Within and Against Performativity

Discursive Engagement in Adult Literacy and Basic Education

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I certify that this thesis, entitled,

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submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, is the result of my own research, except where otherwise acknowledged, and that this thesis in whole or in part has not been submitted for an award including a higher degree to any other university or institution.

Name..

Signature ....

Date..

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Abstract

The field of adult literacy and basic education (ALBE) has undergone dramatic changes in recent years with the advent of labour market programs, accreditation, competency-based assessment and competitive tendering for program funds. Teachers' working conditions have deteriorated and their professional autonomy has been eroded. ALBE has been increasingly instrumentalised to fulfil the requirements of a marketised economy and conform to its norms. The beliefs and value systems which traditionally underpinned the work of ALBE teachers have been reframed according to the principle of 'performativity' and the demands of the 'performative State' (Lyotard, 1984: 46, Yeatman 1994: 110).

The destabilisation of teachers' working lives can be understood as a manifestation of the 'postmodern condition' (Lyotard 1984; Harvey 1989): the collapse of the certainties and purposes of the past; the proliferation of technologies; the impermanence and intensification of work; the commodification of knowledge and curricula; and the dissolving of boundaries between disciplines and fields of knowledge. The critiques of the modernist grand narratives which underpin progressivist and critical approaches to adult literacy pedagogy have further undermined the traditional points of reference of ALBE teachers.

In this thesis I examine how teachers are teaching, surviving, resisting, and 'living the contradictions' (Seddon 1994) in the context of struggles to comply with and resist the requirements of performativity. Following Foucault and a number of feminist poststructuralist authors, I have applied the notions of 'discursive engagement' and 'the politics of discourse' (Yeatman 1990a) as a way of theorising the interplay between imposed change and teachers' practice. I explore the discursive practices which take place at the interface between the 'new' policy discourses and older, naturalised discourses; how teachers are *engaged by* and are *engaging with* discourses of performativity; how teachers are discursively constructing adult literacy pedagogy; what new, hybrid discourses of 'good practice' are emerging; and the micropractices of resistance which teachers are enacting in their speech and in their practice.

My purpose was to develop knowledge which would support the reflexivity of teachers; to enrich the theoretical languages that teachers could draw upon in trying to make sense of their situation; and to use those languages in speaking about the dilemmas of practice. I used participatory action research as means of producing knowledge about teachers' pradices, structured around their agency, and reflecting their standpoint (Harding 1993).

I describe two separate action research projects in which teachers of ALBE participated. I reflect on both projects in the light of poststructuralist theory and consider them as instances of what Lather calls 'within/against research' (Lather 1989: 27). I analyse written and spoken texts produced in both projects which reflect teachers' responses to competency-based assessment and other features of the changing context.

I use a method of discourse mapping to describe the discursive field and the teachers' discursive practices. Three main configurations of discourse are delineated: 'progressivism', 'professional teacher' and 'performativity'. The teachers mainly position themselves within a hybridising 'progressivist /professional teacher' discourse, as a discourse of resistance to 'performative' discourse. In adapting their pedagogies, the teachers are in some degree taking the language and world view of performativity into their own vocabularies and practices. The discursive picture I have mapped is complex and contradictory. On one hand, the 'progressivist /professional teacher' discourse appears to endure and to take strength from the articulation into it of elements of performative discourse, creating new possibilities for discursive transformation. On the other hand, there are signs that performative discourse is colonising and subsuming progressivist /professional teacher discourse. At times, both of these tendencies are apparent in the one text.

Six micropractices of resistance are identified within the texts: 'rational critique', 'objectification', 'subversion', 'refusal', 'humour' and 'the affirmation of desire'. These reflect the teachers' agency in making discursive choices on the micro level of their every day practices. Through those micropractices, the teachers are engaging with and resisting the micropractices and meanings of performativity.

I apply the same multi-layered method of analysis to an examination of discursive engagement in pedagogy by analysing a transcript of the teachers' discussion of critical incidents in their classrooms. Their classroom pedagogies are revealed as complex, situated and eclectic. They are combining and integrating their 'embodied' and their 'institutional' powers, both 'seducing' (McWilliam 1995) and 'regulating' (Gore 1993) as they teach. A strong ethical project is apparent in the teachers' sense of social responsibility, in their determination to adhere to valued traditions of previous times, and in their critical self-awareness of the ways in which they use their institutional and embodied powers in the classroom.

Finally, I look back on the findings, and reflect on the possibilities of discursive engagement and the politics of discourse as a framework for more strategic practice in the current context. This research provides grounds for hope that, by becoming more self-conscious about how we engage discursively, we might become more strategic in our everyday professional practice. Notwithstanding the constraints (evident in this study) which limit the strategic potential of the politics of discourse, there is space for teachers to become more reflexive in their professional, pedagogical and political praxis. Development of more deliberate, self-reflexive praxis might lead to a 'postmodern democratic politics' (Yeatman 1994: 112) which would challenge the performative state and the system of globalised capital which it serves.

Summary

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Title
Within and Against Performativity:
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Short abstract

Adult literacy and basic education (ALBE) teachers have experienced a period of dramatic policy change in recent years; in particular, the introduction of competency-based assessment and competitive tendering for program funds. 'Discourse politics' provides a way of theorising the interplay between policy-mediated institutional change and teachers' practice. The focus of this study is 'discursive engagement'; how teachers are engaged by and are engaging with discourses of performativity. Through two action research projects, texts were generated of teachers talking and writing about how they were responding to the challenges, and developing their pedagogies in the new policy environment. These texts have been analysed and several patterns of discursive engagement delineated, named and illustrated. The strategic potential of 'discourse politics' is explored in the light of the findings.

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Part I

Chapters 1 - 4

The rebellious teacher, the "reflective practitioner" (Schon, 1983) is asked to tamp down dissonant conceptions of what education might be and perhaps ought to be in a chaotic, uncertain time. We do not know how many educators see present demands and prescriptions as obstacles to their own development, or how many find it difficult to breathe. There may be thousands, who, in the absence of support systems, have elected to be silent. Thousands of others (sometimes without explanation) are leaving the schools. Surpassing, transcendence, freedom: such notions are not being articulated in the conversations now going on.

Maxine Greene, *The Dialectics of Freedom,* 1988, New York, Teachers College Press, p.14.

... the goal is no longer truth, but performativity - that is, the best possible input/ output equation. The State and/or company must abandon the idealist and humanist narratives of legitimation in order to justify the new goal: in the discourse of today's financial backers of research, the only credible goal is power. Scientists, technicians and instruments are purchased not to find truth, but to augment power.

Jean-Frarn;ois Lyotard, The *Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge,* 1984, Manchester, Manchester University Press. p.46.

Chapter One

Starting Points and Challenges

1. Introduction

In this thesis I tell a story about the practice of teachers of Adult Literacy and Basic Education (ALBE) in a period of change and upheaval. It is a story about how teachers are working with, adapting to, surviving and resisting the impact of new policies in their field in the mid nineties, and how they are engaging with the discourses[1] in which those policies are embedded. I am one of those teachers, so my thesis is also a product of my own experience in education and my beliefs about it.

I begin, therefore, by sketching the personal, professional and political formation of myself as author of this thesis. I describe some of the challenges I have experienced (as a teacher, professional development officer, administrator and activist) which initially led me to start out on this project. These challenges, articulated in the light of poststructuralist theory, suggest a number of political and theoretical questions which I address.

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1. I use the term 'discourse' throughout the thesis as a term which conveys how power operates through language and meaning. I draw especially on poststructuralist authors (Foucault 1972; Foucault 1975; Foucault 1980; Foucault 1981; Weedon 1987; Fraser 1989; Yeatman 1990a; Fairclough 1992; Yeatman 1994) as explained further in Chapter 4.

2. Personal, professional and political origins

I was born in 1944 into the love and tumult of a strong, lively family. My parents had experienced the hardships of the 30s Depression and separation during my father's naval service in the Second World War. Their stories of struggle, survival, self-sufficiency, thrift, community service, moral virtue and belief in a better future became my own. My father was a deep-thinking, charismatic man with a great sense of humour, a sarcastic tongue, a strong ethical sense and authoritarian ways. I loved and rebelled against him for as long as I can remember.

Growing up in the Victorian country town of Kyabram in the fifties and early sixties, I was was part of a vibrant local community. Along with my brother and sister, I attended the local state school, worked on Saturdays behind the counter in my parents' newsagency and went to church on Sundays. We had freedom to roam the town and to explore by bike the surrounding countryside. My parents were well-known and respected; they had lots of friends and participated in concerts, balls, parties and the many cultural, civic and sporting activities that took place in and around the town. I look back on Kyabram as a nostalgic symbol of my privileged childhood, of rich community life, and Australian rural landscape. I also reflect on the narrowness and racism which I would have absorbed from that community in those early years.

I was sent to a Melbourne boarding school where I was deprived of physical freedom and subjected to a boring disciplinary regime. There were compensatory pleasures: intense friendships with fellow boarders and classmates; the awakening of intellectual and literary excitement; moments of spiritual uplift through music, singing and religious ceremony. My natural tendency was to rebel. I answered back when admonished, organised pranks, and instigated protests against the awful boarding house food and other injustices. In my later years at school I was taught by a few gifted teachers who were highly knowledgeable, brought alive the material through their own interest and passion and took the students seriously. Their example showed that teaching might be a noble and rewarding profession that gave scope for self-expression, human nurturance and an on-going involvement with ideas and learning.

I went on to Melbourne University and secondary teachers' college, and took up my first teaching job at a large, western suburbs high school at the age of 21. I strove to discipline, instruct and inspire groups of up to 40 unruly teenagers who were mostly from newly arrived migrant families and were just a few years my junior. I struggled throughout those years to find my own path and personhood.

The 'I' who is the author of this thesis was further shaped by my experiences and involvements during the late sixties, seventies and eighties: my years as a hippy traveller; my embrace of 'Maoist' socialist ideals; my discovery, later again, of feminism, the gendered nature of my own subjectivity and the might of patriarchy in society; and my eventual learning, through the 'personal growth' movement, to separate out the various hurts of the past from the person whom I wanted to become. I learned to relate my own troubles to the wider issue of patriarchal society, and to struggles for a more just and humane world. I saw my teaching as potentially contributing to this broad, collective project.

The above sketch of my personal, political and professional formation identifies me as a 'child' typical of my time. So too, with the development in my beliefs about education. My early ideals were influenced by mainstream liberal humanist thought. The liberal educational philosophy of John Dewey, whom I studied at teachers' college in the early 60s, linked the pedagogical aim of developing children as participatory and critically enquiring learners to the political aim of a just and democratic society (Dewey 1916) . Later, as a socialist in the early 1970s, I believed that education would inevitably reproduce capitalist ideology and structural inequity, identifying myself with the work of Bowles and Gintis (1976). My reading, in the late 70s of Freire (1971; 1972) enabled me to make an explicit connection between the Marxist politics I had espoused and the possibilities of radical classroom pedagogy. My identification with feminism and feminist thinking in the early 80s eventually led me to reframe my earlier political understandings and to develop a more self-reflexive awareness that 'the personal is political'. I became aware of the effects of gender in the feminised fields of ALBE and ESL, and in my own practice.

My inspiration to write this thesis comes from two main sources. One is the professional satisfaction and enjoyment I have derived from working with dedicated and highly skilled ALBE and ESL teachers in several TAFE

colleges and community locations in Melbourne. The other is the students whom I have been privileged to teach over many years. Images of those students (or 'clients') burn brightly in my mind, and hover behind the images and stories of their teachers, which I focus on in this thesis. The students have been my teachers, sharing their lives, cultures, wisdoms and vulnerabilities with me and with each other. By working and interacting with them and with the other teachers I have learned about the art and craft of teaching: how to balance and weave together the needs of individuals, the energy of the group, the requirements of the curriculum and the opportunities of the pedagogical 'moment'.

Over the five years on which I have been working on this thesis, I have increasingly realised that it is also a story of my own struggle with power and authority, my own journey. Now, in 1998, I feel overwhelmed by the power of the economic rationalist or neo-liberal discourse that has taken hold in economic and political life. The policies of new public sector managrnent and marketisation appear to be dismantling the field of ALBE as it has developed over the last two decades. Language and literacy programs, community and institutional infrastructure and teachers' jobs have been devastated; literacy learning is being used to discipline, rather than enrich and educate unemployed young people; teaching itself is being commodified and down-graded; and pedagogy as an 'art' is under threat. A lean and mean spirit of competition and technical efficiency is enforced by the state, in the drive to remake all aspects of social and community provision in the image of the market. I rail against the authorities and the networks of power which have caused or allowed this to happen. My feelings of loss and outrage have been a significant impetus in doing the research and creating this thesis. In exploring the impact of recent policy on ALBE from 'the inside' I am also exploring issues of power and resistance which are deeply personal in their origins.

3. Professional challenges

My experiences in adult education and my involvement in projects for better and more just practices have led me to ask the questions which the research is structured around.

As a teacher...

Since 1975 I have worked in various positions in Technical And Further Education (TAFE) colleges and have taught English as a Second Language (ESL) and adult literacy in a variety of settings. I taught ESL and ALBE in TAFE colleges and in community centres from 1982 to 1994, one of many women teachers in adult education in Victoria who had similar backgrounds and similar political and educational aspirations.

From to late 70s to the late 90s I experienced the phenomenal growth of ALBE: from a small and relatively obscure field, mainly organised as community-based volunteerism and TAFE 'compensatory education' programs, to the highly successful International Literacy Year (ILY) in 1990. The ILY presaged the dramatic expansion in funding and programs which took place in the following years under the Labor Government's Australian Languages and Literacy Policy (ALLP) and Labour Market Programs (LMPs).

However, the expansion of ALBE and its redefinition in terms of the national economy resulted in a number of new challenges (industrial, political and pedagogical) for teachers. The advent of the competitive training market in which providers compete with each other for funding for short-term labour market programs led to the fragmentation of the field and a down-grading of teachers' conditions of employment. In a short period of time teachers moved from being responsible for their own curriculum development to being responsible for the 'delivery' of accredited curriculum packages. Increasingly they were being defined as 'trainers', working on short term, usually sessional contracts for a range of competing providers. All curriculum had to be competency-based. As a teacher in a small community-based provider in semester 1, 1994, I had to struggle, along with others, to come to terms with a complex framework of assessment couched in terms of performance criteria, range and conditions. In Chapter 2 I give a more detailed account of the historical development of ALBE and the policy context of the period of the research.

As a teacher, I got to know many people who, I believe, have empowered themselves through participating in ALBE programs. Having a first or second opportunity in adulthood to gain literacy, education and training has been a spring board for many to get jobs, find more rewarding err .ployment or to be more effective in their civic and social participation.

At the very least, it has contributed to an improved quality of life, and hence, potentially, their ability to contribute to building a better world.

Alongside other teachers I now ask how I might make meaning of the changes that began to be implemented in the early 90s and that have appeared to change the pedagogical culture of ALBE so dramatically. How might I build on my experience in ALBE to create knowledge which is situated in the field of ALBE practice and which will strengthen and inform the complex struggles in which teachers are now engaging? How might this study be directed to defending the newly-emerged, but now threatened field of ALBE (its programs, its networks, its social justice orientation, its 'feminine' culture of pedagogical 'good practice', its current and potential students and its teachers) in the context of deregulation, marketisation and bureaucratic managerialism?

As adult literacy officer...

Following a long period as a teacher in TAFE, I took up the position of Regional ALBE Officer (RALBEO) in the Western Metropolitan Regional Office of the Adult Community and Further Education Board (ACFEB), where I was responsible for supporting practitioners, organising professional development and building the regional networks. In this position I experienced first hand the reduction in 1993 of recurrent Commonwealth funding for ALBE programs to one third, the advent of literacy programs funded as labour market programs, the pressures on small community-based providers of increasingly onerous accountability requirements, competition for funding and the introduction of a complex framework for competency-based assessment and accreditation (the Certificate of General Education for Adults, or CGEA).

As RALBEO, it was also my job to help implement unpopular policies such as competitive tendering for program funds. I was positioned midway between the policy-makers and teachers and found myself having to mediate the contradictions and work between both 'sides'.

When the competency-based CGEA was introduced in Victoria by ACFEB in 1993, as part of training reforms led by the then Labour Government, a heated and at times bitter controversy broke out. It was my job to introduce the Victorian Adult English Language and Literacy Accreditation Framework (VAELLNAF) which framed the Certificate to the providers in the region and to provide initial professional

development explaining the competency-based framework (ACFEB and STB 1993).

At several seminars and professional development meetings the pedagogical basis of the framework was hotly disputed by teachers and some providers announced their intention to boycott it. However, it became clear that future funding to providers would be linked to their implementing the framework, and reporting outcomes in the terms prescribed. Teachers had no choice but to use the framework and to conform with a number of other unpopular changes: stricter accountability requirements; a cut-back in Commonwealth recurrent funding; and the creation of a competitive training market by the Department of Employment, Education and Training (DEET) for its labour market programs. In VALBEC's publications, *Fine Print* and *Broadsheet*, a number of articles appeared expressing the anger and frustration that many practitioners felt at the lack of consultation in introducing a curriculum innovation which they saw as changing adult literacy pedagogy in a fundamental way (McCormack 1994; Suda 1994) .

I encouraged (and participated in) this debate. I urged teachers to embark on a "critical implementation" of the Certificate and to document the results and feed these back to the relevant authorities. I advocated for funding to support small-scale practitioner-based research, especially participatory research, to document the changes that were taking place.

As ALBE officer, my interactions with the practitioners in the region positioned me in different ways. I was colleague and friend as well as a minor bureaucrat with responsibility to make recommendations about funding. I became painfully aware of the conflicts of loyalty and the ambiguities of moving between the different roles. This experience led me to want to explore more deeply questions of 'multiple positioning'[2] and the political dilemmas entailed by working in a small field in which, at that time, there was no simple 'them and us' division between policy-makers, bureaucrats and practitioners.

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2. 'Multiple positioning' refers to how we are constituted in a multiplicity of discourses and hence inhabit different, and sometimes contradictory subject positions, as explained further in Chapter 4.

As activist...

In more recent years I have been active in a number of professional organisations in the field. These include the Victorian Adult Literacy and Basic Education Council (VALBEC); the national professional body, ACAL (Australian Council of Adult Literacy)[3]; and the Network of Women in Further Education (NOWinFE). In working through the issues in these organisations, in networking and advocating, I have also positioned myself as an activist for the field. This has led me to ask more questions about how to be effective in the struggle for 'good practice', the defence of the profession, and the pursuit of a more just and equitable society.

4. 'Living the contradictions' in difficult times

Terri Seddon, in her keynote address to the 1994 VALBEC conference, framed the challenge to practitioners in ALBE as one of 'living and working the contradictions'. She spoke of four main contradictions or fronts of struggle in the new education and training environment.

- The formation of ALBE in the interstices of mainstream education has led to internal divisions and debates about its pedagogical purposes and practices.
- Commitments within ALBE to holistic education, educational enlightenment, social justice and social rescue are in contradiction with mainstream 'commonsense', which would confine access to powerful knowledge to a privileged minority.
- Mainstream policies in the post-protection era of microeconomic reform have reframed education in terms of the requirement of industry and the labour market. For teachers, these have resulted in coercive accountability and management practices, and loss of industrial conditions.
- Language and literacy provision has been redefined as a component of labour market training, and funded as such on a short-term basis (adapted from Seddon 1994: 5-6).

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3. I discuss the role of these organisations more fully in Chapter 2.

These contradictions feed into a context of uncertainty, personal anxiety and material insecurity for ALBE teachers. Seddon called for teachers to "live the contradictions politically":

> In summary, I am suggesting that the relationship between new contexts and debates lies in living the contradictions politically - in how the field is understood, how the contradictions of the changing ALBE context are lived and how the reconciliation of these understandings and the practical living of contradictions is played out in ongoing debate. What is important to remember is that in these debates and the practical action which they generate, history is made - but not in the conditions of your own choosing, nor with any control of outcomes. In this work, continuities as well as change in ALBE will be created (Seddon 1994).

To "live the contradictions politically" is to practise in ways which take into account the political context of the contradictions we are experiencing and to be conscious of the politics of the ways in which we act, and that the professional is also the personal and the political.

Contradictions of globalisation and economic rationalism

Globalisation is the political economic context of these changes. By 'globalisation' I mean the trend to integrate all economic activities within a single global market and to idealise the market as the most efficient and 'natural' mechanism to determine the distribution of resources. In Australia, the code word used to describe these changes is 'economic rationalism'[4]. This term was first coined by Michael Pusey to describe the ascendant logic of re-orienting national policy around the global market and the eclipse of the discourses of the welfare state and of the nation-building state (Pusey 1991) . Economic rationalism is associated with the erosion of political and social democracy in Australia, a failure of civil society, and a cultural and intellectual failure. In a 1990 address entitled 'The Impact of Economic Ideas on Public Policy in Canberra, he said that:

> The failure is evident in the fact that with the exception of a courageous few, professional politicians and senior bureaucrats no longer believe that the political process is or ever could be governed, even at the margins, *by morally binding interpretations of social needs.* Almost everything that happens in Canberra today is premised, as the results show, on the assumption that there is a hierarchical order of reality and causation that gives primacy to the economic system qua system, and second place to politics and the

4. 'Economic rationalism' corresponds broadly to 'neo-liberalism' which is elsewhere more widely used.

> political system, and third place to a residual view of society that is seen as some kind of stubbornly resisting sludge that variously inhibits and obstructs 'the economy'. In short, society is assumed - and I think this is a momentously important regression - to be not the *subject* of politics as it must be if citizenship, liberal democracy and social needs are to have any meaning but instead as the *object* of politics (Pusey 1990).

According to Pusey, global capital wields power over the state, which services the demands of the international finance markets. The building of a strong civil society is sacrificed to the extension of market relationships to all aspects of human activity.

The work of ALBE, as Seddon pointed out, has traditionally been understood in terms of social justice and social rescue. It has also been in the tradition of 'women's work' (Angwin 1996: 116; Blackmore and Angwin 1997) in which women teachers developed pedagogies infused with feminine attitudes of care and responsibility (Weiler 1988; Darling 1995). The reframing of that work in terms of the needs of 'the economy' is one aspect of those changes which is having a far-reaching impact on the beliefs, the language, the practices, and the culture of ALBE .

Teachers' work has become increasingly casualised; the intensity of work is increasing whilst the amount of work available overall is decreasing within the competitive training market. Teachers are experiencing the insecurities caused by de-regulation of their work as well as the other uncertainties and contradictions which Seddon writes about. At the same time they are trying to make sense of, and to respond to, a changing social and educational policy discourse which is "replacing educational language with marketing language, educational values with marketing values and educational practices with marketing practices" (Kenway, Bigum et al. 1994: 6). In the field of ALBE, the conflicts and instabilities have been particularly sharply felt, as the new policies challenge the beliefs and principles embedded in the ALBE tradition. Discourses of competitiveness and human capital theory challenge 'social justice' discourses; discourses of efficiency and competency-based training confront discourses of critical literacy, progressivism and pedagogies of holistic, learner-centred practice (Luke 1992; Marginson 1993; Gilding 1994; Lee and Wickert 1994; Seddon 1994; Sanguinetti 1995).

5. The postmodem theoretical context

Through my reading of postmodern and poststructural theory in the early 90s, I came to view my own experiences in education differently, and glimpsed the possibility of new, radical approaches to the practice and politics of education. The dethronement of grand narratives (Lyotard 1984), an understanding of the constructed and situated nature of all knowledges and the connection between language, power and subjectivity through the notion of 'discourse' destabilised my earlier beliefs and opened up the possibility of new ways of knowing and understanding. My vision for change now includes a letting go of universalist explanations and an acknowledgment of uncertainty, contradiction and the historic situatedness of my own thinking.

Globalisation and performativity

The policies of economic rationalist times, as described earlier, can be theorised as policies which enact the principle of 'performativity' and reflect its discourse. 'Performativity' is the meta-narrative of the globalising state: the functions of the state are viewed primarily as technical, and managed so as to achieve maximum technical efficiency, in the interests of power.

Lyotard (1984) defines 'performativity' as

> ...the principle of optimal performance: maximizing output (the information modifications obtained) and minimizing input (the energy expended in the process (Lyotard 1984: 44).

Yeatman (1994) writes that in the postmodern state, performativity has supplanted paternalism as the principle which legitimises its control functions and the ways in which it works to contain the democratic and social claims (p.110). She writes (citing Lyotard) that:

> Performativity has the singular virtue of supplying a meta-discourse for public policy. Thus it can subsume and transform substantive democratising claims within a managerialist-functionalist rhetoric. Performativity is a systems orientation: instead of the state appearing as the enlightened and paternal command of shared community, the state is equated with the requirements of a system for ongoing integrity and viability. This is a cybernetic model: "the true goal of the system, the reason it

> programs itself like a computer, is the optimisation of the global relationship between input and output - in other words, performativity" (Yeatman 1994: ibid).

The work of ALBE is now pervaded by the rhetoric, the dictates and the practices of performativity.

Behind the rhetoric of performativity lies the impositional power of the state. According to Lankshear,

> At the level of daily practice, performativity in education at all levels calls for our schools and universities making 'the optimum contribution... to the best performativity of the social system' (Lyotard, 1984: 48). This involves creating the sorts of *skills* among learners that are indispensable to maximum efficiency of the social system which, for societies like our own, is a system of increasing diversity and a 'player' in the market place of global capitalism (Lankshear 1998: 11).

Teachers, like others, have no choice but to work 'within' performativity and to conform to its requirements. Most of those who have participated in this study, are also clearly 'against' it. How they are struggling and engaging discursively within and against performativity is a theme which weaves through the various strands of this study[5].

The contradictions of 'postmodernity'

The anxieties and uncertainties experienced by ALBE practitioners can also be seen as symptoms of the conditions of 'postmodernity'[6] (Lyotard, 1984; Harvey 1989; Hargreaves 1994; Usher and Edwards 1994).

The belief that human progress leads inevitably towards greater material, cultural and social well-being is now seen by postmodernist writers such as Lyotard (1984) as part of the historical myth of the Enlightenment (Hargreaves 1994; Usher and Edwards 1994). Modernity was once seen as

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5. The title of this thesis was suggested by Lather's book, *Feminist Research in Education: Within/Against* (Lather 1991b).

6. The term 'postmodernity' is used in various ways, sometimes to describe the contemporary historical period. The concept of 'postmodernity' as a distinct period is problematic. Andy Hargreaves that writes that:

> Modernity compresses and collapses time and space; postrnodemity does this even more so. Modernity sees the development of monopoly capitalism; postmodernity witnesses its expansion and proliferation across the world. It these respects, what we call postmodernity may well be an extension and intensification of conditions which preceded it, and not something profoundly new (Hargreaves 1994: 44).

a progressive force which promised to liberate humankind from ignorance and irrationality. Postrnodernists, however, point to global suffering, wars, an increasing gap between rich and poor, and environmental destruction. They point out that the institutions, philosophies and moral claims of modernity are no longer tenable. Modernity is no longer synonymous with progress and liberation, but a cover for subjugation and oppression (Harvey 1989; Rosenau 1992; Gare 1995). Modernity has created the conditions for the destruction of its own project: "the 'system' advances seemingly inexorably to destroy the 'life-world"' (Lash 1994: 112). The idea that humanity will necessarily better itself is rejected as illusory, a 'metanarrative', alongside other global, encompassing world views, philosophies, religions and ideologies (Lyotard 1984: 37; Rosenau 1992: 6) .

For teachers, the implications of postmodernist theory are profoundly destabilising. If we can no longer assume that human progress is tied to Modernity; if all meaning is socially constructed and knowledge is relative to the social and historical situation of the knower; how can we speak about progressive change, and how can we (as teachers, citizens, and would-be activists) maintain a vision of hope and struggle for a better future? This is a question which lies behind the other questions which I explore more directly in this thesis.

Postmodern theorising presents a particular challenge to teachers of ALBE who are struggling to defend the notions of 'good practice' against the inroads of the new policy discourse - the discourse of performativity. Understandings of 'good practice' that are discounted by economic rationalist policy are also being undermined by postmodernism's epistemological questioning; by the problematising of our institutional power and authority as teachers; and by a developing awareness of how we are constituted by and in part share the very discourses which we seek to oppose.

To live with and to address this contradiction is a challenge of the times. Does contemporary postmodernist social theory help teachers to make sense of their situation? One of my aims in this thesis is to take up this

challenge by using (and testing out) a poststructuralist approach[7] in my research into the politics of ALBE in the local Victorian context.

Critique of the 'politics of identity'

Poststructuralist theorising has provided the grounds for a particularly strong critique of the 'identity politics'[8] on which my earlier political activism had been premised. Identity politics is about the tendency within social change movements to construct a single, oppositional identity for the members of groups in a way which discounts differences within those groups, to categorise people as 'in' or 'out' and to divide groups from one another. Gunew and Yeatman (1993) have shown identity politics to reflect modernist logic by constructing binary oppositions, privileging certain groups at the expense of others and ignoring the issues of power behind constructions of identity. They point out that, "Such logic is homogenizing and universalist, built on the principle of exclusion and the tyranny of the familiar" (Gunew and Yeatman 1993: xiii). Building on contemporary post-colonial, feminist and queer theorising, they propose a postmodern 'politics of difference' which acknowledges "incommensurable" differences between people, and "offers a means of situating the speaking subject, of defining the intersections and contradictions of competing groups"(loc cit).

Yeatman later writes of the need to 'revision the political' in the light of postmodernism (Yeatman 1994). Her notion of a postmodern politics has become an underlying theme guiding the research and writing in this thesis.

> By entering into a deconstructive relationship to the modern emancipatory project, this postmodern politics can be seen to transform this project and in this sense, to pursue it. If universalism does not reside in what is, or even in what could be, but lies instead in a political, contestatory space that opens up in relation to existing wrongs and to those who contest them in the name of equality, it is clear that this has radical implications for the nature of political vision. Postmodern emancipatory politics does

7. I understand poststructuralism as a theoretical tradition in linguistics and epistemology which starts with the recognition of language as constitutive as well as represenṫional, and accepts the paradoxes of seli-referentiality, as explained further in Chapter 4.

8. Gunew and Yeatman explain that the identity of an excluded group comes in the context of political contestation against the universalism which excludes them. 'Identity politics' develops when this (contestatory) identity is retroactively projected as something that was always there and is a given, with the result that "politics tends to be subordinated to the ritual enactment of ontologized difference" (Gunew 1993: xxii).

> not offer a utopian future, but works to develop contestatory political and public spaces, which open up in relation to existing systems of governance (Yeatman 1994: ix).

'Deconstructive' here means approaching politics with an understanding that 'meaning', 'truth', 'identity', 'right', and 'community' are all socially constructed representations and are all thoroughly contestable concepts (ibid, p. x). In this thesis I attempt to apply such a deconstructive approach to my own project, which is to defend and support the field of ALBE in the context of radical, economic rationalist policies. To defend ALBE is to defend my own collectivity, my own 'tribe'. The 'identity', 'meanings', 'truths' and 'values' of that collectivity are under threat, as public policy commitment is redefined and the funding base is withdrawn. My thesis is in part an attempt to model what it means to deconstruct those truths, values and beliefs whilst struggling to defend them with and on behalf of my own professional collectivity.

Ball writes about the discounting of teachers and marginalisation of educational perspectives in contemporary policy and management: "the teacher is increasingly an absent presence in the discourses of education policy, an object rather than a subject of discourse" (Ball 1994: 50). My aim in this regard is to contradict this trend by privileging the voices, ideas and experiences of teachers in my documentation and analysis of their spoken and written texts; texts produced in the heat of contestation and debate over the issues of change.

I do not see these struggles as a project of 'emancipation' in the modernist sense criticised by Yeatman, but a more humble project of small-scale resistances and of deliberate participation in the politics of the profession. I have therefore set out in my research to explore and to describe (through analysing the spoken and written representations of ALBE teachers) the spaces for professional and pedagogical resistance which teachers are taking up at this time; to trace the ways in which teachers are engaging in a complex field in which old and new discourses of policy and pedagogy are meeting and changing each other; and to explore how they are living and practising the 'politics of discourse' (Yeatman 1990b) in defending their field and developing their practice.

6. Conclusion

In this thesis, I explore how teachers of ALBE and ESL are living the challenges and dilemmas produced by a contradictory historical, theoretical and policy context which is being shaped by the interests and dynamics of economic globalisation.

The study is particularly focused on the period from 1994-1996. It is a study of how teachers (especially women teachers) were speaking and writing about the changes that took place during that period; how they were teaching within the new environments; how they were defending their professionalism and working conditions; how they were holding onto and constructing anew their pedagogical and social commitments; how (and whether) they were surviving, resisting the negatives, and contributing to change; and how they were engaging the contending and conjoining discourses which now construct the field of ALBE.

The thesis originates in my personal struggle with issues of power and resistance and is underpinned by my commitment to a broadly liberal and democratic system of public education for adults as part of a more cohesive and a more equitable society. It is an expression of my desire to act in solidarity with peoples, cultures and communities to somehow resist the colonising force of globalised capital and the deregulated market economy. It is informed by my own process of questioning and self-interrogation as I make the uneasy shift from universalised narratives of Progress and a binarised, 'them-and-us' politics of identity towards a more deconstructive, situated and self-reflexive politics of difference. It is structured by my own multiple positioning (as teacher, as friend and colleague to the participants, as citizen and as academic researcher) and my shifting, throughout the text, among these positions. Finally, it is a product of my own struggle to make sense of the profound discursive shifts that have taken place in the way ALBE has been constructed and reconstructed in the last decade; and by my own struggle to know how to act according to my sense of what is right and what is possible.

The struggle of ALBE teachers to live the contradictions and to engage with discourses of new policy is manifested in the way they speak and write about their work. I therefore set out to produce knowledge about the ways in which the teachers are living the contradictions at this time,

and to explore the politics of their engagement with discourses of 'the new' through their spoken and written texts.

Two unifying themes which weave throughout the thesis are the notion of 'discursive engagement' and the related notion of 'the politics of discourse'. In Chapter 4, I explicate these ideas, drawing on a number of theorists and researchers (especially feminists) who are likewise using postmodernism and poststructuralism to study and theorise contemporary issues in education and society.

Chapter Two

History and Overview of Adult Literacy and Basic Education

1. Introduction

The history of ALBE detailed in this chapter provides the background of the story documented in Chapters 5 to 10: a story about teachers 'living the contradictions' (Seddon 1994) of policy, management and pedagogy during the period of the National Training Reform Agenda (NTRA) and the Australian Language and Literacy Policy (ALLP), from 1994 - 1996.

I first define 'ALBE', then give a historical account of the development of the field from the adult education provision of the mechanics' institutes, in the 1840s, up until the late 80s and early 90s, when ALBE was recognised and funded as a field of education its own right.

My exploration of how teachers are experiencing and responding to policy-led changes to their teaching practice requires a description of the discourses in which teachers (myself included) positioned themselves at the time of the policies of the NTRA. It also requires an understanding of the discourses or discursive formations (Foucault 1972; Lemke 1995: 28) which constructed the field prior to and at the advent of the NTRA. I therefore give a brief account, in this chapter, of contestations about the nature and proper purposes of adult literacy at the time of the introduction of the NTRA and the ALLP.

The historical and theoretical account in this chapter forms the basis of the analysis, in Chapter 6, of the inherited educational traditions (the discourses) which constituted the practices and commitments of the 'field' of ALBE up until this period.

2. What is 'ALBE'?

A historical and institutional jigsaw

Adult Literacy and Basic Education (ALBE) is a relatively new field which grew up on the margins of mainstream institutional provision. It was formed as a corning together of disparate educational projects throughout the two hundred odd years of Australian history since White settlement. The different sites and historical traditions of adult education are reflected in the institutional complexity of Adult and Community Education (ACE) today, of which ALBE is one part.

Wickert and Zimmerman (1991: 176) describe the overall picture of ALBE provision as "elusive, ever-changing and incomplete". They cite Dymock's comment that reviewing adult literacy provision in Australia was like "trying to put together a jigsaw from which many of the pieces are missing" (Dymock 1982). The report *Come in Cinderella* (Senate Standing Committee on Employment Education and Training 1991) lists ALBE as 'special provision' within the broad field of ACE. In that report, ALBE is categorised as a form of special provision alongside workplace training, education for migrants, Aboriginal adult education, education for people with disabilities and prisoner education. However, as well as being a distinct field of provision, ALBE is a key component of all of these.

The 'field' of ALBE is made up of voluntary, community-based, private and institutional providers, funded differently in different states under a variety of ever-changing policies and funding programs. Providers of ALBE include neighbourhood houses, community centres, TAFE colleges, private providers, charitable organisations and industry or work-based providers. In Victoria in 1994 - 96, these providers offered ALBE programs which were funded by any (or a combination) of:

- Office of Technical and Further Education (OTFE) within the Victorian State Ministry of Education (State recurrent funding);

- Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) project funding (administered by OTFE) (Federal funding); and
- Workplace English Language and Literacy (WELL) programs offered in industry and in other work places (Federal);
- Commonwealth labour market programs such as Special Intervention Program (SIP) and Office of Labour Market Adjustments (OLMA) within the Department of Employment, Education and Training (DEET), which later became the Department of Employment, Education, and Youth Affairs (DEETYA)[1] (Federal).
- State and Commonwealth funding administered by the Victorian Adult, Community and Further Education Board (ACFEB).

Problems of definition

In common usage the term 'ALBE' over-laps significantly with the term 'adult literacy' and the two are often used interchangeably. 'ALBE' is one of a number of transformations in the naming of 'adult literacy' as it has evolved from the straight forward teaching of the skills of reading and writing towards more complex definitions and practices. These reflect shifts in understanding of literacy as a set of functional skills to literacy as social and cultural practice (for example, see (Street 1984; Bradshaw, Evans et al. 1989; Gee 1990; Street 1990; Street 1990; STB and DFE 1992; Street 1995). Whereas the term 'ALBE' is often used when speaking of particular programs and the 'field' in general, the term 'adult literacy' is usually used when making reference to social meanings, pedagogies[2] and implied ideologies. The meanings and practices of adult literacy are highly contested, reflecting different, often contradictory aims, values and social commitments.

The most widely currently accepted definition of literacy is that of the Australian Council of Adult Literacy (ACAL) cited in *Come in Cinderella:*

> Literacy involves the integration of listening, speaking, reading, writing and critical thinking; it incorporates numeracy. It includes the cultural knowledge which enables a speaker, writer or reader to recognise and use language appropriate to different social situations. For an advanced technological society such as Australia, the goal is an active literacy which allows people to use language to enhance their capacity to think, create

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1. Commonwealth funded WELL and SIP programs are now discontinued.
2. I use the term 'pedagogy' here to refer to the contexts, processes, relationships and underlying political dimensions of teaching and learning.

> and question, in order to participate effectively in society (Senate Standing Committee on Employment Education and Training 1991: 90).

ALBE is generally used in relation to a range of skills and knowledges within programs, disciplines or fields of education in addition to 'reading and writing'. These include: oral communication, English as a Second Language (ESL), numeracy, basic science and technology, vocational training at an introductory level, generic, work-related skills and general adult education.

ALBE also overlaps with the tradition of adult education, or what is now more frequently referred to as 'adult and community education' (ACE). The *Come in Cinderella* committee found that seeking to define ACE is like "the pursuit of the Holy Grail". Instead of making such an attempt, they highlight some significant features distinguishing ACE from other sectors. In summary, these are as follows:

> - Its philosophy and operations promote *lifelong learning.*
> - It is predominantly user-pays (and therefore client driven).
> - It is *flexible* and not tied to formal institutions.
> - It is *non-compulsory.*
> - It enables clients to *enter and leave* as they require.
> - It has an important *compensatory or second chance* role whereby people can overcome skill deficiencies, remedy shortcomings in previous formal education and training, receive social and cultural benefits previously denied them, and so on (Senate Standing Committee on Employment Education and Training 1991: 7-8) [3].

ALBE developed within the tradition of ACE but is now being integrated with accredited and formally assessed vocational and industrial training as well as other forms of mainstream provision (Angwin 1997; McKenna 1998). These current trends are in tension with earlier understandings of ALBE as a part of ACE.

The following section sketches the history of ALBE as the hybrid product of general adult education, adult literacy and a variety of formal and informal,

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3. See also the ACE National Policy (MCEETYA 1997: 7-9) which gives the defining features of ACE as 'learner-centred, 'responsive to community', 'accessible and inclusive', 'diverse', 'varied', and 'flexible'.

vocational and non-vocational educational programs which are offered at a beginning level and assume little or no prior skills or knowledge.

3. A brief historical overview

Mechanics' Institutes: a philanthropic vision for workers

The history of ALBE in Victoria can be traced back to within a decade of the establishment of Melbourne, when mechanics' institutes were established in Melbourne in 1839, Geelong in 1841 and in Portland in 1843 (Wesson 1971: 4).

Mechanics' institutes began at the time of the Industrial Revolution in England, when the objectives of certain sections of the charitable middle class to "improve" working men (popularly termed 'mechanics') coincided with the need for a more technically competent work force (Wesson, 1971: 5). According to Wesson, one of these middle class "improvers" was George Birkbeck, Professor of Natural Philosophy and Chemistry at Glasgow University, who in 1799 offered free lectures for the ordinary working man "to agreeably occupy his mental vacancy in the evening". His lectures were "abounding with experiments, and conducted with the greatest simplicity of expression and familiarity of illustration, solely for persons engaged in the practical exercise of the mechanical arts". The lectures led to the founding of mechanics' institutes (or 'Schools of Arts') in Edinburgh, London and Manchester in 1820s, "financially assisted and controlled by leading citizens of the town" (p.6).

The spread of the mechanics' institutes throughout England reached its peak in the 1860s. However, Wesson reports that the mechanics institutes in England failed to attract the workers they were set up to educate. In his view, the institutes failed "because they were designed by others, for mechanics, and the mechanics did not come" (p.10).

However, the mechanics' institutes were predecessors of both technical education and public libraries, foreshadowing "in a crude way" what a general adult education and a popular civic centre might be like (p.12).

In Victoria, the mechanics' institutes became -uproportionally more numerous than in England and the movement lasted longer" (p.23). After the upheavals of the goldrushes, "responsible citizens, with newspaper editors as their

spokesmen, saw in the institute movement a possible method of ameliorating the unruliness of the population, and of working for social order and progress" (p.23). Country towns built institutes to qualify for a grant for lending libraries and public halls. By the Second World War, there were over 500 in Victoria (p.24). However, according to Wesson, they were not (in the main) patronised by workers.

The WEA and university extension: trade union aspiration and middle class idealism

By the 1880s universities were providing the main impetus for the development of non-formal adult education, offering programs of lectures to local organisations such as the mechanics institutes (Forster, Hedberg et al. 1991: 3). University Extension programs "effectively shifted the focus from vocationally-related improvement to the development of individuals as citizens and inheritors of western culture" (Gribble 1992). Forster et al report that the Universities of Melbourne and Sydney organised a visit in 1914 by Albert Mansbridge, founder of the Workers Education Association (WEA) in England. This visit led to the joint organisation of adult education courses by the WEA (founded in Australia in 1913) and the university extension boards (p.3).

