

ABSTRACT

This is an account of a collaborative process of discussion and learning that was planned within the broad framework of participatory action research and took place in the Migrant Women's Learning Centre at the Northern Metropolitan College of TAFE between May 1991 and May 1992.

The teachers at the Centre constituted themselves as an 'action research group', resourced by myself as one of their number. We embarked on a process of reflection and discussion in order to share and develop the theoretical understandings informing our work, to share classroom experience and techniques and to explore more deeply what we do in the classroom and why. We identified a number of problems with the notion of 'personal development' and worked from there to articulate a discourse of the meanings and practices of a pedagogy of adult education and English as a Second Language within an all-women's setting.

The collaborative process amongst the teachers was paralleled by two other processes: monitoring my own classroom behaviour by means of a teaching journal and involving the students in reflection and feedback on the theme of the enquiry.

There are several themes that interweave through the presentation and discussion of the project outcomes: the problematising of 'personal development' and 'empowerment' in relation to our teaching; the consequent reworking and reconstruction of our pedagogical understanding; a discussion of the possibilities for teacher-student solidarity in terms of the poststructuralist analysis of language and power; a discussion of the significance of the project as a model of collaborative teacher-based professional development; a critical reflection on issues of action research methodology suggested by this project; and a reflection on the power of feminist poststructuralist theory in interpreting the outcomes and suggesting new possibilities for action research itself.