Central Queensland
UNIVERSITY

Brokering changes: A study of power and identity through discourses

Brokering changes to the knowledge base of twenty-three members of a cohort of adult literacy teachers in Central Queensland

Roberta Elizabeth Harreveld
C82200105

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Central Queensland University
Faculty of Education and Creative Arts

October 2002

Abstract

Brokering Changes refers to the ways in which teachers broker their compliance with a new literacy knowledge base for adults. This thesis reports a study of twenty-three members of a cohort of adult literacy teachers working in regional, rural and remote communities throughout Central Queensland from 1996 to 2001. It details the performance and recognition work that these teachers did as they negotiated their way through a large curriculum reform as literacy was redefined from something that was negotiated as useful for the learner to something that is named and mandated by the state.

The theoretical framework engages with interrelated notions of power, discourse and identity with supporting conceptualisations of ideology, work and pedagogy in the production and exercise of disciplinary power as understood through the thinking of Michel Foucault (1984). The methodological approach deploys James Gee's (1991, 1992, 1993, 1996a, 1996b, 1997, 1999) particular socio-cultural theory of D/discourse. Spoken, written and observed data are analysed using Gee's (1993, 1999) interrelated linguistic system's analysis method.

The major finding is that these teachers actively broker the effects of these changes through their professional practices. This study is an important contribution to the literature concerning the professional lives of teachers of adults in an era of fast capital and performance-based government. Significantly, the research provides important insights into the problems faced by teachers who are confronted with the implementation of major curriculum reforms while living far removed from the networks and activities of the system in which they worked.

CONTENTS

Page

ABSTRACT i

LIST OF FIGURES AND TABLES v

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS vii

DECLARATION ix

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS AND PRESENTATIONS RELATED TO THIS WORK x

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION 1

1.0 INTRODUCTION 1
1.1 THE PROBLEM AND ITS BOUNDARIES 6
1.2 THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PROBLEM 8
1.3 THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS 14
1.4 A PERSONAL NOTE 16
1.5 OVERVIEW OF THE THESIS 18

CHAPTER TWO: SITUATING THE STUDY 22

2.0 INTRODUCTION 22
2.1 THE AUSTRALIAN VET SYSTEM 24
2.1.1 Structural contexts of influence 32
2.1.2 Structural influences on literacy 45
2.2 AT THE POLICY–PRACTICE INTERFACE 53
2.2.1 The language of learning: competencies and literacy 54
2.3 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN ADULT LITERACY TEACHING 67
2.3.1 Professional development at the adult literacy policy–practice interface 71
2.4 PREVIOUS RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS FOR ADULT LITERACY TEACHING IN CENTRAL QUEENSLAND 81
2.5 SUMMARY 88

CHAPTER THREE: THEORISING THE STUDY 91

3.0 INTRODUCTION 91
3.1 'D/d' DISCOURSE THEORY 95
3.1.1 The 'Big D/little d' relationship 98
3.1.2 Distinguishing features of D/discourses 100
3.1.3 Teaching with D/discourse theory 106
3.2 POWER AND IDEOLOGY IN DISCOURSES 113
3.2.1 Power in discourses 114
3.2.2 Ideology in discourses 120
3.2.3 Language and power in discourses 125
3.3 IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION THROUGH WORK 128
3.3.1 Identity 129
3.3.2 Work 133
3.3.3 Constructing professional identities 142
3.4 SUMMARY 153

CHAPTER FOUR: DESIGNING THE STUDY 155

4.0 INTRODUCTION 155
4.1 CHOOSING THE DESIGN BLUEPRINT 158
4.1.1 Qualitative research paradigm 158
4.1.2 Research methodology 160
4.2 DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS 168
4.2.1 Collecting data from library research 169
4.2.2 Collecting data from field research 171
4.2.3 Data analysis strategy 178
4.2.4 Applying the data analysis strategy 184
4.3 IDENTIFYING STRENGTHS AND POTENTIAL LIMITATIONS 193
4.3.1 Credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability 193
4.3.2 Ethics and politics in design 199
4.3.3 Strategic risks 208
4.4 SUMMARY 216