The Workers' Education Association (WEA) was the result of an early alliance between labour activists and educational idealists and founded as a "missionary organisation working in co-operation with Education Authorities and Working Class Organisations" (WEA 1914) cited by McKinlay (1979: 562). It had a declared political mission, allying itself with the working class and aiming to further the democratic aspirations of Australian society.

In Victoria, the WEA was formed in 1914 out of an alliance between 28 unions and the University of Melbourne. By 1919, "the WEA had broadened its charter nationally to the whole community and union involvement rapidly waned" (Gribble 1992: 3). and in 1922 the Trades Hall council renounced all support (p.131). There were 30 classes in 1928, involving 1800 students (Wesson 1971: 189). In the depression years, the rate of attendance was high (9739 students in 1931) despite people's straitened circumstances (p.175). During this period, WEA continued to move away from its working class aspiration, and provided classes for all interested people.

By 1940, constitutional changes within the WEA gave more scope to student representation and set up a closer organisational alliance with the Extension Board. According to Wesson, however, extension courses soon became defunct, and the role of universities in adult education for 'the ordinary man in the street' was questioned (p.205). In 1947 the Victorian Council of Adult Education (CAE) was set up, and a new Adult Education Act was proclaimed. This effectively removed adult education from the philanthropic university environment. By 1947,

> Benevolence formally ceased to be its mainstream [...]. The community was now entitled to adult education; it came from the public taxes, was administered by semi-public servants, and was subject to ministerial oversight [sic] (p.218).

At about this time the WEA in Victoria disbanded and its educational function was effectively taken up by the CAE.

Wesson reports that by 1950, adult education had a securely-funded base at the CAE and a "theory for a practicable system of adult education had been hammered out" (p.233). However, the vast preponderance of students came from the middle classes and "the under-privileged groups in society, whose need for varying sorts of adult education might be thought to be great, but whose felt need was nil, were still getting practically nothing from the taxpayers' adult education" (p.234).

In Victoria, there was no direct linkage between the WEA and the setting up of the CAE and other adult education or adult literacy provision.[4] Despite the tenuous historical connection between ALBE today and the (largely middle class and philanthropic) WEAs of the early 1900s, that history seems to live on in the aspirations of many ALBE educators. Wesson's history of adult education suggests a mixture of middle class idealism and benevolence towards those less fortunate than themselves. Government funding recognised adult education as a right for all, but diluted further the earlier impulses based on political idealism.

Adult literacy from the forties to the sixties: a different history

The teaching of reading and writing to illiterate adults has a separate and more recent institutional history than that of general adult education.

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4. In New South Wales and South Australia the WEAs continue to provide adult education which is at least notionally oriented to working class interests.

Darryl Dymock reports that until World War II there was little evidence that adult literacy was a public issue or that there was a significant literacy problem amongst Australian adults. He cites a 1938 national report on Australian education which asserted that since schooling up to the age of 14 years was compulsory, "illiteracy in Australia is practically non-existent" (Cunningham and Radford 1939: 19), cited by Dymock (1993: 53). However, Dymock recounts that

> Five years later, surveys of Australian troops by members of the Australian Army Education service found that "just over three per cent of Australian troops were 'illiterate or near illiterate' and a further eight to eleven per cent had a reading age 'below that of an average ten year-old child' (Coates 1949: 175). The army responded by establishing a short course at the main recruit training centre, and Army Education staff organised classes at other depots in Australia for those already in the army. This was the first attempt at widespread 'provision' (loc. cit.).

In the context of Wesson's conclusion that those most in need of adult education were not provided for in the early years, it is interesting to reflect that the first systematic provision of adult literacy teaching was an initiative of the Army and was presumably compulsory. While commentators at the time accepted that the army figures were probably valid for the civilian population (Duncan 1944: 105) the issue did not become one of significant community concern until much later.

During the 1960s, general adult education continued to be provided by university extension boards, independent agencies such as the WEA and state agencies (Connell 1993: 352). According to Dymock, however, there is little evidence of any systematic provision of adult literacy or public awareness of its need during this period. Technical colleges provided some evening classes in adult literacy as well as remedial reading and mathematics to enrolled students. In 1964, the Federal Government advised UNESCO that there was no illiteracy in Australia since schooling was compulsory (International Bureau of Education and UNESCO 1964: xvi).

The seventies: the field of ALBE is born

It was not until the seventies that literacy became recognised as a public issue and became a field of provision in its own right. The development of adult literacy during this period was characterised by two main discourses which combined in collective understandings within the field. On the one hand, the 'great tradition' of political and social purpose (Connell, 1993) passed into the

theory and the 'folklore' of adult literacy teaching. On the other hand, the problem of low levels of literacy in some parts of the community was constructed in terms of social crisis to be remedied. Literacy was part of a positive vision of social justice and social change, and at the same time, was constructed in welfare terms, as a safeguard against social disintegration.

Green, Hodgens and Luke write that the post-war focus on literacy as an object of public concern came at a time of large-scale social, cultural and economic changes. These included: a shift from relative geographic and communications isolation to a globalised culture and multinational economic relations; the rapid expansion of private and public educational systems to accommodate the post war 'baby boomers' and immigrants; the emergence of an overtly multicultural and multilingual population; the destabilising effects of the women's movement, the anti-war movement, youth culture, and the turbulent years of the Labor Government (1972-75) (Hodgens 1994: 17; Green, Hodgens et al. 1995a: 37). For the first time, the question of literacy and 'illiteracy' became a significant question of public debate in Australia. According to these authors, the media reporting of literacy issues, and public literacy campaigns constructed issues of literacy in terms of 'crisis' and deficit. The discourse of 'crisis' and 'deficit' had a profound influence on the literacy policies which were to follow in the eighties.

During the 70s, adult literacy policies were developed and program provision became widespread for the first time. Federal Government policy began to be developed and the Technical and Further Education (TAFE) sector became involved as the major providers (Dymock 1993: 54). A 1977 survey of adult literacy levels indicated that 4% of Australians born in English-speaking countries and approximately 40% of migrants from non-English-speaking countries were functionally illiterate (Goyen 1977). The highly influential Kangan Report (Kangan 1974) highlighted issues of access and educational disadvantage. This was followed by the publication of the Richardson Report the following year (Richardson 1975) , urging state TAFE authorities "to regard adult literacy programs as a high priority in their use of Australian government funds". The notion of government responsibility for adult literacy programs had begun to take hold. The Australian Government Commission of Inquiry into Poverty (Fitzgerald 1976) also suggested that the Commonwealth should provide funding for adult literacy programs cited by Dymock (1993: 55).

In 1973, the CAE, under the direction of Mr Colin Cave, appointed a project officer, Ms Dominica Nelson, to document the need for an organised adult

literacy program in Victoria[5]. Ms Nelson set up the first adult literacy classes there with small groups of students, usually for only one session of two hours per week. The tutors were mainly women with primary teacher school training. In 1975, the Victorian Education Department became involved, supporting curriculum development and research (Bradshaw, Evans et al. 1989: 9).

Bradshaw et al. have described the beginning of institutionally-organised adult literacy teaching in Victoria in the 70s (Bradshaw, Evans et al. 1989). They write that "to some extent, the early adult literacy movement evangelically adopted practices and rhetoric aimed at distancing itself from formal schooling" (p.9). Because non-institutional literacy provision was to be offered to those adults for whom the formal education system had failed, "teaching methods to be used in adult literacy programs should enshrine the principles of equality and egalitarianism and be provided in a non-threatening environment" (p.97). This commitment to an alternative, de-institutionalised provision was reinforced, according to Bradshaw et al, by the influence at that time of radical educationists such as Paulo Freire (1971) and Ivan Illich (1973).

The mid-seventies was a period of radical questioning, social experimentation and a search for alternatives to the conventional wisdom. Paulo Freire's work became very influential in adult literacy and community education circles around this time. He visited Melbourne in 1972, and is recalled as having had an "inspirational" influence (Nelson, 1994) on adult literacy development, introducing for the first time the notion of critical literacy. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* and *Cultural Action for Freedom* (Freire 1971; Freire 1972) provided an explicitly political framework in which to view literacy practices at that time. The extent to which these pedagogies took root or have endured in the teaching of ALBE is still' under debate (Lee and Wickert 1995). This debate is a theme which will recur in this study of the discourses of ALBE and the resistance of teachers to certain changes in curriculum practice now required by policy.

During the 70s, community-based learning centres and neighbourhood houses were established in Victoria, offering adult literacy alongside a range of informal learning opportunities (Foley 1991; Gribble 1992). These centres included a number of rural centres of adult education which were administered by local committees of management until their subsequent affiliation with the CAE during the 1980s. During the 1970s and 1980s about 40 learning centres were

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5. The need for literacy classes was "stumbled upon" following contact with social workers, community groups and educational authorities in the Western suburbs (CAE 1974: iv) cited by Dymock (1993: 54).

established in metropolitan Melbourne. The Diamond Valley Learning Centre, established in 1973, became a well-known centre of women's learning and empowerment. In both the metropolitan and the rural centres women predominated amongst committee members, tutors and students. During the same period, the neighbourhood house movement took root. Initially funded through local government and later through the State Government (Community Services Victoria), neighbourhood houses became a further site of community-based literacy provision (Gribble 1992). See also Davison and Gribble (1991).

Neighbourhood houses: centres of women's learning

Neighbourhood houses and rural and metropolitan learning centres were established as centres of communitarian, non-formal education, particularly for women who had missed out on opportunities for education and job advancement in the mainstream.

According to Foley (1991), "much of the growth and creativity in community services and non-formal education over the past two decades has been the work of women" (p.73). Davison and Gribble (1991) write that women were the "invisible 'owners'" of community-based adult education, in terms of the numbers of students (approximately 80%), and the educational culture which characterised community education. Neighbourhood houses became "a significant venue for locally available, women-initiated, accessible and flexible educational opportunity". Courses there offered women

> personal development, a chance to test their capacity and learn new skills, satisfaction of curiosity about the world, constructive intellectual activity as an antidote to housework or unskilled employment and [an opportunity to] contribute significantly to their search for meaning. These needs are met in a context of group learning, where friendship, social support, negotiated course content, short term commitment, and immediate outcomes play their part in empowering women as learners, workers, and contributors to community processes (p.136).

Foley writes that the movement to establish neighbourhood houses and community learning centres was the result of three tendencies: the growth in the 70s of social movements spawning numerous community-based organisations; the flowering of liberal welfare, urban development and educational ideas during the Whitlam years of 1972-75, mostly funded through the Australian Assistance Plan (AAP); and in the 80s, the shifting of resources to

community organisations in an attempt by governments to reduce their direct involvement in the provision of welfare services (p.73).

The establishment of neighbourhood houses likewise coincided with the upsurge in the women's movement in the 70s and 80s, influenced by two intersecting feminist traditions. The first was the liberal feminist tradition that saw the need for such centres as an affirmative measure which would redress women's educational disadvantage and offer alternative pathways into the mainstream (as well as opportunities for hobby, craft and personal development courses that had previously been the preserve of the leisured middle class). The second was the more radical feminist tradition that was behind the establjshment of consciousness raising groups and advocated for 'women's space', where women could retreat from the oppressions of male dominated society, collectively heal themselves and find their own 'power' as women. The first was explicitly expressed as part of the equal opportunity legislation and affirmative policies that took root at that time (Whitlam 1985: 518). The second became an implicit part of the practice of neighbourhood houses which were run by, for and with women, but was not firmly expressed in the policy as such (Sanguinetti 1993). There was however, great diversity amongst community providers and not all were centres of explicitly feminist practice. Nevertheless, the provision of literacy and basic education in neighbourhood houses and community centres was widely regarded as "women's education", taking place in a women-centred culture, to a greater or lesser degree as part of a feminist project (Kimberley 1986).

Shore (1997) has pointed out that the gendered nature of adult community education has been largely ignored by much of the literature and in policy discourse. For example, the *National Policy on ACE* submerges women under the category of "special needs" (p.25). Since 1992 the predominance of women in neighbourhood houses and community centres has been diluted by the participation of the sector in tendering for labour market programs and the provision of accredited vocational courses. The 1997 *Beyond Cinderella* report (Senate Employment Education and Training References Committee 1997) noted however, that women comprise 75% of all participants in ACE (as against 45% of enrolments in the Vocational Education and Training (VET) sector) and that the predominance of women is "one of the sector's defining features" (p.41). The Report makes mention of the "user-friendly nature of ACE for women", in particular the inherent flexibility and responsiveness of the community sector. A 1997 ACFEB planning report (ACFEB 1997) asks questions about how women's specific educational needs should now be met. These include the need

for women-only classes, differences in learning style between women and men, and the need for ACFEB to support greater equity in women's education and employment outcomes (p. 4).

TAFE Colleges: access, equity and vocationalism

In 1974 the release of the Kangan Report (Kangan 1974) launched a major reorganisation of the technical and further education system (TAPE) and substantial Commonwealth funding for new colleges and new programs. Kangan emphasised the need for nationally co-ordinated training to support Australia's industrial and economic development and for measures which would facilitate access and equity in such provision. Kangan also noted that lack of literacy was both an access problem and a 'learning disability' (Dymock 1993: 55) . 'Compensatory education' programs in TAPE colleges in the 70s and early 80s were developed in response to the 'access and equity' requirements of government policy. Further government reports, the Richardson Report (Richardson 1975), the Cadman Report (Cadman 1976) and the Fitzgerald Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Poverty (Fitzgerald 1976) (all cited by Dymock) called for the Australian government to fund the states for adult literacy, and by 1980 there was significant literacy provision in TAPE and elsewhere (ibid)[6].

The first full-time adult basic education course was offered at Footscray College of TAFE in 1976 (Bradshaw, Evans et al. 1989: 10)[7]. As new TAPE colleges were established in the late 70s and early 80s, the 'access' objective was addressed through a range of ESL, women's access, adult literacy, pre-vocational, tertiary orientation and 'compensatory education' courses, in 'access', or 'compensatory education' departments. Programs in the early 1980s straddled a combination of activities reflecting a multiplicity of educational and social discourses. These included:

- co-ordination of volunteer (1:1) provision in the community and training courses for volunteer tutors;

6. See also Connell (1993: 324-329).
7. Evans recounts that the first adult literacy class in TAFE in Victoria was established in response to a suggestion made to him by an adult literacy learner who had been a member of a small group tutored by Joan Doughty, a voluteer who tutored in her home at Williamstown. The class was subsequently funded as part of the National Employment and Training (NEAT) scheme, a labour market program. This vignette symbolises the rapid transition in the 70s and 80s of ALBE from the domain of welfare and private philanthropy to the domain of vocational preparation in the national interest (Evans 1998).

- women's access programs;
- small group and 1:1 support provided for students who were 'struggling' to succeed in the mainstream;
- ESL (and ESL literacy) classes; and,
- provision of literacy and ESL at a range of community centres auspiced and funded through TAFE college departments.

Between 1983 and 1985, eight regional adult literacy co-ordinators were employed in Victoria (on Commonwealth funding). These staff members were located in TAFE colleges and were responsible for establishing local networks of volunteer tutors linked with individual students, providing training for the volunteer tutors and setting up part-time literacy classes in the colleges. In 1987 the TAFE Board established an ALBE Unit with an advisory committee and two staff members.

Connell (1993: 365-367) argues that the development of adult education provision within TAFE colleges in the eighties was accompanied by a more "utilitarian" and "managerial" direction in such provision and a diminution of the "semi-missionary spirit" and "social purposiveness" of the sixties and seventies.

The acronym 'TAFE' reflects the dual purposes of 'Technical' and 'Further' education: 'community needs' and 'industry needs', 'access' and 'mainstream', 'general' and 'vocational', 'education' and 'training'. The duality of purpose has often been a point of contestation between competing interests and value systems. Many have argued against the dichotomy of 'technical' and 'adult' education and for a 'new vocational paradigm' which would take into account the needs of individuals seeking access to training and personal change as part of preparation for work (Moran 1990: 4; McIntyre 1991: 61). With the advent of funding for TAFE colleges under the Australian Language and Literacy Policy in the early to mid 90s there has been a significant integration of ALBE (understood here as 'further' education, 'access' or 'adult' education) into mainstream provision. However, this does not seem to have resulted in the emergence of a broader, inclusive paradigm.

The demise of the ALLP and the further marketisation of ALBE provision from 1996, under Liberal National Coalition policy, has had the effect of drastically reducing the provision of ALBE in the TAFE system and elsewhere (Sanguinetti and Riddell 1997). The integration of ALBE with industrial training has meant

that provision of separate language and literacy classes may soon be a thing of the past. This is further discussed in the final section of this chapter.

English as a Second Language - a related, but separate development

The Adult Migrant Education Service (AMES) was funded by the Commonwealth Government in 1951 to provide English as a Second Language (ESL) tuition to newly arrived migrants from 1951 (Gribble 1992: 4). Administered by the Victorian Education Department until 1988 (when it was transferred to the Division of Further Education of the Ministry of Education) it offered ESL classes in the city, at several suburban centres, and at TAFE colleges.

Angwin (1996: 64-97) has documented the major shifts in immigration policy which affected the way in which ESL was provided and taught over the last fifty years. These were: the period of 'assimilation' (of the 40s and 50s); 'integration' (the 60s and 70s); 'multiculturalism' (from the mid 70s to the late 80s); and the linking of ESL with economic objectives (and nationally-accredited, competency-based curricula) in the early 90s.

ESL developed separately from ALBE. 'English language' and 'literacy' were seen as different pedagogies meeting different sets of needs and were administered by separate funding bodies and bureaucracies. By the 90s, however, the two fields had merged significantly in terms of student groups, funding, administration, programs and pedagogies (Hammond, Wickert et al. 1992). The merging of ALBE and ESL has had the effect of further diluting the discourses of social and political idealism which were part of adult literacy as a 'movement'. As Angwin (1996) has shown, the teaching of English as a second language arose from the positivist discipline and discourses of applied linguistics, outside of the educational mainstream and with little reference to discourses of feminism or critical literacy which were vital to adult literacy pedagogy since the 70s. With competitive tendering, many literacy programs which traditionally were located in community houses or TAFE access departments have been relocated to AMES providers, thus contributing to the loss of cultural and political memory surrounding such programs.

Professional associations - advocacy, leadership and professional development

In the midst of these developments, various group of activists, advocating on behalf of adult literacy and basic education, organised themselves in each State and nationally. The Australian Council of Adult Literacy (ACAL) had its first

national conference in Canberra in 1977, followed by a national conference in Melbourne in 1978 when a Victorian interest group of adult literacy practitioners formed the Victorian Adult Literacy Council (VALC). "Despite limited funds this group battled to provide a wide range of essential services: staff development activities, information sharing, a referral service, liaison with interstate and overseas organisations, public awareness and political lobbying" (Bradshaw, Evans et al. 1989: 26). The VALC produced a periodical, *Fine Print,* and made available a range of interstate journals and newsletters. In 1984 an Executive Officer for VALC was employed (with Commonwealth TAPE funding) and its office was located at the CAE a year later. VALC changed its name to VALBEC (Victorian Adult Literacy and Basic Education Council) in 1986 and held the first of its annual state conferences in 1987, supported by State government funding. ACAL and VALBEC were centres of advocacy for the funding and infrastructure that would be necessary for the scattered and diverse sites of ALBE provision to flourish and develop. Their conferences and seminars provided a means for mutual support and the exchange of ideas. The early heritage of political and philanthropic idealism was expressed in the dedication of ACAL and VALBEC members to advocate for public funding in order to build adult literacy provision.

The twentieth anniversary of ACAL was marked in October 1997 with the '20/20 Vision' national conference in Sydney. A series of presentations by all of ACAL's past presidents gave a fascinating insight into the developments which created the field and which have radically changed and re-defined it since 1977. ACAL's role has changed significantly during its brief history, having passed through a number of phases.

In the late 70s and early 80s ACAL was the spear-head of the 'adult literacy movement' and successfully advocated for public recognition and funding for adult literacy. It was funded in the 80s to carry out a range of professional development, networking and advocacy activities. As a result, it became in important partner of the Federal Government in policy and project development which re-positioned adult literacy as central to the emerging economic reform agenda. During the "time of plenty" from 1991-1993, ACAL was involved in innumerable professional development, course development and research projects, was represented on 22 national projects and had input to nine government enquiries (Persson 1997). However, it has been increasingly marginalised since the cessation of its organisational funding in 1994 and left out of policy-making processes (Lo Bianco 1996: 3). Now (1998) with the ending of the ALLP and labour market programs and the diminishing profile of adult

literacy in Liberal Coalition policy, the role of ACAL has become further marginalised[8].

The eighties: policies, campaigns and conflicting theories

Throughout the eighties, the level of activity in the provision of programs, professional advocacy, research, report writing and policy development continued to rise. In 1987, the Commonwealth endorsed the National Policy on Languages (NPL) (Lo Bianco 1987) with funding of around $4 million over two years for what became the Adult Literacy Action Campaign (ALAC) (Dymock 1993: 58). ALAC generated twelve national research activities, including the survey of Australian adult literacy, *No Single Measure* (Wickert 1989), which provided the first reliable statistics and drew considerable media attention. Over the period 1989-90, the Commonwealth committed $3 million of new policy funding and over $2 million from existing sources for International Literacy Year (ILY) projects.

The momentum generated by ALAC and ILY coincided with policy developments led by the Minister for Employment, Education and Training, John Dawkins who, in 1987, announced new policies based on human capital theory, defining the purpose of education and training as to efficiently and effectively service economic growth.[9] A review of Commonwealth language and literacy programs in 1990 led to the release in 1991 of the Australian Language and Literacy Policy (ALLP) (DEET 1991). The significance of the ALLP is discussed in detail in the next chapter.

The establishment of the Adult, Community and Further Education Board

The Edgar Report (A Focus on Adults: Towards a Productive Learning Culture) was commissioned in 1986 by the Victorian State Labor Government and completed in 1987 (Edgar 1987). The Report highlighted the essential contribution made by adult, community and further education, to the economic and social well-being of individuals and the community as a whole. It

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8. Despite the current contractions in funding and an apparently hostile policy environment, ACAL continues to offer advice to government and leadership and professional development to its members. Recently (early 1998) ACAL executive members have met with Dr Kemp, the Minister for Employment, Education and Training to discuss policy responses to the 1997 ABS Adult Literacy Survey and the possibility of ACAL becoming a professional registration and standards organisation.
9. The policy foreshadowed in 1987 reached its fullest expression in *Working Nation,* (Commonwealth of Australia 1994).

recommended that adult education should be co-ordinated for the purposes of policy development, planning and resource allocation and that Parliament create a new central board to report directly to the Minister of Education (Gribble 1992: 16).

The Division of Further Education (DFE) was established in 1987 to implement the recommendations of the Report. In 1989 a permanent position was created in the DFE for a senior consultant in ALBE and permanent positions were created for Regional ALBE officers in each of the ten regions. In addition, State funding was augmented by the Commonwealth Adult Literacy Program (CALP) which under the National Policy on Languages (NPL), funded ALBE programs in TAPE and in community-based providers through the regional councils of ACFE.

The recommendations were eventually implemented starting with a public consultation in 1989 which confirmed overwhelming support for the creation of a central board and regional system. In 1991, the Adult, Community and Further Education Act (State of Victoria 1991) was passed establishing ACFEB (Adult, Community and Further Education Board) and eleven community controlled regional councils of ACFE[10]. The first State Budget allocations specifically for ALBE were made. A major consultancy on the needs of ALBE was carried out by a group of educationalists at LaTrobe University (D'Cruz 1989).

5. 'Literacy' as a contested construct

During the eighties, adult literacy became focus of more intense academic research and theorising, as well a focus of public policy-making. The different discourses and histories reflected in adult literacy policy and practice during the 70s, were reflected, during the 80s, in academic debates over the meanings and proper purposes of adult literacy provision within the emerging field.

The term 'literacy' was, and still is, highly contested; it is used differently within different discursive fields and is politicised within opposing

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10. There are now nine regional councils of Adult Community and Further Education, composed of councillors appointed with Ministerial approval and responsible for local policy and the allocation of funds. The councils are supported by regional offices run by regional managers, education and project officers and support staff.

discourses of the educational and the social. Bigum and Green write that discourses of literacy interweave in complex ways:

> Currently three distinct discourses on literacy and literacy pedagogy can be isolated and observed: these can be identified with the labels 'functional literacy', cultural literacy' and 'critical literacy' respectively. They have emerged only relatively recently as the principal contending discourses on literacy in educational debate, and involve quite different emphases and understandings with regard to curriculum and literacy, as well as different social and political interests. At the level of general educational debate, however, the discourses indicated continue to circulate and contend with each other in the public-educational sphere, as separate and distinct discursive ensembles which are ultimately incompatible and incommensurate with each other. Each constructs the category 'literacy' differently, and this means by extension different constructions of education and society, as well as the relationship between them. It is important to note that, in each case, the central organising concept - 'functional literacy', 'cultural literacy', and 'critical literacy' - needs to be seen as involving a range of definitions, understandings and interpretations. Moreover, there are 'strong' and 'weak', or at least 'more positive' and 'more negative', senses in which these concepts are currently being deployed (Bigum and Green 1993: 14)[11].

This analysis of the principal discourses structuring the field of ALBE (that is, discourses of functional, cultural and critical literacy) is a useful description of the discursive field up until the time of this study. In the succeeding chapters I give a more complex picture, and explore the processes by which the discourses contend and evolve in opposition and in dialogue with each other.

Functional literacy and the discourse of 'deficit'

During the 80s, a strong functional account of literacy emerged (Lankshear and Lawler 1989: 62; Green 1993: 197; Barton 1994: 164). According to Barton, functional literacy suggests the "teaching of sets of skills thought to be universal and applicable anywhere, with the idea of there being one literacy which everyone should learn in the same way" (Barton 1994: 193).

The 'functionalist' or 'prescriptive' approach has been contested by proponents of a broader conception of 'literacy as social practice'

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11. A number of authors have described contestations about what constitutes literacy (Gee 1990: 27; Wickert 1993; Barton 1994 :5) .

(Lankshear and Lawler 1989: 72; Green 1993: 203; Barton 1994: 33). Literacy construed as 'functional competency' tends to obscure the social, political and cultural dimensions of 'being literate' (Bradshaw, Evans et al. 1989). 'Literacy' is understood as the opposite of 'illiteracy', a term which carries extremely negative connotations of cultural and moral deficit. The purpose of literacy is seen in this light as the straight-forward and unproblematic provision of functional skills of reading and writing to 'illiterate' people, in order to remediate the 'ill' they suffer[12].

A documentary study of the history of literacy in Australia from 1945 - 1994 (Green, Hodgens et al. 1995a), shows how the implicit negativity surrounding the literacy/illiteracy binary was fanned into a public discourse of crisis in the mid 70s and 80s. In the broad historical and social context, the construction of the literacy 'crisis' can be seen as part of a backlash against the 'shifting social order' of those times. The study reveals that the issue of literacy was barely mentioned before the mid 70s when there was a sudden proliferation of reports and press articles on literacy and illiteracy, constructing literacy as being in a state of 'crisis'. Many of the articles described the literacy 'problem' in terms which "drew metaphorically on a number of highly emotive discourses: those of immorality, warfare, and disease" (Hodgens 1994: 18). The literacy 'crusade' in fact was more a product of the turbulent years of the Labor Government in the early 70s and perceived 'threats' to the moral order from equity measures, free universal education, the counter-cultural revolution and the perceived 'decline' of the traditional institutions of education and the family (McKinlay, 1979). School teachers, unions, employers and politicians joined in the call for remediation of the illiteracy 'problem', constructed in deficit terms and sometimes implicitly victim-blaming. For example, the ILY publication, *The Social Costs of Inadequate Literacy* (Hartley 1989) links a lack of literacy with ill-health, crime and dysfunctional family life.

Hodgens argues that, in lobbying for funding for the cause of literacy, the representatives of literacy practitioners ("despite putting the 'progressive' view") also used the language of 'crusade' in putting their case (p.23), thus helping to prepare the way for the lack of literacy to be seen as contributing to Australia's economic problems. Thus, the 'deficit

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12. Barton (1994: 193) comments that UNESCO documents refer to 'the scourge of illiteracy'.

discourse' helped lay the ground for the discourse of the 'clever country' which became part of literacy provision in the early 90s[13].

Literacy as social practice

Ideas of 'literacy as social practice' are usually opposed to functionalist and deficit accounts. Literacy is defined in relation to its various possible social purposes, especially the purpose of political literacy: for people to be able to read, interpret, and critique the texts which shape their identities and political understandings, and to participate fully as citizens. There are any number of different literacies which relate to different cultures, domains of life and social contexts (STB and DFE 1992: 2; Barton 1994: 34). 'Literacy as social practice' corresponds to the progressivist view of John Dewey (1916) and reflects (in a more sophisticated form) the democratising and liberal progressive traditions of the early WEA days. Lankshear sums up the key axioms of 'literacy as social practice' as follows:

> ... power is structured unequally; competing interest groups exist within society; these groups pursue their interests from positions of greater advantage or disadvantage in terms of the structured power available to them; practices of reading and writing are integral to this social process and evolve within it (Lankshear and Lawler 1989: 225).

'Literacy as social practice' has become the mainstream approach of literacy theorists and leading edge practitioners[14] (Street 1984; Lankshear and Lawler 1989; Street 1990; Wickert and Zimmerman 1991; Green 1993; McCormack 1995; Street 1995).

For many, the 'functional' and 'social practice' constructions of 'literacy' are ultimately incommensurable. For example, Gee writes that,

> We can choose to use this word [literacy] in any of several ways. Each such choice incorporates a tacit or overt ideological theory about the distribution of social goods and has important social and moral consequences. The 'normal' meaning of the word 'literacy' ('the ability to read and write') seems to be 'innocent' and 'obvious'. but, I will argue, it is no such thing. Literacy as 'the ability to read

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13. See also Luke (1992: 3-13) for an analysis of how notions of 'functional literacy' relate to 'human capital theory' and the economic agenda of 'New Times'.

14. Within the Certificate of General Education for Adults and other curriculum frameworks in the 90s, the social practices of literacy are are described in terms of domains of social life each of which has its own textual genres (STB and DFE 1992; ACFEB and STB 1993; ACTRAC 1993).

> and write' situates literacy in the individual person, rather than in that society of which that person is a member. As such it obscures the multiple ways in which reading, writing and language interrelate with the workings of power and desire in social life" (Gee 1990: 27).

However, as my research shows, these oppositions are rarely so clear-cut in the world of practice in which the meanings of 'functional' and 'social' literacy deconstruct and diffuse. A teacher by necessity is teaching individuals the mechanics of reading and writing, which after all is the skill being sought by most adults who attend classes. The extent to which such teaching is informed and shaped pedagogically by the social and critical beliefs of the teacher is more a matter of degree, and a matter of the prevailing culture of an institution or field of practice, than a 'right' or 'wrong' approach.

Practitioners and the professional associations have at times drawn on the deficit discourse in order to advocate for adequate public funding for adult literacy provision, as Hodgens pointed out. However, if literacy is understood as a form of 'cultural capital', there is sense in which the inability to read and write *is* a 'lack' and a 'deficit' for the individuals concerned[15]. In describing the teaching of literacy, and in developing curriculum, teachers have tended to contest extreme versions of the 'deficit' discourse by using more complex accounts. ACAL's definition of adult literacy, adopted by *ALBE into the 90s,* the International Literacy Year and *Come in Cinderella* (Senate Standing Committee on Employment Education and Training 1991) is eclectic, distilling a multiplicity of discourses which in the late 80s were contending and blending in the field of ALBE. In that definition, the functional account (literacy as a set of skills) is included within an overall definition which is about literacy as a set of tools for critique, social action, cultural knowledge, the understanding of social genres and conceptualisation.

5. Conclusion

The history of ALBE can be conceived as a patchwork of projects and programs which in one way or another have attempted to provide adults

15. Luke (1995a) drawing upon Bourdieu (1984) has theorised the acquisition of literacy as a form of 'cultural capital' whose value and use is 'sociologically contingent'.

with the education and skills required to participate in work, social or civic life. The mechanics institutes in the early part of the century were established as an expression of middle class philanthropy and idealism. Such philanthropy was also manifested by the academic founders of the Workers' Education Associations who set up an alliance between trade unions and universities in order to provide opportunities for ('general') political and cultural education for workers. In terms of literacy instruction, however, there was little public interest in or awareness of the need for such provision (apart from that provided to army recruits during World War II) until the 1970s.

When adult literacy first came into the public gaze in the 70s, a number of surveys and reports called for governments to take responsibility for its provision. Media campaigns drew attention to the literacy 'crisis' and perceived 'risks' which illiteracy posed to society. Adult literacy teaching was provided for the first time in institutions such as the CAE and TAFE colleges. An adult literacy 'movement', led by teachers and practitioners in the field, combined philanthropy with the social justice politics of the 70s. Neighbourhood houses and community learning centres became centres of women's empowerment; here, adult literacy provision was influenced by the women's movement which was gathering strength at that time. Professional associations were established and took a leading role in advocating for public recognition and funding for literacy.

During the 80s ALBE emerged as a field of education in its own right; the Commonwealth Government granted funding for research and programs and a series of reports created the context for further development. The publication of *No Single Measure* (Wickert 1989) paved the way for a significant public policy commitment to adult literacy which was made during the International Year of Literacy, in 1990. In Victoria, the Adult, Community and Further Education Board and its regional offices were established.

Debates emerged between functionalist accounts of adult literacy and accounts of literacy as forms of social practice. The principles and values inherent in 'social practice' approaches reflected the progressive political tradition of the WEAs. Freirean notions of critical literacy took root.

The opposition between, and harmonisation of, 'economic' and 'social justice' discourses in the late 80s set the scene for the contradictory and rapidly changing policy environment experienced as difficult times by ALBE practitioners in the

early 90s. I discuss the policy context of the period of the research in the next chapter.

Chapter Three

The Changing Policy Context

1. Introduction

In Chapter 2 I told the story of ALBE as a complex field with diverse histories. Its historical diversity is reflected in the complexity of institutional and funding arrangements and in multiple and contested understandings within the field over its role, purpose and pedagogies.

In this chapter, I give an account of the policies of the 'clever country' under the Labor Government in Canberra during the late 80s. The economic rationalist policies of the Hawke Labor Government signified a profound shift in understandings of the public policy role of government. These shifts resulted in policies which instrumentalised education and training towards economic ends. The National Training Reform Agenda (NTRA) and the Australian Language and Literacy Policy (ALLP) put ALBE at the centre of Labour Market Programs (LMPs) which competed for funds in a newly created training market. The policies of the NTRA and ALLP brought ALBE out of the institutional margins and into the mainstream of public policy and funding. The teaching of ALBE during the period of this research was complexified by the contradictory effects of those policies.

Finally I give a brief overview of the policy innovations of the Liberal National Coalition Government which have impacted further on ALBE since that period (from 1997 onwards). While these developments post-date my field work they provide a further set of reference points for my

analysis of discursive engagement, power, agency and the usefulness of the 'politics of discourse' to teachers of ALBE at this time.

2. Genesis of economic rationalist and corporatist policies

Dawkins' interventionism and corporate alliances

The NTRA forms the policy context for the period 1993 to 1995, the period of the research documented in this thesis. Having described the dramatic development in the public profile of ALBE which took place in the late 80s, I will now briefly sketch the moves in Canberra to economic rationalist/corporatist policies which took place during roughly the same period. These were the policies which were to nourish generously the emerging field of ALBE (through very significant funding inputs in the early 90s), while in many ways constraining and radically changing it.

John Dawkins, the main author of the education and training policies from 1987 to 1993, supported strategies of economic interventionism similar to the policies of Sweden and other OECD countries. Dawkins' interventionism was based on a concept of technically-skilled public service management (Yeatman 1990a: 13) and a corporate alliance between government, business and the union movement. (His form of interventionism can be distinguished from the non-interventionist, liberalisation of market forces now associated with the term 'economic rationalism'.)

This corporatist alliance was manifest in the report, *Australia Reconstructed* (ACTU/TDC Mission Members 1987) which was produced by the ACTU, several individual union members (including a member of the Australian Teachers' Federation) and the Trade Development Council Secretariat (TDCS) and funded by the Commonwealth Department of Trade. *Australia Reconstructed* laid many of the foundations of the NTRA. It called for the Australian economy to become more internationally competitive and, drawing on experience from other OECD countries, established the foundation for: the introduction of award restructuring; a system of competency-based training; multi-skilling; and a breakdown of restrictive work practices. Competency-based training (CBT) was seen as a way of creating a more flexible work force while preserving the award

system. At the same time, vocational education and training were to be seen "not as a one-off exercise, but as a process of life-long learning, contributing to both personal and career development" (ibid, p.109). CBT was to democratise training, ending a system based on gaining 'time-serving' qualifications which entrenched privilege and discriminated against skilled but unqualified workers. The trade union movement (including the teachers' unions) were centrally involved in the construction of industry, employment and training policies which came to fruition in the NTRA.

A brief flowering of multicultural policies

The late 70s and early 80s was also a period of multicultural policies and initiatives. This movement was epitomised by the Galbally Report (Commonwealth of Australia 1978) cited by Moore (1995). Malcolm Fraser, Prime Minister of the day, had a personal commitment to multiculturalism and established triennial funding for adult ESL and a range of other multicultural and language programs (Moore 1995: 33). The National Policy on Languages (NPL) (Lo Bianco 1987), was also set in train by the Galbally Report and a Senate Committee recommendation under the Fraser Government.

According to Joseph Lo Bianco, author of the NPL, the significant shifts in policy which were to impinge on existing language and literacy policy directions became apparent shortly following the adoption of the NPL in April of 1987 (at the time of the 1987 general election). The NPL was the product of extensive consultations with academics, community groups and language professionals. It enunciated the principle of linguistic diversity as a rich social and economic resource and the need for equitable and widespread language services (including provision for adult literacy) (Lo Bianco 1989; Moore 1995). A four year program was funded through its recommendations.

Writing in 1989, Lo Bianco noted that,

> However, by the time of the 1987 budget (August), the way of talking about the policy and its programs had changed. These shifts, both subtle and not so subtle, merit deeper analysis, but, essentially, represented (1) a changed target audience (business, 'hard-nosed' economic rationalists and those primarily dealing with the labour market and 'national interest' macro-economic policy, rather than an electoral constituency); (2) a changed rhetoric (less emphasis on the 'value of diversity', our 'rich society, 'unity in diversity', being a 'good neighbour', 'many cultures coexisting', and much more stress on 'facilitating trade with Asia', 'knowing and dealing with our markets'); and (3) a different logic (rather than ensuring better social cohesion, better acquisition of English and

> improved intergroup social relations, language policy would primarily address the language-derived obstacles to economic restructuring through attacking adult illiteracy rates and would bring 'more discipline and rigour' in education by teaching the harder character-based languages of north Asia) (Lo Bianco 1989: 189).

These trends continued, and by 1988 there was a new orthodoxy being enunciated in Labour government policy: "Language policy was for meeting urgent national economic and strategic needs which had far greater priority than educational or cultural needs" (ibid: 189). This was part of a political consensus (Coalition and Labor) about the need to expose a hitherto over-protected and inefficient Australian industry to competition in order to increase efficiency. The 'clever country', which required increased public investment in training and the retraining of workers displaced by microeconomic reform, represented an alternative to the more brutal market approach of the New Right: to discipline the economy by opening it up fully to international competition.

The rise of corporate managerialism

A 'discursive sea change' (Butler 1996) was taking place in revising the social democratic purposes of public policy to meet the challenge of global competitiveness. This was also reflected in the managerialist policies introduced into the public service in the late 1980s (Pusey 1991).

The decline of the welfare state and the advent of managerialism

In *Economic Rationalism in Canberra,* Pusey analysed the decline of the 'welfare state' and the 'nation-building state' and the ascendancy of economic rationalism which subordinated considerations of welfare and social cohesion to the requirements of the economy and thus to globalised capital:

> As we have seen from the Canberra example, the claim is no longer that the state must 'get out of the way' to enhance the steering capacity of the economy but rather that politics, administration, and all of the resources of the state shall be mobilised instead to liquefy, dissolve, and instrumentalise every aspect of the lifeworld (including political citizenship, identity, autonomy, responsibility, freedom, and culture) which still resists the external logic of 'incentivation' administered from the top down through an internationalisation of totalitarian 'business democracy' (Pusey 1991: 241).

According to Pusey, this process of instrumentalisation of the public sphere to economic ends has been achieved largely through managerialism: the rise of generic, 'content-free' management in the public bureaucracy modelled on private sector management (p.121). The previous generation of public officers are distrusted as 'captured officials' whose self interest as regulators and funders lies ambiguously between the institutional sector which they are responsible for funding, and their political masters who, in Corbett's terms, have "gradually fallen into the trap of benefiting particular stakeholders who have earned or paid for favours" (Corbett 1996). In the new order of "results-oriented management... the purposes of public administration and public service tend to be reduced to the effective, efficient and economic management of human and financial resources" (Yeatman 1997: 13).

The previous generation of public service 'mandarins' had detailed expert knowledge which enabled them to work intuitively and gave them a degree of power to resist political direction. At the same time, they were trusted by the ruling politicians. In a regime where there was control exerted over 'inputs' (rather than 'outputs'), the professional administrator was an expert in his or her field. He or she was a critical mediating influence whose judgement was crucial. In the new, managerial regime, the corporatist, consensual approach is no longer required. In place of the expert knowledge of administrators, control is achieved through better management and information technology which produces numerical data about outcomes (Stretton and Orchard 1994; Buchanan 1995; Considine 1997).

The key characteristics of managerialism are summed up by Yeatman (1990) as:

- the replacement of commitment to programs by incentives, especially for senior managers,
- the drive for 'efficiency', defined in terms of reduced, but clearly stated goals framed by senior managers,
- diminished program budgets,
- devolved responsibility for policy implementation,
- 'user pays' contracting out and tendering,
- increased ministerial control,

- encouragement of circulation of personnel between departments, fostering loyalty to the service, careerism and networks within it, with an emphasis on procedures, r ther than openness to outside networks (Yeatman, 1990: 9)

These characteristics have been described by Yeatman more recently as the effects of performativity, as mentioned in Chapter l:

> Performativity is a principle of governance which establishes strictly functional relations between a state and its inside and outside environments. Democracy and social welfare are operationalised in terms of these functional relations (Yeatman 1994: 111).

In the era of the globalisation of capital, the state is more accountable to international money markets and less accountable to the domestic civil society. The managerialist emphasis on procedures, efficiency and accountability works to discipline the bureaucracy and professional public servants to better service the needs of a marketised and deregulated economy. It therefore tends to insulate public servants against the claims of civil society, especially those expressed directly through the institutions.

Managerialism has been associated with the transfer of hitherto public functions to the private and non-government sectors, the sale of government enterprises and assets, and the contracting out of public services (Considine 1997; Corbett 1996; Yeatman 1997).

The impact of managerialism, privatisation and contractualisrn on vocational and further education has been analysed by a number of academic commentators (Butler and Connole 1994; Connole and Butler 1994; Gilding 1994; Lee and Wickert 1994; Soucek 1994; ACAL/ACTA 1996; Angwin 1996; Butler 1996; Foley 1996; Marginson 1996; Blackmore and Angwin 1997; Brennan 1997; Butler 1997; Gustavsson 1997; Seddon 1996).

