXIX, No. 3, August, pp. 297 - 310.

- Reid, Jo-Anne (1995) *Constructing Subjects: Programming as Synthetic Practice*, Primary English Teaching and Pre-Service Teacher Education, unpublished PhD thesis, Faculty of Education, Deakin University.
- Reid, Jo-Anne, Forrestal, Peter, & Cook, Jonathan (1989) *Small Group Learning in the Classroom*, Revised Edition, Rozelle, Chalkface Press/P.E.T.A.
- Reid, Jo-Anne with Kamler, Barbara, Maclean, Rod, and Simpson, Alyson (1994) 'Discipline and cherish: making girls and boys', *Education Links*, No. 48.
- Reid, Jo-Anne, Kamler, Barbara, Simpson, Alyson and Maclean, Rod (1996, in press) '"Do you see what I see?": Reading a Different Classroom Scene', in *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*.
- Schmelzer, Mary (1993) *Panopticonism and Postmodern Pedagogy*, in John Caputo and Mark Yount (eds), *Foucault and the Critique of Institutions*, Studies of the Greater Philadelphia Philosophy Consortium, University Park, Pennsylvania, Pennsylvania University Press, pp. 127 - 136.
- Shulman, Lee S. (1987) 'Knowledge and Teaching: Foundations of the New Reform', *Harvard Educational Review*, Vol. 57, No. 1 (Feb.), pp. 1-22.
- Simon, Brian (1985) *Does Education Matter?*, London, Lawrence & Wishart.
- 
- Stables, Andrew (1995) 'Learning Through Talk and Learning Through Talking: Sound and Silence in the Classroom', *Language and Education*, Vol. 9, No. 1, pp. 61 - 68.
- Suchman, Lucy (1987) *Plans and Situated Actions: The Problem of Human/Machine Communication*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Usher, Robin and Edwards, Richard (1995) *Postmodernism and Education*, London and New York, Routledge.
- Walker, Jim, Hughes, John, Mitchell, Jim and Traill, Ron (1995) 'Teachers' Knowledge Base in Australian Teacher Education: Development of a Content Analysis Methodology', *Australian Educational Researcher*, Vol. 22, No. 2, August, pp. 13 - 25.
- Weedon, Chris (1987) *Feminist Practice and Poststructuralist Theory*, Oxford and Cambridge, Mass., Basil Blackwell.