CHAPTER FIVE: ENGAGING WITH INSTITUTIONALISED CO-ORDINATIONS OF POWER 218

5.0 INTRODUCTION 218
5.1 ENGAGING WITH THE CONCEPT OF LITERACY 221
5.1.1 The system's notions of literacy 221
5.1.2 Integrating knowledge about the VET System's Standards 226
5.1.3 The system's literacy 229
5.2 WORKING WITH THE SYSTEM'S LITERACY 233
5.2.1 Adults as learners 235
5.2.2 Balancing the students, the system and self 246
5.2.3 Interpreting relevance 261
5.3 SUMMARY 274

CHAPTER SIX: CONSTRUCTING IDENTITY 278

6.0 INTRODUCTION 278
6.1 THE SYSTEM'S SYLLABUS 281
6.2 DISSONANT DISCOURSES OF IDENTITY 289
6.2.1 Discourses of social justice and economic rationalism: Catherine the historian 292
6.2.2 Rising up and revolting against economic rationalism: Maggie the prophet 306
6.2.3 Thinking through dissonant discourses 312
6.3 IDENTITY CONSTRUCTIONS AT THE LITERACY CONCEPT–CONTEXT INTERFACE 315
6.3.1 Connections: Teachers, students and system 316
6.3.2 Constructing teacher identity: Welcome to the war 324
6.4 SUMMARY 336

CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSIONS 339

7.0 INTRODUCTION 339
7.1 FINDINGS 340
7.1.1 Using critical literacy to broker change 341
7.1.2 Double agents constructing identities 344
7.1.3 Concluding thoughts 346
7.2 SIGNIFICANT IMPLICATIONS 347
7.2.1 Conceptual significance and implications 347
7.2.2 Methodological significance and implications 350
7.2.3 Empirical significance and implications 353
7.3 REFLECTIONS 356

REFERENCES **359**
APPENDIX 1: THE CENTRALQUEENSLAND REGION **395**
APPENDIX 2: SAMPLE CONSENT FORM **397**

LIST OF FIGURES & TABLES

Figures	**Page**
Figure 2.1: The VET system's structures of influence on adult literacy education	32
Figure 4.1: Research Design Components and Relationships	156
Figure 4.2: Example Thematic Organisation	192
Figure 4.3: Triangulation of Evidence Sources and Data Collection Methods	195
Figure 5.1: Lorraine's Thematic Organisation	245
Figure 5.2: Module's thematic organisation	249
Figure 5.3: Eleanor's thematic organisation	260
Figure 5.4: Thea's thematic organisation	273
Figure 6.1: Thematic Organisation of Social Justice	286
Figure 6.2: The Push of Discourses	303
Figure 6.3: Catherine's Thematic Organisation	305
Figure 6.4: Maggie's Thematic Organisation	312
Figure 6.5: The War Zone	330
Figure 6.6: Julie's Thematic Organisation	335

Tables **Page**

Table 2.1: Competency and Adult Literacy 60

Table 2.2: Significant Events Linking Policy and Practice in Central Queensland 62

Table 2.3: Professional Development Courses in Adult Literacy Teaching 77

Table 3.1: Discourses of Adult Literacy Teaching 124

Table 4.1: The Interpretive Mode of Inquiry 159

Table 4.2: Relationship between Methodological Questions and Research Questions 166

Table 4.3: What Count as Data 167

Table 4.4: Techniques and Tools of Field Approaches to Literacy Research 172

Table 4.5: Logistics of Data Collection from Field Research 173

Table 4.6: Relationship between Data Categories and Research Questions 179

Table 4.7: Five Interrelated Linguistic Systems and Key Researchers 181

Table 5.1: Causes and Effects of Inadequate Resources and Inflexibility 244

Table 5.2: Past and Present Tense Verb Phrases 270

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Professor Colin Lankshear and Associate Professor Michele Knobel have been my supervisors for the latter years of this study. I thank them both for challenging and clarifying my thinking. I also wish to acknowledge their strategic and discerning leadership and management of my ongoing learning throughout this period.