It is a paradox that during the consensus period of Hawke (and the corporatist aspirations of *Australia Reconstructed)* changes were taking place in the styles and structures of public service management which in essence negated the culture of partnership, respect for local professional expertise and commitment to shared policy aims[1].

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1. . The effects of those changes on educational provision have been vigorously exposed by many academic researchers of education policy (Ball 1990; Kenway 1990; Street 1990; Bigum and Green 1993; Henry 1993; Marginson 1993; Ball 1994; Butler and Connole 1994;

The decline of the welfare state and the advent of managerialism, deregulation and marketisation within education can be understood in terms of the application of performativity. Performativity (as seen in the changes in management culture and the change from nation-building, social democratic policies to economic rationalist policies) started to take effect in public policy at the very time when ALBE had its brief period of ascendancy.

In Chapter 9 I take up the discussion of managerialism in relation to changes in the management culture in the institutions of TAFE and show how a group of teachers are engaging with and attempting to resist those changes.

3. The Australian Language and Literacy Policy

The period within which this research took place was the period of the Australian Language and Literacy Policy (ALLP) and the National Training Reform Agenda (NTRA).

The National Training Reform Agenda (NTRA) is a suite of policies and new directions for adult education, training and employment set in train initially under Labor Minister John Dawkins (then Minister for Employment, Education and Training) and implemented nationally until the accession to government of the Liberal National Coalition in March 1996. These policies, elaborated in the *Australian Language and Literacy Policy* (DEET 1991), the Commonwealth White paper *Working Nation* (Commonwealth of Australia 1994) and in the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) publication *Towards a Skilled Australia: a National Strategy for Vocational Education and Training* (ANTA 1994), shaped the project for building an integrated national system of training, the National Vocational Education and Training System (NVETS). In so doing they defined ALBE as integral to a national system of industry-led vocational training.

In the foreword to *Australia's Language: the Australian language and literacy policy* (DEET 1991), John Dawkins states that the ALLP builds on the NPL and

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Connole and Butler 1994; Giroux and McLaren 1994; Kenway, Bigum et al. 1994; Soucek 1994; Suda 1994; Usher and Edwards 1994; Lemke 1995; Marginson 1995; Blackmore 1995a; Luke and Luke 1995b; ACAL/ACTA 1996; Blackmore 1996; Marginson 1996; Angus and Seddon 1997; Brennan 1997; Butler 1997; Sanguinetti and Riddell 1997; Usher, Bryant et al. 1997; Walters 1997; Luke 1997a; Forward 1998). See especially (Marginson 1998; Seddon 1998; Thompson 1998) for recent analyses of the impact of rnarketisation on public education provision.

the achievements of the International Literacy Year. The ALLP announced significant new funding for literacy programs, languages other than English, Aboriginal and Torres Strait language maintenance and expanded services to be provided by interpreters, print and electronic media and libraries (p.4). The new funding was substantial:

- a total of $74.64 million for adult literacy courses, curriculum and teacher development in TAFE and the community-based sector, between 1991 - 1995;
- $3.5 million for adult literacy professional development 1991 - 1995;
- $21 million for adult literacy and basic education in SIP in 1991 - 92;
- $3 million for adult literacy under the Skillshare Program in 1991 - 92;
- a total of $14 million for Literacy in the Workplace Program;
- $1.5 million per year for innovative national projects in adult literacy, including funding for development of literacy teaching series;
- total spending for 1991-92 rose from a base of $2.6 million to $39.39 million (DEET 1991: 10-11).

In 1995-96, $2.25 billion went into training and labour market assistance (Commonwealth of Australia 1996). This amount was in addition to substantial increases announced for Aboriginal literacy and ESL and big increases for adult ESL programs.

The ALLP ushered in a boom period for adult literacy and basic education. However, it also brought in some not-so-welcome changes. In the companion volume of the ALLP is a reference to possible allocation of government funds to private providers resulting from tendering for courses: "competitive tendering in adult literacy and ESL has particular value for new, innovative or pilot initiatives and, potentially, as a means of improving the reach of the programs" (DEET 1991: 29). It also refers to the need for better measuring and reporting of language proficiency (p.75). A new restriction was announced, of 510 hours as the maximum instruction time allowed for each client in the AMEP.

Even more significantly, the vast majority of funding was to be targeted to either 'job-seekers' (through a range of labour market programs) or workers employed in industry. The emphasis was on addressing the increasing unemployment

associated with the late 80s economic recession, rather than on national competitiveness or 'creating the clever country'.

A further development that was implied rather than spelt out in the policy was a move away from a rhetoric of Australia's *"languages"* (as in the NPL) to *"Australia's Language"*. According to Moore (1995: 14), the ALLP introduced a deliberate move to downgrade pluralist concerns by conflating ESL with literacy, and reinscribing Australia as a monolingual country.

Finally, whilst the rhetoric of the ALLP was steeped in liberal notions of equity and a "well-educated, cultured, humane and purposeful" society, the definition implied by the provisions of the ALLP were clearly instrumental: literacy education and training was to be planned and provided in order to meet the needs of industry and the economy. The ALLP was in fact based on the human capital model, the proposition that better skilled and more literate societies will be economically more productive and (therefore) richer. It was based on the now discreditted assumption that the unemployed but newly retrained workforce would be absorbed back into new industries which would emerge as the result of microeconomic reform (Luke 1992: 3; Marginson 1993: 31; Taylor, Rizvi et al. 1997: 94).

The ALLP was a contradictory and contested document which set the scene for a period of rapid expansion, change and confusion in ALBE. It framed one important plank in the strategy of the NTRA for a 'clever Australia' - the provision of labour market programs that would provide full-time, basic skills, literacy and language training for all unemployed people. However, the rhetoric of the ALLP helped conceal another purpose: to address (and to be seen to compensate workers for) the unemployment set in train by microeconomic reform (Brown, 1997).

4. The National Training Reform Agenda

Key features of the NTRA

The NTRA framed a set of policies, which, between 1991 and 1996, had the effect of radically restructuring funding, institutions and curriculum arrangements for adult education and training and its relationship with industry. NTRA did not

exist in a single text. Its key features have been summarised by Butler and Connole (1994) as follows:

- a national system of training enacted through a new assortment of powerful interdependent regulatory and funding bureaucracies;
- the requirement that all training be competency-based;
- the development of competency standards, linked through a national eight-level overarching skills framework, the Australian Standards Framework (ASF), and over-seen by tripartite 'consensus' at industry/government level;
- a National Framework for the Recognition Of Training (NFROT), involving the accreditation of courses, registration of providers, articulation and credit transfer, recognition of prior learning (RPL), assessment and the National Qualifications Framework;
- the development of national curriculum through Australian Committee for Training Curriculum (ACTRAC), flexible delivery, and competency-based assessment, both on and off the job;
- an expanded and enhanced system of entry level training; and,
- a competitive training market based on 'user choice' by employer/employee groups (modified from (Butler and Connole 1994).

-A key strategy in the implementation of the NTRA was the establishment, in 1992, of the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA), to be overseen by a Ministerial Council[2] and responsible for the development of a national strategic plan on vocational education and training within the framework of goals and priorities set by the Ministerial Council. Since 1992 ANTA has allocated funding to State training agencies and oversees their annual business plans. The adult, community and further education area (including ALBE) is included in the sphere of responsibility of ANTA, which also funds research and other major projects.

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2. The Ministerial Council of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA)

The policy directions and programs set in train by the ALLP changed profoundly the organisation and funding of ALBE (as well as ESL and related adult education fields) at a time when, as I have shown, the field itself had barely 'arrived' on the public policy scene. The discourses embedded in the NTRA expressed the meta-discourse of performativity and were at odds with the discourses which previously constructed ALBE (Lee and Wickert 1995). Although policy documents such as the ALLP still contained traces of the discourses of the social democratic state, ALBE was now basically legitimated by a discourse about the enhancement of the performance of individuals and of the state in a competitive world economy.

Contradictory effects

For ALBE practitioners, the NTRA created a contradictory, confusing and constantly changing working environment. There have been widespread feelings amongst teachers and other commentators that:

- The competitive training market had undermined the traditions of close collaboration between providers (sharing curricula and materials, frequent cross-referrals of students, informal 'divisions of duty' between providers as to who puts on what courses and at what levels) as they competed with one another for resources and student numbers.

- Accountability requirements added to work loads and increased stress through an increasing use of standardised assessment procedures, the documenting and reporting of outcomes and a reduction in paid non-teaching time for both contract and permanent teachers.

- Competency-based assessment frameworks significantly affected teachers' ability to teach according to their understandings of pedagogical 'good practice'.

- Increasingly, the only work available was part-time sessional work on short-term (one semester) contracts, which had an implicit effect of deprofessionalising teaching.
- There was no award rate and teachers were paid as low as $23.50 per hour (in TAFE colleges) or $14 per hour (in Skillshare

> programs) without any provision for paid professional development, holiday or sick leave[3].

The NTRA brought important gains as well as difficulties to the emerging field of ALBE. The most important gain was a huge increase in student places (through DEET's labour market programs) and consequently more jobs (which were in the main on short-term, part-time sessional contracts).

In particular, the DEET-funded Special Intervention Program (SIP) and Office of Labour Market (OLMA) programs created a proliferation of student places, although for some providers only. The arrangements for competitive tendering for programs and student placements, accompanied by the fast-tracking of registration of a host of new private and community-based providers, meant that funds were shifted around at six to twelve-monthly intervals between an ever-increasing number of would-be providers. Some long-established small providers went to the wall, others clung on with one or two full-time programs funded at any one time, while others, especially some of the big TAFE colleges, experienced a bonanza, having to quickly recruit dozens of new teachers and rent new classroom accommodation (ACAL/ACTA 1996).

Despite large amounts of new funding directed to professional development through the TAFE National Staff Development Committee (TNSDC), the competitive environment did not allow for funding to release teachers to actually attend professional development sessions, and there was no incentive for casual, part-time teachers to self-fund their own professional development through expensive postgraduate courses. The TNSDC had little or no impact.

Impact on women

While the NTRA offered new opportunities for training and career pathways for women, it has been found to work against the interests of women and other marginalised groups[4] (Butler and Connole 1994; Connole and Butler 1994; Blackmore 1995b; Blackmore and Angwin 1997; Butler 1997).

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3. As at August 1998, some institutes of TAFE are still paying $24 per hour for sessional teaching, with no extra allowances for preparation or correction.

4. Connole and Butler (1994) point out that the framework of eight levels of skill (the ASF) is likely to compound a lack of recognition of skills of groups of women workers in feminised service industries:
"Assumptions about where such workers belong in the ASF flow through directly into the kinds of competencies identified (and ignored) in their competency standards and thus into training which fails to recognise either existing skills or skill requirements and which results in the trivialised curricula which workers we have spoken to identified as insulting" (Connole and Butler 1994: 10).

For teachers, there was never any guarantee of long-term funding or job security for those working in DEET-funded programs. The effects of the casualisation on the (mainly female) ALBE teaching force are documented by (Newcombe 1996; Blackmore and Angwin 1997). A discussion paper produced by ACAL (Australian Council of Adult Literacy) and ACTA (Australian Council of TESOL Associations) and entitled *Towards an Understanding of the Shifting Sands* (ACAL/ACTA 1996), referred to the downgrading of conditions of employment. The paper referred to the continued lack of career paths for women; the problems of retaining experienced teachers who can only be employed on short term contracts; and the continued marginalisation and deprofessionalisation of language and literacy teaching. The concern of *Australia Reconstructed* to preserve the award system, provide training pathways and avoid the brutality of the free market was clearly aimed at male metal and other technical workers, and was not meant to apply to those whose work it would be to train and re-train the industrial workers.

Impact of the NTRA in Victoria

In Victoria, both the Adult, Community and Further Education Board (ACFEB) and the State Training Board (STB) had to adapt to the policies of the NTRA put into practice by ANTA and through the Commonwealth DEET[5]. ACFEB's policies and funding programs are reported against national adult and community education (ACE) policy and the State VET strategy (ACFEB 1996).

ACFEB was positioned between the somewhat contradictory directions and underlying principles of national ACE policy, National Competition Policy (NCP) (Joint Departmental Information Centre 1996) and the NTRA. The 1993 national policy on ACE (MCEETYA 1993) emphasised the importance of active involvement of learners in decisions about their learning; collaboration between teacher and learner; the need for accessible, appropriate, stimulating and affordable adult education opportunities; and the importance of local communities and networks in identifying and responding to needs. The National Competition Policy introduced the requirement for "universal and uniformly applied rules of market conduct" in ACFE's planning and resource allocation (ACFEB 1996). The State VET Strategy spelt out the imperatives of the **NTRA:** the changing role of government from funder of courses and providers to

5 . Since a 1995 restructure, DEET has become DEETYA - the Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs.

purchaser of places in the training market; the devolution of operational responsibility directly to TAFE colleges; system-wide planning and accreditation; and the achievement of responsibility, efficiency and outcomes (ACFEB 1996). These contradictions and tensions (to an extent harmonised within recent ACFE policy statements) were implicit in the policy environment guiding the provision of ALBE during the period of this study. The tension created by the seemingly contradictory principles of community-controlled, general adult education, and the 'managed market' of the vocational education and training system, is reflected in the strategic directions which are spelt out in the 1996 State ACFE Plan as: co-operation and competition; quality and quantity; consolidation and change; development and diversification; accountability and autonomy (adapted from (ACFEB 1996: 6).

The State ACFE Plan typifies the complexity of the policy field and the attempt in policy texts to reconcile the contradictory projects of marketisation and community control, learner-centredness and accreditation, general education and vocational training. Rushbrook wrote about ACFE's attempt to reconcile "the enriching educational values of the past" with the "foreign culture" of accredited VET programs "determined from the top-down by Industry Training Boards or 'expert' advisory bodies", likening ACFE's stance to "riding the accreditation tiger" (Rushbrook 1996: 4). Brennan, in her critique of the 1996-98 ACFE Research Strategy, pointed to the silences in the document, and said that, "The contradictions are named and harmonised by the use of 'and' (Brennan 1997: 6).

This, then, is the contradictory and paradoxical policy environment which structured the field of ALBE during the period in which this research was carried out: the pressures, the paradoxes, the giddying rate of change, the unsettling of educational traditions and the attempt to reconcile within key policy documents the reversal (in economic rationalist policy) of liberal democratic and socially critical understandings about the role, purpose and practices of adult literacy and adult basic education.

6. A brief policy update

Since beginning this study in 1994, the Liberal National Coalition has acceded to power federally, the ALLP and NTRA have come to an end, and ALBE has been subjected to a new wave of policy changes. The changes announced in 1996 (Vanstone 1996) have significantly reversed the directions and policy commitments of the previous Labor years, threatening to relegate ALBE once more to the margins of mainstream provision (Sanguinetti and Riddell 1997). It is of interest here to flag briefly the main changes announced in 1996 and now being implemented by the Commonwealth Government. The significance of these latest changes in relation to my analysis lies in the huge loss of jobs and programs experienced during 1996 and the further sessionalisation of the ALBE work force which has weakened the field and further disempowered and alienated those who remain.

The main changes

Labour market programs abolished

Labour market programs have been abolished, and the employment services of the CES have been corporatised and privatised. The 1996-7 Commonwealth budget slashed labour market program funding by $1. 8 billion over four years, including a cut of $574.7 million in 1996-7 and $956.3 million in 1997-8 (Forward 1998: 25). A new statutory authority, CentreLink, has been set up by the Department of Social Security (DSS) to provide a service for functions previously provided by the DSS and the Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs (DEETYA). These include registration of job seekers for income support, self help facilities, a data base of vacancies and referral to providers. Private employment agencies have had to compete for contracts to provide employment services, alongside the corporatised agency (Employment National), into which the remaining staff of the CES were transferred. Many small comunity-based providers lost out in the tendering process. The non-government employment agencies who won contracts comprise the Job Network. Training is only being made available to those categorised as being eligible for Intensive Employment Assistance (IEA). A 'capacity to benefit' criterion is further reducing the numbers of those eligible to receive training. A program of literacy

provision, linked to the notion of 'mutual obligation' for unemployed 18-24 year olds, has been announced. The $39 million program (1998-1999) will provide part-time training provision for those who have been unemployed for six months or more while they search for jobs (McKenna 1998: 32).

Prospective employers are being charged for these services and job-seekers not in receipt of government benefits now must pay for placement services which were previously free. Agencies compete for eligible clients, each of whom attracts funding for a 'customised assistance package' of training, job search allowance and wage subsidies. Case managers may decide whether and what training may be included in the assistance and funded out of the customised assistance package. Agencies receive payments from DEETYA according to the kind of outcomes they achieve for their clients (Vanstone 1996).

It is widely acknowledged that the privatised Job Network is seriously flawed and that agencies are struggling to survive financially ('The Age' editorial, August 24, 1998). There are logjams in referrals, and training providers are unable to fill courses or sustain comprehensive programs (ACAL 1998).

The National Training Framework

A new system of entry-level training, the National Training Framework (NTF) has been established. The Industry Training Boards (ITABS) are responsible for the development of National Training Packages (NTPs) against which all training will be assessed and skills recognised through skills passports to record qualifications. NTPs consist of three 'endorsed components' and a set of 'tools and resources'. The endorsed components are: industry competency standards, agreed assessment guidelines and a revised Australian qualifications framework. The tools and resources are: learning strategies, professional development, assessment resources and unit costs. Explicit literacy and numeracy standards have been spelt out within the 'tools and resources' components so that the context is being created for adult literacy teaching within industry programs and for industry trainers to become skilled in literacy and numeracy assessment and support. Language, literacy and numeracy are to be integrated into industry training as far as possible.

Tendering out of the Adult Migrant Education Program

The Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs has entered into a new tendering process for the AMEP which in Victoria has resulted in the losses of all AMEP programs by most large TAFE colleges and small providers. The AMES has won the Victorian tender, at the cost of shedding 160 permanent positions and agreeing to an 80% proportion of sessional teaching.

Marketisation of ACFE programs

Since 1989 the Victorian Government has provided state recurrent funds for co-ordination and development of adult literacy programs. With the move to 'unit costing' in 1997, all funding has been tied to the provision of programs, rather than student contact hours, co-ordination and infrastructure support. While the overall amount of program funding has remained constant, this has placed further stress on providers and has resulted in a cut in infrastructure for some (Simmons 1996). Within each region, a percentage of ACFE programs is being put out to competitive tender.

Restructuring of TAFE colleges

In December 1997, a radical restructuring of TAFE colleges in Victoria was announced. The number of TAFE institutions has been reduced from fourteen to nine; courses have been rationalised into fewer sites; the way has been cleared for future privatisation of TAFE; and possibly 1000 jobs will be lost.

ALBE in the new policy environment: back to the margins?

The changes listed above give some indication of the new wave of turmoil and uncertainty now being experienced in the fields of ALBE and ESL. Small providers of ALBE and ESL lost out badly in the tenders for job placement services announced in March 1998, and large numbers of teachers of ALBE and ESL in Victoria have lost their jobs or been forced to accept part-time sessional employment. Job placement, case management, labour brokerage and referral work which was previously the work of CES officers has largely gone to private providers or large consortia.

Clearly, it will be in the interest of case managers in to spend a minimum amount of the 'package' each job-seeker will attract, before trying to place him or her. As the overall period of assistance for each client is limited, and case managers will be working to place clients as quickly as possible, it is likely that they will contract providers to put on short, highly targeted courses in which language and literacy will be closely integrated with vocational content. How, and according to what processes, clients from different Employment Placement Enterprises (EPEs) will be grouped so as to form viable classes, and how much provision will be required, is still uncertain.

It is questionable whether the amount of training that can be funded out of the notional 'assistance packages' will be enough to sustain substantial programs in language and literacy. ACFE-funded ALBE and ESL classes in neighbourhood houses and community centres will still continue, but these are almost all part-time.

The role of literacy and ESL in industry and workplace training is obscure under the new provisions, and it is not yet clear how these will be written into the new national training packages. Increasingly, the emphasis will be on pre-packaged, standardised, flexible learning modules and greater integration of language and literacy with on-the-job industrial training. Rosa McKenna, Director of the Victorian office of 'Languages Australia', wrote in *Fine Print* that "we can no longer rely on a separate notion of literacy and numeracy provision and be assured of infrastructure for that provision. The emphasis will be on the broader outcomes of employment and productivity and co-ordinators of adult literacy programs will be found as case managers, industry trainers and assessors and consultants to ITABs, enterprises and trainers."(McKenna 1997: 21; Parkinson 1995: 12; Angwin 1997; Forward 1998; McKenna 1998).

Nobody knows exactly how many jobs have been lost in ALBE and ESL. However, it is common knowledge that language and literacy studies departments in many TAFE colleges have been 'decimated' and that the majority of ALBE and ESL teachers who have endured insecure and inadequate working conditions throughout the nineties have now finally lost their jobs (Forward 1998: 25).

In mid 1998, the fields of ALBE and ESL are have been subjected to devastating program reductions and loss of jobs for teachers. At the same time, the profile of ALBE in national policy has been implicitly down-

graded in the provisions of the National Training Framework. The survival of ALBE as a field of education and of adult literacy teaching as a distinct profession and field of expertise seems at this stage to be in question. As the cut backs of the Liberal Coalition Government bite into all areas of public service provision, the discourse of performativity has become all embracing, and there is no longer justification for public funding for widespread ALBE provision. The return of ALBE to the marginal status of the early to mid 1980s, after less than a decade in the mainstream of public policy and funding, appears to be highly likely.

5. Conclusion

The data reported in this thesis about how teachers of ALBE and ESL in Victoria are living and negotiating the dilemmas and challenges of new policy was gathered in 1994-96, the period of the NTRA and ALLP which preceded the more recent wave of change under the Liberal National Coalition government.

The NTRA period was a time of great stress for teachers as they adapted their practice to new policies of vocationalisation, marketisation, tendering, accountability, accredited curriculum frameworks and competency-based assessment. By contrast with the present period, this was also a period in which funding was available in plenty, new providers sprang up and innovative programs and projects proliferated. The teachers who have contributed their stories and insights to this study were working and struggling in the midst of this complex and contradictory period: the movement of ALBE from the margins to the mainstream and the challenge of the new policy imperatives to its traditional discourses and practices. However, as I will show, the discourses and meanings of ALBE which evolved historically are reflected in complex discursive formations which teachers draw on in their struggles to engage with, to integrate and to resist the meta-discourse of performativity.

The impact and significance of current developments has yet to be analysed in detail and is not the subject of this thesis. However, my reading of subsequent developments in the field provides an additional set of reference points for my analysis of how teachers were engaging

discursively with the policies of the time. In particular, the more recent developments throw light on my retrospective analysis of the usefulness of the 'politics of discourse' at that time and in that context.

In Chapter 4, I give an account of theories of discourse and power put forward by Foucault and feminist poststructuralist authors and which form the methodological basis of the research.

Chapter Four

Methodology: Strategies, Themes and Issues

1. Introduction

The research documented in this thesis is an exploration of the struggles of teachers and other practitioners of ALBE within the contradictory and rapidly changing policy environment described in Chapters 1, 2 and 3: to build 'good practice' in the teaching and delivery of ALBE; to defend jobs and industrial conditions; to address competing demands of policy and curriculum; to reconcile different pedagogical paradigms; to make meaning of rapid processes of change; and to know how to act in this context. As a teacher of ALBE, these are my struggles as well as those of the broader collectivity, the 'field of practice' with which I identify. At the same time, the thesis is an exploration of theory, a search for new and meaningful ways for speaking about the problems. The theoretical pursuit is part of my aim of producing insights which will respond to the questioning of teachers and to support their reflexivity in complex and difficult times.

The methods I have used belong to the tradition of feminist (critical) praxis (Stanley and Wise 1983: 231; Weiler 1994: 455; Weiner 1994: 130; Lemke 1995: 131). My purpose is to help develop a reflexive awareness within the field of our own discursive constitution and my (our) implication in the policies I (we) oppose; of the micropolitics of resistance which we enact in our every day professional lives; and of our power to act agentically to contradict meanings and to produce new discourse.

I begin this Chapter by giving a brief overview of the story of the research which is detailed in subsequent chapters: the story of what I have done and why. The story is divided into four main stages. In describing each of the four stages, I highlight the key methodological ideas and traditions which I have drawn upon. I then discuss these under the headings of discursive engagement, the politics of discourse, participatory action research, and discourse mapping.

In this Chapter I have confined myself to presenting the broad strategic and methodological underpinnings of the research. The details of the methods I have used, in each stage of the research, to produce the data and analyse the texts, are explained and discussed further in the body of the chapters which follow.

2. The research story

Between 1994 and 1997 I worked with two groups of teachers of ALBE in two separate participatory action research (PAR) projects. I chose PAR as a form of "collective, self-reflective enquiry undertaken by participants in social situations" (Kemmis and McTaggart 1988: 5) as my basic approach, in order to produce knowledge which would be structured around the experiences and agency of teachers. In developing and theorising these action research projects, I have used the poststructuralist notion of discourse and have highlighted the relativity and contingency of "situated knowledges" (Haraway 1991). In Section 5 I take up this discussion.

Stage 1

The first project involved thirty teachers of ALBE in a PAR evaluation of the Certificate of General Education for Adults (CGEA). This project was funded by the Adult Literacy Research Network Node. The project report, *Negotiating Competence: the impact on teaching practice of the CGEA* (Sanguinetti 1995) is attached as an appendix to this thesis.

The competency-based CGEA was a policy-led innovation, which was a product of the NTRA, as discussed in Chapter 3. The introduction of the Certificate at a time of change and turmoil met with considerable resistance from the field.

Teachers' responses to the Certificate were documented in reports by teachers based on their personal/professional journals and in the transcripts of individual and group interviews. I analysed the teachers' journal reports and the interviews for the Report, *Negotiating Competence.* Details of the aims, method, findings and outcomes of this project are given in Chapter 5.

In participating in an action research evaluation of the CGEA, the teachers were also engaging with its discourse; that is, its distinctive forms of talking, thinking and doing. The methodological issues which have arisen in using PAR as a method for researching issues of discursive engagement are discussed in Section 5 of this chapter.

Stage 2

Working with teachers in an action research style to evaluate the impact of competency-based training was an opportunity to study how the teachers were engaging with new policy on the level of discourse. The teachers' reports and the interviews provided a rich textual record of how teachers were adapting to, accommodating, resisting and transforming the new polices. For many, the introduction into ALBE of competency based training stood as a symbol of the new policy environment of performativity, commodification and marketisation. In engaging with the CGEA and its discourse, the teachers were also engaging with the discourses of NTRA policy. I take up the notion of 'discursive engagement' in my discussion in Section 3 of this chapter.

I revisited the data produced for *Negotiating Competence* in order to explore more deeply the teachers' discursive engagement with and resistance to 'competency' and other aspects of the new policy environment. For this I needed to find ways to speak about the discursive constitution of the teachers' professional subjectivities and the dynamics of their engagement in both the traditional and the new discourses constructing ALBE.

I developed a method of discourse 'mapping' which would enable me to analyse how traces of the history and politics of ALBE were reflected and refracted in the texts of the reports and interviews. By naming and 'charting' these discursive traces within the texts I developed a framework for studying the interactions between the discourses of the 'traditional'

with discourses of the 'new'. My method of analysis of discourses structuring the texts is discussed further in Section 6 of this chapter and in Chapters 6 to 11.

I next set out to explore how teachers are resisting the policy-led changes 'in discourse', in the way they write, speak and act. Based on a review of relevant poststructural writings, I formulated a set of six generic categories which I called 'micropractices of discursive resistance'. I applied these six generic categories to make a further round of analysis of the CGEA texts. This analysis shows some of the ways in which teachers are engaging and resisting through making conscious or intuitive choices about how they practise: how they are acting agentically in discourse. In Chapter 6 I detail the rationale of each of these categories, my method of analysis and findings in relation to each.

Each of these rounds of analysis (the 'mapping' of discourses and the delineation of micropractices of discursive resistance) required a high level of linguistic and analytic abstraction. In order to illustrate my method and to bring alive the findings, I re-wrote a selection of texts as case studies. For each of these I made an analysis of the complete text of the interview or journal report, taking into account the discourses framing the ways in which the teachers talked about the CGEA, the kinds of subject positions they were assuming and constrained by and their discursive practices. The case studies are presented in Chapter 7.

Stage 3

The CGEA project had yielded rich material about how teachers are engaging discursively with new policy. In order to explore more directly issues of discursive resistance with teachers I set up a second action research project with a group of teachers in one teaching department of a large Melbourne TAPE college. During 1996, 1997 and 1998 the teachers participated in a series of eight meetings at which they discussed aspects of their work in relation to the policy environment in general, issues at the institutional level, and issues in classroom teaching. I made notes or tape recorded and transcribed each of the meetings and fed the notes or transcripts back to the participants. I shared with the teachers my theoretical project and progressively fed back to them how I was analysing and theorising their discussions. The on-going feedback from this set of teachers has helped me to shape my analysis and overall findings.

The interface between PAR and my focus on discursive engagement and the 'politics of discourse' is discussed further in Section 5.

In Chapter 8 I give the story of this second action research project, which raised further issues in relation to the tension between my own academic purpose and the interests and resources of the participants; and tensions between my own subjective investments and the explicit research aims.

Stage 4

The final stage was to make an analysis of the texts produced by the teachers' discussions in this second round of action research. I chose to concentrate on two of the texts: a discussion focussing on the teachers' experiences with managerialism and marketisation in their college, and a discussion focussing on pedagogy.

I made an analysis of the 'managerialism' text, applying the method I had developed with respect to the CGEA texts for mapping discourses and analysing micropractices of discursive resistance. The method of analysis and findings with relation to the 'managerialism' text are detailed in Chapter 9.

The CGEA texts had provided some insight into the discourses of pedagogy which teachers were drawing upon as they engaged with the CGEA and its discourse. However, I wished to explore in greater depth how teachers were engaging pedagogically in the new context. I therefore suggested that teachers relate 'critical incidents' which have occurred in their classroom teaching. The transcript of that session (ie, the critical incidents which they related and the ensuing discussion) formed the text of a further analysis of discourses and subject positions, again building on the method I had developed previously.

In Chapter 10 I present my method of analysis of the 'critical incidents in pedagogy' text, the findings, and a discussion of power and ethics in complex, situated and eclectic pedagogical practice.

3. Discursive engagement and Foucault's theory of discourse

What is 'discourse'?

My notion of 'discursive engagement' uses the notion of discourse as a tool for understanding how teachers are 'living the contradictions' in the midst of processes of change and transition. The conception of discourse which I apply and elaborate throughout this thesis is based on the work of Foucault (1972; 1981; 1991) and subsequent theoretical elaborations. In particular I have drawn on social theories of discourse which link language, texts and events to particular patterns of social practice, particular institutional structures and structures of power. Social theor es of discourse point to the materiality of discourse; that discourse is produced and enacted in all forms of human activity as well as in the semantics of language. (Kress 1985; Fairclough 1989; Fraser 1989; Gee 1990; Fairclough 1992; Fairclough 1995; Lemke 1995). I have also used feminist poststructuralist versions of discourse theory which foreground the implications of discourse theory for feminist struggle and other social movements (Weedon 1987; Flax 1990; Hekman 1990; Yeatman 1990a; Haraway 1991; Sawicki 1991; Alcoff 1993; Hennessy 1993; Davies 1994; Yeatman 1994; Yeatman 1997).

By *discourse,* I mean networks of meaning (statements) encoded in language, or reflected in actions and social processes. *Discourse* is a way of thinking about how meaning is connected with cultural values and power relations. It constitutes the way we think and who we are.

The major theoretical insights provided by Foucault can be summarised in the following way[1]:

- that discourse constitutes the objects of knowledge, social subjects, forms of 'self', social relationships, and conceptual frameworks;
- that discourse is a product of the (material and language) practices of societies or institutions;
- that discourses are generated out of combinations of other discourses which are configurations or 'orders of discourse';

[1] Adapted from Fairclough (1992: 39 and Weedon (1987: 109).

- that knowledge constituted by discourse is embedded in power relations ('power/knowledge');
- that the workings of discourse constitute, subjectify, discipline and inscribe individual subjects;
- that discourses are in a state of contestation reflecting broader social and political contestations and that the subjects of discourse live out this contestation by challenging dominant discourses and claiming alternative sets of meanings, knowledges and values.

Discourse is therefore:

> ... a structuring principle of society, in social institutions, modes of thought and individual subjectivity ... Meanings do not exist prior to their articulation in language and language is not an abstract system, but is always socially and historically located in discourses (Weedon 1987: 41).

Such a conception of discourse enables us to view texts (such as the documents and research and policy reports about ALBE) as reflecting and enacting social and political contestation.

In the rest of this section I briefly discuss my notion of 'discursive engagement' in terms of some of the key ideas of Foucauldian discourse theory.

Discourse and power

Marxist critiques of the organised and systematised sovereignty of the State construct power primarily in terms of domination[2]. The system of gobalised capitalism exercises massive economic (hegemonic and impositional) power on behalf of a minority over the vast majority. Foucault did not deny the role of sovereign power, but his interest was in the "polymorphous· techniques of subjugation", rather than the "solid and global kind of domination that one person exercises over others" (Foucault, 1980: 96). Instead of "the regulated and legitimate forms of power in their central locations", Foucault focused on "power at its extremities, in its ultimate destinations, with those points where it becomes capillary" (loc cit). For this study, I have taken up Foucault's

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[2] 'Domination' is defined by Weber as "the authoritarian power of command" (Weber 1986: 33).

notion of discursive power as dispersed, enacted and mobilised throughout (Western) society in the context of the sovereignty of global financial power. The meta-discourse of performativity (Yeatman 1994: 110), is a means by which the power of global finance colonises, subjectifies and reaches to 'the extremities' of social life.

According to Foucault, discourse and power are inseparable. Discourse is embedded in power relations and discursive practices have power effects:

> [Discourse] ... is the moving substrate of force relations, which, by virtue of their inequality, constantly engender states of power, but the latter are always local and unstable. The omnipresence of power: not because it has the privilege of consolidating everything under its invincible unity, but because it is produced from one moment to the next, at every point, or rather in every relation from one point to another. Power is everywhere, not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere (Foucault 1981: 93) .

Foucault rejects the notion that power is just a negative and repressive force which flows downward from institutions, states and rulers. He refuses a simple binary opposition between the 'rulers' and 'the ruled', or 'power' and 'resistance': "resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power... one is always "inside" power, there is no "escaping it" (ibid, p.95). Power comes from below and is immanent in all relationships (such as economic relationships, knowledge relationships, family and sexual relationships):

> What makes power hold good, what makes it accepted, is simply the fact that it doesn't only weigh on us as a force which says no, but that it traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms of knowledge, produces discourse. It needs to be considered as a productive network which runs through the whole social body, much more than as a negative instance whose function is repression (Foucault 1984: 61).

Discourse is conceived by Foucault as a mechanism by which power is distributed and transacted in the myriad relationships of everyday life. It is the key to understanding both domination and resistance. However, the tactical function of discourse is "neither uniform nor stable" (1984: 100):

> Discourses are not once and for all subservient to power or raised up against it, any more than silences are. We must make allowance for the complex and unstable process whereby discourse can be both an instrument and an effect of power, but also a

> hindrance, a stumbling block, a point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing strategy. Discourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it (p.101).

My study of 'discursive engagement' is therefore a study of how people engage with power (how they respond to, and produce power) in their everyday communications and practices. Power is viewed both in terms of the sovereign power of the state *and* in terms of capillary 'micropower' which infuses all human relationships and transactions.

Resistance in discourse

In this thesis, 'discursive engagement' is also used more specifically, to describe how teachers of ALBE are engaging with and-*resisting* the meanings and requirements of the NTRA 'in discourse'. I have made a conscious choice, however, to make *engagement* rather than *resistance* the central and guiding notion. I made this choice for three reasons. First, the complexity of the texts was such that it was almost impossible to separate out 'resistance to' or 'compliance with' institutional power in the way the teachers wrote and spoke about their work. Second, given the de-centring of power in Foucault's work, and his insistence that "resistance is *internal* to power as a permanent possibility" (Schrift 1995: 45), I found that the notion of 'engagement' provided a way of dealing with the complex imbrication of power and resistance as apparent in the texts. Third, 'engagement' gave a way of avoiding the binary construction of power and resistance altogether, in so far as in one sense, they are the same.

Colin Gordon, in his *Afterword* to *Power/knowledge: selected interviews and other writings by Michel Foucault,* explains the problem of separating out 'resistance' from 'power' in actual social situations:

> If one turns, not to the fictitious schema of the disciplined subject but to the question of what it is for real people to reject or refuse, or on the other hand in some manner to consent to, acquiesce in or accept the subjection of themselves or of others, it becomes apparent that the binary division between resistance and non-resistance is an unreal one. The existence of those who seem to rebel is a warren of minute, individual, autonomous tactics and strategies which counter and inflect the visible facts of overall domination, and whose purposes and calculations, desires and choices resist any simple division into the political and the

> apolitical. The schema of a strategy of resistance as a vanguard of politicisation needs to be subjected to re-examination, and account must be taken of resistances whose strategy is one of evasion or defence - the Schweijks as well as the Solzhhenitsyns. There are no good subjects of resistance (Gordon 1980: 257).

To concentrate on 'resistance' would be to foreground and perhaps to reify coercive power. 'Resistance' implicitly conjures up 'domination'; to centre on resistance would thus be to lean towards the repressive meaning of power, rather than the productive and dispersed meaning. Moreover, by focussing on resistance as a key theme in my analysis I might be led to pass over some of the textual complexity of the data. The semiosis of 'engagement', on the other hand, enables a focus on multiplicity and on complexity; on the imbrication of 'power' with 'resistance'; and the problem of distinguishing 'resistance' and 'non-resistance'. It also discourages, to an extent, the making of normative judgements of 'bad' and 'good' that we habitually make within the binarised discourse of power/resistance.

My use of the notion of 'engagement' has a strategic sense also in that I have used it to interpret and to analyse the teachers' engagement with policy and pedagogy as politicised fields of discourse. In exploring how the teachers are engaging with power and discourse in their everyday teaching lives, I have attempted to develop knowledge about the political and strategic implications of their practice. This is part of my own political project, as discussed.

The production of meaning

In *The Archaeology of Knowledge,* Foucault's discussion of discourse is focused on the role of discourse in language and in the production of meaning: in "the formation of objects" (Foucault 1972: 40). All statements are made in discourse; objects, ideas and social understandings are constituted in and through discourse. The 'objects' of discourse are formed and transformed in accordance with the rules of particular discursive formations (p.46).

By engaging in discourse (in linguistic and material practices) we construct our realities and produce meaning. In this thesis, I have focused more on the production of meaning within texts, and have applied a particular approach to the analysis of discourses within texts

which I have called 'discourse mapping' (discussed in Section 6) to study the teachers' discursive engagement on the level of meaning-making. In Chapters 6, 7, 9 and 10, I explore the processes of meaning-making amongst teachers of ALBE as they engage with the new policy discourses and in processes of discursive transformation (Foucault 1991: 54), contestation (Foucault 1981: 92), and *interdiscursivity.* Interdiscursivity refers to the relationships and transformations which take place between discourses (Foucault 1991: 580; Fairclough 1992: 47). Applied to the study of texts, it enables us to study how texts are constructed *intertextually:* to recognise that the meaning of an utterance or an event must be read against the background of other utterances and events and *dialogically,* in "implicit dialogue with other points of view, other discourses on the same subject "(Foucault 1991: 58). See also Fairclough (1992: 124; Lemke 1995: 3).

Subject positions and subjectivities

Foucault describes the relationship between discourse and subjectivity as follows:

> What is important to me is to show that there are not on the one hand inert discourses, which are already more than half dead, and on the other hand, an all-powerful subject which manipulates them, overturns them, renews them; but that discoursing subjects form a part of the discursive field - they have their place within it (and their possibilities of displacements) and their function (and their possibilities of functional mutation). Discourse is not a place into which the subjectivity irrupts; it is a space of differentiated subject-positions and subject-functions (Foucault 1991: 58).

In *The Archaeology of Knowledge* this relationship is elaborated as the theory of the 'enunciative modalities' (Foucault 1972: 50). Discourse works to 'position' the people who are either the subjects or the objects of statements: "what position can and must be occupied by any individual if he is to be the subject of [a statement]" (ibid, p.96). Fairclough (1992: 43-46) offers a useful summary of this aspect of Foucault's work. Subjects of discourse cannot exist outside of, or independently to, the statements they make, or the discourse which inscribes them. 'Enunciative modalities' are particular configurations of discursive formations which are historically specific and open to change. Each of the modalities (which make up the configuration of modalities for any one person at any one

time) has its own associated subject position. These various modalities and positions manifest the dispersion or fragmentation of the subject.

Foucault's theory of enunciative modalities has helped move us from an understanding of the subject as unitary and rational to an understanding of the subject (hence, 'subjectivity') as fluid and multi-centred. However, his theory constructs subjectivity as structured and constituted by discourse; agency is bounded and limited by the set of possible discourses available within the discursive fields which the subject participates in. Feminist authors such as Jane Flax have taken up Foucault's theory of the subject and have combined it with psychoanalytic theory which is another source of the challenge to the idea that "the self can have transparent access to, and be master of its own processes" (Flax 1990: 96). They have developed the notion of the 'multiple subjectivities' constituted in discourse (Davies 1990; Flax 1990; Hekman 1990; Davies 1991; Code 1993; Gunew 1993). According to feminist accounts, the multiply constituted subject is also a subject 'in process' (Weedon 1987: 86; Flax 1990: 93) . The ability to choose between a range of possible discourses and subject positions is what makes agency possible. Angelides (1992) writes about "agentic subject(act)ivity" as follows:

> Subject-position is a site of intersecting and overlapping discourses and subject-effects... The notion of subjectivity 'in process' allows us to appreciate the role our (re)actions, our movement, play in the (re)construction of our subject-positions - our subjectivities (p.10).

Davies likewise links the question of agency to self awareness of the constitutive force of discourse and a choice of possible positionings and discursive practices:

> The question is not then whether individuals can be said in any absolute sense to have or not have agency, but whether or not there is awareness of the constitutive force of discursive practice, and the means for resisting or changing unacceptable practices. It also depends on whether there is choice amongst discursive practices and whether amongst these are practices which provide the possibility of that individual positioning themselves as an agent - as one who chooses and carries through the chosen line of action. Further the taking up of agentic lines of action depends on whether or not the individual person has available to them the knowledge resources to recognise the choices that are available and to carry through the line of action chosen (Davies 1990: 359).

Reid (1995) has applied these notions in her writing about "the agentic subject of teaching". In her terms, the work of 'programming' (by primary school teachers) is a "synthetic practice through which the teaching subject produces herself as an agentic subject of the discourse of institutionalised education" (p. 208). Reid draws on Davies' notion of 'authority' to illustrate her argument. Davies equates 'agency' with 'authority', expressed by "a speaker who mobilises existing discourses in new ways, inverting, inventing and breaking old patterns" (Davies and Harre 1991/92).

'Fields of discourse' and 'communities of discourse'

Discursive fields (or fields of discourse) are organised institutionally (as in as law, medicine, education, media, industries and so on). Within fields of discourse, a range of discourses give competing ways of giving meaning to social institutions and their purposes (Weedon 1987: 35). ALBE may be regarded as a 'field of discourse' with reference to the institutional structures and processes through which it is organised, and which structure it as a 'discursive field'. Within the field of ALBE there is a vigorous competition between discourses of practice, all of which at some level have a political dimension.

As well as a discursive 'field', ALBE in Victoria can be thought of as a discursive 'community', consisting of the teachers, students, managers, government administrators and others involved in a range of practices central to the development and provision of ALBE[3]. The teachers and practitioners who participate in common institutions (for example, teaching institutions and professional organisations such as VALBEC) form their own loose community or communities. They share some common understandings and values about the nature of adult literacy and dispute other understandings. As a 'community of discourse', ALBE teachers and practitioners are constantly producing (in the course of multiple interactions, publications, conversations and meetings) new meanings about the nature of their field and their work. According to the social theory of discourse, it is within communities, rather than individual subjectivities, that the processes of discursive contention work

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[3] Note that 'the ALBE field', in common parlance, refers to the 'community' of teachers and practitioners, not to the 'discursive' field in the Foucauldian sense.

themselves out (Fairclough 1992: 62; Lemke 1995: 19). Lemke explains his social theory of discourse in the following terms:

> Instead of meaning-making as something that is done by minds, I prefer to talk about it as a *social practice* in a community. It is a kind of doing that is done in ways that are characteristic of a community, and its occurrence is part of what binds the community together and helps to constitute it as a community. In this sense, we speak of a community, not as a collection of interacting individuals, but as a system of interdependent social practices: a system of doings, rather than a system of doers (Lemke 1995: 9).

Lemke's social theory of discourse also draws on Bourdieu's (slightly different) notion of *field* and his notion of *habitus*. Bourdieu writes that a 'field' is "a network, or a configuration, of objective relations between positions" (Bourdieu 1992: 97). Individuals exist as *agents* who are socially constituted as active and acting in the field (p.107). The notion of *habitus* refers to the sets of cultural and sub-cultural dispositions (habits, attitudes, preferences, actions) which we acquire, over a period of time, as members of particular fields. These socially acquired dispositions and relationships make up our *habitus* : our set of embodied cultural dispositions (Bourdieu 1992: 97, 124-143; Lemke 1995: 32-34).

> We are agents of social interaction and our strategic practice is structured by our sociocultural environment (our habitus). As strategic agents, we "compete for honour, for *symbolic capital*, on the myriad but related *fields* of thought and action. The culturally competent strategists, agents embodying the habitus, are neither mechanistic puppets nor calculating game players. Their behaviour does not involve obedience to rules... [it is] collectively orchestrated without being the product of the orchestrating action of the conductor" (Branson and Miller 1991: 39-40)[4].

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4. Bourdieu uses the notion of social habitus as the key to working with structure and agency in a manner which is similar to Gidden's use of 'structuration theory'. Cohen comments, "the proviso that in principle, agents are always capable of 'acting otherwise' represents only a denial of a thorough-going determinism of agency by forces to which the agent must respond automatically... there is a dialectic of control involving the asymmetrical access to the media (resources) through which agents influence one another's behaviour... the latitude of freedom of agency crucially depends upon the range of practices that an agent is competent to perform. However great this range may be, unqualified freedom is denied because no agent is sufficiently skilled to perform every type of practice that his or her fellow actors have mastered. Thus, the conception of agency in structuration theory resists the polarities of both thoroughgoing determinism and unqualified freedom, while preserving all possibilities between these extremes" (Cohen 1987: 285).

Lemke applies the notion of 'habitus' in the notion of 'discourse habitus': the typical patterns of discourse and action in a community. Reid in her dissertation writes about the acquisition by teachers of their 'teaching habitus'; the inscription of the teaching body through discourse (1995: 213).

Feminist poststructural writers have also written about the social processes of meaning-making. Linda Alcoff writes about the way in which 'epistemological communities' construct and acquire knowledge: "as the result of collaborations between, consensus achieved by, political struggles engaged in, negotiations undertaken among, or other activities" not only between individuals but between communities and sub-communities (Alcoff 1993: 124).

> ... epistemological communities are multiple, historically contingent, and dynamic: they have fuzzy, often over-lapping boundaries; they evolve, dissolve, and recombine; and they have a variety of "purposes" and projects which may include (as in the case of science communities) but frequently do not include (as a priority) the production of knowledge (p.125).

'Epistemological communities' are equivalent to 'discourse communities' in the social theory of discourse. This notion is central to my theorising of knowledge production through the processes of participatory action research. It also informs my approach to discourse analysis which focuses on the evolution of discourses within the field, as well as on the discursive practices of individuals.

In summary

My notion of discursive engagement is informed by the complex of ideas I have sketched above, and is a vehicle for bringing these ideas into my study and analysis of the professional and pedagogical practice of two groups of ALBE teachers. The analysis in subsequent chapters is concerned with how the teachers are engaging in discourse (ie, in a meaning-making community) at one and the same time as they are engaging with a field of power. That power can be understood as 'capillary', as well as 'sovereign'; it is a component of all relationships and transactions and is rooted in the 'micropractices' of those relationships. Power is not only coercive but is also productive. Teachers are not simply the objects and victims of institutional power but are constituted by its discourse and co-implicated in that power. Further,

there is a dimension of 'productive power' in the way teachers practise and the way they teach: in the way they practise and engage discursively.

Meanings and practices evolve dialogically both within the 'field' and the 'community' of discourse. Social agents within communities of discourse are neither fully determined nor completely free. Agency is structured by sociocultural (discursive) forces which are embodied in the 'habitus' of communities and individuals.

4. Discursive engagement and 'the politics of discourse'

The idea of 'discursive engagement' runs in tandem throughout this thesis with the notion of 'the politics of discourse' (Yeatman 1990a; Hennessy 1993). 'The politics of discourse' refers to a kind of political practice which is implied by Foucault's framework of power and discourse. While discourse politics (as a practice) is essentially nothing new, that notion has been developed since Foucault and consciously theorised by feminist poststructuralists as a tool for guiding emancipatory political struggles[5].

As Nancy Fraser put it, Foucault's conception of power implies a call for a 'politics of every day life':

> In revealing the capillary character of modern power and thereby ruling out crude ideology critique, statism and economism, Foucault can be understood as in effect ruling in what is often called a "politics of everyday life". For if power is instantiated in mundane social practices and relations, then efforts to dismantle or transform the regime must address those practices and relations" (Fraser 1989: 26).

Patti Lather has summed up the key significances of postmodernism/poststructuralism for feminist struggle as follows:

5. Anna Yeatman (Yeatman 1990b) cites the work of William Connolly (Connolly 1974) who was an early proponent of the 'politics of discourse'. Connolly wrote that, "By the *terms* of political discourse, then, I refer first to the vocabulary commonly employed in political thought and action; second, to the ways in which the meanings conventionally embodied in that vocabulary set the frame for political reflection by establishing criteria to be met before an event or act can be said to fall within the ambit of a given concept; third, to the judgements or commitments that are conventionally sanctioned when these criteria are met" (p.2).

> Postrnodernism offers feminists ways to work within and yet challenge dominant discourses. Within postmodern feminism, language moves from representational to constitutive; binary logic implodes, and debates about the "real" shift from a radical constructivism to a discursively reflexive position which recognises how our knowledge is mediated by the concepts and categories of our understanding. Hegemonic forms of academic discourse are thoroughly challenged, including those at play in our intendedly counter-hegemonic work. [...] As such, postrnodernism offers feminism opportunities to avoid dogmatism and the reductionism of single-cause analysis, to produce knowledge from which to act, and to diffuse power as a means to take advantage of the range of mobile and transitory points of resistance inherent in the networks of power relations (Lather 1991c: 39)6.

A host of other feminist researchers and authors have written of the political significances of poststructuralism for feminist struggle (Flax, 1990; Ellsworth, 1989; Fraser, 1990; Gore, 1993; Gunew, 1993; Haraway, 1991; Hennessy, 1993; McNay, 1994; Nicholson, 1990; Sawicki, 1991; Yeatman, 1990; Yeatman, 1990; Yeatman, 1993; Yeatman, 1994; Kenway 1995; Stanley and Wise 1983; Weedon 1987; Diamond and Quinby 1988; Davies 1990; Hekman 1990; Bauer and McKinstry 1991; Davies 1994).

Many feminist educators have taken up the challenge of poststructuralist theory in order to find more useful and complex ways of speaking about problematic notions of transformation and empowerment in teaching (McLeod 1993; Kenway and Blackmore 1994; Weiler 1994; Hughes 1995). I am attempting to build on the work of those authors while exploring, in particular, what it might mean to apply the notion of 'discourse' to teaching and the politics of the ALBE profession at this time.

According to feminist poststructuralists, discourse theory "demands a new way of conceptualising both truth and political action" (Hekman 1990: 189). This 'new way' is the politics of discourse, defined by Yeatman as follows:

> This is a politics of discourse, or what Haraway (1987:30) calls 'language politics': contests for meaning of writing are a major form of contemporary political struggle. They can bring to light the domination which is inscribed in institutional practices and procedures, mass media and communication, government policies, and so on. These contests are not oriented simply to demystifying (debunking) these inscriptions of power: they are oriented to

6. Here, as elsewhere, Lather uses 'postmodernism' synonymously with 'poststructuralism'. In most cases, I distinguish between these terms, as explained earlier.

> substituting an alternative meaning. Discourse is the power to create reality by naming it and giving it meaning (Yeatman 1990a: 155).
>
> ... Political activity itself becomes preeminently a politics of contest over meanings: it comprises the disputes, debates and struggle about how the identities of the participants should be named and thereby constituted, how their relationships should be named and thereby constituted (loc. cit.).

In *Struggle over Needs,* Fraser spells out a framework and analytic model for understanding and practising the politics of discourse. She describes 'needs talk' as

> a site of struggle where groups with unequal discursive (and non-discursive) resources compete to establish as hegemonic their respective interpretations of legitimate social needs. Dominant groups articulate need interpretations intended to exclude, defuse, and/or co-opt counter interpretations. Subordinate or oppositional groups, on the other hand, articulate need interpretations intended to challenge, displace, and/or modify dominant ones. In neither case are the interpretations simply "representations". In both cases, rather, they are acts and interventions (Fraser 1989: 166).

Fraser's model for analysing struggles over social needs (pp. 164-165) has been another useful resource for my interpretation and analysis of the texts produced by this research. In engaging discursively in their professional and classroom practice, teachers of ALBE are also engaging in contests over meaning and over whose 'needs' count.

Luke (1994) has characterised struggles in ALBE over curriculum in terms of discourse politics. In a paper entitled 'Getting Our Hands Dirty', he writes about the involvement of a group of practitioners in the development of the competency-based National Framework. He describes the political complexity of that project in terms of the discursive variants of economic rationalism in Australia, where:

> ... the enfranchisement of 'equity' and 'social justice' issues and clienteles within the discourses of Labor educational policy has led to the participation of many feminists, Leftists and 'radical' educators in curriculum development and policy formation. This in turn, has muddied the demarcations of critique and complicity available in those national and regional contexts where a visible, vocal Right runs education - to the point where some would say that 'we have met the enemy and it is us' (Luke 1995c: 95).

Instead of taking up a 'doctrinal' opposition to economic rationalism, Luke suggests that these discursive variants can be "read as signs of an entry point, what Yeatman (1993) calls 'gaps' and 'openings' for pedagogical or political intervention" (Luke, 1995c: 94). This is a 'provisional politics in postrnodern conditions', which is about:

> ... making it up as we go along, about shifting levels and subjects, about local effects of centralized edicts and policies, about programmatic and contingent decisions, about getting our hands dirty, all the while committed to taking up issues of hybridity and marginality, economic exclusion and political disenfranchisement, but without clearcut, unambiguous normative benchmarks (p.96).

My exploration of the discursive engagement of teachers of ALBE is also an exploration of the strategic possibilities of the politics of discourse as a 'local, pragmatic politics' in Luke's terms.

5. Studying discursive engagement through participatory action research

I have used participatory action research (PAR) as my main method for researching teachers' discursive engagement in the field of ALBE. In this section I will build a picture of what I mean by PAR and discuss some aspects of it which are relevant to my study. In particular I discuss my applications of poststructuralist theory to action research methodology and method.

Participatory action research as collaborative, self-reflexive enquiry

I have set out to follow the principles and methodologies associated with participatory action research, traditionally defined as a form of collaborative, self-reflective enquiry and documentation carried out by practitioners on their own practice in order to find ways of improving it (Brennan 1982; Carr and Kemmis 1986; Maguire 1987; Kemmis and McTaggart 1988; Brown 1990; McTaggart 1991; Wadsworth 1991; Sanguinetti 1994; Kemmis 1995; Winter 1996; Zuber-Skerrit 1996; McTaggart 1997).

Participatory action research in education has been described as a strategic response to the political forces seen to be inhibiting the development of more effective and socially just practices (Carr and Kemmis 1986; Kemmis and McTaggart 1988). As a strategy of institutional change in education, Kemmis and McTaggart theorise action research in terms of the dialectics of institutionalisation and contestation (1988: 39-43). According to this framework, there are three inter-dependent domains within institutions: language, action and social relationships. Through processes of contestation, these domains take on institutional forms: language becomes discourse, activities become practices, and social relationships become organisation. Accordingly, "educational reform consists in opening up, challenging and changing the institutionalised forms of language, activity and social relationships which constitute education, and restructuring the relationships between them" (p.40). This framework, which highlights the reality of processes of contestation within institutions, was a helpful model in planning the CGEA evaluation which challenged institutional discourses in relation to teachers' understandings of pedagogical 'good practice'.

Participatory action research methodology is belongs to the Freirean tradition of critical pedagogical theories and methodology (Freire 1971; Freire 1972; Freire 1985). The process of gaining literacy, according to Freire and his followers, starts with the 'community of learners' reflecting on their experience. This is problematised and discussed and an understanding of the broader social and historical context is built up. Text activities are developed as part of this process of naming and analysing through dialogue. For Freire, becoming literate means being able to name one's immediate social and economic environment, to think critically about it, and hence to have the tools to act to change it. Freirean critical practice has an additional relevance in informing this project. The rhetoric of critical literacy is central to most accounts of adult literacy pedagogy. The challenge for ALBE teachers is to apply critical literacy practices to the processes of their own learning; to attend to their own empowerment as teachers through questioning and naming their own realities (Sanguinetti 1994: 43). PAR provides a means of research based on such collaborative, critical and self-reflective learning.

Fourth generation evaluation: negotiation across difference

Guba and Lincoln's *Fourth Generation Evaluation* (Guba and Lincoln 1989) has developed from the action research tradition and assumes a similar (social constructivist) epistemology[7]. However, by emphasising the possibilities of dialogue and negotiation as part of the research process itself, it moves away from preoccupation with opposition and the "epistemic privileging of the oppressed" (Bar On 1993: 83). Fourth generation evaluation is thus more compatible with the theoretical context of this research: the development of a politics of discourse and a consensus-building 'politics of difference' (Gunew and Yeatman 1993).

Guba and Lincoln state that fourth generation evaluation, rather than 'just getting to the facts', includes "the myriad human, political, social, cultural and contextual elements that are involved." They describe fourth generation evaluation as moving beyond the previous three generations of evaluation, which they characterise as "measurement-oriented", "description-oriented" and "judgement oriented", "to a new level whose key dynamic is *negotiation*" (Guba and Lincoln 1989: 8). Epstein and Wadsworth used the metaphor of a 'double helix' to describe processes of dialogue and negotiation between consumers and staff participating in an evaluation of services in an acute psychiatric hospital (Epstein and Wadsworth 1996).

The precepts of fourth generation research are compatible with the feminist and poststructural orientations which I describe in the following sections. For example, the notion of 'negotiation' fits well my usage of the notion of 'engagement'. Together, these approaches have informed the first part of this project (the action research evaluation of the CGEA) during which I consciously negotiated a variety of different responses to the Certificate with the participants on an individual and a group level, feeding back my constructions of their different viewpoints. This involved feeding back and negotiating the different interpretations in

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7.Both 'action' and 'postmodem' research are firmly anti-positivist (Wadsworth 1991: 78). The social constructionist epistemology associated with much action research (for example, that developed by Peter Berger (Berger 1966: 5) can be seen as a 'weak' form of poststructuralist epistemology. Whereas Berger would say that social reality is 'humanly produced' (applying a fundamentally representational constructionist epistemology) the poststructuralists would go further and say that in so far as as language captures difference, and that our human thought is limited by its recursiveness, a more radical and relativist constructionism is required.

order to build a 'workable' level of consensus about the impact of the Certificate.

Participatory action research and feminist method

It is not possible here to reflect in any depth on complex debates about definitions and meanings of feminist research. There are very few who would claim that there is a distinctly and uniquely feminist method of data collection and analysis (Stanley and Wise 1983: 188). Many descriptions of feminist research focus on the purpose, content and method of the research. Wadsworth and Hargreaves (1993: 1) define feminist research as "research which is carried out by women who identify as feminists, and which [...] distinctly draws on women's experience of living in a world in which women are subordinate to men. [...] It is about "collaborative models, a sense of responsibility to the research 'subjects' (participants) and to the social aim or contribution of the research". According to Lather (1991c: 71), feminist research is research which "puts the social construction of gender at the centre of the inquiry".

Other authors describe feminist research in terms of a distinctive approach to issues of epistemology and ontology (Harding 1990; Harding 1991; Harding 1992; Grosz 1988; Grosz 1990; Alcoff 1993; Code 1993; Gunew and Yeatman 1993; Stanley and Wise 1983). Weiner describes feminist research in education as a form of feminist critical praxis' which she describes as:

- deriving from experience and rooted in practice;
- continually subject to revision as a result of experience;
- reflexive and self-reflexive;
- widely accessible and open to change;
- grounded in the analysis of women's (and men's) multiple and different material realities;
- illuminative of women's (and men's) multiple and different material realities;
- explicitly political and value-led;
- within the classroom, imbued with feminist organizational practices grounded in equality, non-hierarchy and democracy;

- within educational research, additionally rejecting conventional dualisms such as theory/practice, mental/manual, epistemology/methodology '(Weiner 1994: 130).

This research is not *uniquely* feminist on any of these grounds. However, it belongs to a feminist tradition and has a strong feminist orientation in the above terms.

Feminist research and gender equity

ALBE is a feminised field in which women teaching in part-time casual or short-term contract conditions constitute the large majority of the ALBE workforce. The issue of gender is very significant, in that the progressive casualisation and rapid deterioration of working conditions of ALBE teachers would probably not have been so easily achieved were ALBE teaching not seen as 'women's work' (that is, the fragmentation and underpayment could be seen as 'natural' (Angwin, 1996)[8]. The policies which flow from performativity and marketisation are forcing women teachers into conditions of employment which have become unviable and many have been forced out of work altogether. As well, those policies are progressively discounting and over-riding feminine perceptions of teaching and learning (Blackmore and Angwin 1997; Shore 1997).

Despite the significance of gender in the politics of the field, issues of gender equity as such are not central to this study. At the same time, the feminist methodological orientation is central, as discussed above.

Standpoint theory

PAR can be seen as a means of producing knowledge which comes out of the experience of marginalised groups and from their 'standpoint'. Sandra Harding writes that in order to gain a critical view of the values and interests of institutions, one must start from outside those institutions, and study the experiences of those who have been marginalised by them:

> Standpoint theories argue for "starting off thought" from the lives of marginalised peoples; beginning in those determinate, objective

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8 Of the forty participants who have contributed directly to the project, only two were males.

> locations in any social order will generate illuminating critical questions that do not arise in thought that begins from dominant group lives... The epistemologically advantaged starting points for research do not guarantee that the researcher can maximise objectivity in her account; these grounds provide only a necessary - not a sufficient - starting point for maximizing objectivity (Harding 1993: 56-57)9.

In this project, I have 'started off thought' about the issues of policy, pedagogy and discursive engagement with the lived experiences of teachers (including myself) who in the current context have become marginalised from processes of policy development and institutional management. Both action research projects described in this thesis involve groups of teachers collaboratively coming to terms with their institutional teaching situations and constructing shared meanings in the context of struggles to resist and to come to terms with new policies and requirements which affect their teaching.

Social constructionism

In general, PAR shares with feminist research an epistemological foundation based in social constructionism. Feminist epistemology is described by Stanley and Wise as "rooted in a feminist ontology; that is, a feminism rooted in the acknowledgment that all social knowledge is generated as a part and a product of human social experience" (Stanley and Wise 1983: 192). PAR likewise "sees truth as historically and socially embedded, not as standing above or outside history and the concerns of participants in real social situations" (Carr and Kemmis 1986: 149).

The social constructionist epistemology characterising both 'feminist research' and 'action research' is manifested in the idea of 'praxis', which I understand as dialectical interaction between action and theory[10]. In this project, the emergence of theory rather than "transformative social

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9. The notion of "feminist empiricism" (Harding 1991: 111) includes a reclaiming and redefinition of 'objectivity' as socially-situated knowledge (p.134). There is a potential theoretical contradiction between her notion and the poststructural framework which I am using throughout this thesis. My aim here, however, is to merely draw attention to the compatibility between action research and 'standpoint theory', rather than to discuss the latter in any depth.

10. Carr and Kemmis define praxis as, a dialectical relationship between thought and action (or theory and practice). "They are to be understood as *mutually constitutive,* as in a process of interaction which is a continual reconstruction of thought and action in the living historical process which evidences itself in every real social situation" (Carr and Kemmis 1986: 34).

action" was central. My own role, as a teacher/researcher working amongst teachers, could be theorised in terms of Gramsci's 'organic intellectual' (Davidson 1968: 46) in that my research has evolved out of the context of my work and feeds back into the field from which I have come[11].

Participatory action research and poststructuralist theory

The postmodern challenge

In recent years, there has been a significant challenge to action research as an 'emancipatory' modernist undertaking, from theorists taking up postmodern or poststructuralist viewpoints (Ellsworth 1989; Gore 1991; McTaggart 1994; Kemmis 1996; Jennings and Graham 1997; Usher, Bryant et al. 1997). Gore wrote about to the tendency of the emancipatory rhetoric of action research in teacher education to mask "a technology of surveillance and control" (1993: 153) . Ellsworth's critique of critical pedagogy is made on similar grounds. She points out that the critical paradigm is based in an emancipatory meta-narrative and a 'phallocentric' paradigm of rational knowledge and abstract logic. Such logic relies on the notion of the ideal rational person; that people will act rationally once they understand more about the cause and context of their oppression (Ellsworth 1989: 306). It does not problematise our own implication in the very structures we are trying to change (p.310).

It is clear that many accounts of action research do reflect the modernist framework of critical social science. For example, Carr and Kemmis wrote in 1986 that action research can "... identify and expose those aspects of the social order which frustrate rational change, and provide a basis for overcoming irrationality... the action research group confronts institutional values and practices which are distorted by ideology" (Carr and Kemmis

11. Stuart Hall has written of the 'organic intellectual' that "Our aim, in this respect, could be defined as the struggle to form a more 'organic' kind of intellectual. Gramsci spoke of the distinction between those 'traditional' intellectuals who set themselves the task of developing and sophisticating the existing paradigms of knowledge and those who, in their critical role, aim to become more 'organic' to new and emergent tendencies in society, who seek to become more integral with those forces, linked to them, capable of reflecting what Gramsci called the "intellectual function" in its wider, non-specialist and non-elitist sense. He also designated two tasks for those aiming to become 'organic' intellectuals: to challenge modem ideologies 'in their most refined form' and to enter into the task of popular education. Two tasks, not one, both difficult to realise, especially at the same moment" (Hall 1980: 46).

1986: 197). This formulation is underpinned by modernist notions of the unitary rational subject, the possibility of an objectively 'rational' order, and a transcendent truth which is distorted by ideology but able to be known by action researchers and others who are unproblematically 'good' subjects pitted against injustice and irrationality.

The postmodern critique of action research has been addressed by leading action research theorists in recent years. Kemmis, for example, has written about the challenge of postmodernism to action research and the need to reconstruct educational action research in the light of those challenges (Kemmis and McTaggart 1994; Kemmis 1996). For Kemmis, the challenges centre around 'the death of the subject' as autonomous rational agent; 'the death of history' (that the Enlightenment notion of progress or the possibility of emancipation is no longer sustainable); and 'the death of metaphysics' (that science and rationality merely construct the illusion of an independent reality as a mask for human purposes of making sense of and controlling the human and natural world) (Kemmis and McTaggart 1994: 2).

Poststructuralist theory can be applied to build a more sophisticated understanding of the possibilities and limits of action research (Kemmis and McTaggart 1994; McTaggart 1994; Kemmis 1996; Jennings and Graham 1997). One of the most important contributions of the postmodern critique is that it leads us to problematise the power relations driving the research and the different political investments participants bring to it (McTaggart 1994: 327). According to McTaggart, we now need to relativise terms such as 'empowerment' and 'emancipation' and to see these as part of "the many discourses which constitute and contest the ground of action research" (p.325).

Action and discourse

In the version of PAR which I have used in this thesis, 'action' is theorised as action 'in discourse'. The focus is on discursive engagement: reflecting on, challenging and coming to terms with values, meanings and power dimensions of particular discourses. In this sense, 'reflection' and 'action' overlap with each other. In poststructuralist terms, if power is enmeshed in discourse and transacted in discourse, then resistance must also be conceived, at least in part, in terms of discourse.

Foucault's concept of power as productive and dispersed throughout society widens the scope of PAR from a focus on struggles informed by emancipatory meta-narrative of 'them' and 'us' to a deliberate and conscious investigation of discourses which construct our understandings of ourselves and our social situations. This becomes a focus on "the practices, techniques and procedures by which power operates... It involves the tracking of knowledge production (webs of power) and its power effects" Gennings 1997: 174). Further, it involves a strategic orientation to discursive resistance and the development of new discourses.

The fragmented subject

The poststructural notion of the discursively constituted and fragmented subject 'in process' (Flax 1990: 98) can be applied to action research in place of the modernist notion of the unitary, rational self (Jennings and Graham 1997: 170). Reconceptualising 'the subject' in action research requires a shift in emphasis from 'action' to 'reflection' and a shift in emphasis towards self-reflexive 'critical praxis' which includes reflection about our own positioning as a pre-requisite to negotiating different but intersecting understandings and planning what is to be done, as discussed below.

The notion of the fragmented subject is also a way of conceptualising tensions in the role of the facilitator/researcher: of being both 'insider' and 'outsider', 'comrade' and 'academic expert'.

In this research I faced the problem of how to represent multiple and sometimes contradictory views and experiences in the text of a single report. The poststructuralist focus on multiple, partial stories was of use to me in addressing this issue. For example, the notion of 'situated knowledges' (Haraway 1991) gives a language to speak about and acknowledge multiplicity, partiality and contradiction in people's representations within a field of discourse. To write the Report of the CGEA action research project (see Appendix 1), I needed to textualise the various and often contradictory views of teachers in order to present a 'collective' (but by no means consensual) view. I saw my task of writing the report, in some respects, as "the joining together of partial views and halting voices into a collective subject position" (Haraway 1991).

Reflection and reflexivity

Usher, Bryant et al. (1997) argue that the 'postrnodern challenge' calls for a greater emphasis on reflexivity in action research, that is, conscious recognition of the mutual interactivity of theory and practice through self-reflexive practice, or 'praxis' (p.137)[12] . Their writing echoes that of Lather, Lemke and others about the significance of critical self-reflexivity in textual politics. Lemke speaks of 'critical praxis' as the practical enactment of 'textual politics'. 'Critical praxis' is about reflexivity in struggles for change:

> *Critical Praxis* is a shorthand way of saying that we need to examine ourselves, examine our own actions, beliefs and values to see how they connect up with the larger patterns and processes of the system of which we are part, to understand how we are part of the problem in order to have any hope of becoming part of the solution (Lemke 1995: 131).

Praxis is central to traditions of feminist theorising and feminist struggle, as described earlier. In this project, PAR has been applied and developed as a framework for developing theoretical resources to support reflexivity amongst teachers; reflexivity about how our beliefs and values connect with the larger patterns; the patterns of our own discursive constitution; and the processes of their discursive engagement with the broader system.

The tool of deconstruction

Poststructuralist theory has provided the notion of deconstruction as a way of working through problems in their historical, political and cultural contexts (Jennings and Graham 1997: 179). According to Green (1997) deconstruction

> encompasses both a politics and an ethics, understood not so much in terms of a 'method' or a 'program' as of a distinctive, and distinctively worldly, *attitude*. That is to say, deconstruction is to be grasped as a strategy, an attitude, a stance towards texts, institutions, the social world and Being in itself (p. 233).

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12. The notion of 'reflexivity ' is already central to much theorising about action research. (Wadsworth 1991: 81) and (Hall 1996: 29). Hall (Hall 1996: 30). writes of reflexivity in action research as a deliberate attempt on two levels: to shape the research responsively, and to account for researcher constitutiveness. See also (Winter 1996: 13).

Such an attitude "encourages a relentless vigilance, including a self-regard that is always poised between introspection and interrogation"[13].

For my M. Ed. project, I documented an action research process amongst a group of teachers who over a series of discussions, collectively deconstructed 'personal development' as it figured in their professional/pedagogical discourse[14] (Sanguinetti 1993; Sanguinetti 1994). In the current project, the focus of deconstruction has been competency-based assessment, marketisation and the pedagogical practices of performativity. Some of the teachers have reflected on their own positionings and discursive constitution as teachers as part of that process.

Limitations and contradictions

There were a number of limitations in using action research for this project.

First, there was some contradiction between my strategic purposes in using action research and my academic purpose: my role as both an *insider* and an *outsider* researcher, who had the power to interpret and to theorise the politics of their engagement. As well, I had access to expert theoretical knowledge which some may have found intimidating. This issue is further discussed in Chapter 11.

It is important to note that the data (the texts) which were produced through the action research process were by no means representative of the field. Most of the participants in both projects were either self-selected

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13. Patti Lather also understands deconstruction as an internal, as well as external process of reflection and analysis: "The goal of deconstruction is neither unitary wholeness nor dialectical resolution. The goal is to keep things in process, to disrupt, to keep the system in play, to set up procedures to continuously demystify the realities we create, to fight the tendency for our categories to congeal (Caputo, 1987:236). Deconstruction foregrounds the lack of innocence in any discourse by looking at the textual staging of knowledge, the constitutive effects of our uses of language. As the postmodern equivalent to the dialectic, deconstruction provides a corrective moment, a safeguard against dogmatism, a continual displacement" (Lather 1991c: 13). See also (Grosz 1989: xv).

14. In practice, this meant examining 'personal development' as a discourse: the way it positioned us as teachers and the way it positioned the students; the way it implied a 'lack' of adult development amongst adult students, the subtle cultural meanings which were relevant within our own language and middle class Western understandings but which may be irrelevant in the context of other languages and cultures or may implicitly discount the students' values and understandings. The process of deconstructive discussion opened up new ways of articulating and conceiving of what it meant to teach in a 'feminist' way and a heightened awareness, amongst the teachers, of their (our) own tendencies to impose values and understandings on our students.

or selected by myself because they were active in questioning, resisting or supporting the CGEA.

An alternative approach to data gathering might have been to set up a discussion process (not claiming to be action research) in which my role as researcher was more clearly defined. Another possibility would have been an ethnographic study as carried out by Comber (1996). With this approach I would likewise not have been so constrained by the discipline of feeding back and progressively adjusting my analyses to take into account the responses of participants. Another alternative would have been a longitudinal study which would have enabled me to trace the evolution of the teachers' discourse around competency and pedagogy over a period of time.

In Chapter 11, I continue my discussion of the dilemmas of my own dual insider/outsider positioning, and I reflect further on the possibilities of practising a postmodern/poststructuralist approach to action research.

6. Discourse 'mapping'

Mapping the configuration of discourses

My choice of discursive engagement as a central theme for this research required me to find a method of analysis with which to explore the discursive engagement of teachers as reflected in their textual self representations.

Such a method would need to show how aspects of discursive engagement (discussed in Section 3) were enacted in the ways the teachers wrote and spoke about their work. It would need to reveal some of the ways in which teachers respond to, and produce, power in their everyday communications and practices; it would delineate the different discourses and the meanings which blend and contend in the configuration of discourses in the field of ALBE; it would connect with the historical evolution of discourses and their political significances; it would delineate the different subject positions which these discourses make available and the power effects of each; it would focus on discursive resistance, as well as discursive inscription and subjectification;

and it would account for the evolution of new discourses within the field of practice.

My approach differs significantly from critical discourse analysis which, in most accounts, is about applying techniques of linguistic analysis in order to describe the dynamics of power structuring texts. The discourse analysis reported in this thesis involves a more open, descriptive and interpretive method than the more formal analyses associated with critical discourse analysis.

My method is informed by Foucault's characterisation of the formation and transformation of 'clusters' of discourses and their correlation or relationship with other types of discourse (Foucault 1991: 54).

I have attempted to describe the transformations currently taking place in discourses of ALBE through an analysis of the writing and speaking of teachers struggling within (and against) hegemonic, performative discourses. I developed a framework for analysing and describing the discourses structuring the texts and 'mapping' (or 'charting') the dynamics of change, contestation and transformation reflected in them.

The method of analysis is 'genealogical' rather than 'archaeological'[15] Whereas Foucault's 'archaeological' method emphasised the *rules* of formations of discourse and the need for formal methods to analyse the systems of ordered procedures producing discourse, his 'genealogical' method emphasised the mutual relations between truth, language and systems of power, suggesting the need for interpretive methods of analysis (Fairclough 1992: 49). According to Fraser,

> Genealogy takes it as axiomatic that everything is interpretation all the way down, or, to put it less figuratively, that cultural practices are instituted historically and are therefore contingent, ungrounded except in terms of other, prior, contingent, historically instituted practices (Fraser 1989: 19).

My method of mapping configurations of discourse and charting the dynamic relationships between them in relation to particular texts is an attempt to "theorise and document strategic transformations of discourse and subjectivity in local sites" (Luke 1995d: 37).

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15. Foucault described his *archaeological method as* "the description of an *archive,* ie, the delineation of the set of rules which at a given period and for a given society define the limits and forms of the *sayable,* the limits and forms of *conservation* and other criteria of discursive transformation" (1991:59-60).

In discussing the influence of Foucault on educational research, Luke has stated that:

> Foucault's work moved towards a broader discourse analysis that looks both synchronically and historically at larger configurations of discourse, and how these are constructive of human subjectivity and the institutional contexts and dynamics of power relations. Even within its scepticism towards all forms of determinism - economic, technological, humanist - Foucault's works open out the possibility for tracing the lines and patterns by which discourse actually reconstructs and reconstitutes 'difference', and how these lines and patterns constitute flows, directions, exchanges and constructions of systematic grids, taxonomies and definitions... [Foucault's work] has generated a range of theory-based and theory-driven approaches to discourse analysis, in which productive affinities with neo-Marxian social theory, feminist, and postcolonial and critical race studies have been used to analyse power relations in local sites (Luke 1997b: 347).

The methods I have developed for the mapping of discourses and analysis of discursive practices (in particular, my historical analysis of larger configurations of discourse, and how these are reflected in the talk of teachers) fit Luke's terms well. As I have shown, my method is of a different order to critical and linguistic discourse analysis (Kress 1985; Gee 1990; Fairclough 1992; Fairclough 1995; Lemke 1995). It also differs in some ways from more recent (more theoretically eclectic and deconstructive) neo-Foucauldian discourse analytic work (Kamler, Maclean et al. 1994; Luke 1995c; Comber 1996; Comber 1997; Kamler 1997; Luke 1997b) .

Critical discourse analysis as a possible alternative

I had initially set out to use more mainstream versions of critical discourse analysis (Kress 1985; Fairclough 1989; Gee 1990; Fairclough 1992; Fairclough 1992; Fairclough 1995; Luke 1995d; Janks 1997; Luke 1997b) as a method of analysis. However I found these to be unsuitable for my purpose, which was to generate knowledge about teachers' discursive practices and the strategic possibilities of the politics of discourse.

Most critical discourse analysis is about explaining and de-mystifying how power operates in language and texts. Like action research, critical discourse analysis evolved within a modernist epistemology. 'Traditional' critical discourse analysis draws on Halliday's systemic functional linguistics (Halliday 1985; Halliday and Hasan 1985) which (as

Threadgold has pointed out) is highly technical[16], and usually involves a detailed analysis of small sections of text. At times, the discourse of critical discourse analysis implies that it is able to uncover 'the truth' about how texts work to express and transact power. The systemic linguistic techniques of critical discourse analysis create an appearance of technical expertise and therefore objectivity. The critical, neo-Marxist paradigm draws on a discourse based in a grand narrative of struggle against oppression and the promise of emancipation. Pennycoock writes:

> The neo-Marxist view adopted by the critical discourse analysts tends to posit a 'real' world that is obfuscated by ideology. The estimable, though problematic task, of the critical linguist then, is to help remove this veil of obscurity and help people to see the 'truth' (Pennycook 1994: 125).

A similar critique is made by Annette Patterson, who writes:

> ... as a critical researcher I also uncover those procedures that block the operation of ideology from view. I describe the material effects of language/texts and claim to reveal the discursive construction of power and subjectivity. But if the positivist claim to grasping truth is to be discredited, it seems odd that as a critical analyst I should feel free to assume the truth about ideological operations is within my reach (Patterson 1997: 426).

However, critical discourse analysis, like action research, is moving on from its modernist discursive origins towards more deconstructive and situated practices. Luke, for example, proposes:

> a critical discourse analysis in postmodern conditions which is not a science nor a logical extension of linguistics, sociology or pragmatics (nor, for that matter of 'scientific socialism'), but entails a situated, historically-located set of practices [...] it might provide a contingent procedural basis for doing research and analysis that acts on behalf of visible epistemological standpoints and interests. Like all research, it uses and builds theory; but unlike much research it is in the position to accept the provisional and contingent nature of that theory (Luke 1997b: 349).

It is possible therefore to do critical discourse analysis with an understanding that such an analysis is contingent and provisional, to view analysis as a question of 'interpreting' and 'interrupting' rather than

16. Threadgold comments that "much of the work that has taken up Halliday within linguistics has been masculinist, technicist and not very helpful to feminist poetics" (Threadgold 1997: 13).

'revealing' or 'explaining', and to speak about traces, reflections and connections rather than determinations.

There are now a number of authors and researchers who are using poststructuralist versions of critical discourse analysis which enact progressive political agendas and do not claim to uncover **'truth'** from ideologically 'correct' standpoints (Comber 1997; Kamler 1997; Patterson 1997; Threadgold 1997; Luke 1997b). However, none of these were quite appropriate for my particular research purposes.

According to Luke, the purpose of critical discourse analysis is "to disarticulate and to critique texts as a way of disrupting common sense" (1995: 21). My purpose by way of contrast was to understand more about how teachers are discursively constituted (as teachers) and how they engage with the powerful discourses of the macro context.

Luke writes that critical discourse analysis operates *both* critically and constructively. In its 'constructive moment',

> critical discourse analysis sets out to generate agency among students, teachers, and others by giving them tools to see how texts represent the social and natural world in particular interests and how texts position them and generate the very relations of institutional power at work in classrooms, staff rooms and policy (loc. cit.).

I too have set out to 'generate agency' among teachers. However, the tools which I have used are seen primarily as resources for reflexivity about the teachers' own discursive constitution and the exercise of agency in their discursive micropractices.

Discourse charting and 'feminist poetics'

Threadgold's notion of 'feminist poetics' is relevant to the approach to discourse mapping which I have taken (Threadgold 1997a; Threadgold 1997b). Threadgold defines 'poetics' as work 'on and with texts' (1997: 2). She uses the notion of 're-writing' to explore new strategies for text analysis which incorporate ideas from feminism, poststructuralism and cultural studies, and to propose more open-ended approaches which will respond to issues of corporeality, habitus and embodied subjectivity, to read the traces within texts of the inscribed and the disciplined body "as a signifying practice" (1997: 446).

To 're-write' texts (as a method of analysis) is to utilise elements of critical discourse analysis in an approach which nevertheless avoids the "objectifying metalanguage" of linguistic analysis. According to Threadgold, the 'metalanguage' of critical discourse analysis interferes with the openness and plurality of textual meaning and appears to deny the dimension of subjectivity (1997: 440-441). 'Feminist poetics' is about a more open-ended approach to text analysis which combines poststructuralist and structuralist-linguistic frameworks, but is able to respond to "the kind of endless, almost infinite semiosis that emerges from a poetic or literary text" (p. 441). The degree to which elements of critical or linguistic analysis are used "depends on what your agenda is in doing the work" (p.450).

Similarly, I have attempted to use an interpretive method which gives a 'broad brush' (as against 'fine-grained') analysis of configurations of discourse and discursive micropractices. By re-writing of texts (as 'case studies') I have highlighted textual manifestations of resistance, desire and embodied pedagogical practice.

My method for mapping discursive dynamics within texts is shown in more detail in Chapters 6, 9 and 10.

Limits and potential weaknesses

I am aware that there are certain limits to the theoretically eclectic, ('neo-Foucauldian') approach to discourse mapping that I have developed in this research.

Firstly, the mapping of discourses, as an interpretive exercise, is very much a product of my own enculturation and world view, including my disciplinary and professional training. Using my method, another person could have mapped and named the discourses constructing ALBE at this time and place differently, and equally legitimately. My representation of discourses, however, will be judged according to how well it coheres with the logic of my overall analysis and alongside common understandings within education. In the end, its validity can only be judged by how persuasive it is to teachers and other readers of this thesis.

Luke points out a further risk in research which comes out of discourse analysis, feminisms and cultural theory, and focuses on marginalised or excluded 'voices'. This is that "such work risks a move into

phonocentrism and phenomenological individualism". In turn, this could "set potential conditions... for an unintentional re-marginalisation of women's and minority discourses to the aesthetic domains of personal 'voice' and 'standpoint' (Luke 1997b: 348). However, my presentation of the teachers' individual voices and stories includes and is balanced by the notion of the 'field of discourse' in which they participate. The teachers' 'excluded' voices are presented in relation to the material effects of policy and in the context of political and economic change.

There is a further risk in working with deconstructive, eclectic models of research at a time when "a proliferation of contending paradigms is causing some diffusion of legitimacy and authority" (Lather 1991b: 7). This is that the logic and direction of the research can become lost in the attempt to straddle paradigms and to document multiple realities. In writing this thesis and in developing a method of discourse analysis I have had to struggle at times to hold onto coherence and to withstand the entropic effects of deconstruction and semiotic multiplication. However, my imagined audience of ALBE teachers (to whom this thesis is intended in addition to the academic audience) demands that I maintain clarity and usefulness in the midst of deconstructive profusion.

7. Conclusion

In this Chapter I have given a brief summary of the four stages of the research reported in this thesis. I have discussed 'discursive engagement' and 'the politics of discourse' as themes which interweave throughout the research and inform the various stages of its method. I have discussed participatory action research as my main method for gathering data and studying the ways in which teachers are engaging discursively in the field of ALBE. I have identified the modernist discourse in which the traditions and practices of PAR have evolved and have suggested ways of reframing the discourse of PAR in the light of poststructural theory. Finally, I have presented a rationale for the particular method of discourse mapping I have developed and utilised throughout the thesis.