Professor Michael Singh was my supervisor for the early years of this study. From Professor Singh I learned much about doing fieldwork and managing a research project. I thank him most sincerely for his patience, astute scaffolding of my emergent thinking and continuing professional collaborations.

In particular, I want to acknowledge Dr Patrick Danaher for his steadfast faith in our shared learning and his inspirational professional insights throughout the journey. I will always value his extensive feedback, together with his incisive questioning at the very moments when I needed it most.

Thank you to Ms Phyllida Coombes and other colleagues in our CQU writing team who provide peer reviews par excellence for our ongoing collaborative research efforts.

Dr Geoff Danaher most kindly shared his extensive knowledge and understanding of Foucault and Bourdieu. He also took the time to peruse and provide feedback upon developing drafts of my theoretical framework, and I am most grateful to him for this.

As well as providing thoughtful, sage advice and feedback on my emergent thinking, Dr Mairin Kenny gave freely of her time and intellect to scaffold my thinking and writing throughout the thesis development. Her empathic understanding of the PhD study process has always been enlivened with the unique Irish storytelling wit and humour.

To my colleagues in the Adult Literacy Teaching field in Central Queensland, I extend a most heartfelt gratitude for sharing so freely of their time and their thinking during our professional development sessions, and in their interviews and assignments. My memories of the 'flight lounge' will be treasured forever.

I wish to acknowledge the most generous, ongoing professional advice and assistance that I have received throughout the years from my colleagues in the Faculty of Education and Creative Arts at Central Queensland University.

On a personal note, I wish to acknowledge the people in my immediate family who have provided emotional sustenance throughout this study. Thank you to the three magnificent men in my life who have always believed that the thesis would be finished: Koos, Stuart and David. For so many years, Koos and the boys have been a private oasis and source of strength in a sometimes tumultuous professional life. I have also been blessed with a wonderful sister, Paula, from whom I continue to learn insightful understandings of human nature.

DECLARATION

I declare that the main text of this thesis is entirely my own work and that such work has not been previously submitted as a requirement for the award of a degree at Central Queensland University or any other institution of higher education.

Roberta Elizabeth Harreveld
24 October 2002

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS AND PRESENTATIONS RELATED TO THIS WORK

Danaher, G. R., Coombes, P. N., Simpson, J., Harreveld, R. E., & Danaher, P. A. (2002). From double agents to double vision: Marginalisation and potential transformation among three groups of open and distance teachers. *Open and Distance Learning Association of Australia Occasional Papers*. July, 12-25.

Danaher, P. A., Harreveld, R. E., Chen Li. (2002). Navigating through distance teacher education: taking comparative bearings in Australia and China. *Malaysian Journal of Distance Education*, *2*(1), 33-48.

Danaher, P., Moran, P., & Harreveld, R. E. (1995). Linking teacher education and vocational education through fieldwork experiences: practice, politics and policy in an educational boundary site. *Queensland Researcher*, *11*(1), 1-14.

Harreveld, R. E. (forthcoming). The Work of Adult Literacy Teaching. In P. Kell, M. Singh & S. Shore, *Adult Education @ 21st Century: Global futures in practice and theory*. New York: Peter Lang.

Harreveld, R.E. (2001). *Lifelong Learning*. Keynote speech at The Daily Mercury & School Industry Links Inaugural Vocational Placement Awards of the Mackay Region School Industry Links Scheme. Cook Lecture Theatre, Central Queensland University, Wednesday October 24.