All of these methodological themes are further developed in the rest of the thesis. In Chapter 5, I tell the story of the first of the participatory action research projects: the action research evaluation of the CGEA.

Part II

Chapters 5 - 7

A relation of surveillance, defined and regulated, is inscribed at the heart of the practices of teaching, not as an additional or adjacent part, but as a mechanism that is inherent to it and which increases its efficiency.

Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison,* Penguin, 1977, p. 138.

In a sense, the power of normalisation imposes homogeneity; but it individualizes by making it possible to measure gaps, to determine levels, to fix specialties and to render the differences useful by fitting them one to another. It is easy to understand how the power of the norm functions within a system of formal equality, since within a homogeneity that is the rule, the norm introduces, as a useful imperative and as a result of measurement, all the shading of individual differences.

Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison,* Penguin, 1977, p. 184.

Curriculum is a project of transcendence, our attempt while immersed in biology and ideology to transcend biology and ideology. Even in the most conventional scene of classroom practice we can find traces of transformative consciousness, no matter how masked in apparent compliance and convention.

Madeleine R. Grumet, *Bitter Milk: Women and Teaching,* University of Massachusetts Press, 1988, p. 20.

Chapter Five

Negotiating Competence:
The CGEA Action Research Evaluation

1. Introduction

In Chapter 1, I wrote about the challenges and dilemmas I experienced as a teacher and as an adult literacy and basic education officer at a regional council of ACFE: challenges which were also confronted by many of my colleagues and which eventually led me to embark on the research described in this thesis. These challenges came into focus with the introduction in Victoria of the competency-based Certificate of General Education for Adults: the CGEA.

In what ways and to what extent were the teachers resisting the CGEA, complying with it, or absorbing its discourse into their own? How, in other words, were they engaging with it discursively? What could we learn about the 'politics of discourse' from the teachers' resistances to the Certificate and their engagement with its discourse? Could the teachers' resistances be characterised in terms of the 'politics of discourse'?

In this chapter, I report on the first phase of the research on which this thesis is based: an action research evaluation of the CGEA which I undertook in collaboration with twenty-seven ALBE practitioners in Melbourne in 1994.

I first locate the Certificate historically and show how it grew out of the debates around ALBE policy and curriculum in the 80s and early 90s, (which I introduced in Chapter 2). I describe the structure of the CGEA and give a chronological account of my involvement with it, and with the evaluation project which was the first stage of my research. I give an

account of my method, data gathering, analysis and writing of the report. I discuss the project's immediate outcomes and its longer-term effects within the field of ALBE. Finally, I consider the evaluation project as a discursive intervention with multiple and possibly contradictory effects.

The report of the evaluation, *Negotiating Competence: The Impact on Teaching Practice of the CGEA* (Sanguinetti 1995) is attached as Appendix 1. The report documents the widespread rejection of competency-based assessment at that time. It also illustrates the diversity and the complexity of practitioners' responses as they engaged with the CGEA and the discourses in which it is constructed.

2. The Adult Basic Education Framework: precursor of the CGEA

The report *ALBE into the* 90s, discussed in Chapter 2, refers to the decision to accredit previously informal ALBE courses. This decision came out of the dove-tailing of two different sets of interests, two different discourses.

As new Commonwealth and State funding for programs and infrastructure began to flow, there was increasing interest in policy circles in an accreditation framework that would support the accountability of service providers to the funding authorities (Bradshaw, Evans et al. 1989: 96). At the same time, there was a demand from the field for accreditation, argued on the basis of the need for clarification, consistency and common understandings of a curriculum framework for adult basic education in Victoria (op. cit.). There was a corresponding argument about the entitlement of students to a clear statement of what they might be expected to learn and for them to receive public credit for their learning. Pedagogical 'good practice' and administrative accountability both required a common language for the teaching of ALBE and the formality of publicly accredited curriculum and certification.

In 1989 the Victorian Division of Further Education funded a project of consultation within the field to determine the need for and feasibility of an Adult Basic Education Certificate that would articulate into the VCE (Victorian Certificate of Education). The consultation found strong support for the notion of awarding a credential to students in adult

literacy and numeracy courses. Practitioners needed common reference points and a common language; students would benefit from the public recognition of their achievement which an accredited certificate would bring. A 'framework' would provide the flexibility needed to accommodate a diversity of learning needs, levels of skill and curriculum perspectives.

In 1991 another project was commissioned by OTFE to produce such a framework as a step towards accreditation. The proje t officer consulted with a large number of teachers and academics. She produced a complex and comprehensive framework for speaking about and recognising different levels of competence in reading and writing: the *Adult Basic Education Accreditation Framework (ABEAF)* (STB and DFE 1992). According to Bradshaw (1994), the framework was developed from two main sources: an intensive, six week period of consultation with literacy practitioners and a reading of current linguistic, critical pedagogy and curriculum theory. This included an examination of other models of accredited curricula for ALBE and McCormack's model of four "social literacies" (ACFEB and STB 1993: 135).

The ABEAF framework had a vertical axis of four ascending levels (conceived as approximate milestones in developing literacy competence), from a very low level of reading and writing competence to VCE entry level. The horizontal axis was structured as the 'four literacies': 'literacy as self-exploration', 'literacy as procedure', literacy as knowledge', and 'literacy as public debate'. This gave a basic structure of sixteen elements (four levels by four domains) for each of the writing and reading streams. (See Fig. 5.1.) Each element within each stream was given a complex description which accorded a level of 'developing' skill in literacy, reflecting increasing sophistication in conceptual and linguistic development. The e]ements, structured as four levels of competence across four different 'literacies' (corresponding to four major contexts within contemporary social life), were further divided into 'strands'. The strands, derived from Hallidayan linguistic theory (Halliday 1985), were the basis for constructing sets of competence statements within each element. In the writing stream, the four strands were (a) subject matter, (b) persona/tone/stance, (c) language and (d) structure/length[1]. (See Fig. 5.2.)

1. For further details see ACFEB and STB (1993:127-170).

Fig. 5.1 The ABEAF (Adult Basic Education Accreditation) Framework for the development of writing skills

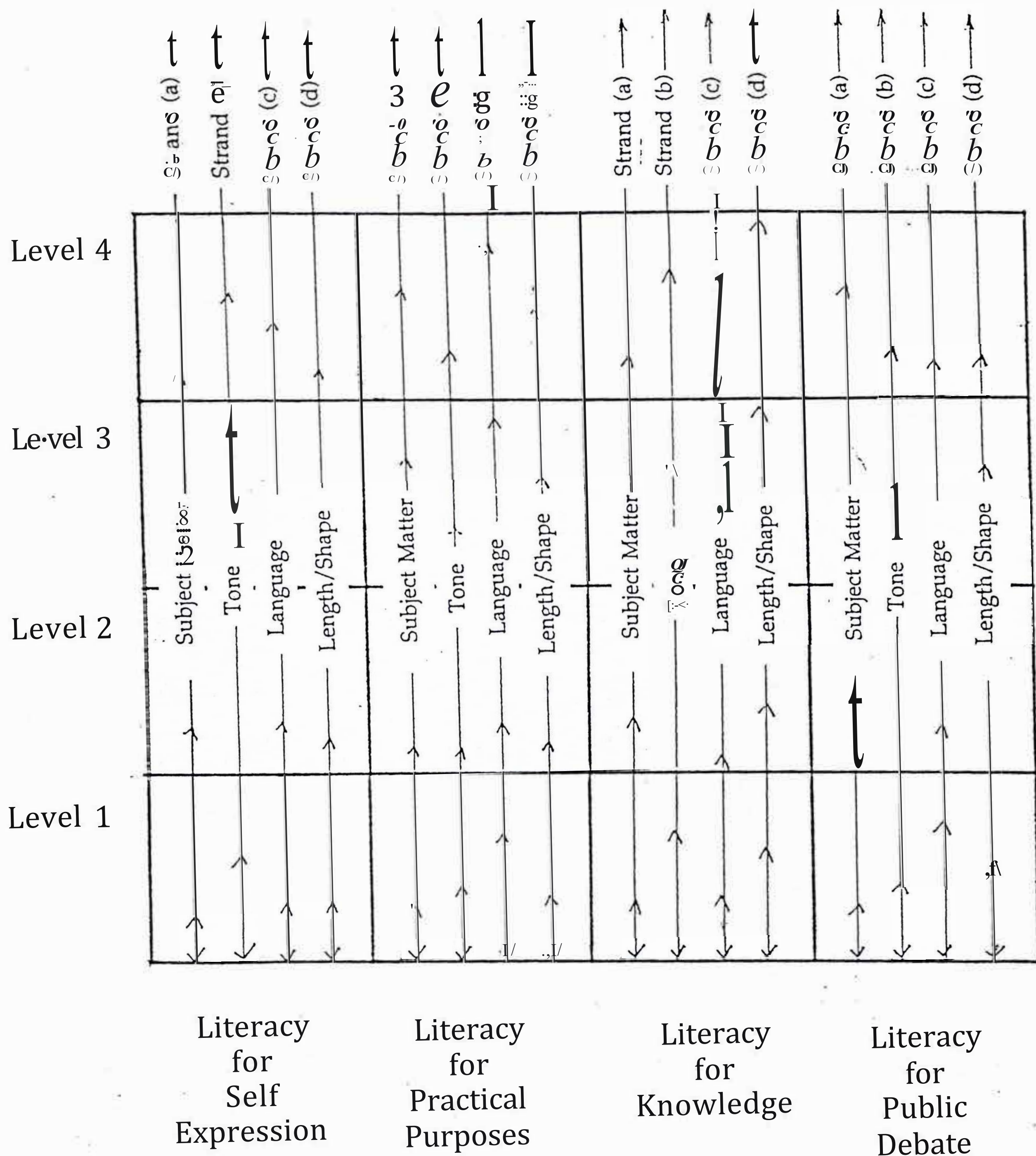
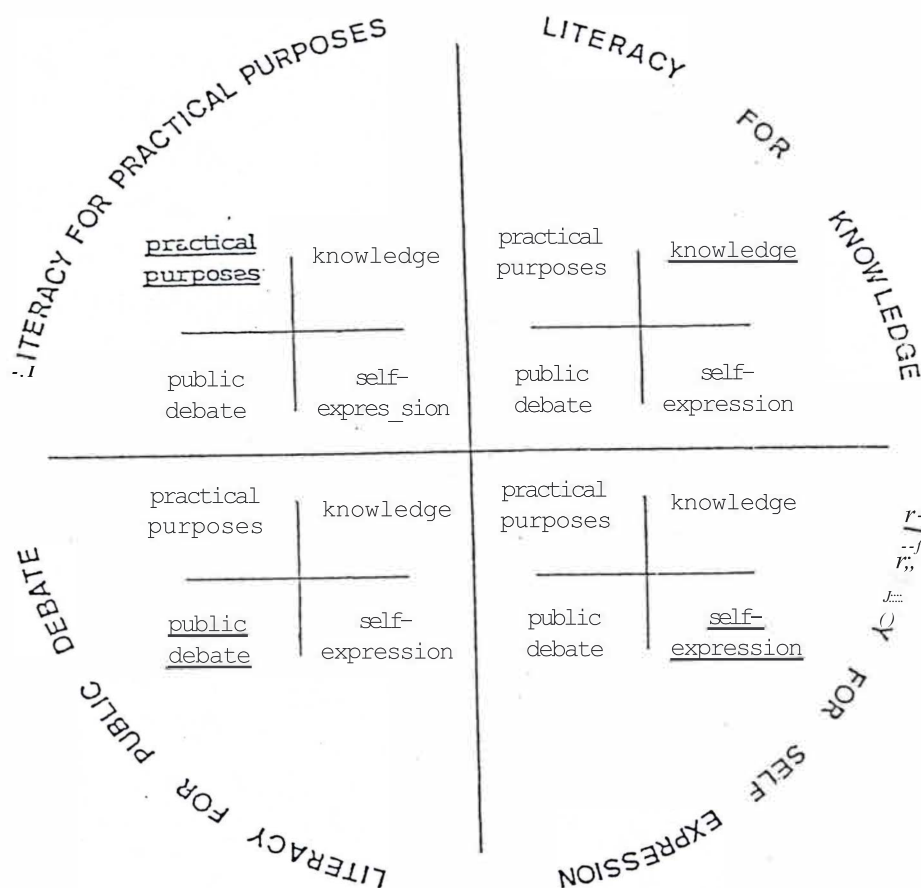


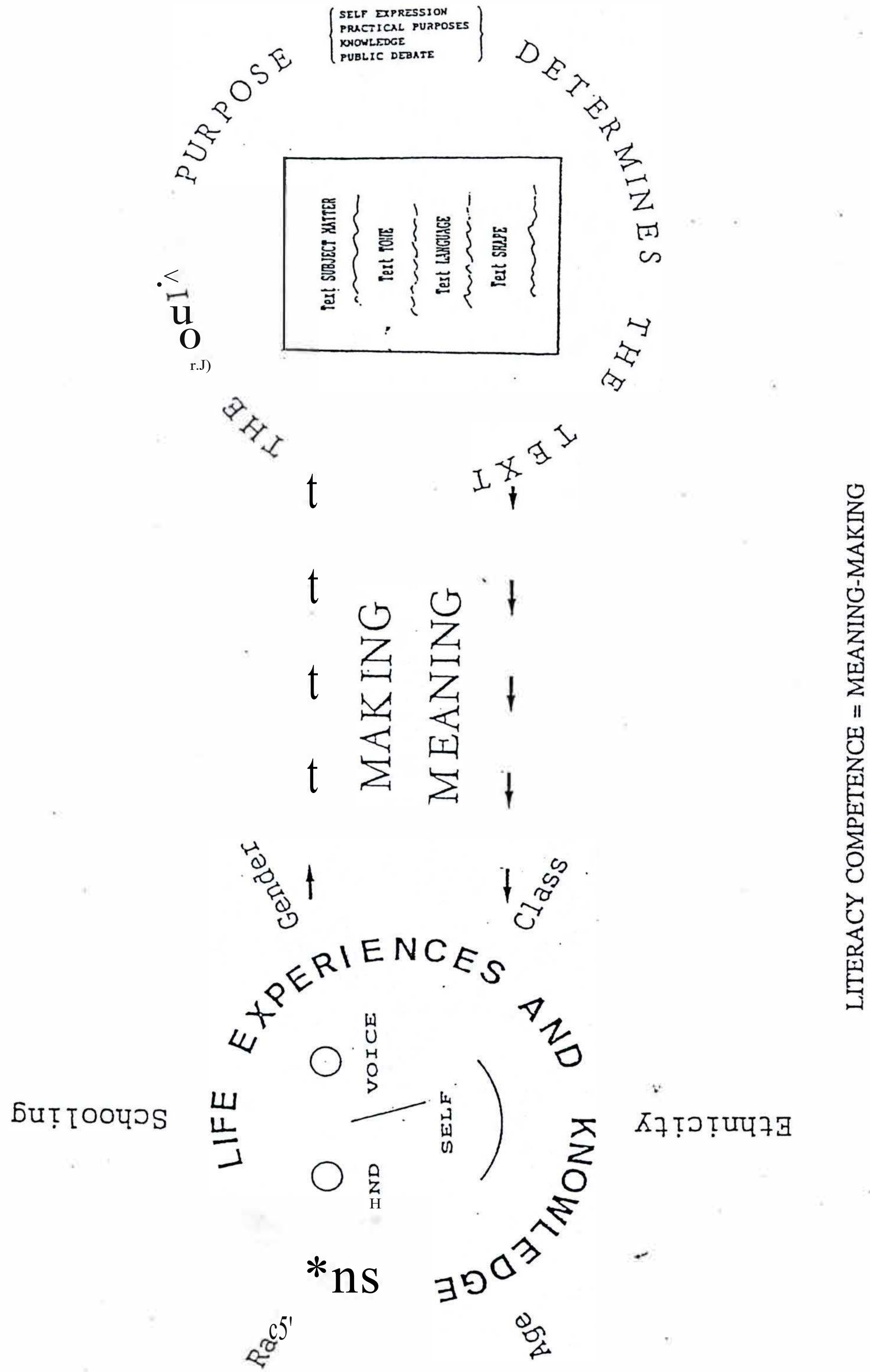
Fig. 5.2 Literacy Domains within the ABEAF



So, in ,summary,

- each literacy, whilst having a primary focus / ciµ1 contain the others;
- each literacy, whilst associated primarily with particular genres, can include others, or mixtures, as well.

Fig. 5.3 The ABEAF model of literacy



The ABEAF framework was based on 'Nine Educational Principles'. The principles described an eclectic notion of literacy: literacy as meaning-making, as sets of basic skills, as influenced by cognitive, emotional and social factors, and as "an amalgam" of interrelated social literacies (STB and DFE 1992: 2-7). (See Fig. 5.3).

The description of the ABEAF framework (given in the 'Background Works' Appendix to the CGEA document) emphasised that the literacy domains and their associated texts were not "ideal types" but were "usually mixed" (p.137). Competence statements were described as approximations which were "representative or symptomatic of each of the four literacy domains. They are descriptions of what commonly occurs.. not a complete embodiment of the multi-dimensional complexity of each domain" (p.138).

The ABEAF framework had credibility within the field and was informed by current theory in linguistics and literacy pedagogy. It was complex and multi-layered; an attempt to capture and to describe the complexity of literacy pedagogy in the language of competence, without reifying either the notion of competence or the levels and categories of the framework itself.

The framework was well received by teachers who had hitherto been working largely intuitively in developing curriculum materials and teaching strategies. According to Bradshaw (1994), the common response was, "ah, you've given us a language for talking about our work and our students' progress, but you have also broadened our notion of literacy".

3. The Certificate of General Education for Adults (CGEA)

The next step was to gain accreditation for the ABEAF Framework through VETAB (the Victorian Education and Training Accreditation Board) which required inter alia that it conformed with the policy requirements of the National Training Board (NTB).2 It was at this point that the ABEAF, an innovation which had been developed primarily

2 The NTB was the precursor of the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA).

with an educational orientation, in partnership with the 'field', was radically changed in order to meet the policy requirements of the NTRA.

Fig. 5.4 The Structure of the CGEA

	STREAMS			
Level 4	Reading and Writing 4	Oral Communication 4	Numerical & Mathematical Concepts 4	General Curriculum Options 4
Level 3	Reading and Writing 3	Oral Communication 3	Numerical and Mathematical Concepts 3	General Curriculum Options 3
Level 2	Reading and Writing 2	Oral Communication 2	Numerical and Mathematical Concepts 2	General Curriculum Options 2
Level 1	Reading and Writing 1	Oral Communication 1	Numerical and Mathematical Concepts 1	General Curriculum Options 1

Certificate of General Education for Adults (Foundation)

Certificate of General Education for Adults (Reading and Writing)

Summary of Reading and Writing Competencies

Suggested changes have been made to some of these performance criteria (below) through the Annotated Agreed Variations Process.

Self Expression	Practical Purposes	Knowledge	Public Debate
Module 4: Read and write at a level that displays more detailed technical knowledge and vocabularly and sophisticated language use, includes more objective and analytical processes, and is precisely structured and sustained in length.			
Write a longer narrative, recount or piece of creative/imaginative/expressive writing Demonstrate that meaning has been gained from reading a more complex, sustained narrative or literary text	Write a more complex text on unfamiliar processes Demonstrate that meaning has been gained from reading a complex practical text that describes an unfamiliar procedure	Write an informative, explanatory or academic report Demonstrate that meaning has been gained from reading a reference or informative text that is complex in presentation and content	Write a reasoned argumentative text Demonstrate that meaning has been gained from reading a complex persuasive text
Module 3: Read and write at a level that displays emerging technical knowledge and vocabulary, a developing personal style, increasing complexity in language use and a growing capacity to sustain longer pieces of work.			
Write a short text about less immediate aspects of personal life and experience Demonstrate that meaning has been gained from reading a more complex narrative or literary text of at least one page in length	Write a more complex procedural text Demonstrate that meaning has been gained from reading a more complex practical text that describes an unfamiliar procedure	Write an informative or explanatory report Demonstrate that meaning has been gained from reading a reference or informative text on an unfamiliar topic	Write an argumentative text that justifies an opinion Demonstrate that meaning has been gained from reading a persuasive text on an abstract topic
Module 2: Read and write at a level no longer entirely concrete nor only related to personal experience but starting to show some diversity in organisation and style			
Write a paragraph which describes personal routines and familiar situations Demonstrate that meaning has been gained from reading a simple, less familiar narrative or literary text	Write a short procedural sequence in a familiar format Demonstrate that meaning has been gained from reading a practical text that describes a familiar procedure	Write a short well-organised report on one subject Demonstrate that meaning has been gained from reading a short reference or informative text on a mostly familiar topic	Write a simple argument expressing a point of view on a matter of personal interest Demonstrate that meaning has been gained from reading a short persuasive text on a familiar topic
Module 1: Read and write a concrete text that is related to personal experience or the familiar, and is short and rudimentary in format and style			
Write one or two sentences recounting a simple personal activity, idea or experience Demonstrate that meaning has been gained from reading a simple narrative or literary text	Write a simple practical text of 1-2 sentences Demonstrate that meaning has been gained from reading a simple familiar practical text	Write several facts about a familiar or personal subject Demonstrate that meaning has been gained from reading a simple reference or informative text	Write a statement of opinion on a familiar matter Demonstrate that meaning has been gained from reading a simple persuasive text

Fig. 5.5 Summary of Reading and Writing Competencies in the CGEA

Fig. 5.6 CGEA Performance Criteria for Element 2.1: Writing for Self-Expression, Module 2

READING AND WRITING — MODULE 2

Element 2.1: *Writingfor SelfExpression*

Write a paragraph which describes personal routines and familiar situations

Performance Criteria:

1. Combine 2 - 4 personally familiar events, ideas or experiences
2. Refer to some external factors, including other times and places
3. Use pronouns correctly
4. Use descriptive details abour contexts and thoughts considered unfamiliar to the reader
5. Write a coherent paragraph linked by language devices of time
6. Spell with spasmodic accuracy
7. Use standard grammar spasmodically

Range/Conditions:

1. Familiar subject matter related ꝏ personal life and meaning
2. Use of dictionary of own choice

Examples of texts:

srories, poetry, aurobiographies, diaries, journals, plays, myths and legends, creative writing, greeting cards, interviews (magazines, TV, radio), TV soapies, films ("real *life*" documentaries, biographies)

Examples of assessment tasks:

- Write a short job history as part of a job application letter
- Write about one highlight of your weekend

The requirements were made clear to curriculum developers employed by ACFE: all courses now had to be accredited in order to attract funding. Accreditation meant that the curriculum and assessment framework must comply with the NTB's definition of competency. There was a further pressure brought to bear on TAFE colleges which had a significant role in ALBE teaching through their access and compensatory education departments. If the CGEA did not receive accreditation by the end of 1992 there was a possibility that (currently unaccredited) ALBE programs would be taken away and re-located in the community sector.

The structure of the CGEA

The document prepared for accreditation was titled, *Certificates of General Education for Adults within the Victorian Adult English Language, Literacy and Numeracy Accreditation Framework* (VAELLNAF) (ACFEB and STB 1993)[3].

It was developed by extending the ABEAF framework and super-imposing upon it a new framework of criterion-referenced, competency-based assessment. The ABEAF Reading and Writing stream was adapted, and three new streams ('Oral Communications', 'Numerical and Mathematical Concept' and 'General Curriculum Option') were added. Fig. 5.4 shows the basic structure of the Certificate.

The four streams were comprised as follows:

- Stream 1 was Reading and Writing, divided into 'Reading' and 'Writing' as two separately assessable strands. Each of these then divided into four domains. These four domains equated to the four domains or fields of the ABEAF framework and were now termed: *self expression, practical purposes, knowledge* and *public debate.* (See Fig. 5.5.)

- Stream 2, Oracy, was also divided into the above four domains. However, each of the domains was associated with, and described in terms of, 'speech events', 'speech episodes', 'informational routines' and 'interactional routines' (Richards, Platt et al. 1985: 267) cited in (ACFEB and STB 1993: 184). Hence: *oracy for self-expression* related to competency in 'social episodes'; *oracy for practical purposes* related to 'support episodes'; *oracy for knowledge* related to 'presentation

3. Throughout this thesis it is variously referred to as the CGEA, the VAELLNAF, the Certificate, or 'the framework'.

episodes'; and *oracy for public debate* related to 'exploratory episodes'.

- Stream 3, Numerical and Mathematical Concepts, was divided into five fields of mathematical competency. These were: *data, relation and pattern, number, measurement,* and *shape.*

- Stream 4, the General Curriculum Option, had seven fields, which were derived from the Mayer Key Competencies (Mayer 1992) . which are: *collecting, analysing and organising ideas and information, communicating ideas and information, planning and organising activities, working with others in teams, using mathematical ideas and techniques, solving problems, and using technology*4.

Competence had to be displayed in any three of the five possible Mayer competencies at each level. For the purposes of the grid of assessment, the Mayer competencies were regarded in the same way as 'domains'.

For the whole framework, each node (each square in the grid of levels, fields and streams) was to be separately assessed and have its own set of performance criteria, standards, range and conditions. It was possible, however, to teach and assess the GCO competencies via the 'integrated model'. That is, the Mayer skills could be inserted into (or 'overlaid' onto) any other of the streams, rather than being taught separately.

The VAELLNAF thus had an enormously complex structure. To be assessed as having achieved competency in Writing in Element 2.1 (Writing for Self-Expression, level 2) students were required to produce a paragraph on a given theme, fulfilling all of the seven performance criteria within the same task, in order to be deemed to have demonstrated competency in that element. (See Fig. 5.6.) Performance criteria for elements in the Oral Communication, Numerical and Mathematic, and General Curriculum Option Streams are similarly complex and demanding (Appendix 1: 118- 110).

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4. The three developing levels of competency specified by Mayer was extended to four levels in order to be incorporated into stream 4 of the framework. Instead of having to achieve competence in all seven of the Mayer competencies, students needed to be assessed in only three of them. The rationale behind the inclusion of the Mayer competencies was to "provide a vehicle for the delivery of a content-oriented subject" (VAELLNAF p.97). In other words, the purpose of the General Curriculum Option stream was to include general subjects which reflected local or special interest such as Koori history, women's health or science and technology, and to develop thematic curricula which would meet the requirements of assessment in the other three streams (p.98).

From ABEAF to CGEA: critique from the field

Immediately the VAELLNAF (or 'CGEA') was published, there was a cry of protest from teachers. Some said that a slide had taken place from the notion of literacy (or literacies) as social action to a functional notion emphasising written and spoken English as discrete sets of skills (McCormack 1994: 11). Others pointed to the shift that had taken place from 'competence statements' (which in the ABEAF were written as complex sentences reflecting the notion of a complex, holistic pedagogy) to 'competencies'. 'Competencies' in the CGEA were the same as 'elements', which were the basic units for assessment, the nodes in the grid. Elements were defined and assessed by sequenced lists of skills known as 'performance criteria'. Whereas the competence statements of the ABEAF were to be used as a guide, an indication of levels of attainment (ultimately to be decided by teachers in consultation with each other), the competencies of the CGEA were to be assessed formally by means of the completion by students of *assessment tasks* which had to display a fixed number of *performance criteria* each of which had specified *range* and *conditions*.

Several articles appeared in the pages of VALBEC's *Fine Print* denouncing the framework. The CGEA re-write was described as "fatally flawed", was "a betrayal of the original", "pedagogically fragmented" and "incoherent" (McCormack 1994: 13). See also Suda (1994: 27), Pobega (1994: 1). These views exemplified the prevailing view in the field at that time; that the CGEA was atheoretical, reductionist, and based on a simplistic notion of literacy and language development.

The critique of the CGEA from within the field focussed on the various shifts that occurred in the transition from the ABEAF to the CGEA. The changes sparked debates about the meanings and purposes of ALBE and about who 'owned' it. For many, the CGEA was a symbol of the appropriation of curriculum by the state and its colonisation by discourses of commodification, and national economic and industrial imperatives. The earlier ABEAF had offered the possibility of greater rigour and public accountability in a complex and holistic framework which acknowledged the multiple theoretical understandings and traditions which feed into curriculum and pedagogy in ALBE. However, the behavioural competencies within the CGEA implicitly positioned teachers as trainers and as assessors of students' performances according to predefined

criteria, rather than as skilled and responsible teachers in a complex educational field.

The alternative view put forward by the project officers and by some teachers, was that the CGEA symbolised the benefits of the shift from margins to mainstream, including new funding for full- and part-time courses through DEET. The controversy between these two view points raged during 1993, when the VAELLNAF document was published, and 1994, when it was first introduced in classrooms. It formed the context for the first phase of my research, described in Section 4.

The critique from academia

The teachers' protests were mirrored by a growing critique within academia of CBT as reductionist and anti-educational (Preston and Walker 1993; Davies 1994; Soucek 1994; Spady 1994; Usher and Edwards 1994; Brown 1994a; Jackson 1994a; Jackson 1994b; Marginson 1995; Usher, Bryant et al. 1997). According to these critics, CBT signified the restructuring of educational provision to meet the needs of Australia's industry in the context of the integration into the globalised economic market. CBT was described as "the colonisation of lifeworlds by the economic/administrative system" (Soucek 1993: 165) and as a "process of ideological capture" (Jackson 1993: 159).

Marginson argued that competency-based education (CBE) had a role in fulfilling certain functions but that it does not bring improved learning or facilitate skill transfer and is "fundamentally flawed" as an educational paradigm (Marginson 1995: 103). CBE appeared to resolve the tension between a view of the student as the *subject* of learning (where the students' empowerment is the goal of learning) and a view of the students as *object* of education (where meeting the needs of employers is the goal) (Marginson 1995: 109).

David Homer's critique of 'curriculism' discussed the ways in which the discourse of 'levels' (in curriculum frameworks of the 1990s) disciplines teachers and serves to "recolonise education in the names of national renewal and economic prosperity" (Homer 1995: 123):

> The current discourse of curriculism claims territories, sets levels and lays down boundaries which are the basis for the construction of its subjects. Such is its nature that they cannot be subject to part of it; you have to take it all. Once that you have decided that there

> are, say, ten levels of attainment, you have to say what they are. And if they are crossed by, say, four focus areas of strands then you have to say what *they* are too. You have forty boxes and you have to have something in every one of them. This is no mean feat. Why not fifty-seven boxes with entries in forty-three of them?.. Well, you cannot have a level/category intersection without it becoming at least potentially, if not intentionally, a point of assessment. In both of these texts we are examining *what falls within the grids* [author's emphasis]. There is no more; the boxes are full. There is no theorising about the subject English in these documents simply 'is' what is there... (p. 119).

Usher and Edwards discuss the discourse of competence in Foucauldian terms, claiming that it:

> ... acts as a form of regulation and self-regulation. The power of competence is exercised by removing that exercise from our own gaze. Competence constructs and reflects a new technology of power and of the self (Usher and Edwards 1994: 117).

The academic critique of CBT (or CBE) has informed my analysis of the data generated in the CGEA action research project and my analysis (in Chapter 6) of the discourse of performativity.

4. Origins of the CGEA action research evaluation

Teaching to the CGEA

In February 1994, after enrolling in full time doctoral study, I sought a part-time teaching position with a community-based provider offering the CGEA. I was curious to teach the CGEA myself and wanted a base from which to research how it was being implemented.

I took up a part-time sessional teaching job for one day per week at a local community centre, teaching the reading, writing and oral communication streams of the CGEA to a group of women in the OLMA (Office of Labour Market Adjustments) programs. The women (from Italian, Greek, Turkish and Laotian backgrounds) had been retrenched from the textiles and clothing industries and were improving their literacy at the same time as retraining as home care workers.

I had planned to work with the teachers at that centre in a participatory action research process and to document the issues that the teachers were

grappling with in teaching for the first time 'to' the CGEA. As all teachers worked part-time and sessionally there was never a time when enough of them were together to make this feasible. The part-time, sessional conditions made it almost impossible for groups of teachers to meet at any one time or place and the stress of constant travel reduced their interest in doing so. This was a difficulty in both the CGEA evaluation project documented in this chapter and the subsequent action research project documented in Chapters 8, 9 and 10.

I kept a journal of my own experiences, thoughts and feelings about teaching to the CGEA and of the various teacher meetings and moderation meetings which I attended during that time.

The role of the Adult Literacy Research Network Node

On June 24, 1994, the Adult Literacy Research Network Node of Victoria (ALRNNV) of the National Languages and Literacy Institute of Australia (NLLIA) (now known as Languages Australia) organised a seminar entitled 'Evaluation as Research' which was attended by about 80 people involved in ALBE. The morning session focussed on evaluation methodology and the afternoon session consisted of four workshops, one on each of the four streams of the CGEA, in which teachers shared their responses to it. The reports of these workshops at the plenary session which followed came together in a rather devastating critique of the Certificate (ALRNN 1994). In the meantime, the ALRNN had decided to commission a teacher-based evaluation of the Certificate (as a research response to the controversy then raging in the field) and circulated a leaflet at the seminar inviting participants to indicate their interest in becoming involved.

Following the seminar I was asked by the co-ordinator of the ALRNN to facilitate the project: to convene a group of participant-evaluators and to write a synthesis report for publication by the ALRNN. This project was completed by the end of 1994 and the report published in 1995 (Sanguinetti 1995: Appendix 1). The invitation to facilitate an action research evaluation of the CGEA as a funded ALRNN project provided an opportunity to do what I had attempted to do on my own a few months earlier. The institutional backing now available gave the project prestige, momentum, a planned outcome (a publication) and a small

amount of funding which enabled me to carry out research similar to that which I had already planned for my PhD.

5. Method

Multiple, over-lapping aims

My account in Chapter 1 of the various situations in which I have been positioned (as teacher, teacher-researcher, bureaucrat, policy activist and student of poststructural theory) sets the background for a discussion of my multiple (and in some ways contradictory) aims in undertaking the CGEA project.

I took on this project with four main aims in mind:

- to evaluate a policy innovation (the competency-based Certificate of General Education for Adults) in order to inform policy-makers;
- to challenge a policy innovation from the standpoint of the practitioners;
- to facilitate a dialogue between practitioners and policy-makers;
- to contribute towards strengthening the field of practice;

As discussed in Chapter 4, I had two additional aims that were specific to my own thesis. These were:

- to use the data that would be generated to make a further analysis of the discursive engagement of teachers in response to the CGEA;
- to develop my theoretical understanding of issues of research methodology, especially issues at the intersection of action research and poststructuralism.

The CGEA evaluation project

At the 'Evaluation as Research' seminar on June 21 1994 (described above), a leaflet asking for expressions of interest in being involved in a project evaluating the impact of the CGEA on teaching was circulated. A group of 15 teachers came forward in response. After contacting all of

these, I established a group of 14 teachers who initially met on Friday, August 19. Two subsequently decided not to participate (one of these wanted to be interviewed instead and one dropped out after it emerged that the provider in which she worked was actually boycotting the CGEA). Two country participants were not able to be present. At that time I sought and gained ethics approval from the relevant committee at Deakin University.

The reflective journalling group

The group comprised 13 members (including myself). Eleven had volunteered at the June seminar and there were two whom I recruited to improve the representativeness of the group (to ensure greater geographical representation). The group members were from four different TAFE colleges, three different community-based providers and the prison system. This group became the informal reference group for the project. They helped to plan the research process, generated much of the data and commented on early drafts of the report.

At the initial meeting the participants worked through the issues involved in teaching to the CGEA and identified a list of key questions which would guide their reflections on the pedagogical impact of the framework. The key questions were:

1. How does the competency framework affect my teaching program and teaching practice? (This was the key organising question.)
2. Is it possible to 'go with the flow' (with a group or topic) then look back and retrospectively fit this around the requirements of the Certificate? To what extent do I do this?
3. What has driven me as a teacher? How do I hold onto that; am I compromising myself?
4. What works? what doesn't?
5. Can I fulfil the assessment demands without compromising student needs?
6. How can I cope with teaching and assessing at the different levels, and the range within each level?
7. What do I do with learning outcomes that are defined in the Certificate that are ambiguous, or don't make sense, or that I disagree with?

8. What does the Certificate offer *me* as a teacher?

9. How do I support and teach intellectually disabled students who are being integrated, at the same time as implementing the Certificate?

10. What is the impact on students of the assessment?

11. In what ways have I been creative in testing/assessing students?

12. What are the administrative constraints (of moderation, etc)?

13. What is the impact on 'negotiating the curriculum'? Is my course driven by the needs of the learners or by the Certificate?

14. What are the significant outcomes which *are not* part of the framework? (Appendix: 6).

There was discussion of the theoretical underpinning of the research and agreement was reached about ethical issues involved. This discussion was recorded in detail in the minutes of the meeting. I distributed and discussed material about teacher-based action research and personal/professional journal-keeping (Nunan 1993; Henry 1985; Holly 1987).

The participants undertook to keep reflective journals in which they would record what was happening in their teaching in the light of the key questions. They would keep journals during September, October and November 1994, in which they would document the changes, challenges, benefits and difficulties they experienced in working with the Certificate. I suggested that in order to maintain confidentiality, the journals themselves were to be private and would not be shared, but that each person would submit a report based on what they had written, summing up the issues as they experienced them and their overall reflections. Some participants in fact submitted their journals as well as their summary reports. The participants each received a small payment ($200) for this work, in recognition of the time taken for meetings and writing and the fact that most participants were not full-time teachers. The 11 journal reports contributed by the 12 participants (including one joint report) are published in Appendix 1.

It was difficult to gather all participants together at ensuing meetings. Nevertheless, I was able to maintain contact with the participants and

offer them support and guidance where necessary. During this time I continued with my interviews and transcriptions.

Interviews

At the first meeting, it was decided that the group should be broadened so that the evaluation would be based on more widely representative feedback. Members of the reflective journalling group recommended teachers at the first meeting and I decided that I would approach others whom I knew were very experienced in the field, had been involved in the CGEA and would contribute their wisdom to the analysis, as well as their experience in implementation. I also consciously included people whom I knew were more positive about the CGEA, so that there would be a representation of different views about it and that these differing perceptions would be negotiated in the course of the group reflections and the drafting of the report.

Accordingly, I recruited a second group of 13 practitioners chosen with a view to broadening the representation of different institutions, types of providers, geographical locations, streams, and in some cases on the basis of historical involvement as CGEA project workers. These participants were interviewed rather than being asked to keep reflective journals. I conducted the interviews mainly at the place of work of each person. I showed each interviewee the key questions beforehand, and conducted each interview informally, as a discussion, rather than as question and answer. The interviews were taped and transcribed by me before being checked and modified by each participant.

Focus group

The teachers with whom I had worked at the community centre in the first semester of 1994 knew of my work and wanted to be involved, although it was not possible to convene them as an action research group. I therefore invited them to give their feedback at a focus group meeting which was attended by five teachers; I taped and transcribed the focus group discussion and used this alongside the other interview data.

Personal journal

From early February 1994 and throughout the period of the research, I maintained a personal journal of the developing process of the research. I did not consciously refer to the journal which I had kept during the previous six months as a teacher of the CGEA when analysing the data for the ALRNN report as I felt that it was more important for me in that role to focus on the data generated by the other teachers. However, it provided a reference point for the further analysis of discursive engagement. My journal has also enabled me to consciously articulate and to review my own experiences, biases and preconceptions and therefore to be more aware of these as I analysed the data provided by the participants.

Key documents

The data for the evaluation included a number of key documents which were selected because they were part of the official documentation or because they documented the responses of practitioners. These documents include the workshop reports of the June 24 seminar 'Evaluation as Research seminar', reports of rural seminars, CGEA project reports, and a number of articles by practitioners about the CGEA which have been published in VALBEC's publications, *Fine Print* and *Broadsheet.* These are listed in the bibliography of the Appendix.

Analysis and writing of the report

I analysed the data across a set of categories of issues and concerns, derived from my reading of the transcripts and the reports[5]. I organised the categories (that is, the name I gave to groups of issues confronting participants) into nine themes which became the nine headings. In the report, each category forms a sub-heading under which there is a brief discussion and quotes from the data. I derived four main recommendations out of the totality of issues raised (Appendix 1: 52).

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5. In this process I was guided by Quinn Patton's discussion of developing category systems in qualitative data analysis (Quinn Patton 1990: 402-405). According to Quinn Patton, the categories ought to have "credibility, uniqueness, heuristic value, feasibility, special interests and materiality" (p.403). Consciously and unconsciously, in developing the categories, I was referring back to my aims and theoretical world view as referred to in the previous section.

On the request of the ALRNN, I subsequently included two further sections summarising the findings; a section highlighting the 'achievements' of the Certificate (p. 46) and a section identifying issues for further research (p. 47). I included a further section discussing the critique of competency-based assessment as it appears in the literature and made some suggestions for exploring alternative modes of competency-based assessment (p.41).

My initial draft findings were presented and negotiated with ten of the participants at the final meeting of the working group on November 18. At this meeting, participants agreed with the findings, made some changes and added more information. The report was then approved and presented at the VALBEC conference on November 24, where it was well received by about 50 VALBEC members.

6. Findings

The findings are couched in terms of the benefits and difficulties that practitioners were experiencing in implementing the CGEA. The report contains a full version of the project findings under the following headings:

1. Institutional issues
2. Impact of the CGEA on teaching generally
3. Assessment
4. Reading and writing stream
5. Oral communication stream
6. Numeracy stream
7. General curriculum option stream
8. Moderation
9. Implementation

Here I present a brief summary the findings documented in the report.

Institutional issues

> ... it gives the student a credential, for all the time they have spent here (and we've been running courses for so long, and all they have got is a bit of paper that no-one recognises (interview, Appendix: 9).

The accreditation of the CGEA was seen as 'bringing ALBE in from the margins' and raising its profile by making it more coherent and ensuring a measure of public accountability to funding authorities. It brought increased awareness and self-confidence to some teachers (p. 9).

However, the current model of funding providers by according to 'student outcomes' was seen as encouraging 'creaming off', by providers, of the potentially most able students. Moreover, there was seen to be a contradiction between the demands placed on teachers and the conditions of sessional staff: that the level of skill, commitment, and extra time required to implement the Certificate could not be expected from people being paid a minimum hourly rate (p. 10).

There was inadequate funding for moderation and professional development, especially in rural areas.

Despite the expressed aim of helping students into mainstream education and training, there were areas of confusion. The CGEA did not clearly articulate into Year 11 of secondary school. Some of the performance criteria demanded a much higher level than that required at years 11 or 12, especially at levels 3 and 4 (p. 11). It was seen by industry to be unsuitable for workplace and industry training because of the period of time required to achieve the competencies and because industry already had its 'own' credentialled certificates (p. 11).

The impact of the CGEA on teaching generally

> Certainly, there have been some positives that have come out of the CGEA, for example, the necessity of moderation has forced teachers together and provided an invaluable opportunity for discussion and sharing. This must be continued and built on, as in the ALBE field of peer support and sharing is enormous ... (but) ... we need to come up with something more realistic and less restrictive ... The Certificate stifles creativity and confidence and has the potential to remove students away from being the main focus of my teaching (Appendix: 12).