Harreveld, R. E., Danaher, P. A. & Kenny, M. (2002). Lifelong learning in the vocational education workplace: implications of a distance vocational teacher education program. In In K. Appleton, C. Macpherson, D. Orr (Eds.), *International Lifelong Learning Conference Proceedings,* (pp. 201-207). Yeppoon, Central Queensland, Australia. 16-19 June. Rockhampton: Central Queensland University Press.

Harreveld, R. E. (2001). Discourse co-ordinations within adult literacy teaching. *Queensland Journal of Educational Research, 17*(2), 138-151 .

Harreveld, R. E. (1999). Distance education in an Australian context: Issues in the design and delivery of teacher education programs. In S-H Kwong, *The trend of cyber education,* (pp. 9-21). Seoul, Republic of Korea: Hanyang University.

Harreveld, R. E. (1999, December 3). Multi-mode delivery of educational programs in regional, rural and remote Australia. In *The role of educational broadcasting and multimedia for education in the new millennium,* (pp. 11-18). Pusan, Republic of Korea: Pusan University, the Korean Society for the Study of Educational Broadcasting and the Korean Society for Educational Technology.

Harreveld, R. E. (1999). Mutual obligation: (not) A challenge for community. *Write-On. 16,* 6-14.

Harreveld, R. E. (1998). Technological Tangles in Adult Literacy Education. In *Literacy on the Line*, the Australian Council for Adult Literacy's 21st National conference proceedings. Adelaide , South Australia. 24-26 September.

Harreveld, R. E. (1996). Multiliteracies of the Experienced Educator. *Write On*, *14*(2), 7-18.

Harreveld, R. E. (1995). *Are we going in the right direction? A critical analysis of trends in post-compulsory education and the implications for teaching and learning*. Paper presented at 'Trends, Trendies and Troglodytes', the Sixth Biennial Regional Conference of the Cape York Peninsula Council of the Australian Reading Association in association with the English Teachers' Association of Queensland Cairns. 28 July - 30 July.

Harreveld, R. E. with Holgate, H. V., Gill, G. M., & Veach, R. J. (1994). *Programs in Literacy and Numeracy for Adults with Intellectual Disabilities*. Rockhampton, Qld: Rockhampton College of TAFE Publications.

Harreveld, R. E. (1992). "Report on an adult literacy tutor training program (for caregivers/supervisors who work with adults with a moderate/severe intellectual disability)". In C. E. van Kraayenoord (Ed), *A survey of Adult Literacy Provision for People with Intellectual Disabilities*, (pp. 215-243). Brisbane, Qld: Fred and Eleanor Schonnel Special Education Research Centre, University of Queensland.

Kwon, S-H., Harreveld, R. E. & Danaher, P. A. (2000). Individualising, socialising and globalising knowledge: Approaches to lifelong learning in Korea and Australia. In *Lifelong Learning Conference* (http://elvis.cqu.edu.au/conference/papers/kwon.htm). Rockhampton, Qld: Lifelong Learning Conference Committee, Central Queensland University.

Singh, M.G., & Harreveld, R. E. with Hunt, N. (1997). *Virtual flexibility: Adult literacy & new technologies in remote communities*. Report commissioned by the Queensland Adult English Language, Literacy and Numeracy (QAELLN) Council. Rockhampton, Qld: Research Centre for Open and Distance Learning, Central Queensland University.

Singh, M., & Harreveld, R. E. (1997). Adult literacy education and the rigidities of cultural technologies: Issues of in/flexible delivery and teaching/learning. Paper presented at the Australian Teacher Education Association National Conference and the Seventh National Workshop on Vocational Teacher Education, *Diversity, Difference Discontinuity: (Re)mapping Teacher Education for the Next Decad'*. 5-8 July. Capricorn International Resort, Yeppoon, Central Queensland.

Singh, M., & Harreveld, R. E. (1997). Pioneering "Flexible Delivery" in the Bush. *Northern Radius, 4*(2), 11-12.