Teachers acknowledged the benefits as well as pointing to the difficulties of working with the Certificate. Some commented that the framework

encouraged more rigorous attention to the theoretical underpinnings of ALBE teaching, to curriculum planning and method of delivery. They were able to use the framework in a way which enabled them to successfully integrate it into their teaching. Many noted that the language was inaccessible and that the framework was intimidating and at times incoherent: in the wording of the performance criteria, in the way the performance criteria related to each other and to the elements, and also in the way that the streams related to each other (pp. 11-12).

A number of participants noted too that there was inadequate guidance in how to develop the curriculum itself. The focus on assessment had detracted from the issue of how one actually bring students to the outcomes specified (p.12).

A significant issue was the increased work involved in generating a large amount of documentation with respect to each student. This was acutely felt by sessional teachers who were being forced to give hours of unpaid time in developing curriculum and assessment tasks to meet the requirements and to record assessments (p.16).

Some teachers reported that their students liked working with the Certificate, appreciated the additional structure, the knowledge of what was required and where they were going and valued the awarding of a credential for their achievement. Others reported that many students were not interested, that it was often not relevant, and that they had complained about the number and frequency of assessment tasks. Some said the CGEA tended to engender a 'pass/fail mentality' amongst the students who became focussed on hoops they need to jump through, rather than actual learning (p.17).

Problems with competency-based assessment

> The last thing I wanted to do is repeat the same confidence destroying activities with which the students had already experienced a history of failure... The problem with this is that every lesson had to fit the criteria of the Certificate for the work to go into someone's folio to enable them to access the Certificate... the students found producing these pieces of work patronising and useless (Appendix: 18-19).

Criterion-referenced assessment (that is, the requirement for the students to display a fixed number of performance criteria in order for teachers to assess whether or not 'elements' of competency had been attained) was criticised by most participants, that it had the effect of fragmenting and

distorting teachers' practice (p. 21). The criteria were seen as often bearing a tenuous relationship to the element being assessed and were not accepted as constituting exclusive and necessary evidence that a particular element had been achieved (pp. 19-20). One teacher referred to the need to "rush through" material that otherwise would have required more time spent on it, in order to fulfil the performance criteria (p. 21). Several others commented that although moderation was successful and appreciated, the focus on the legalities of assessment amounted to a waste of professional development time when there were many other issues that needed to be worked on jointly across providers (p. 18).

There were a number of explicit examples given about the ways in which the assessment framework affected and distorted 'good practice' through fragmenting the curriculum and the processes of teaching and learning. A view expressed by several people was that whereas an experienced teacher will find ways around it, a less experienced teacher would be inclined to follow the lead of the document and tend to use it as a curriculum outline (p. 21).

The separate assessment of elements in each domain, each with its own set of performance criteria, had the effect of constructing the domains as 'fixed' rather than as conceptual groupings that, in real life, always flow into one another and cannot be clearly separated out. Most texts did not fit neatly into this or that domain. Some commented that within each domain, the performance criteria had the effect of limiting skills or types of texts that could be brought in. The necessity to assess each domain separately within each stream was also questioned. Instead it was suggested that students should be given more choice in working within the domains that were important to them, so that they would use the framework as a way to help them to reach their individual goals. By enforcing an even spread of assessment across all the domains, and criteria, the framework implicitly inhibited the focussing on a particular theme or area of skill. This limited its appropriateness, for example in vocational and industrial settings or in the context of women's groups or groups with very low levels of literacy (p. 22).

Some participants pointed to the complex 'mapping' that was required when integrating the streams and domains. The complexities of working across domains and streams had been overcome by some practitioners through concentrating on the content and identifying elements and

assessment tasks in the material which flowed from themes, activities and projects. However, there was a huge amount of research and preparation required, especially in finding texts that were authentic, appropriate and matched the criteria, range and conditions. The richness of teaching to the integrated model was circumscribed when it came to applying the complex requirements of the assessment. Mapping across the complex requirements tended to produce curriculum which was highly contrived, whereas previously, teachers could follow themes which unfolded organically and took on their own momentum, following the students' interests (pp. 23-24).

Reading and writing stream

> I think we have to be critical of the whole competency system because of the way it does compartmentalise language. It's saying, in order to be competent, you have to display this set of skills and it doesn't allow for other factors that might influence that, such as gender, socio-cultural background, ethnographic aspects. So, whose competencies are they really? (Appendix: 25).

The separation. of 'oracy' from 'literacy' and the construction of 'oracy' (or, 'oral communication') as a separate stream, alongside 'reading' and 'writing', was seen by many as problematic. This separation implicitly goes against generally agreed notions of literacy as social activity in different domains of life. It was noted that most people were already teaching it in an integrated way but were assessing it separately (p. 25).

Many people questioned the appropriateness of CBT to teaching and assessing language and literacy: minimalist checklists of criteria may not adequately reflect the complexities of the writing process. A number of instances were documented in which student texts met all the performance criteria as such but still did not work as effective texts (p. 25).

A few participants referred to the tendency, when devising texts that would fit in with prescribed levels, criteria, range and conditions, to oversimplify and thereby to patronise students and to deprive them of authentic material (p. 27).

Oral communication stream

> I just don't think [the oracy stream] should be there, and I don't think it should be assessed for ESB [English Speaking Background] people, particularly at levels 1 and 2 [...] They already have a lack of skills in their everyday life,

> which they have to go through with, and this is something on top of that[...] It's absolutely outrageous (Appendix: 30).

The oral communication stream was found to be extremely problematic from a number of viewpoints. Participants rejected the need for an 'oracy' stream to be assessed separately from reading and writing (p. 28). Assessing the way people speak was seen as artificial and intrusive (p. 29). A number of participants refused to assess in oral communication or else assessed unobtrusively and intuitively. Whereas the CGEA was used as a framework for ESL learners, it was not an ESL framework and did not encompass the skills they needed to be taught (p. 30). The 'intelligibility' criterion was seen to discriminate against Non- English Speaking Background (NESB) people with different accents (p. 31).

Numeracy

> My view is that it's very hard to cut up mathematics. The analogy that I use is that I know how to saw timber and hammer nails, but I don't really know if I could build a house. I think that breaking up the course [has to be done] to measure how people are going, but I'm not sure if this is the best way to do it (Appendix: 32).

Feedback on numeracy was mixed although many found it to be unworkable in its present form (p. 31). The framework effectively 'atomised' curriculum and made it difficult to follow through on areas of interest to students. There was a mismatch between skill levels between students in numeracy and reading and writing which may result in some students failing to achieve a Certificate because of numeracy problems (p. 32). A 'pass/fail' attitude was engendered, putting both students and teachers under pressure (p. 33). Some essential elements of work-related numeracy skills had been omitted (p. 33).

General Curriculum Option (GCO)

> If someone is paying off a mortgage and doing these things in their daily lives and we know that they are functioning in the wide world with children and have kept down jobs, we know that they are more likely to be demonstrating GCO level 2, so why is it that we need to create new tasks, in order to validate that? As someone else said, it's insulting to ask an adult, "show me how you can organise an activity" (Appendix: 35).

Whereas the GCO was originally developed to include local options in the CGEA curriculum (such as health, science, creative arts, horticulture), the framework of generic competencies ('able to work in teams', 'able to

plan and organise activities', 'able to communicate ideas', etc.,) meant that there was no means of assessing the students' learning of the actual content of those options (pp. 34-35). The generic competencies were about general learning outcomes that would normally be expected of any ALBE program, and could therefore be awarded by teachers without the teaching of any programs at all (p. 35). The generic skills and attributes were those which were normally already possessed by functioning adults and it was sometimes patronising to ask students to display these in contrived situations (p. 35).

Moderation

> Recently I attended a moderation session where [teachers] brought along samples of student work at level 2 to be moderated and verified. I took along samples of responses to readings and student writing which I had, in the classroom context, celebrated in a big way. I felt the students were beginning to be critical, to be brave, to be adventurous. They told me I could take their work. They were proud that it was going to be looked at by other teachers because I felt they were good examples of their developing abilities. Up until this point, I had been desperately poring over performance criteria and was pretty well convinced that these had been met. The discussion around the table did not centre on the performance criteria but on the range and conditions, because, as they did not believe it met the range and conditions of a level 2 text, the whole exercise was virtually disqualified (Appendix: 37).

Most participants found that moderation[6] was an effective means for professional sharing of issues, networking, and building common understandings of standards and levels (p. 36). However, the dollar cost of attendance at moderation meetings was not always covered by the amount of money available (p. 36). Moderation could be an extremely stressful experience; teachers felt under pressure to present 'perfect' tasks and pieces of work that fitted the criteria well, rather than the problematic ones that would benefit from being discussed by peers (p. 36). There were questions as to the validity and reliability of moderation, when teachers only needed to present one piece of work (p. 37). There were many areas of confusion, such as whether the focus of moderation should be on the degree to which the element as a whole had been fulfilled, or on whether individual performance criteria had been met (p. 37). There were ethical issues that had not been addressed (p. 38).

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6 'Moderation' refers to organised group processes (a requirement for all teachers working with the CGEA) for checking that standards of assessment and the setting of assessment tasks fulfilled the requirements and reflected common understandings of levels. Local and regional sessions were held covering the various fields and domains.

Implementation

Participants expressed frustration about the lack of consultation in the implementation of the Certificate. A variety of problems in the implementation of the Certificate were brought out, including the fragmenting effects of "implementation through projects", instead of by a co-ordinated program; the lack of a standard format for the Certificate or statements of attainment (undermining the public credibility of the award); the lack of procedures for the recognition of prior learning (RPL); the mismatch between enrolment and accreditation procedures in TAFE colleges and those required by the Certificate; and the uncertainty created by the simultaneous development of a new national curriculum framework, the National Reporting System (NRS), which had a different format of competencies and levels (pp. 38-39).

Summary of findings and recommendations

The summary of findings (Appendix 1: 1) was an attempt to capture the contradictory pressures the teachers were responding to and the different positions they took up in interpreting the politics of the field and furthering 'good practice' in course provision and pedagogical practice. At the same time, it presented the broad consensus which emerged about the message to be sent up to those with responsibility for the re-accreditation of the Certificate and with policy responsibility more widely.

There was therefore a strong (but not unanimous) consensus which formed the basis for the main recommendations that the framework should be reviewed and revised, taking into account the experience of teachers and including a review of the latest literature on assessment and competency-based approaches, with a view to developing a form of assessment which is more appropriate to the current understandings of pedagogical 'good practice' in ALBE (p. 52).

The revision ('re-development') of the CGEA took place during 1996, as described below.

7. The revised version of the CGEA

In 1996, ACFEB launched a project to re-develop the CGEA and produce a new version for reaccreditation (NLLIA 1996). *Negotiating Competence* was a key resource in planning for the revision, undertaken by the Adult Basic Education Research and Information Service (ARIS) in 1996 (Kindler 1996). The re-developed CGEA (ACFEB 1996) was the result of a consultative process amongst teachers, a number of whom had participated in the action research evaluation project.

The new version includes a number of changes:

- three possible certificates which can be awarded according to different levels and combinations of elements of the framework (instead of the previous two);
- new licensing, record keeping and accountability requirements;
- an alignment of the CGEA Foundation Certificate (awarded when competence is achieved at level 2 in all four streams of the framework) with the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) level 1, and Certificate 11 (competence in 3 of the four streams at level 3) with AQF level 2;
- an alignment of indicators of competence with those of the National Reporting System (ANTA and DEET 1995);
- provision for a range of 'assessment strategies' that teachers can use to assess whether students are able to demonstrate competence (implicitly down-playing the need for teachers to produce 'evidence' that all criteria had been fulfilled);
- an overall pruning and simplification of assessment criteria and conditions of assessment; and,
- the addition of an eighth key competency ('cultural awareness') as a domain within the General Curriculum Options Stream, following the development of the eighth competency by the Mayer Committee[7].

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7. The eighth competency is summarised as follows: "**Identifying, analysing and applying the practices of culture** focusses on the capacity to use an understanding of the cultures and cultural issues applying in a given context. This understanding is developed through recognition and analysis of the organisational and personal cultures and cultural issues involved in any activity. This understanding can then be applied to carry out the activity successfully" (ACFEB 1997).

The re-developed Certificate was introduced during 1997 and is now the most widely used of any ALBE curriculum framework throughout Australia (CGEA web page[8]).

It is hard to gauge at the point of writing how the revised version of the CGEA has been received in the field. According to the authors of the revised version, there has been a marked lack of interest amongst teachers, in contrast to the controversy with which the first CGEA was met. The lack of strong positive or negative responses could possibly be explained by the fact that teachers have now 'learned' the CGEA and are now confident that they are able to translate and integrate competency-based frameworks into 'good' classroom practice. Adapting to the revised version is not the same challenge as corning to grips with competency-based assessment when it first appeared. Perhaps the field as a whole has found that the CGEA serves a useful purpose, despite the criticisms put forward four years earlier. On the other hand, the acceptance of the CGEA could be seen as a symptom of the degree to which the field has been 'softened up' by waves of change and deteriorating conditions. In the current policy environment, in which programs are being cut, jobs are disappearing and morale is low, the focus of struggle has changed, and the CGEA is no longer an over-riding issue.

8. Problems of interpretation: the 'politics' of the report·

Writing the findings: critical modernist and poststructural intersections

In this section, I look back on my involvement in the CGEA evaluation project and the methodological issues I struggled with in making my interpretations, and in constructing and writing up a set of findings.

One of these was the problem of making meaning from a diverse range of viewpoints and experiences. Here I had to address my 'critical modernist' tendency as an action researcher: the will to find a solution; to present the voice of teachers as unified and rational; and to come up with a set of

8. The CGEA web page is at <http:/ /sunsite.anu.edu.au/language-australia/cgea/cgea.home.htm>, as at February, 1998. The web page includes a range of information on the new CGEA and a discussion forum. Facilities for on-line moderation are being established.

straight-forward findings and recommendations which would somehow defend 'good practice' against the inroads of CBT. The evaluation report genre also demanded a more or less unified finding. However, there was a great diversity of experience and opinion amongst the 30 teachers who had contributed. I needed to find a way of writing the diversity of views into the findings, acknowledging the uncertainties, the multiple and often contradictory representations of the CGEA and its impact, and yet to tell a strong and coherent story. At the same time, I did not want to over-emphasise difference and relativism and end up with a document which would diffuse (what I saw as) the political struggle that was taking place about competency and the implications of competency-based assessment on teaching and pedagogy.

I also needed to be clear about the relationship between my role as author and my own positioning in the collective story I was piecing together out of many stories. I identified as one of those teachers who had felt frustrated and oppressed by the CGEA; indeed, this was one of my motivations in taking on the project in the first place. I therefore attempted to be highly conscious of my own authorial power in the making of interpretative and textual decisions and to down play my own voice. However, my authorial power was considerable, enabling me a degree of latitude with which to construct a story according to my own sense of the politics of the project.

The data overall amounted to a trenchant critique, exposing many aspects of the framework, its negative pedagogical effects and counter-productive administrative requirements. However, I did not wish to present this critique in a way which would exacerbate divisions in the field over the CGEA. Nor did I want to add to feelings of demoralisation amongst teachers by emphasising the negative too strongly, given that there was no real choice about using it or not. I therefore had to try to present the critique in a positive light without 'softening' its critical edge too much.

The insights offered by fourth generation evaluation (Guba and Lincoln 1989) about research as a contribution to dialogue were useful here. The notion of dialogue suggested writing the diversity of views into the findings in a way which would build a dialogue amongst those diverse voices and viewpoints. It also suggested finding a 'voice' for the report which would be in the spirit of dialogue rather than denunciation.

Articulating contradiction and critique

The ALRNN requested that I insert two new sections: one highlighting the 'achievements' of the CGEA (in order to balance out a perception of negativity) and the other listing issues for future research and analysis arising from the detailed findings. In writing both of these sections I had the opportunity to foreground ambivalence, uncertainty and contradiction in the teachers' responses. For example, I wrote as follows:

> The CGEA has "brought ALBE in from the margins". It has raised its profile by giving it a coherent framework and a greater role in public educational policy. This involves an increase in accountability to government but a corresponding decrease in accountability to the communities and students who are served by it.
>
> The advent of accreditation and the challenges of implementing the Certificate in its first year have led to increased professional awareness and self-confidence in some teachers, and to feelings of frustration and disaffection in others (Appendix, p.46).

Participants' responses

The participants in the core group gave positive feedback about their participation. O'Neill said her participation enabled her to become more critical, more confident, less threatened, less powerless and less isolated:

> I entered into this project ultimately because I wanted to be part of a process of change, I wanted to participate in bringing about change. I feel as though we have had a huge amount dumped on us in the past few years and have been playing a reactive role ever since. I am tired of feeling that we are being 'done to'. I do now know what changes can come about as the result of projects such as the one I have just participated in. I do know that for any real change to come, for us to start feeling in control, we need to become more active in an organised sort of way. We need more research *within* our field, not research *about* our field, and we need more. avenues for disseminating this. Being involved in this project has at least made me feel less threatened, less powerless, more critical and more confident about the organisation of this critique. It has made me feel less active and less isolated. More projects, please, ALRNN! (O'Neill 1995: 4)[9].

---

9. Other teachers have written similar reflections about their participation (Edman 1996; Donovan 1995: 2) .

After presentation to the CGEA Monitoring and Evaluation Committee. and further approval of the draft report by participants and by the ALRNN, the report was published in September 1995. I reported on the findings and the process in various conferences, seminars and gatherings, locally and in other States. The presentations were well-received, and usually triggered off further impassioned expressions of disaffection from (and sometimes support for) the CGEA.

9. The CGEA project as a discursive intervention

Earlier on in this Chapter I noted four over-lapping purposes which I set out to achieve in embarking on the CGEA evaluation project. These were:

- to evaluate a policy innovation;
- to challenge a policy innovation;
- to facilitate a dialogue; and
- to strengthen the field of practice.

The first aim was achieved. The CGEA was evaluated within the terms of prevailing policy discussions and recommendations were made for its improvement. Some of these recommendations were subsequently acted upon in the re-development of the CGEA.

The second aim also seems to have been achieved. The teachers' written reflections and interviews brought forward a plethora of issues which challenged the appropriateness of competency-based assessment in ALBE. The report pointed out a range of other difficulties associated with the new provisions for assessment and accreditation: the distorting effects of DEET's funding and accountability arrangements; the contradiction between a sessionalised work force and the complicated and time-consuming documentation requirements; the lack of funding for moderation and professional development, especially in rural areas; and its inadequate articulation with either the VCE or industry or work place training.

Negotiating Competence has also contributed to a wider dialogue in the field of VET about the efficacy of competency-based training. The move

away from 'competency' (under current policy, as explained earlier) may be partly because policy-makers are now taking heed of the large amount of research and writing which has challenged the competency-based training movement over the last five years. At the same time, this shift away from CBT (or CBE) can also be explained by the shift of control of VET from teachers to employers, which has reduced the need for the measurement and classification of learning outcomes·.

Negotiating Competence challenged competency-based training in ALBE; but did so in a way which may have simultaneously domesticated and 'softened' that challenge. It focussed the teachers' resistances by taking the critique from the field into more formal policy evaluation discourse, steering the critique into the production of a subsequent (and more acceptable) version of it. In some ways this may have diffused and channelled those resistances in a safe direction and away from direct political expression. Which set of interests did the report further the most? Was my strategy of writing up the 'achievements' and juxtaposing these against the "negatives' of the CGEA, as ambiguities and open questions (p.26) an effective subversion, or was I at this point 'having it both ways': colonising the critical voices by writing them alongside the positive voices within that part of the text?

Perhaps it was necessary to 'soften' the challenge in order to fulfil the third purpose of the project: to facilitate dialogue between policy-makers and practitioners. The three teachers' reviews of the project (p. 28) attest to it having facilitated dialogue amongst teachers and with policy-makers more widely. The consultative process by which the CGEA was re-developed and subsequently re-accredited, carried on that dialogue which had been opened up with the earlier project. However, I must also problematise the notion of 'dialogue' in this context. How does one avoid slipping from 'dialogue' to 'acquiescence' when the power differential between both groups is so great? What was the relationship between 'issuing a challenge' and 'promoting dialogue' in that context?

The fourth aim, to strengthen the field of practice, also appears to have been fulfilled, as reflected in the judgements of the teachers cited earlier. There was also a positive reception of *Negotiating Competence* at many conference presentations. At each of these the discussion of the process, outcomes and issues stimulated those present to tell similar stories and raise further issues; hearing about the project or reading the report gave

permission to the wider cohort of literacy practitioners to air their own frustrations and to make their own critique. As well, the process and the published outcome helped to frame a consensus around the main issues and seemed to diffuse the conflict around the CGEA which had previously damaged relationships in the field. But here, too, it is important to reflect on what were the overall political effects of this diffusion and consensus-building.

Together, the participatory action research project and its published report can be seen as a discursive intervention in the production and evolution of discourses of adult education and training at that time. This intervention problematised competency-based training in ALBE and asserted alternative understandings of 'good practice' in curriculum and pedagogy. The text of the report reflected ways in which the discourse of the CGEA was being absorbed and accommodated into the discourse of 'good practice' and in fact was a textual vehicle for that articulation. At the same time, it tended to diffuse teachers' resistances and channel them productively (and safely) into the production of a revised version, which was still competency-based. It is difficult to make a judgement about the complex and possibly contradictory political effects of that intervention at this time.

10. Conclusion

In the context of the National Training Reform Agenda, local struggles to resist and to ameliorate the impact of CBT could be seen as strategic attempts to defend ALBE as a profession and as a field of practice. Now, however, the policy context has already changed significantly. The Liberal Coalition Government has de-emphasised the importance of nationally accredited frameworks and CBT, in keeping with a further move to privatisation and the devolution of responsibility for training directly to industry and to the states. In 1994, the struggle to defend 'the field' seemed to centre on a rejection of the imposition of competency-based training to ALBE. In 1998, however, it may be strategic to defend and promote the CGEA as an accountability measure; as a buffer against further cuts; as a means to underpin common understandings about

curriculum and assessment; and as a reference point of common culture in the field.

In the next two chapters, Chapters 6 and 7, I tum to the discursive engagement of teachers working within and against performativity by analysing in detail the written reflections and interviews provided by the participants in this project. By analysing these texts, I examine how they have engaged with 'competency' as an issue of policy within a complex discursive field.

Chapter Six

A Window on Discursive Engagement

1. Introduction

In Chapter 5 I have told the story of the CGEA action research evaluation project: its methodology, findings and (contradictory) significances in mediating the participation of ALBE teachers in policy-making. The evaluation project was an occasion of discursive engagement by teachers, individually and collectively, with policies of accreditation, accountability and competency-based training.

In this chapter, I revisit the data produced through that project with a different purpose: to explore in depth the discursive practices of the participants as they engage with the CGEA and its requirements. The CGEA is a policy-led innovation cast in discourses which instrumentalise education to economic ends, as discussed earlier. The teachers have participated in a formal evaluation of the Certificate with the aim of producing a revised and improved version, as discussed in Chapter 4. In the course of participating in that project, they have engaged with the discourses, the policy environment and the power structures which the CGEA reflects, as individuals and as members of a meaning-making community (Lemke 1995: 19). It is this level of engagement which I will explore in this Chapter.

The mapping of discourses presented in this chapter focuses on the discursive practice of teachers of ALBE as they write and speak about their experiences of producing and reproducing the CGEA in their teaching. Through their representations, I explore how they are engaging with the discourse of the Certificate; their participation in the discourse and their resistances to it. I approach this goal through three main objectives. The first is to 'name' the configuration of discourses which structure the texts

produced by the CGEA evaluation project and to describe the dynamics of the teachers' engagement with policy in terms of that complex discursive field. My second objective is to describe the micro practices of the teachers' discursive engagement as revealed in the texts. By 'micro practices of discursive engagement' I mean ways in which, in our everyday language and social practice, we engage intuitively or deliberately in the 'politics of discourse'. My third objective is to understand more about the agency of teachers as they negotiate a range of competing discourses offering different subject positions.

In this chapter, then, I 'map' the configuration of discourses which structure the field of ALBE and which constitute the professional and pedagogical practices of the teachers. My analysis of the texts produced during the CGEA project demonstrates how teachers are practising as agentic subjects 'in discourse'; how they are engaging with what Foucault calls disciplinary 'micropower' (Foucault 1975: 139) and the forms (micro-practices) of such engagement.

The texts reflect elements of the complex discursive field in which teachers of ALBE are participating. I describe this field in terms of three main discourses which contend and articulate with each other: *progressivist, professional teacher,* and *performative.* The texts reflect the many challenges and dilemmas which the teachers face in implementing the CGEA. I interpret these in terms of the dynamics of accommodation and resistance which are being played out in the teachers' professional practice and in their subjectivities.

Six 'micro practices' of discursive resistance are identified and discussed: *rational critique, objectification, subversion, transgression, humour* and *affirmation of desire.* These micro practices are part of the 'politics of every day life' (Fraser 1989: 18). For these teachers, the exercise of professional agency is clearly constrained by larger structures of power. However, they are consciously negotiating the policies and hence the discourses which constitute them as teachers; collectively, through their meaning-making practices, they are in turn reconstituting the discursive field. The micro practices can be thought of as a sphere of agentic practice which is always there, despite constraints on the level of macro practice.

The material in this Chapter is organised in three main sections. In the first section I describe how the texts used in this analysis were produced and selected. In the second section I present my method of analysis and

my description of the configurations of discourse constructing the texts. In the third section I explain the notion of 'micro practices of discursive resistance', and my method for delineating these within the texts.

2. Production and selection of texts

The texts which I am analysing were produced as part of an action research evaluation of the CGEA which I facilitated in 1994, as described in Chapter 5. The texts were all produced for a specific purpose: to contribute to a report evaluating the CGEA from the standpoint of teaching practice.

Two sorts of texts were generated during the CGEA project, as described. I excluded three of the interviews which were not with classroom teachers, giving a total of 11 pieces of reflective writing and 9 interview transcriptions (including one group interview).

The teachers' reports were written for a wider audience and were lightly edited (by myself) prior to publication. They therefore tended to be polished, carefully considered and well-balanced discussions of the issues. The interviews, although based on the same key questions, were more spontaneous and often more revealing of the passions aroused by the Certificate and the covert subversions of the requirements in classroom practice. As well, the interviewees tended to contextualise their responses more by reference to the wider political sphere and broader institutional and funding issues.

Despite these differences, there is little substantive difference between both lots of texts in relation to my analysis. In each group of texts there is a wide divergence of approaches to the CGEA and its discourse. In each, the same discursive themes and similar sorts of discursive practices emerge.

It is important to note that the sample of teachers that produced these texts is not representative of the field as a whole. The journal-keeping group had already self-selected as being interested in participating in the debate over the CGEA by their attendance at a seminar run by the Victorian Adult Literacy Research Network Node (ALRNNV) on June 24, 1994 and again by offering to participate in the evaluation in response to

an invitation at that meeting. They would for the most part be at the leading edge of practice and professional participation, in that they frequently attended professional forums and were generally active in debates about ALBE.

The focus of the texts was shaped collaboratively by the concerns of the teachers, the researcher (myself) and the ALRNNV which funded and co-ordinated the project. Clearly, the research process was inscribed throughout by my own views and commitments (see Chapter 1). There could be other concerns, discourses and discursive practices in the field at large which were not revealed in these texts because they did not speak to the particular concerns of the research collaborators at that time.

From the start, all participants knew of and agreed to my use of the texts for this thesis, as this was written into the consent statements which they signed at the beginning of their involvement in the project.

3. Mapping discourses in the texts

In this section I describe my method for delineating the discourses at play in the texts and which currently structure ALBE as a discursive field. As my purpose is to study the links between meaning, power and subjectivity I have used a Foucauldian approach to discourse analysis, as discussed in Chapter 4. In order to be able to discuss the discursive practices of teachers I first needed to 'name' the discourses which I identify as being 'present' in the texts, the discursive contestations structuring the field and the articulations and disarticulations between discourses (Hall 1985; Hall 1986; Fairclough 1992: 124). However, it would be possible to identify and differently name any number of educational or theoretical discourses. I thus needed a method and a set of rules or criteria for identifying and naming a manageable number of discourses.

Method

The method I used is as follows:

1. I read and re-read the texts from both the CGEA evaluation project and the Herrington teachers project in order to familiarise myself with the way the teachers were constructing

their practices, pedagogical understandings and individual struggles with the CGEA.

2. I iterated between the reports, interviews and transcriptions of discussions and the historical and theoretical material presented in Chapters 2 and 3.

3. I looked for traces, anywhere in the texts (in the themes, value statements, anecdotes, metaphors, arguments and lexical items), of the schools of thought and traditions I had described in my earlier discussion of the history and development of ALBE, and listed these.

4. I developed a web chart in which the main traces are named as discourses and their interrelationships (interdiscursivities) with other traces could be depicted. The rules I used for determining whether or not a construction could be termed a 'discourse' were that it must:

    - recur across the texts (but not necessarily be in each text),
    - be identifiably associated with a particular institutional sector, tradition, theory and set of practices, and
    - reflect a set of power relations and a world view.

5. After 'webbing' between the discursive elements on the web chart, I found they could be clustered into three main discourses (configurations or 'orders of discourse') for the purposes of the analysis.

6. I then marked up each text in terms of the three main discourses.

7. Finally, I used the web chart as a reference point for studying the interdiscursivities as these appeared in the detail of the texts.

By following the above process I identified the following as discursive 'elements' or 'traces' currently constructing ALBE:

liberal progressivism	philanthropy
personal development	volunteerism
critical literacy	experiential learning

multiculturalism	social justice
welfare	access and equity
holistic pedagogy	literacy as social practice
curriculum	standards
social contribution	student-centred practice
cultural canon	genre
functional literacy	assessment
accountability	vocationalism
competency	accreditation

Sorting discursive traces into groups

The three main clusters or 'orders of discourse' I called 'liberal progressivism', 'professional teacher' and 'performativity', as shown in Fig. 6.1. Despite the fact that there were large areas of overlap, it made sense to think about the field of ALBE in terms of these three interacting 'discourses'.

I grouped together discourses of philanthropy, access and equity, feminism, volunteerism, cultural canon, multiculturalism, social contribution, literacy as social practice, student-centred practice, as 'progressivist discourse'. I included 'critical literacy' under this general category as, in so far as there are traces of critical literacy in the texts, these were more associated with notions of experiential, holistic practice and liberal democratic ideas than with an explicitly political practice of teaching students skills to interrogate and problematise texts. Likewise, traces of 'feminism' seemed to belong to a relational and nurturant style of teaching, rather than to gender critique. In other words, critical literacy and feminism seemed to have been absorbed interdiscursively into liberal progressivist practice and world view in the ways it is referred to or appears in the texts. Multiculturalism was also included in this main discursive category as a discourse about democratic rights of migrants and a liberal appreciation of and respect for cultural differences.

Discourses about standards, assessment, curriculum, accountability and accreditation, could be grouped together as a set of discourses and practices

associated with school and institutional educational practice. These are the discourses which were brought into ALBE by trained teachers who went into TAPE colleges and some community centres in the late 70s and 80s. I called this grouping of sub discourses a discourse of the 'professional teacher'. I included under 'professional teacher' discourse, discourses of curriculum, assessment, accreditation and standards, as well as discourses of genre, cultural canon, multiculture, holistic practice and social contribution, which were also included under 'liberal progressivist' discourse.

I formed a third main grouping of discourses by collapsing the discourses associated with NTRA policy: discourses of competency, accountability vocationalism, assessment, standards and accreditation as discussed in Chapter 2. This group of discourses I have put under the single generic category of 'performative' discourse as explained further below.

I therefore grouped the main discourses constructing ALBE historically and traditionally around two entities of meaning which I have called 'liberal progressivist' and 'professional teacher'. These are not to be thought of as a binary pair as they evolved in close relationship with each other and significantly overlap in terms of the practices each tends to produce and reflect. Each nevertheless reflects and constitutes a distinguishable set of traditions, teaching practices, beliefs and pedagogies, as discussed below. The 'performative' discourse was present throughout the texts in two different ways. At times it could be seen as the discursive 'Other' which structured the dialogue implicit in the teachers' reflections about implementing the CGEA (Lemke 1995: 37). At other times, the performative discourse articulated and combined with both progressivist and professionalist discourses.

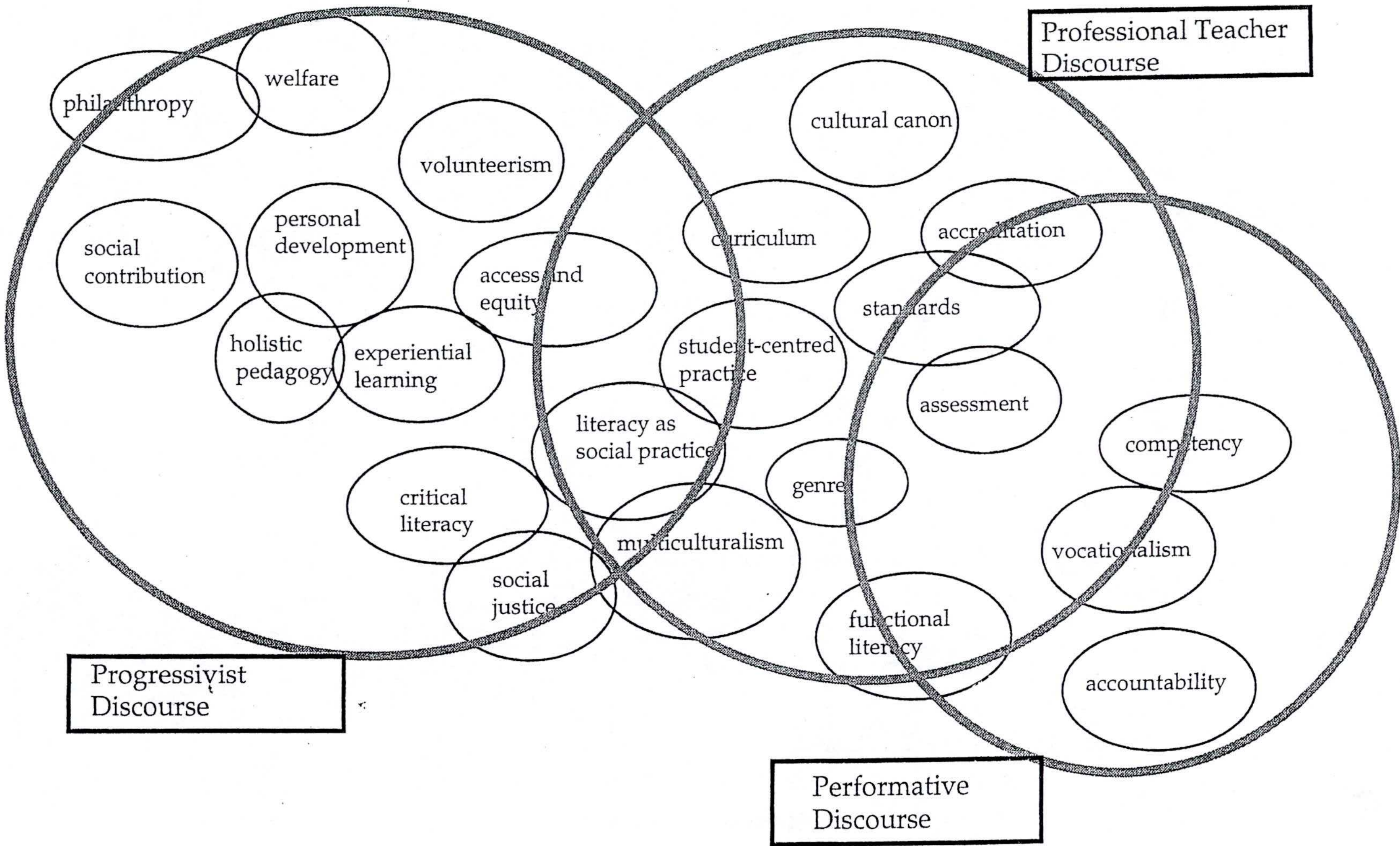
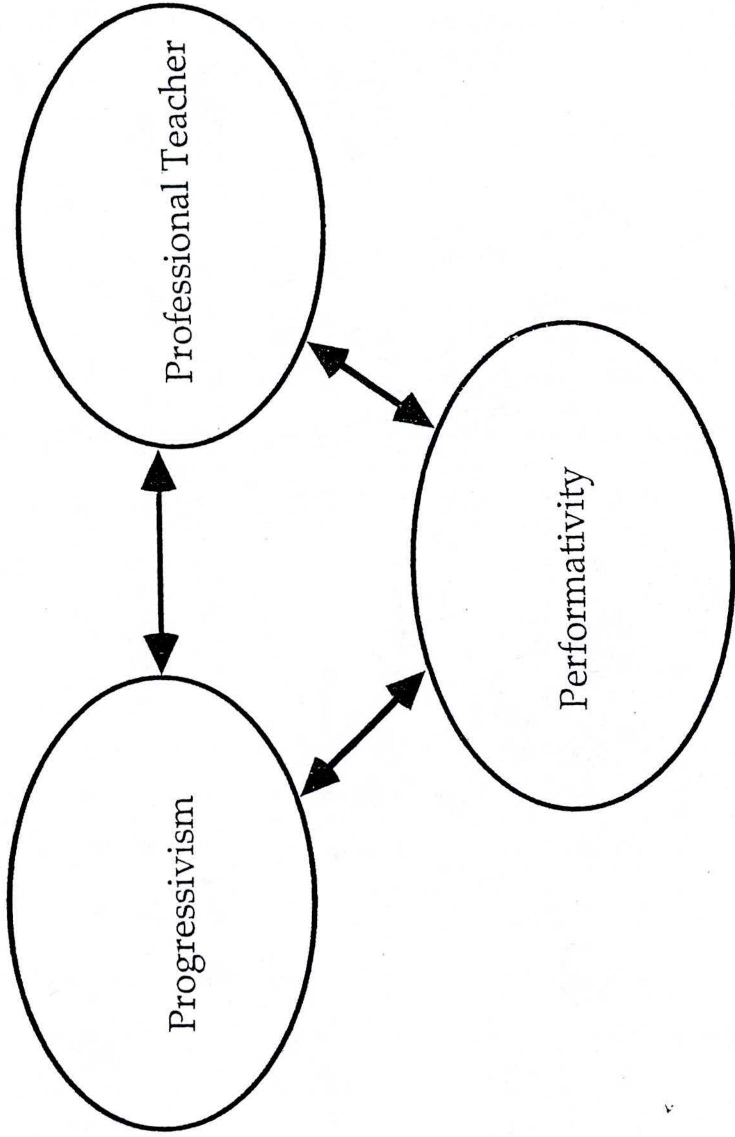


Fig. 6.1 Web Chart of Discourses Delineated within the Text

Fig. 6.2
Articulations Between the Three Main Discursive Clusters



Liberal progressivist discourse

In Chapter 2, I described ALBE as a hybrid field which grew up over the last hundred years in sites outside or on the fringes of the institutional mainstream. The pedagogical discourses that evolved over this period were a reflection of its historically marginal status and the kinds of social and philosophical commitments tutors, teachers and activists brought to their work in non-mainstream institutional or community settings. According to Thompson,

> Adult education, with its roots firmly in the nineteenth century, has been part of the trend associated with the progressive enlightenment of an industrial society. Partly initiated by the philanthropists, industrialists and liberal academics as a way of civilising the masses, and partly struggled for by those who regarded it as a tool of self improvement, it has become both the means of self-fulfilment, and generally, a source of enlightenment and reason, dedicated to the development of useful and contented citizens (Thompson 1997: 11).

Liberal progressivism has also been a key discourse within school education. The educator best known for his contribution to a progressivist philosophy of education is John Dewey (Dewey 1916) who wrote of nurturing the 'power to grow' and 'power to learn from experience' (p.183) in preparing students for participation in democratic society. Carl Rogers' *Freedom to Learn* (Rogers 1969) is another classic of liberal progressivist educational theory, with its emphasis on the role of 'real' interpersonal relationships in facilitating learning, and the need, on the part of the teacher, to promote "conditions which encourage self-initiated, significant, experiential, 'gut-level' learning by the whole person" (p.105). The goal of education, according to Rogers, is the "fully functioning individual" (p.279) who "has a capacity for freedom and commitment" (p.275).

Progressivism in adult education discourse is typified in the work of Malcolm Knowles (Knowles 1990) whose theory of 'andragogy' is again about freedom in teaching and learning. Knowles constructs adults (in contrast to children) as autonomous, self-directed learners requiring support rather than direction and input.

Lee and Wickert's investigation into publications produced by teachers and ACAL during the 1980s (Lee and Wickert 1994) found that the statements of principles and values within those texts often construct

discourses of 'individualism' and 'adultism' which they situate within a broad discourse of 'liberalism/human rights' or 'liberal progressivism'. This, they say, is the foundational discourse of ALBE pedagogy (p.62). It constructs the principle of adult learning as a right, the idea of the centrality of the individual and beliefs about adult learning as a natural process of growth to be supported and nurtured. They found, by way of contrast, almost no evidence in the texts of an emancipatory discourse of critical literacy (p. 64).

In the texts which I examined, there were also very few traces of critical literacy discourse. It seems that the discourse of critical pedagogy which came out of the years of Freirean educational radicalism of the 70s and early 80s has been absorbed into progressivist discourse; ie, that the emphasis has shifted towards students 'naming their worlds' as part of experiential learning rather than as part of a project for social change. Another tendency seemed to be that critical literacy is now categorised as belonging to the 'public debate' domain within the CGEA and has been domesticated in the flurry of practices such as the setting of assessment tasks to meet performance criteria, documentation of results, reporting and moderation. The subsuming of critical literacy into the 'public debate' domain within the CGEA is an appropriation of radical practice into the framework of performativity. However, it appears that teachers who were previously committed to teaching critical literacy have continued to do so by 'stretching' the framework, rather than shrinking their practice to fit in with it.

Other discourses which have evolved as a product of the marginal, community-based location of ALBE likewise appear to have been absorbed into an over-riding progressivist discourse. 'Volunteerism' connects with the earlier discourse of philanthropy and belongs to the period in the late 70s and early 80s when the majority of adult literacy was provided by volunteer tutors organised as networks. Feminist and 'personal growth' discourses which were associated with the community and neighbourhood house movement seem (in these texts) to be part of progressivist discourse, rather than having any particular salience in their own right. Multiculturalist discourse which grew from the years of strong immigrant and NESB participation in ALBE produced for many teachers a strong consciousness of multiculturalist issues and values. In my analysis the traces of multiculturalist discourse are interpreted as a subset of progressivist discourse.

Taking the 20 texts examined as a single collection there was ample evidence of teachers' educational understandings and commitments, and strong traces of 'liberal progressivist' discourse, as described above.

For example:

> I respect my students unconditionally, and am interested in all comments they bring to the classroom. I hope that they see the classroom as a safe place to try out conversations, test out ideas, raise issues etc. and to question and to ask. I believe I must always be honest, and that often involves admitting ignorance. I try to model what I believe are the traits of a good learner - a willingness to find out and to try. I believe that learning should foremost be enjoyable in order for motivation to occur. I try to plan out lessons a bit like dinner parties, in that I try to anticipate what will be fun, be stimulating and what will be positive and build in success. I try to enhance students' self esteem always through my own positive regard for them, but also through helping them to access the learning process so that they are successful. I praise everything, and look always for the positive in what is said or done (Rachel, Appendix 1:86).

> What I teach must be relevant to the interests of my students and their life contexts. It must be accessible, and link to previous knowledge and experience. I aim to provide meaningful learning outcomes that fit in with critical literacy principles, so that if we are discussing an issue which is current in the media, then students will feel they can participate in the issue by writing letters to the editor, linking the debate into their own life context, researching, ringing people etc (Megan, Appendix 1: 67)[1].

In each of the texts from which these excerpts come, the teachers' judgements about the CGEA are based fundamentally on their understandings of the learning needs and well-being of students as developing individuals. For both Rachel and Rose the teaching relationship is of primary importance as they work to build self-esteem and to provide enjoyable and stimulating classroom experiences. Rose has articulated a common theme amongst ALBE teachers: that working with people and being part of their processes of growth and new achievement is in fact deeply rewarding. For Megan, the key issue in determining curriculum is interest and relevance to life contexts. Learning outcomes "must fit in with critical literacy principles" in order to promote social participation (which includes political participation).

The traces of liberal progressivist discourse are often implicit in the subject positions which the teachers are taking up in making their critiques, rather than being directly present in the texts:

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1. Hereafter, excerpts from the texts followed by page numbers in brackets refer to Appendix 1.

> I find the Certificate quite restrictive to good teaching and unnecessarily bureaucratic but in the end the inventive pragmatist in me will find ways of minimizing the impact of accountability procedures and I will continue to utilise an extensive teaching repertoire developed over the years through critically reflective practice, to go on lighting fires in the imagination rather than filling buckets with busy work. (Sue, p.79).

Here Sue opposes her idea of 'good teaching' to the bureaucratic requirements of the certificate. The rest of her text makes it clear that her idea of good teaching is a pedagogy which is imaginative, personal and stimulates enjoyment and excitement in learning. She is clearly corning from a progressivist position but her progressivism is also highly professional, as shown by her reference to her extensive teaching repertoire developed by years of 'critically reflective practice'. As an 'inventive pragmatist' she is accommodating the need for accountability procedures into her practice while minimizing their impact.

Professional teacher discourse

When adult literacy programs were established in access and compensatory education departments in TAFE colleges in the early 80s, they were taught by trained teachers, most of whom came from the schools sector.[2]

To set up a contrast with liberal progressivist discourse (which developed with the early forms of ALBE at the margins of the formal education system), I called the pedagogical discourse which trained teachers brought to ALBE, the 'professional teacher' discourse[3]. Professional teacher discourse is of course infused with progressivist discourse which was particularly strong in schools in the seventies and eighties. However the professional teacher discourse tends to construct teaching and teachers more in institutional terms than does the progressivist discourse which centres more on student needs and the pedagogical relationship. These values are more clearly recognizable in community-based settings, where many teachers have eschewed professional identity and status and continue to identify as community workers, volunteers, or simply as non-professional 'tutors'.

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2. All teachers employed by TAFE had to be qualified. Almost all of the teachers in this study had some sort of tertiary teacher training.
3. Some teachers have sought work in community providers because of the way they perceived adults have been constructed as learners in school-like settings. They have brought 'professional teacher' discourse into community discourses and have deliberately let go of 'institutional' discourses.

Professional teacher discourse also overlaps with a discourse of 'teacher professionalism', which I discuss further in Chapter 9. With the advent of the NTRA, competency-based assessment and accreditation, and mandatory qualifications for ALBE teachers in DEETYA-funded programs, there has been a significant shift towards professionalisation. Within the 'professional teacher' discourse, the institutional and industrial context is more central and there is a more explicit awareness of curriculum, method, pedagogy and an awareness of teaching as a developing craft. Connell (1985: 77-79) describes the 'craft' of teaching as the acquisition and development of increasingly subtle and complex techniques and "tricks of the trade".

The definition of professionalism put forward by Preston revolves around the making of complex situational judgements which take into account "the complex diversity of students, objectives, contexts and teachers themselves" (Preston 1996: 1). Such judgements require the application of high level competencies, personal skills and a depth of educational knowledge, content knowledge and cognitive and social capacities.

In these texts, much of the discussion is around the 'complex situational judgements' which the teachers are making in the light of the CGEA. I am therefore identifying 'professional teacher' discourse, for the purposes of this analysis, in utterances which reveal a self-reflexive approach to complex situated practice as well as reference to educational theory and an orientation to more institutionalised aspects of teaching (including curriculum and assessment).

For example:

> For me the positive side is that it has made me articulate my practice and made me think more about my teaching and what I do, and I think that happens whenever anything new comes in, so, anything that would have come in would have had this effect of making me reflect more on why I do things and why I don't. Initially I think the impact of the genre-based structure has been positive for me. It has pushed my teaching a step further... (Rose, interview).

> Some of the skills described in the oral competencies of the CGEA are skills which are required for classroom discussion and learning to take place. On this basis, I thought it may be possible to accommodate the performance criteria of the oracy stream into a broader program of what I call "talking to learn". I wanted to believe that I could simply map my existing practice into the Certificate with minor compromises and a bit more record-keeping. (Susan, *(Appendix 1:* 75).

In each of the above excerpts, the teachers position themselves as professional experts in the complex situated practice of teaching. They each have a strong sense of pedagogical authority; they speak with personal confidence as professional teachers who are drawing on expert knowledge of curriculum and pedagogy and take seriously their own learning processes as teachers[4].

Performative discourse

I have termed the discourse associated with the NTRA policy the 'performative' on the basis that the competency-based assessment framework of the CGEA is a prime example of the application of the principle of 'performativity', as discussed previously. The powerful and totalising discourse introduced into the field of ALBE by the National Training Reform Agenda (NTRA) and more specifically the Australian Language and Literacy Policy (ALLP) can therefo e be named as a discourse of performativity. The CGEA is a product of the NTRA era and, in so far as it is constructed on performance-based objectives and observable, 'measurable' criteria, manifests all the characteristics of performativity[5]. 'Vocationalism' can be seen as the application of the principle of performativity to public investment in adult education and training. 'Accountability' is about the ability to report quantifiable data about teachers' performances as 'outcomes'. 'Marketisation' is constructed as the most efficient mechanism for distribution of funds for education and training.

I have already discussed the work of authors who (commonly basing themselves in discourses of democratisation) have mounted strong critiques of performativity in education and training, especially in relation to competency-based approaches to curriculum and assessment which focus on the display of performance. More recently, these shifts have been described as indicators of the 'performative state' (Lingard and Blackmore 1997; Lankshear 1998).

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4. The evidence of ALBE teachers in this study positioning themselves strongly within 'professional teacher' discourse contrasts with the findings of (Lee and Wickert 1994) who find that the liberal progressivist discourse appears to construct weak subject positions which "preclude the possibility of the teachers' expert knowledge, either about curriculum or about pedagogy" (p.59).
5. Usher and Edwards (1994: 117) and Homer (1995) also describe competency-based assessment in terms of performativity.

I have thus identified the third principal discourse structuring the texts as the 'performative' discourse. In reflecting on the impact of the CGEA on their teaching practice, the teachers in the evaluation project were forced to engage with the performative discourse implicit in the Certificate and the practices it constructs. In their accounts they have entered into dialogue with it either explicitly or implicitly (Lemke 1995: 37). In each of the excerpts quoted in my discussion of progressivist and professional teacher discourse (above), what is said is in implicit dialogue with the performative discourse reflected in the CGEA. In the case of Marika that dialogue is explicit:

> The document has created an unnecessary obsession with assessment. As soon as someone can do an activity or task there is a tendency to want to make sure that it is recorded for CGEA 'evidence'. (It wasn't so important that a student had successfully performed a certain skill but that it would somehow match the performance criteria.) There is this awful feeling of becoming obsessed with collecting samples of work. The nightmare associated with this is that it is impossible to fulfil the requirements of the frameworks without contriving the most unreal of tasks (Appendix 1: 100).

The "obsession with assessment" (the application of technologies of assessment which purport to quantify performance) is the aspect of the performative discourse which these teachers most strongly criticise and are attempting to resist. In doing so, the teachers typically refer to and raise issues of teachers' 'professionalism'; how the CGEA (and related administrative measures) discount and undermine their professional skills and responsibilities.

In some cases, the teachers appeared to be talking within the performative discourse even as they were critical of its excesses:

> I think the task, the level, is more important than the performance criteria. We have to be careful that we don't get creeping standards... there is always that danger... when you look at that task, and that task, that task seemed a bit better than mine... so I might be trying to make a slightly harder task to take along next time... [whereas] as long as it is clear that it does not have to be the best piece of work, that we think is acceptable [we should] take that along. If you try to address all of the PCs and all of the elements, you could make a real straitjacket for yourself (Andrew, interview).

Here, Andrew is criticising the CGEA (from a 'professional' positioning) on the basis that processes of moderation are implicitly competitive; the tendency of teachers to moderate with pieces of work which clearly meet criteria at a particular level, rather than ones which are uncertain, will lead to "creeping standards". Moderation itself, as a form of peer accountability and quality control, is not questioned. While apparently

distancing himself from the assessment framework, Andrew seems to have taken up the language of task, performance criteria and element. He seems to approve of the focus on 'the task'; that is, the framework the CGEA provides for specifying what teachers *should* do. He is not challenging or problematising the performative discourse of the CGEA, and appears to be accommodating it into his thinking. The jargonistic use of the acronym "PC" (for 'performance criteria') indicates the extent to which the language (and hence the discourse) has entered into his every day parlance and practice. This point istaken up in the next section.

Kaye on the other hand argues *for* the CGEA on the basis that criterion-based assessment is actually fairer than teachers' intuition:

> ... I think it's a retrograde step to rely on the teacher's intuition and knowledge of where the students are at, rather than on specific forms of criteria ... (Kaye, focus group).

Here Kaye is arguing for the CGEA on the basis that it is more educationally sound than what went before. Many others disagreed with this position. However, whilst it may appear that Kaye is a staunch supporter of competency-based assessment, the basis of her argument is 'doing the right thing by students'. This could be interpreted as either a 'professional teacher' positioning (based in an aspiration to ethical practice) or a 'performative' positioning (based on distrust of what is not 'objectively' demonstrable and institutionally accountable). The possibility of multiple interpretations illustrates the slippery nature of this kind of discourse mapping and the necessarily fuzzy boundaries I have drawn in the attempt to delineate and name the discourses. It also illustrates the ease with which performative discourse is absorbed and articulated into professional teacher discourse, as will be discussed further in the next section.

4. Interdiscursivity, hybridisation and the production of new meanings

In the 20 texts (of interview transcripts and articles), the three major orders of discourse or discursive constellations ('progressivist', 'professional teacher' and 'performative') are 'present' throughout the texts in complex interdiscursive formations. Here I am using the term 'interdiscursivity' to describe the way discourses are constituted and

evolve through combinations of other discourses or discursive elements (Fairclough 1992: 88).

According to Fairclough, orders of discourse are

> unstable equilibria, consisting of elements which are internally heterogeneous - or intertextual in their constitution - the boundaries between which are constantly open to being redrawn as orders of discourse are disarticulated and rearticulated in the course of hegemonic struggle (p.124).

Interdiscursivities evolve in struggles to transform and restructure relations of domination and, in the course of these struggles, meanings become transformed through discursive contention (opposition, disarticulation) and discursive hybridisation (accommodation, articulation). In these texts, the teachers' representations of their problems in corning to grips with the CGEA, their struggles to resist, to accommodate and to transform perfornative discourse illustrate well the complex processes of interdiscursivity.

Specifically, the progressivist and professional teacher discourses are evolving interdiscursively in the course of struggles to resist the hegemonic effects of perfornative discourse. Traces of each of these discourses coalesce in the texts and in frequent references to 'good practice'. The 'good practice' discourse could be seen as a hybrid discourse of the 'progressivist professional teacher'. Typically, this consists of a commitment to student-centred, relational and holistic pedagogy combined with a professional orientation to curriculum, methodology, institutional accountability and a reflexive approach to complex situated practice.

According to Fairclough, struggles in and over discourse practices "give rise to a great variety of mixed or hybrid forms of discourse" (p.222). For the sake of my analysis, I am therefore describing the main discursive contention that the teachers are engaged in a conflict between a hybridising 'progressivist professional' ('good practice') discourse and a (usually un-narned) 'perfornative' discourse. In the course of this conflict a new level of hybridisation is taking place.

The hybrid progressivist professional discourse at times appears to accommodate the performative discourse and at times is mobilised in resistance against it. Most teachers in fact seem to move between these

contradictory tendencies (accommodation of and resistance to performative discourse) sometimes within the same texts.[6]

The transcripts indicate that teachers are defending their notions of 'good practice' against the pressures of performativity, often with great passion and with skillful deployment of 'good practice' and 'professional teacher' rhetoric. At the same time, there are also signs that they are taking up the language of performativity into their everyday vocabularies and therefore accommodating its' meanings, values and world view into their teaching habitus. In other words, elements of performative discourse are being absorbed interdiscursively into the progressivist professional discourse at the same time as the progressivist professional discourse is being mobilised to delegitimate and discredit some of the practices associated with performative discourse.

The three case studies presented in Chapter 7 illustrate the complex processes of discursive accommodation, resistance and hybridisation in the interaction between the progressivist professional discourse and the performative discourse. Progressivist discourse is historically complicit with performative discourse (as shown by Sedunary (1996) as well as being opposed to it; 'professional teacher' discourse is also both complicit with and opposed to performative discourse.

The intensely contradictory and paradoxical discursive field within which teachers are negotiating and trying to make sense of their practice can thus be described in terms of a dynamic engagement between three main orders of discourse: 'profess:iional teacher', 'progressivist' and 'performative' discourses. These dynamics can be summarised as follows:

- The performative discourse erodes and undermines progressivist, student-centred, holistic and broadly educational discourse.

- In response, progressivist discourse reasserts itself, combining with professional teacher discourse to form an emerging hybrid discourse of the 'progressivist/professional teacher' (the discourse of 'good practice', in common parlance).

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6. Eileen Sedunary has described the confluence of radical education and the new vocationalism' as 'janus-faced' movements in Australian education which are at the interface of modernity and postmodernity (Sedunary 1996).

- Professional teacher discourse articulates with performative discourse in the recognition generally that educational benefits have been gained in the advent of a common language of curriculum content, structure and public funding and public recognition afforded by accreditation.

- Professional teacher discourse disarticulates from and contests performative discourse in, for example, judgements teachers have made about the undermining of their professional autonomy by the packaging and commodification of curriculum, a host of accountability requirements and legalistic, performative forms of assessment.

- Progressivist discourse articulates with performative discourse in that the CGEA is justified in terms of equity, offering the possibility to students (who are mainly unemployed job-seekers) a more stream-lined and relevant pathway to jobs and training, a more relevant curriculum, more accountable and more 'professional' teachers.

- Performative discourse colonises both professional teacher and progressivist discourses and is gradually instating a language and set of practices which undermine professional autonomy in curriculum and assessment.

- In the midst of this complexity, there are signs that teachers' struggles to both implement and to resist the CGEA are producing a new or at least a changed discourse of practice.

The ethical and professional dilemmas faced by teachers (the competing subject positions made available by this discursive conjunction) are illustrated by Megan:

> There is a danger that the competencies can drive the curriculum, however hard we try to resist this happening. If we say (with principle and with arrogance) that we will throw the Certificate out of the window and get back to 'good practice', then what of our obligations to the students who want and expect to get the Certificate (Megan, p.69)?

Megan here seems to be suggesting (as have others) that the students themselves want the CGEA and support accreditation and competency-based assessment (ie, that the students themselves are taking up performative discourse, or that they recognise the benefits of accreditation). The contradiction then becomes one between the teachers'

professional educational expertise about how best to teach and their respect for the students' judgements and expressed needs. Acting "with principle" might be the same as acting "with arrogance".

My depiction of interdiscursivity, hybridisation, articulation and disarticulation in relation to a group of ALBE teachers, is necessarily partial and incomplete. I acknowledge here the limitation of my analytic framework in the quest to capture and to delineate the diffuse swirl of meanings, positionings and value systems within the interviews and written texts. Bakhtin's notion of 'heteroglossia'(Bakhtin 1981; Yaeger 1991; Lemke 1995) makes clear the ultimate impossibility of making a 'neat' analysis of discursive practice as revealed in the real life language of an individual or collectivity. He writes that,

> ...language is clamorously multivocal; our daily speech opens itself to the bray and cackle, the hum and protest, of multiple dissents. Heteroglossia describes, then, the dynamism among "stratified" languages and the ways in which these languages may work together to explode dominant forms of thought (Yaeger 1991: 241).

The heteroglossic processes of meaning-making in any site are too multitudinous, too multifarious and too complex to capture and to describe with any final authority through the application of a formal analytic method. Bakhtin's metaphor of heteroglossia conjures up the many voices and languages which clamour and contend, the countless articulations and disarticulations, the resistances and accommodations which occur within speech and within discourse communities as meaning is produced, reproduced and transformed.

5. The micro-practices of discursive resistance

In the previous section I described the complex discursive field of ALBE in which teachers are both resisting and accommodating the performative discourse of the CGEA. At different times, the teachers reveal themselves in the texts as either opponents, victims or agents of the new discourse, and sometimes all three. Most commonly, however, they appear as ethical, professional subjects who are exercising their agency in ways which at once resist, engage with and produce anew the discourse,

reconstituting it in order to find new spaces to develop their own 'good practice', within and against it.

My aim in this section is to explore what my analysis of the texts reveals about *how* and *by what means* teachers are acting agentically in the context of top-down, policy-led educational change. Specifically, I describe the discursive practices through which teachers, whose pedagogical subjectivity is framed by the discourse of good practice, are resisting the pressures to reframe their teaching practice in accordance with the performative discourse of the CGEA.

In framing this question about discursive resistance I have focused on the operation of Foucauldian micro-power (Foucault 1975: 222), as discussed in Chapter 4. Foucault's 'micro-practices of power' suggest a corresponding notion of 'micro-practices of resistance'. The notion of micropractices of discursive resistance which I am using for this part of the analysis can also be theorised in terms of the social theory of discourse, as discussed in Chapter 4. According to this broad notion, "discourse is a mode of action, one form in which people may act upon the world and especially upon each other, as well as a mode of representation" (Fairclough 1992: 63). The teachers' discursive practices are reflected in what they say (their representations) as well as in what they do. There is no clear distinction between the teachers' 'material' and 'non-material' discursive practice. Their discursive practice can be seen in the subject positions they ignore or take up, the meanings that they resist or construct and in the semiosis of their social and political actions[7].

My analysis in this section is therefore based on a broad social theory of discourse and on a particular notion of micropractices of discursive resistance derived from Foucault. It also rests on the idea that policy debate is always a site of the political struggle over discourse, over whose meaning system will prevail. In this case, the struggle is over how students' needs and the purposes of their education shall be named and how teaching relationship shall be constituted. I have focused here on *the ways in which* teachers are resisting the discourse of performativity as revealed in their representations of their struggles in implementing the CGEA (their discursive actions); the ways in which they are critiquing,

7. See Hennessy (1993: 37) for a discussion of theoretical issues surrounding the materiality of discourse.

contesting and transgressing powerful discourses in their professional and classroom practice[8].

6. Delineating the micropractices of discursive resistance

Method

I commenced by re-reading the texts, focussing this time on forms of resistance and on passages which reflected teachers resisting the pressure to reinterpret their students' needs and their own practice in terms of the performative discourse.

In relation to each passage I asked:

- from what discourse is this teacher speaking (writing)?
- how is this teacher resisting the pressure to reinterpret their students' needs or to change their practice?

This produced a number of brief descriptive notes for each of the identified passages of text.

I then reviewed a number of relevant poststructural and pedagogical writing in relation to this collection of brief commentaries. On that basis I formulated a set of six generic categories which would adequately encompass all of the descriptive commentaries and which were consistent with the theoretical literature which uses the notion of micro-power. I called these 'micropractices of discursive resistance'. The six generic categories were:

- rational critique
- objectification
- subversion
- refusal
- humour
- the affirmation of desire

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8. This analysis of forms of micropower is in some ways similar to that of Gore (1995) who is currently researching the functioning of disciplinary micropower in various pedagogical sites, as discussed in Chapter 10.

In the rest of this section I present a descriptive and theoretical account of the micropractices classified under each of these headings. This categorisation is not exhaustive and could have been done differently.

Rational critique

'Rational critique' refers to teachers' engagement with the logic of the CGEA in the terms in which it is presented. Rational critique is a discursive practice in the tradition of the Enlightenment which is about the application of critical reason "as an opposition and counterforce" to unreason (Habermas 1985: 107). In the examples given, the teachers are arguing rationally against competency-based assessment model on the grounds of its *inefficiency* as an educational tool:

> The students who fulfil the assessment tasks to the letter may be restricted in terms of what else they might have explored in their writing. If they do not comply with the instructions because they see a different purpose, or they have a strong desire to explore a different interpretation, a better piece of work may result. This may be more valuable to the students but it may not meet the performance criteria (Jennifer, p. 73).

Here Andrew is arguing that performance criteria may limit, rather than enhance, students' learning.

> Where in the past we tried to get students to a certain level, without the rigidity that's been built into the certificate, you could probably afford to spend more time on the thing, so that if students were struggling along, give them some extra work out of a lesson, to try and give them more chance to grasp what's happening. This year I'm finding that there are these elements that have to be met, because of the performance criteria, I am finding, that especially towards the end of the semester, I am not doing justice to a particular thing. I might be rushing through in two or three lessons something I might have spent two or three weeks on in the previous year, just trying to get parts of the certificate covered, so that the students have a fair chance they will become competent in that particular thing... I think it puts pressure on the teacher, but then puts more pressure onto the student...(Andrew, interview).

Andrew argues that the performance criteria driving the teaching program create pressures to 'achieve competency' within particular time limits, thus undermining the quality of teaching required for them· to learn. Both Jennifer and Andrew attribute the pressures and fragmentations of the Certificate to the performance criterion model of assessment which manifests performative discourse.

Jennifer points out the contradiction between complying with the requirement to demonstrate competency in all criteria and the need to

'blur the edges' in order to make them fit better with students' needs and actual levels:

> It is necessary to design assessment tasks to enable students to demonstrate competency in all performance criteria. Teaching the full range of domains and levels, I try to offer open-ended assessment tasks which will cover a number of streams and allow students to demonstrate competency at their level, rather than one which has been predetermined by the Certificate. This becomes quite a nightmare! (Jennifer. p.72).

The metaphor of 'nightmare' conveys a sense of horror at the convolutions she now must perform in order to fulfil requirements *and* to teach well. Her use of hyperbole is effective in representing the framework as *irrational.*

The teachers' rational critique could be seen as contributing to dialogue and the production of a revised and more acceptable version of the Certificate. It can be seen as part of a process of accommodation of resistances into the dominant discourse, as discussed earlier. On the other hand, the overall effect of the issues raised, of the demands on time, inappropriate criteria, fragmented and unintelligible criteria can also be seen as de-legitimating the performative discourse. In Lyotard's terms, de-legitimation occurs when "the grand narrative has lost its credibility" (Lyotard 1984: 37). Habermas wrote similarly of the 'legitimation crisis' of the modern state as follows:

> A legitimation crisis then, must be based on a motivation crisis - that is, a discrepancy between the need for motives declared by the state, the educational system and the occupational system on the one hand, and the motivation supplied by the socio-cultural system on the other" (Habermas 1973:74-75).

In this sense, the teachers are asserting the 'motivation of the socio-cultural system' against the declared policy motives. Individually and collectively they are de-legitimating the performative discourse in which the CGEA is embedded and reasserting a progressivist/professional discourse ('motivation') in its place. The system-wide de-legitimation of the discourse of performativity (which is now taking place) is the cumulative effect of critiques of this kind being made at all different levels.

Nerida is moving from rational evaluation to angry denunciation which seems to heighten the delegitimating effect. She is expressing her

frustration with institutional managerialism as well as the inadequacies of the Certificate from a 'progressivist professional teacher' discourse:

> Overall my journalling of CGEA practice has unearthed more negative experiences than positive ones. The implementation has at times made me question my own abilities as a teacher and put my students into a position where their feelings about course content had to sit second to a set of criteria dictated by people who don't know them or me and who have imposed a half-baked, unworkable system on us (Nerida, p.66).

To what extent and on what basis can the critical evaluation of each of these teachers be judged as weakening the credibility or legitimacy of the dominant discourse? In so far as a judgement can be made with respect to an individual critique, it would need to take into account other qualities, such as the strength of the argument, the rhetorical skill and the emotional force deployed.

Objectification

In order to contest explicitly the meanings and values embedded in a discourse, it is first necessary to name, objectify and thereby distance oneself from it. To name and objectify a discourse is to challenge it more directly and on a deeper level than to offer a rational critique within its own terms. Naming the discourse is a short-hand way of highlighting the inscriptions of power embedded and naturalised as common sense in every day discourse. It is a way of 'disidentifying' from the dominant discourse (MacDonell 1986: 113). According to MacDonell, the subject, rather than merely 'countering' the dominant discourse, works "on and against the dominant forms of ideological subjection". The subject thus. disidentifies herself from the dominant discourse and in so doing helps to change the discursive terrain, rather than taking up antagonist positions which nevertheless remain within that discourse.

In a similar vein, Lemke talks about the need to 'contextualise'; to break the limits of a discourse such that systematic connections are made, a *rival* set of meanings is created and therefore there is a real possibility of system change (Lemke 1995: 179). Distancing, naming and objectifying the discourse can also be seen as a practice of critical discourse analysis in that it operates to demystify ideologies by *naming them* as such (Fairclough 1992: 87). It is possible to name and objectify *as discourses* significations and constructions of reality which are inherent in the CGEA but which might otherwise be naturalised in every day language and practice.

The discursive effect of naming and objectifying the competency discourse and connecting it with the broader social and economic context is to demystify and to weaken its truth claims. As a form of 'ideology critique' of competency or performative discourse it creates the spaces for different meanings and different belief systems.

In these texts, most teachers in fact do not contest the discourse of the CGEA on this level; at least, they do not do so explicitly. There are however, some instances in which teachers' critiques include a naming of the discourse in ways which make connections between the language used and the structures of economic power. Meredith for example objectifies the discourse as "educational rationalism" in which "burns on seats and student contact hours" are more important than "educational stuff" which is merely "tolerated". "Educational rationalism" is linked to "larger political agendas" which we cannot control but must tak€ into account:

> Given that the manager is on the national framework committee, and the feeling is that all this educational stuff is tolerated ... essentially the game is where the money is (that's the educational rationalism) so the professional and curriculum development is not seen as so important as the bums on seats and student contact hours and bringing the money into ACFE ... ACFE's survival is what is running that office. Ultimately there are larger political agendas than curriculum development and it's not seen as being all that important (interview).

Helen bases her critique of the CGEA on an account of adult learning which she relates to theory and to her own experience as an adult learner of piano. She too objectifies the competency discourse by linking it to questions of the purpose of education and the wider political and economic discourse of the day:

> It is the purpose behind any pedagogical approach that is of key importance to its effectiveness. That is what will be felt by the teachers and in tum will affect the students' learning. What is the purpose, then, of the advent of competency-based education (in the form of the CGEA) into the adult literacy field? To what extent is it designed to enhance the students' learning and development? Or rather, to what extent is it designed to enable the outcomes of the program to be quantified in terms which are understood by economic rationalists in government and business in order to decide its dollar value? (p.84).

Whilst speaking from within what could be generally termed a 'progressivist professional' discourse, the teachers frequently take up antagonistic positions but only rarely could they be said clearly to objectify or to 'disidentify from' the world view associated with the discourse of

the CGEA. On the other hand, by constantly putting forward issues such as students' needs, personal growth outcomes which are negated by the competency discourse and their own professional experience, they are articulating a rival set of meanings and thereby implicitly challenging its discourse.

Nevertheless it makes sense to speak of a continuum between discursive practice which resists without fundamentally challenging the dominant discourse and discursive practice which challenges its meanings and world view at a deeper level by naming and objectifying it. In the complex engagement which I described earlier, it is not always possible to clearly judge the degree to which the teachers are explicitly objectifying the performative discourse or implicitly countering it in an alternative world view which is embedded in the textual detail of what they say.

Subverting the discourse

'Subverting the discourse' refers to a deliberate strategy of taking up the language of a discourse and changing it from the inside; colonising it and investing it with a different set of meanings. Usher and Edwards, for example, discuss the appropriation of discourse as a strategy of "subversion", of "harnessing that which the dominant discourse seeks to exclude or repress" (1994: 117).

Luke's (1995) article, *Getting Your Hands Dirty,* is a good example. He and his colleagues set out to "form a contingent alliance with the economic rationalists" and to use this to:

- redefine competency to competence, to shift emphasis from psychological/technocratic models of skills in people's heads to culturally acquired and used "repertoires" of social activities...",
- change the human subject of competence, such that the curriculum model would recognise the productivity and value of the different knowledges that students and workers bring to programs,
- shift the developmental movement in the curriculum away from the achievement of competitive autonomy towards a Vygotskian model of movement from 'assisted', to 'independent' to 'collaborative' competence, and,

- build a complex, multi-levelled and multifaceted model of competence that defied a single digit assessment of individuals (pp. 91 - 92).

Luke et al's attempt to subvert or redirect the market-oriented discourse towards a more explicitly culturally-oriented discourse is an instance of a local, pragmatic politics of discourse. This kind of discursive political practice entails 'getting our hands dirty'. It is a risky process in which the line between subverting and furthering the market-oriented agenda may easily be lost.

Two of the participants in this study spoke of consciously attempting to subvert the discourse by means of colonising and redirecting it to more human-centred, educational ends.

Meredith proposed that if we "learn the language" of competency we could better defend "the areas we feel strongly about":

> But there is a great deal of information flow that can come from providers to DEET if we knew the language and we can play it so that the areas that we feel strongly about like the personal enrichment and negotiated learning and those kinds of things are still in place and part of the funding provider's language, so where I feel most people's anger is sitting is because they haven't yet learned the language of element, performance criteria and all the stuff that those linear dry old things that relate to other subject-specific courses use (interview).

Here Meredith is referring to the previous wave of curriculum development in TAFE around the Instructional Systems Model (TAFE Services Victoria 1980) which also demanded behavioural objectives and assessment of measurable outcomes. Teachers soon 'learned the language' and hence were able to teach with and 'control' the curricula (and hence its discourse) with minimal impact on their practice. The data produced by this study indicates that teachers are doing the same thing: learning the language of competency and using it slightly differently whilst modifying the requirements in line with their own meanings and pedagogical projects.

John talks about the struggle around the notion of language education which is central to the debate about competency-based assessment in ALBE. In opposing the functionalist account of literacy (which is about acquiring minimal levels of literacy only) he has deliberately used a "more complicated taxonomy":

> So, in a sense I have been trying to push as far away as possible from the UNESCO functionalist account, and my sub-agenda has been not to allow for

> an opposition to be set up between 'functional language and literacy' and 'critical language and literacy', because as soon as you allow that to happen, then the government will lock you into impossible dilemmas. That's why I use a more complicated taxonomy - so it's harder for a simple polarity to be set up (Interview).

John has deliberately avoided arguing against a functionalist account of literacy and advocating on behalf of 'critical literacy' because this would have set up a binary opposition which would have left critical literacy vulnerable. A more complex account which includes 'basic skills' has traditionally been a strategic element in the historical development of ALBE (as we have seen in the discussion of the ABEAF in Chapter 2).

While only two participants in the study had a deliberate approach to appropriating, subverting and redirecting the discourse of competency, almost all of them were *implicitly,* in their pedagogical practice and in their speech, attempting to appropriate and to redirect the discourse by reinterpreting and reconstituting it in progressivist terms.

Deliberate subversion of the discourse requires a high level of conceptual sophistication. Teachers located on the margins may not have the resources[9] or opportunities to practice this form of discourse politics. Many teachers subvert the discourse in practice, rather than in their linguistic meaning-making. This kind of subversion part of the culture of institutional resistance which is deeply embedded in their teaching and professional habitus. For these teachers, subversion and redirection of the discourse meant assertion of their agency as professional teachers by refusing or transgressing the requirements whenever they thought this to be necessary. The evidence in the texts of such 'material' resistances, of teachers who refuse and transgress the competency discourse in practice (rather than in linguistic representations) is presented in the next section.

Refusal

'Refusal' refers to the ways in which the teachers transgressed, ignored or modified the requirements of the CGEA when they judged these to be pedagogically inappropriate, unnecessary, or simply undoable. As teachers they were consciously holding onto reference points which had

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9. Foucault writes about the power of discursive 'authority' (which he says is a characteristic of the bourgeoisie) and which involves having access to "the rules and processes of appropriation of discourse" (Foucault 1972: 68).

guided their practice in the past, in effect stating the limits to which they are willing to go in implementing the new rules.

Understood in terms of a broad social theory of discourse, refusal is a 'material' discursive practice which also has a semiotic effect. Refusal is significant in this study in so far as the teachers are giving words to their refusals and articulating why and what it means for them to refuse.

Roughly half of the participants spoke or wrote about how they transgress or selectively apply the 'rules' in their struggles to reconcile these with their teaching habitus and notions of 'good practice'.

Rachel is typical in speaking about the limit to which she would go in 'compromising' her practice to accommodate the CGEA:

> The issue that is relevant for me is that students stand to be disadvantaged because of restrictions and limitations that are formally put on them as learners, and on me as facilitator of their learning, as to the type of texts that are seen to be legitimate for them. Whether or not the Certificate (or those who wrote it) intended this to be the case, the truth is that it is the way it is being interpreted in the field. My own stance is that I REFUSE [author's emphasis] to allow students to be shielded, removed or protected from hard words, complex sentences, complex arguments that are part of their daily lives and discourses (and certainly part of the texts on television) and to insult them with simple sentences and simple debates, which is largely what the range and conditions of a level 2 text demand (p. 97).

Rose talked about how, in her department, teachers jointly decided to dispense with the oral communication stream:

> Oh, we chucked it [oral communication] in, and we give it to them as a benefit .. .I teach the overall ... I understand what the overall competency is that they have to meet, I only look at the criteria, if communication has broken down in some way ... for example, some of those criteria can be useful, but ... I don't think, in oracy for self-expression, I don't have any right to assess people's casual conversation in, any way. Chuck that one out! (interview).

Gretel was also typical in the way that she solved the personal crisis which she experienced in attempting to implement the Certificate, basically by getting on with what was important and refusing to take the rules and requirements too seriously:

> My resolution for 1995 is to focus more acutely on meeting learners' needs, rather than spending time battling college bureaucracy, translating obscure performance criteria and guiltily worrying that I had let a piece through knowing that performance criteria number 5 of element 4.7 had not been met. (p. 62).

The resistances of these teachers can be seen as the assertion of professional agency as they struggle in their daily teaching practice to

implement the CGEA. They are carrying out countless small practical refusals and modifications and talking to each other about what they will and will not do. By the cumulative force of these small refusals and the evolution of an anti-disciplinary "popular culture" (De Certeau 1984):xiv) in the field of ALBE at large, they are once again (from a Habermasian viewpoint) de-legitimating its discourse and asserting an alternative. They are producing, in the field at large, a hybridised certificate (the 1997 revised version) and a hybrid pedagogical discourse, as discussed in the previous section.

Humour

An important aspect of the teachers' refusal to implement the CGEA "hook, line and sinker", is the mobilisation of humour and play.

Bakhtin wrote about the "carnival of laughter", which "celebrated temporary liberation from the prevailing truth and from the established order; it marked the suspension of all hierarchical rank, privileges, norms and prohibitions... the feast of becoming, change"(Bakhtin 1981: 21) The carnival is "at the same time cheerful and annihilating", directed at those in power and those subjected to it (Bakhtin 1968: 10; Bauer and McKinstry 1991: 9).

Humour is the dimension of transgressive or 'ludic' resistance (Lemke 1995: 183-184; Usher and Edwards 1994: 22; Usher, Bryant and Johnston 1997: 8).

There are frequent passages or vignettes throughout the texts which show such humorous disrespect for the CGEA and the institutional authority which it represents. Rose said,

> I say "we've got these stupid criteria here", that's literally what I say. I say, "I'm trying to develop your writing, I'm trying to enable you to write in such a way, and I give them examples of the kind of work I would like them to able to produce, we analyse the content, we talk about what makes one piece different from another piece, why people write in that sort of style. Then I say, "unfortunately, we've got this certificate, and for example, in the public debate piece, I'll get them to write an argument, and its got 'acknowledge the other side' in it, and I would debate whether you always have to acknowledge the other arguments, but they might do the piece - I say, "this is great, but to meet these criteria, you will need to acknowledge the other side, so could you add a paragraph doing this..." and then they add it in... anyway, it's exciting. If they knew what we really did, they would die!! (interview).

Here Rose is talking about how she caricatures the Certificate as she teaches it. As a confident and experienced teacher she has the ability to 'play' with it in the classroom, modelling to her students a healthy disrespect for authority whilst making it clear that she is acting professionally in providing them with a compromise arrangement.

Sue parodies the CGEA:

> Shades of Orwell's 1984 swirl around teachers' assessment folders as they struggle to memorise, internalise, adopt the new language: 'Certificate speak'.
>
> "Bonzetta, in an unfamiliar situation, when it is raining, with two or three persons unknown to her, can utter three coherent sentences about the weather" (p.78).

Dora laughs at herself as a "ticker of boxes":

> ... But as verification gets closer, then I am thinking, gee Dora, you should be tick, tick, ticking here, to make sure they are covering everything, rather than designing a program in class, and then saying, oh yes, look they've done that and they've done that. So, in that respect it's putting me in the position of 'yes, I must become a ticker' ... I don't want to be a ticker (interview)!

Usher, Bryant and Johnston write of this kind of humour as a 'parodic' narrative trope:

> The parodic, finally, is located in the realm of the playful or the ludic, both in the sense of game-playing and play as performance. The parodic foregrounds subversion, a refusal to take 'sacred' positions and 'articles of faith' seriously and at their own self-important valuation. (Usher, Bryant et al. 1997: 8)

Lemke, like Bakhtin and Usher, sees humour as profoundly significant as a form of resistance to disciplinary power:

> Play happens whenever the system of disjunctions fails to get us to police ourselves, wherever Chaos is a welcome friend, embraced in laughter and not shut out in the terror of no-meaning. Play is the complement and antithesis of praxis because it creates the possibility of a meaning-space outside the meaning system, beyond the limits set by the system of disjunctions, from which that system can become visible to us in its effects on our practice (Lemke 1995: 184).

Humour, laughing openly and pointing out absurdities in the competency-based requirements, powerfully delegitimates the discourse while strengthening the collective oppositional subject (Hennessy 1993: 38) within the local ALBE 'community'.

The affirmation of desire

Humour belongs to the realm of embodiment and desire. Throughout these texts there is a current of vibrancy and spontaneity which I have attempted to pin down and have called 'the affirmation of desire'. In mobilising the progressivist and feminist discourses that are silenced and discounted by the dominant discourse, the teachers are reconstituting themselves within a discourse which legitimates and celebrates connection, relationship and desire. The 'affirmation of desire' can thus be seen as an assertion of progressivist discourse, but also as a discursive micropractice in its own right: the affirmation of the authority of feelings and the body as a source of what is right, what is to be valued and what is to be resisted.

In Foucault's terms, the affirmation of desire is about power rooted in a "positive economy of the body and pleasure" (Foucault 1980: 190) which is structured discursively by the dynamics of subjectification and resistance. In *The History of Sexuality* Foucault talks about sexuality as:

> ... a great surface network in which the stimulation of bodies, the intensification of pleasures, the incitement to discourse, the formation of special knowledges, the strengthening of controls and resistances, are linked to one another, in accordance with a few major strategies of knowledge and power. (Foucault 1981: 105).

Foucault saw the body as a site of subjectification and repression *and* as the site and source of pleasures, rebellion and the production of new 'truth' ('the incitement to discourse'). Feminists built on poststructural theorisation of desire and the body, asserting a feminist epistemology of relationship, connection, positionality and intersubjectivity against 'phallogocentrism' of male rationality (Grosz 1988: 92).

It is beyond the scope of this thesis, however, to locate the 'affirmation of desire' as a discursive micropractice within the extensive contemporary literature about the politics of the body, deconstructions of the mind/body dualism, and the power of embodied subjectivity (Turner 1984; Grosz 1994). The work of the French feminists such as Luce Irigaray, Julia Kristeva and Helene Cixous has also contributed significantly to the theoretical discourse of 'desire' which I draw on here and which has passed into feminist pedagogical discourse.

Feminist pedagogues of the 80s applied notions of feminist epistemology and feminine desire in reclaiming pedagogy from patriarchal definitions and affirming the centrality of desire in the teaching/learning relationship. bell hooks writes of the need "to restore passion to the classroom" and the need to "find again the place of eros within ourselves and together allow the mind and body to feel and know and desire (hooks 1994a). Grumet writes of the split between father and mother, public and private, rationality and emotion, separation and connection, in patriarchal educational institutions. Her project is to bring women's experience of reproduction and nurturance and the 'epistemology of love' into the classroom (Grumet 1988: 1-30). Culley et al, celebrate the role of nurturance and emotionality in teaching: the classroom as an "eroticised milieu", the "fusion of affect and intellect" and the "intrusion/infusion of emotionality... as a step towards healing the fragmentation capitalism and patriarchy have demanded from us" (Culley, Diamond et al. 1985: 19).

McWilliam argues for reclaiming 'seduction' as "a legitimate metaphor for the sort of pedagogical work successful teachers do... that such teachers successfully mobilise forces of desire (the desire to teach and the desire to learn) both of which are productive, not malevolent" (McWilliam 1995: 15). According to her, contemporary constructions of teaching have "neutered teachers, rendering them functionaries without self-interest, without desire, without any 'body' to teach (with)... The possibility of an erotic inter-subjectivity of teacher and student has been disallowed" (p.17)[10].

A number of participants in this study affirmed the centrality of pleasure and desire in their teaching as a touchstone for them of what is real, worthwhile and to be defended. Meredith said that,

> ... and how not to go down the TAFE road, so we are producing curriculums like those awful blue things. How can we prevent that from happening to us? And my feeling is that it happens through solidarity, through people being united in their desire for the field to continue, and for the richness and the beauty that can happen within a classroom; you know it when you are in there (interview)

There is no language in the performative discourse for the "richness and beauty that can happen within a classroom". Even progressivist discourse seems inadequate when it comes to putting into words moments of

10. There are educationalists such who do not specifically identify with feminist traditions and who also emphasise the importance of 'eras' in teaching (Neville 1985).

powerful human connection or transformation that we sometimes experience as we teach.

When we do speak about it, it is often with a degree of self-deprecation, as with Rose:

> ... but then I go to my class and I have a wonderful time, and that's why I hang onto doing teaching because I love my job ... you go in and it's a joy and you feel there are people just blossoming, and I know it sounds a bit corny, but it's true, you see people come in and just grow ... you know, all that seventies stuff, of course it's far more than that, but seeing people develop and take control of their lives, and see themselves as worthwhile, that they can learn, that they have knowledge and that they are articulate ... it's the most exciting thing I think you ever get to experience... interview).

Rose feels the need to apologise ("it sounds a bit corny" and "all that seventies stuff") when she is affirming the essence of her commitment, her passion for teaching. This suggests the lack of discourses which are readily available and which we can use to speak legitimately about issues of passion and desire in our teaching.

Rose's self-deprecatory affirmation of pedagogical desire is probably indicative of a defensiveness within the field at large in relation to liberal progressivist discourse. Is progressivist discourse diminishing in collective practice and meaning-making in ALBE? Progressivist beliefs and understandings are being delegitimated by performative discourse and at the same time are being undermined by a critique of liberal progressivism (Walkerdine 1992; Lee and Wickert 1995). This critique appears to articulate with (and therefore in some ways to strengthen) the discourse of performativity. Are we now in need of a new pedagogical discourse of desire and the body? This question will be taken up in my discussion of pedagogy in Chapter 10.

7. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have shown in some detail the complex of discursive positionings and practices amongst teachers struggling to come to terms with a policy-led innovation which has had a profound impact on their classroom practice. The teachers are negotiating and participating in a dynamic discursive field which can be described in terms of three main discursive formations: 'progressivist', 'professional teacher', and 'performative'. There is a high level of interdiscursivity between these

three discourses: the boundaries which I have constructed to mark them off from each other are highly permeable and sometimes appear to be non existent. The discourses dissolve into and transform each other in the course of everyday speaking, writing and teaching.

I have also delineated some of the micro-practices of discursive resistance through which the teachers have contradicted the meanings and practices of performativity in their language and in their classroom practice.

In the next Chapter, I present three of the texts which I have 're-written' as case studies. The case studies illustrate individual teachers in the midst of complex and dynamic processes of discursive negotiation and engagement.

Chapter Seven

Three Case Studies of Discursive Engagement

1. Introduction

In this Chapter, I present three case studies based on three of the CGEA texts. I show the interplay of professional, progressivist, and performative discourse within each of the teachers' representations, the different subject positions they are assuming and constrained by, and the discursive practices they carry out as they mediate the conflicting discourses.

These three texts were selected because they contain features which were common across the texts and reflect discursive practices which were typical of the teachers within the study. Dissimilarities between the texts provide a series of comparisons and contrasts which highlight the individual discursive positionings and practices of each teacher.

The first two of these case studies (Gretel and Jennifer) are based on texts written for the CGEA evaluation project and published in the Appendix. The third case study is based on the text of one of the eleven interviews. That text is longer, less self-conscious and more narratival than the reports. The report writers and the interviewees were presented with the same list of key questions, and, in terms of my specific focus, the content of each of the two groups of texts is essentially similar.

The case studies can be seen as 're-writings' of the original texts (Threadgold 1997). That is, I have written commentaries on the texts in order to 'tell an intertextual story' (p. 9) and to show how the teachers'

discursive practices are part of their habituses, their enculturated and inscribed teaching bodies.

2. Gretel: 'putting texts into boxes'

Gretel is an experienced TAFE teacher who has teaching and co-ordination responsibilities in a large metropolitan TAFE college. Her report (Appendix 1: 59) reflects themes, discourses and discursive practices which were common among the participants in this study.

In discussing the positive as well as the negative effects of implementing the CGEA, Gretel positions herself clearly within a hybridising 'professional/progressivist teacher' discourse. There is also evidence in the text that despite of, in fact *through,* her struggles with the CGEA, she may be absorbing the performative discourse into her discursive repertoire. Her account of this complex encounter could be seen as a depiction of the growth and evolution of the professional self or of its fragmentation.

Progressivist/professional teacher discourse

Gretel's role and institutional location are consistent with her strongly 'professional' orientation within a hybridising progressivist professional teacher discourse. This can be read from her account of how she has prepared for the implementation of the CGEA through planning, preparation of documentation, assisting tutors and rewriting the curriculum. This process had entailed a re-examination of her practice: an attempt to "make explicit the theory that underpinned my teaching" and to re-assess "the assumptions that I took with me into the classroom". Her self-reflexive examination of the theories and assumptions guiding her practice indicates a highly professional approach to developing her pedagogical practice.

> At the end of last year I was forced to re-examine my practice and planning. Preparing documentation, assisting tutors and rewriting obsolete curriculum documents to make way for the Certificate, I had to make explicit the theory that underpinned my teaching. Before I could deliver the CGEA I had to prioritise the elements of past programs which could not be compromised. While I recognised CBT would mean a change in my assessment processes, I did not think it should entail giving up aspects of programs that I knew worked, or giving up on students' needs. The transfer to the CGEA has set

> me on a course of reassessing the assumptions which I took into the classroom.

Gretel's progressivism can be read from her commitment to 'student-centred' curriculum and her references to 'self-esteem' and 'pleasure' as important components in literacy learning:

> There are monumental achievements of many ABE students which I cannot assess with the CGEA document. Increased confidence and self-esteem, a first contribution to a discussion, completing a piece of writing, perceiving the self as learner and gaining pleasure from a text for the first time are just as important outcomes to me as "using and, but and so" or "ordering information by the cause and effect or by classification connections".

Gretel is finding that the new requirements may be in opposition to her belief in the centrality of students' needs and, in order to deal with that conflict, has set out on a course of "reassessing the assumptions which I took into the classroom". This re-assessment of assumptions suggests a rich process of interdiscursivity, of progressivist discourse being examined, revised, transformed, enhanced or developed in dialogue with the other, emerging discourses.

Performative discourse

In problematising many aspects of the CGEA, Gretel is entering into implicit dialogue with the performative discourse, but she does not on an immediate level appear to be positioning herself within that discourse. Gretel's prose is complex and metaphorical, suggesting a strong sense of her own being and agency in writing her evaluative reflections. Her choice of words in critiquing the Certificate is measured and she is comfortable with sharing her experience of the positives, the negatives and her own uncertainties. In the opening paragraph she says that she is "still not convinced that CBT and language and literacy sit comfortably together". She points out contradictions, poses many questions and talks of her own "struggle to wrestle with the CGEA", setting out a series of complex dilemmas that this involves. Her wide-ranging references to the details of the requirements and her own pedagogy indicate a complex educational and personal discursive positioning which is anything but performative but instead serves to highlight the over-simplifications produced by such discourse.

In Gretel's text there is evidence that the three main discourses are blending in complex ways in the course of her struggle to both integrate the CGEA into her practice and resist aspects of it.

The metaphor of "clearing away some of the cobwebs of habit" signifies the positive process of conscious accommodation of the new frameworks in her practice. The CGEA, by bringing about an intensification of self-reflection on her own practice and requiring certain changes, has caused her to develop new strategies, some of which she has found to be productive. In the past for example, she always began programs with writing in the 'self-expression domain' and had applied her "stockpile of things that work". At the same time, she had not asked students to speak publicly about their experiences and ideas until later on. "Yet this semester, more conscious of integrating activities, I changed my usual tack...". She successfully introduced "public debate" on the second day, and learned that her previous (perhaps over-protective) belief that new students "did not want to contribute personal experiences to strangers" did not necessarily apply. Instead,

> This change in old habits really has resulted from the CGEA, which focused me more rigorously on oracy practice and assessment. Being a communication skills teacher I had always thought I included a great many opportunities for oral episodes, yet the CGEA has made explicit the standards that I should be aiming for in assessment of oracy.

Like many of the other participants in this study, Gretel is learning, sometimes to her own surprise, that the challenge to do things differently has had some positive effects. At the same time, each of the many small practical changes "in old habits" and each of the innovations in classroom practice can also be seen as an occasion for importing not only the new practices and new language but also elements of the underlying world view of the CGEA. In the above quote, for example, the words "has made explicit the standards I should be aiming for" suggest a process of normalisation. This passage illustrates the subtlety of linguistic processes in which resistance and accommodation are closely intertwined.

Micro-practices of discursive engagement

While writing about how she is experimenting with the CGEA and finding some aspects favourable, she problematises it and rejects its educational authority (and its legitimacy) overall. She writes that she is "still not convinced that CBI and language and literacy sit comfortably

together"; that she is "still not prepared to swallow the whole performance criteria approach hook, line and sinker", and so on.

In the course of her "cautious" and "critical" implementation of the CGEA, she carries out many small refusals and transgressions of the rules. For example, she has her own version of "unobtrusive" assessment of the oracy elements, instead of setting assessment tasks which can be formally moderated, as required. Her resolution "to focus more acutely on meeting learners' needs" rather than guiltily worry about whether each criterion for each element has been met" (quoted earlier) is a fairly open declaration that where she perceives a conflict between the students' interests and the requirements imposed by the Certificate, she will put the students and her own judgement about good practice first and somehow fudge the requirements to fit in with that. It is in the course of carrying out these small refusals as well as in her compliances that Gretel is progressively constituting and re-constituting her pedagogical discourse. In this case, a hybridising progressivist/professional discourse is being re-constituted in conflict and in dialogue with the performative discourse of the CGEA:

> To avoid narrowing my focus, I use texts, even in assessment tasks, which do not fit all the range and conditions. More and more the challenge becomes a case of designing assessment tasks and selecting materials that allow students to develop the skills to demonstrate the performance criteria, *and* that represent real literacy in the world.

The phrase "more and more" indicates that responding to the challenge by making (minor) transgressions is part of a meaning-making process. By attempting to do both things, to enable students to demonstrate the performance criteria *and* to teach with 'real life' texts, she is gradually producing a hybrid curriculum as well as a hybrid discourse.

The dynamic of hybridisation occurs in the course of the many iterations which she makes in accommodating and/or refusing the CGEA; the many small acts of inclusion, small acts of resistance and countless judgements she makes in the course of her work (her teaching praxis).

Gretel's many small refusals and adaptations are part of her habitus, her embodied teaching disposition. She is "trying to maintain student confidence, enjoyment and direction". This is her embodied practice which cannot be contained or changed by a set of methods or techniques of assessment. Her teaching habitus is fundamentally about how she relates to and communicates with the students and how she works with

them to resource their "real life" learning needs. This is the element of desire which she is affirming against the constraints, abstractions and minute surveillances the CGEA calls for. However, her habitus is changing and developing in the course of self-reflexive praxis in relation to the challenge of implementing the CGEA.

The conflict in Gretel's practice between progressivist, professional and performative discourses is working itself out in this process. On the one hand Gretel is challenging the educational legitimacy of CBT with a strong professional critique. However, the question remains whether in striving to implement it and working daily with the requirements and the language of the CGEA, she is being colonised or inscribed (perhaps inevitably) by its discourse:

> Last semester I gave the CGEA a go, but my classes were far too 'assessment task' driven. Counting off the 12 elements, setting numerous assessment tasks and seeing if students had achieved all the performance criteria were far too much my focus. Now down the track somewhat and more familiar with the shortfalls in the certificate document, I am more circumspect. I look to the earlier ABEAF frameworks document more to inform my practice. The later accreditation document is mainly something I consult when designing assessment tasks and moderating. To design a syllabus, I focus on my students' current skills and future goals and my understanding of what works in the classroom.

There seem to be several things going on here: on the basis of reflection on her first semester of implementation, Gretel is now more "circumspect" (an interesting euphemism suggesting here more 'critical' and more 'selective' about what she will and won't do). By saying that she "now looks to the earlier ABEAF frameworks" (discussed in Chapter 2) she is implicitly rejecting the status and authority of the CGEA. While she uses it to fulfil formal accountability requirements of assessment and moderation, she eschews it when it comes to designing the syllabus. For this she focuses on "students' current skills and my understanding of what works in the classroom".

It is through conscious reflection on her own practice that the contradiction she refers to gradually moves towards some sort of resolution. This process involves a complex interplay of discourses and the evolution of new levels of complexity and new, hybrid discourses. As far as this text is concerned, it appears on one level that Gretel's progressivist professionalist discourse is prevailing against the performative discourse of the CGEA.

> My resolution for 1995 is to focus more acutely on meeting learners' needs, rather than spending time battling college bureaucracy, translating obscure performance criteria and guiltily worrying that I had let a piece through knowing that performance criteria number 5 of element 4.7 had not been met.

As we have seen, however, there are also small indications in the text that the CGEA discourse is permeating Gretel's language and her thinking despite her resistances and her well-developed critique of it.

In the context of the institutional power in which Gretel is working there is very little space for openly resisting the CGEA and its discourse. Her evaluative critique operates on one level to strongly delegitimate the CGEA and its discourse. It constructs an alternative professional progressivist discourse which is educationally impressive. She resists in practi e by exploiting the spaces of professional autonomy she does have and making many small refusals of the official requirements. On another level, however, we can see the powerful colonising effects of the language of performativity which she now has to use.

It may be that this complex discursive struggle is strengthening Gretel's 'progressivist professional teacher' discourse by the articulation of notions and practices of curriculum structure, outcomes, repertoire, integration of learning domains and activities, assessment and moderation.

In making her critique of the CGEA, Gretel has re-affirmed her belief in the primacy of student-centred practice, a holistic 'real life' approach to texts, the need for students to experience pleasure in learning and the need to speak of other achievements which are neither assessed nor recognised by the CGEA. Progressivist principles are shown to be reconcilable with aspects of the CGEA which have been accepted into professional discourse: it is possible to be student-centred, to teach in a holistic way *and* to be more methodical in working with notions of repertoire, outcomes and moderateable assessment which the CGEA has introduced. Progressivist principles are now balanced and modified by the 'professional' notions and extended by discourses of vocationalism, repertoire and measurable outcomes imported from the discourse of the CGEA. There appears to be a transformed and more authoritative version of progressivism within the newly emerging discourse of the progressivist professional teacher.

Gretel does little to distance herself from the discourse of the CGEA or to objectify it *as* a discourse as some others in this study have done. She does

not explicitly 'disidentify' from the dominant discourse and hence may be more vulnerable to its colonising effects as she struggles to both accommodate and to resist it. Neither does she appear to have any orientation to explicitly subverting the language of competency as a strategic form of resistance. However, she seems to have found a way of straddling both discourses and using the discomfort productively whilst staying with her habitus, her teaching 'self'.

Gretel appears to position herself strongly within a hybrid progressivist professional discourse, the discourse of 'good practice', despite the signs that she is taking up some elements of performative discourse. It is impossible to foretell from this text whether her accommodations of performative discourse will produce a creative strengthening of her professional practice or will undermine and change it fundamentally. The same could be said for the whole community of ALBE teachers of which she is a member.

3. Jennifer: 'messing up the learning experience'

Jennifer (Appendix 1: 71) is a part-time literacy teacher of a *Return to Study* course at a neighbourhood learning centre in a small country town. She teaches a group of seven women, aged 25-62, who meet for 3 hours per week.

Progressivist/ professional teacher discourse

Jennifer positions herself clearly within a hybrid progressivist /professional discourse although 'the progressivist' is more clearly reflected in the text of Jennifer's report than in Gretel's report. This is as would be expected given her history in and commitment to community-based education. She is less 'balanced' in her critical evaluation of the CGEA, finally rejecting it as having little if any educational validity.

Jennifer's professionalism can be seen in the methodical way she has evaluated the CGEA and has organised her report around the issues which impact negatively on her teaching.

Like Gretel, Jennifer has conscientiously tried to implement the CGEA as best she could and she has made some modifications to make it fit in with the students' learning needs. However (unlike Gretel) she has found that

trying to make the CGEA stretch to meet the diversity of student needs and to make a compromise between student-centred pedagogy and the prescriptions of the framework of assessment, has become "a nightmare".

She positions herself consistently, in making her critique, in the kind of beliefs and principles (student-centred practice, holistic pedagogy, negotiated curriculum and the importance of pleasure) which are normally identified with educational progressivism. In making the six points of her critique, Jennifer constantly returns to the students (their needs, bodily presences and desires) as her basic reference point in making her judgements:

> Trying to explain the Certificate to students is quite difficult. The language used to outline performance criteria is not easily accessible to students, or to teachers for that matter!... The document should be written for students, after all they are the ones who are undertaking the course and they need to know what is expected of them to successfully complete the course... Most students become intimidated by the wording of the document as it currently stands and it does not offer a supportive framework to reduce student anxiety over expectations (p.73).

Jennifer's pedagogical project appears in this text to be completely centred on students and bears little relationship to the purposes of adult literacy as constructed within the mainstream discourse. The CGEA document is 'inaccessible' and 'intimidating' to students (and teachers) clearly contradicting principles of the negotiated curriculum and a pedagogy of nurturance and support.

According to Jennifer, the CGEA is in fact irrelevant and has no redeeming features at all. She concludes that:

> In my experience, I have found the CGEA to be irrelevant for students. They have a desire to learn, a desire to experience schooling that they may have missed out on. The course document is not compatible with the students' stated goals and/or their desired learning outcomes. The Certificate messes up a valuable learning experience (p.73).

Performative discourse

Jennifer not prepared to compromise the progressivist /profe.ssional pedagogical beliefs and practicesto accommodate the Certificate. She rejects the performative discourse totally as she struggles to teach holisticly within the confines of the Certificate.

Micro-practices of discursive resistance

What, then, can be said about micropractices of resistance? By making a well-organised and well-documented rational evaluation (criticising the CGEA on six important counts) she contributes her voice to the collective view reflected in the findings of the *Negotiating Competence* report which, as discussed in Chapter 5, had an overall delegitimating effect.

Like Gretel, Jennifer does not seem to resist consciously or strategically; she does not in any way attempt to directly distance herself from or name the opposing discourse (at least in this text); neither does she appear to have any kind of strategy for dealing with it.

On the other hand, by constantly claiming an alternative set of values and practices from those in which the CGEA is embedded (the needs and desires of students, holistic pedagogy, pleasure in learning), she is not only 'countering' the dominant discourse but implicitly disidentifying from it, as discussed in the previous chapter. Whilst taking up an antagonistic position towards the CGEA she positions herself outside the terms of its discourse. In so doing, she is articulating a rival set of meanings and values - the progressivist, student-centred traditional discourses of ALBE.

However, in taking up a strongly defensive position, Jennifer does not open herself to the productive possibilities of the CGEA in the same way as Gretel has done. Whereas Gretel's approach is exploratory, remaining open to learn and to develop her practice by engaging the challenge of the CGEA and acknowledging some benefits, Jennifer has judged strongly against it on all counts. Whereas Gretel has used the CGEA as a springboard to re-examine her practice and reflect on the assumptions guiding her practice, Jennifer's experience is that in the context of a small community setting, there are no redeeming features.

Whereas Gretel has refused in practice certain of the requirements, Jennifer (at least in the evidence of her report) does not appear to do so, at least not to anything like the same extent. She reports that "a fragmented approach creeps into my teaching", "assessment hangs over my head and the heads of the students" and that teaching to the Certificates "results in contrived and fragmented sessions". Her report conveys a sense of frustration and distress and creates an impression of her relative powerlessness in that situation. By way of contrast, Gretel seemed to

have a stronger sense of her own professional autonomy in the way she confidently modified or refused those parts of the CGEA which she found were not compatible with her practice. This impression could be linked to the fact that Gretel was located at a large TAFE institute and had the benefits of being at the 'centre' of the professional activity which constitutes ALBE as a community, while Jennifer, at a small community centre in a rural area, was at the 'margins' of that community and therefore was less confident about exercising professional autonomy.

We saw in the case study of Gretel how, by engaging intensively with the CGEA (both accommodating and resisting it), she was open to both taking up its discourse and to transforming it; her teaching habitus was being re-constituted, just as she was re-constituting the discourse by producing a different and more deconstructed and flexible version of it. Jennifer, on the other hand, has resisted but has not engaged with the same intensity. There is little evidence in her text of her either absorbing the discourse or, conversely, producing any kind of hybridised version of it. Instead she is rejecting performativity and re-affirming progressivist /professional teacher 'good practice' as her discourse of resistance[1].

4. Jodie: 'One humungus assignment'

Jodie is a literacy co-ordinator and teacher at a neighbourhood learning centre at another small Victorian country town[2]. She has only recently joined the centre, having taken a voluntary redundancy package after many years as a teacher in a local school. Deeply distressed at the effect of cut-backs at her former school and the devastation of the school sector generally, she is relieved to find herself in a small, democratically-run centre with strong community links and an educational vision for the community. Although being paid for only half of the 35 hours per week she puts into the centre, she feels rewarded by the degree of autonomy her job allows and that her work is making a difference to people's lives. She is, however, critical of the quality of some of the teaching in the

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[1] In making this interpretation, it must be recognised that there is of course a possibility that in writing for a public research project Jennifer is purposefully not reporting her resistances and transgressions, and that over a period of time, her initial resistances may have softened to a more accommodatory approach.

[2] The account of Jodie is based on an interview transcription.

community sector and sees some important benefits in the introduction of the CGEA.

Progressivist professional teacher discourse

Like Gretel and Jennifer, Jodie appears to position herself in a hybrid progressivist/ professional teacher discourse. With Jodie, however, the professional teacher positioning seems to be the stronger.

Her critique of the CGEA is that of an accomplished teaching professional. She specifically mentions the inadequacies of the implementation process; the way in which the bureaucratic details of moderation and assessment have taken precedence over curriculum development; the lack of resourcing for country providers; the complexity of the assessment framework; and the contradiction between the level of professional sophistication required to develop, teach and assess the curriculum and the inadequate conditions, pay and level of support offered to tutors at her centre.

Jodie (like Gretel) is engaging in a complex way with the discourse of the Certificate and recognises certain educational benefits that it brings to community education. Importantly, she believes it will maximise job opportunities of unemployed local people if they have an accredited certificate stating exactly what their communication skills are.

For the teacher, "It is good because it really diversifies your thinking and makes your planning better across a broader range of content". This is in the context of a fairly negative view of the practice of many literacy tutors in community-based settings:

> I think probably that the thing that I picked up when I first came in, was that tutors were doing a lot of 'cut out a pretty picture and get the students to write about it' ... now this is going to broaden thinking, broaden planning, so that a greater range of subjects will be covered.

This comment appears to be a criticism of certain teaching practices in neighbourhood houses rather than of progressivist practice per se.

Jodie's curriculum reflects the multiple purposes of ALBE which is expressed in the four domains: 'self-expression', 'practical purposes', 'knowledge' and 'public debate', and in itself reflects a hybridising of 'progressivist', 'professional teacher' and 'vocationalist' discourses. Her

level one course, for example, strongly focuses on issues of personal identity and self-expression:

> The course that we are writing for level 1 is called 'Survival' and that's designed to appeal both to migrant families and local folk. There's a lot of stuff you could talk about survival in Australia, it could be physical, emotional, social, all that sort of thing and there are lots of fascinating modules you could do within that, whether it's surviving bushfires, and then it's migrants bringing their own experience, you know, 'what do you have to do to survive in your countries?

Although issues such as identity and personal survival are normally associated with progressivist discourse they are here associated with the curriculum content rather than constructed in terms of a philosophy of ALBE. The progressivism in Jodie's curriculum (intertextualised with vocationalist, functionalist and critical elements) is a reflection of the hybridity built into the CGEA framework as well as the complexity of her own discursive positioning.

Moreover, Jodie does not believe that negotiating the curriculum is necessarily a good thing, in that:

> if you have got to write a course, it's you putting it in and you designing it, and you haven't got a lot of time to sit around and chew the cud with students and say, "what do you want?" [..] if you sit down and negotiate what every one is going to do, when really, there aren't enough hours in the day, it's not expedient, to do that because you will end up with a whole lot of people saying "I don't want to do that", so you will get into a row. What you have got to do is write something locally based and sell it to people - that's what I've done.

Here Jodie is reflecting a clear trend within community education: with the move to larger class sizes, accredited curriculum frameworks and limited contact hours, the environments in which progressivist, student-centred teaching and negotiated curriculum were developed are changing. Instead, it is the task of the teacher to apply competency-based frameworks to local needs and to develop locally-based curriculum within the frameworks. In this context, 'negotiating the curriculum', a central principle within progressivist discourse, is becoming more and more impractical. However, Jodie also speaks as a "no nonsense" professional who has developed her teaching habitus within the demands and institutional structures of the school system.

Performative discourse

In expressing strong support for the CGEA and committing herself to making it work, Jodie at times seems to speak from inside the

performative discourse, or at least, from a hybridising 'professional teacher' version of it. For example, she describes her approach to curriculum development for her CGEA course as follows:

> ... I then went back to the performance criteria for level three and four to see whether it would actually hold together, and it wasn't difficult to write assessment tasks and plum in [sic] ordinary activities around the performance criteria. What we are finding now is that when we are actually writing assessment tasks, we have to be very specific and we have to go to the document and make sure what we are covering and if it fits in with the curriculum.

Jodie is able to speak comfortably from within the performative discourse while she carries out the requirements of performative assessment. However, she is just as comfortable in denouncing it, as described below.

Micro-practices of discursive resistance

Like Gretel, Jodie has engaged very intensively with the CGEA and its discourse. As a supporter (in the main) of the CGEA she strives to comply with it at the same time as being highly critical of it. Her main mode of resistance 'in discourse' is rational evaluation and the main object of her critique is its over-emphasis on assessment, rather than curriculum development:,

> We are going to be so bogged down with assessment that this will drive everything. I know, in schools, it was raising stress levels to immense proportions ... Who is going to look at these records? By implication we will need to keep all of this stuff to prove that our teaching has been up to scratch and everything has been covered ...
>
> I see assessment tasks as becoming the curriculum. A [particular college] integrated course is one humungus assignment comprising multi-assessment tasks - beautifully put together, interesting and efficient, but there is little deviation from the all important assessment.

In making her critique, she is mainly located within professional teacher discourse. She implicitly distances herself from the performative discourse as manifested in the CGEA at the same time showing great expertise in developing curricula for it and in many ways supporting its introduction. As a supporter of the CGEA, she laments the fact that there are insufficient resources to run it properly in country areas.

Despite this, she too takes liberties in her interpretation of the assessment requirements which she is happy to modify and at times ignore. She says that when it comes down to it, the professional judgement of the teacher, rather than the application of a set of criteria must be the deciding factor:

> ... but once again, it comes down to the professionalism of the person doing this, and the fact that that has to be accepted. You might not be able to fit an oracy task exactly around that, but that shouldn't stop you from saying "these people can do this. You are the person who is working with them all the time, so therefore you're seeing it on a daily basis in a different way from strictly an assessment task.

Like Gretel, Jodie is exploiting spaces of autonomy of the classroom teacher when she feels the need to refuse, modify or ignore requirements which may compromise her 'good practice' habitus.

Jodie identifies with certain aspects of the discourse of the CGEA, such as the need for vocational training as part of ALBE and the need for a rigorous curriculum. As for the strong criticisms that she does make, she regards the CGEA evaluation project as an opportunity to "get it right next time". She is confident in her own professional authority in that, like Gretel, she will break or modify the rules rather than compromise her own professional reference points regarding 'good practice'. Whilst she supports the CGEA as an educational initiative of benefit (in certain ways) to the field of ALBE, she is sharply critical of the funding environment which is at odds with the level of skill and commitment that it requires of teachers and is insufficient for the needs of country providers.

Attempting to extrapolate and to generalise from text to person as I have done in these case studies is problematic, in that the teachers' subjectivities are far more complex and dynamic than would be revealed in any one text. In this interview, Jodie, appears to be a (critical) supporter the CGEA. However, in a subsequent letter which she sent to clarify some points, she concluded with an ironic throw-away line that "everyone is milling up certificates... retirement looks good!", thus suggesting an underlying disenchantment with the whole movement towards certification and the effects of performativity.

5. Conclusion

In 're-writing' these three texts as case studies I have shown how the three teachers are moving between the different subject positions made available by progressivist, professional teacher and performative discourses. Gretel and Jodie appear to be more open to integrating the requirements of performativity into their practice than does Jennifer,

who resists more strongly, standing firmly in progressivist /professional teacher discourse. By one interpretation, Gretel and Jodie are engaging with performativity and producing a new, hybrid and resistant discourse of good practice: the 'progressivist /professional teacher' discourse. An alternative reading is that Gretel and Jodie are being more compliant in accommodating performativity into their language and practice. Is Jennifer's more open resistance and her adherence to 'good' discourses more strategic in the long term?

All three teachers have mounted an impressive rational critique of the CGEA. All three have refused to implement it to the letter and all three modify and adapt it according to their pedagogical habituses and beliefs. All three are making choices based in a commitment to pedagogical 'good practice' and an ethic of care. The 'choices' can be seen as instances of (conscious and rational) agentic practice, as well as expressions of their embodied (and therefore intuitive) teaching dispositions.

In Chapter 8, I introduce the second action research project which formed the basis of texts analysed in Chapters 9 and 10.

Part III

Chapters 8 - 10

Just as the network of power relations ends by forming a dense web that passes through apparatuses and institutions, without being exactly localised in them, so too the swarm of points of resistance traverses social stratifications and individual unities.

Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, vol.1.,* 1981, New York, Random House, p.97.

In reality, a rationalized, expansionist, centralised, spectacular and clamorous production is confronted by an entirely different kind of production, called "consumption" and characterised by its ruses, its fragmentation (the result of circumstances), its poaching, its clandestine nature, its tireless but quiet activity, in short by its quasi-invisibility, since it shows itself not in its own products (where would you place them?) but in an art of using those imposed on it.

Michel De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life.,* 1984, Berkley and Los Angeles, University of California Press, p. 31.

Chapter Eight

The Second Action Research Project

1. Introduction

The texts I have examined so far were the product of the action research evaluation of the CGEA. These texts provided one window upon teachers' discursive engagement with the new policies. In order for me to work more closely with teachers and to focus more closely on how they are engaging discursively in their institutional and pedagogical struggles, I undertook a second action research project.

In this chapter, I describe that project in which I involved as participants a different group of ALBE and ESL teachers in the 'language and literacy' department of a Melbourne TAFE college. I briefly discuss some of the methodological issues which arose in its course. Two texts generated by this project are analysed in Chapters 9 and 10 respectively.

2. The research aims

I set out on this second project with three aims: firstly, to produce data which would help me to explore more directly issues of discursive resistance of teachers in the current political and institutional coQtext; secondly, to support a group of teachers by working collaboratively with them, facilitating a process of group discussions and feeding back how I was interpreting and theorising the discussions; and thirdly, to 'test' in practice, how useful the ideas were in this specific context.

As an action researcher, I was offering myself to that group as facilitator and support person as they talked about their difficulties of the moment. I planned to progressively feed back my own commentary as a resource in the process of their developing stronger understandings of their situation. We (that is, the teachers and myself) would each have something to gain: I would be gathering data and testing out the idea of discursive engagement and discursive resistance in our on-going discussions; at the same time, I would be holding up a mirror to them by offering them my interpretation of the discursive dynamics and their discursive practices. Their responses to my interpretations would in turn mirror back to me the usefulness and meaningfulness of the theory I was exploring.

3. The story of the project

In mid 1995 I set up the second action research project with a group of teachers of ALBE and ESL in a teaching department in a large Melbourne TAFE college, which I shall call Herrington College. None of the teachers had participated in the earlier CGEA evaluation project.

The teachers agreed to participate in a series of meetings during 1996 in which they would discuss with me their issues. I would progressively share with them how I was theorising their issues so that we would together build our understanding the meaning of the changes and try to develop some sort of strategic orientation.

There were six teachers in the group whom I have named Anita, Vera, Colette, Therese, Zoe and Ruth. Most were part-time teachers on six month contracts. All of the teachers did not all attend all of the meetings. I encountered considerable difficulty in arranging times that were convenient for all members of the group, and all meetings were postponed, usually several times, before we managed to get together. The frequent postponement of meetings was a symptom of the stress they were experiencing during that year.

There were seven formal meetings altogether between 1995 - 1998:

Meeting 1

At this introductory meeting I outlined the aims of my research, my theoretical framework and my plans for the series of meetings which I

had planned to have with them. I made notes but did not record the meeting. My journal records that there was a high level of interest in what I was doing. It was attended by Anita, Vera, Colette, Terese and Zoe.

Anita said at the outset (words to the effect that) this was just what they needed right now: "We have a terrible quandary about what we are going to do and we are trying to resist this onslaught onto our conditions. Your work gives me a bit of hope" (journal).

The teachers quickly picked up on the language I was using. Ruth said:

> We need to build up our own discourses in order to be able to counter what management is giving to us, and we need to be able to subvert their management discourses... What we need, is a language for thinking about the problems. This is what we need more of; we already have these ideas but we haven't had the language to express them in... you are able to translate the ideas [of feminist poststructuralism] into normal language and give it to us. (journal).

In a subsequent discussion, Terese said that she had been thinking about our earlier session, and how she was trying to find new language to use in negotiating with the departmental head over the new contracts, to articulate their experience, their commitments and their sense of professional rights.

Anita, too, had been applying the notion of discourse politics in negotiations with management. She told me she had used my 'stuff' at a departmental planning meeting at Herrington and had quoted Anna Yeatman in questioning the language we were using and how that constructed education as being commercialised. She had said that she found the term 'customer' instead of 'student' offensive, and had said "I am not a shop keeper". She had criticised the college strategy plan as being all about the college's relationship with DEET and completely leaving out the students. She had said that they should be looking for and analysing what they actually meant by the new jargon and terminology.

Meeting 2

The teachers postponed the next meeting as the result of the 'chaos' caused by an ultimatum by the director to sign local contracts, which would mean voluntarily giving up the protection of the federal award. The contracts included a significant increase in classroom duties, a

decrease in non-attendance time[1] and the requirement for staff to be available to teach in certain evenings (without paid overtime).

The meeting was postponed for a second time and eventually took place at my home in early 1996. The discussion took place following a shared dinner. I began by asking them about the main issues they were facing at the college. The mood became angry and my journal records that there was an "outpouring of feeling" about what is going on at the level of college management and in the policy environment more widely. I also recorded that, with the emotional force of the stories about what was happening at the college, I had 'lost control' of the discussion to some extent.

I tape recorded and transcribed the main discussion. We agreed that I would circulate the transcript. A detailed analysis of this transcript is presented in Chapter 9.

Meeting 3

The third meeting was held in March 1996, planned as a feedback session on the previous meeting. Once again the teachers came for an evening meeting at my home and brought food to share. This time, however, the distress at recent moves by the director of the college was such that the discussion I had planned was out of the question. They said that they wanted instead to have a "council of war" and requested my help in thinking out how they should respond to the latest moves by management to force teachers onto local contracts (with vastly reduced conditions) and off the Federal award. Basically, they had been told that if they did not agree to local contracts and the loss of conditions in them, they would lose their jobs after first semester.

I did not tape this meeting. It turned into a planning session in which we composed a letter and I undertook to research and publicise the issue of local contracts and the Federal award.

I subsequently spent two weeks interviewing union activists and leaders and writing an article for submission to 'The Age'. However, the Australian Education Union (AEU) officer whom I had interviewed subsequently requested that I withdraw the article, fearing it may inflame the situation and jeopardise negotiations they were carrying out with

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[1] Non-attendance time is written into the TAFE teachers' award and includes the days over and above four weeks annual leave time in which classes are not scheduled.

TAFE college directors at that time. The unpublished article, attached as Appendix 3, gives further background on the industrial and professional turmoil experienced by teachers during that period, and the multiple impacts of loss of tenure.

Meeting 4

The fourth meeting was held in the staff room of the department during the semester break in April 1996 and was planned to focus specifically on issues of pedagogy, using a critical incident technique.

In my letter to the head of department in preparation for the session, I asked the teachers to write down a 'critical incident' in the classroom, in which they felt they were confronted by a difficulty or dilemma and were able to resolve it in some way. We would read out the incidents and discuss each of them at the meeting.

In a lively, 90 minute session, two critical incidents (as such) were ofered, alongside a number of stories of classroom practice. I taped and transcribed this session and in Chapter 10 I present an analysis of this transcript.

Meeting 5

The fifth meeting was postponed twice before we were able to finally reconvene in June. The aim of that meeting was for the group to give me feedback on my analysis of the discussion about policy and college management that had taken place on the second meeting. The participants had received a copy of the transcript previously as well as my preliminary analysis of the transcript.

The meeting was once again over-shadowed by concerns about their survival (individually and as a department) in the current management climate. It was not until late in the evening that I presented my analysis. The pressure and distress being experienced by the group and the issue of local contracts dominated the discussion. The teachers had finally agreed to signing local contracts following the advice of the union. Only two of them were assured of their jobs continuing the following semester.

My journal records that in this meeting (which I taped but did not transcribe) I felt torn between the roles of friend, hostess, comrade in struggle and academic researcher. The mood and energy level did not

seem right for my presentation of a 'heavy' analysis of their earlier discussion. My presentation met with a mixed response.

Contrary to their earlier enthusiasm, there was an unspoken sense that given their institutional powerlessness, the 'discourse of discourse' was not all that helpful at that time.

Meeting 6

This meeting was postponed several times due to competing priorities, mainly associated with the stresses at work. We finally convened early in 1997. My aim for this final meeting was to feed back my analysis of the transcript of the 'critical incident in pedagogy' meeting (Meeting 4) that had been held in April 1996 - 10 months previously. However, the main preoccupation at this meeting was once again the worsening employment and industrial situation of their department. All of the teachers had finally signed the local contract, feeling they had no choice once the AEU had made a recommendation to this effect.

Numbers were already depleted to approximately half of the original group of participants with whom I had begun working a year earlier. All of the sessional teachers had gone, programs had been moved elsewhere in the college and student numbers were significantly reduced. Although I had prepared to record the meeting, I decided on the spot that this would not be appropriate, given the slightly fragile atmosphere. Instead I took notes which I wrote up the next day.

I presented to the group an early analysis of the 'critical incident' transcript which I had presented at a conference in December 1996 and which I had posted to them beforehand. My discursive mapping was followed with interest. There was some disagreement (which I believe was justified) with some parts of my analysis and I have adjusted the final version accordingly. Again, I felt that they were at a distance from what I was attempting and were either not convinced of its relevance, or did not have the 'space' to engage deeply with it.

There was some discussion about the notion of resistance. They felt very pessimistic about how the field as a whole would be able to withstand the inroads. While they were resisting by holding onto their own notions of 'good practice' in the way they teach, younger, inexperienced teachers were vulnerable. My notes record Anita's final comment which seemed to sum up their feelings about the future:

> I have a sense that the middle of the year is looming like an enormous abyss - that the department as a centre of access and education will be a thing of the past... that we will have to take on the role of 'EPEs' (Employment Placement Enterprises) and so forth. Much of the work will be done by "teacher demonstrators" and an era will be over. At all meetings with management education is just not on the agenda. It is like Pol Pot killing the intellectuals... (journal).

The meeting ended with a sense of uncertainty about what it all meant and where my work fitted in. The early analysis of the pedagogy discussion which I shared then has since been substantially reworked in the version which now appears as Chapter 10.

Meeting 7

The final meeting was held in February, 1998, after drafts of Chapters 9 and 10 had been circulated to them, for their final feedback. By this time, only one of the original teachers was still in the Department. Others had had their contracts terminated, or had moved to other parts of the College. Feelings at that meeting were intensely mixed: there was sorrow, nostalgia, and anger at what appeared to be the demise of the Department and the dispersal of the group of teachers; continuing denunciation of those responsible; analysis of what had happened and why; and celebration of the friendships and shared values which had survived. A discussion of what is now Chapter 10 ensued. Clearly, they appreciated and agreed with my analysis and felt supported (and to a degree vindicated) by the work I was doing.

The follow-up story

The staff numbers and morale at Herrington College have declined further. The teachers have felt increasingly disempowered by managerial control whilst a number of bureaucratic 'quality assurance' procedures had been set in place. Stories I have heard from teachers in at least three other TAFE colleges in Melbourne indicate that the situation at Herrington is typical of the current trend.

As discussed in Chapter 3, program funding through the CES for labour market programs and funding provided through the Adult Migrant Education Service (AMES) have ceased. As in all the TAFE colleges at this time, short-term contracts are not being renewed and the long-term survival of many ALBE, ESL and Access departments is in doubt.

I am still in touch with members of the group, including those who have left the college and we continue to meet informally and to share our

thoughts on the latest developments. Some have continued to provide feedback by reading and commenting on chapters of this thesis.

4. Some methodological reflections

The Herrington project was an informal, loosely structured version of action research based around a series of discussion and feedback sessions. I had conceived the 'action research' in a poststructuralist framework, in which the 'action' was theorised as 'action in discourse', as discussed in Chapter 4.

Of the three aims with which I began (to produce data reflecting practices of discursive engagement, to support and strengthen the teachers as a 'learning community' and to 'test' the usefulness and meaningfulness of the poststructuralist notion of the politics of discourse is at this time), only the first was clearly achieved.

The aim of 'supporting and strengthening' the group of teachers by helping them to theorise their immediate struggles may have been achieved to some extent. Support was given in that the project provided opportunities for collective discussion and reflection away from the college and there was support on the level of my personal friendship and solidarity. However, this small group of teachers was quite powerless in an environment of contracting funds, marketisation and increasing managerial control. It is not dear how new insights and new ways of talking could have empowered them (in that particular situation) to address and to survive these issues more effectively or strategically.

The aim of progressively testing out the 'usefulness' of ideas about discursive engagement, was only partially achieved. On the one hand, the stress and 'chaos' experienced by the teachers during the course of the project, the many cancellations and the constant domination of the meetings by more urgent, practical issues made it impossible to facilitate processes which would enable them to study and reflect in depth on the theory I was offering. On the other hand, the feedback which I did get was mixed and inconclusive. The initial enthusiasm for the ideas waned during the period of crisis and then seemed to return in the final meeting.

Were the three research aims incompatible from the start? Was I attempting the impossible by combining research for an academic thesis with an action research project which, if it were 'pure' participatory action research, would normally have been owned by all the participants and shaped by their needs for knowledge and empowerment? In this case, the motivation and the momentum for the project came mainly from my research commitment. Although this in turn was part of a broader political project, as already explained, the contradictions lingered. The teachers' participation was born of a mixture of genuine interest, their expressed need to make meaning of the current unsatisfactory situation, and loyalty to me as a colleague and friend. On one level, the meetings were about *helping me*; but they were also enjoyable social occasions at which they could let off steam and talk through the issues in a safe place. Some, but not all, of the group engaged critically with my reframing of their issues (as would be expected).

At some stages, it seemed that my theoretical project might be overwhelmed by the teachers' imperative of self-defence and survival. I was not exposed to the insecurity and direct hurt that was now a part of their working lives. I was mainly driven by my research and my theoretical interests, rather than the teachers' needs, yet their issues kept bubbling up and crowding out the theoretical focus. Try as I might, I was never quite able (at least during the formal phase of the project) to bring the two together: to force their experiences into my theoretical Procrustean bed. It was not until much later, when the immediate period of crisis had been passed and after some teachers had left or relocated, that the two seemed to come closer together.

The contradiction I was experiencing at that time can be seen as a methodological issue which arises in an attempt to combine private academic research with participatory action research. I was positioning the group on the one hand as co-researchers and on the other hand as objects of study and reporting. I take up this issue in my concluding discussion in Chapter 11.

Clearly, action research in such a context is not easy. I was at working with a divergent and in some ways contradictory set of aims and negotiating personally the multiple subject positions which these different aims constructed. At the same time I was mediating complex currents of power (my leadership and my dependence on their willing

collaboration), desire (strong personal relationships, the desire on all our parts to support each other) and emotion (anguish caused by difficult times and loss of jobs). Poststructuralist theory was useful in helping me think through these issues.

5. Conclusion

In this chapter I have described the second action research project in which a group of teachers at Herrington college participated in a series of semi-structured discussion meetings. There were some problematic methodological issues which emerged in my attempt to involve the teachers as participants in a project which in most ways was more 'mine' than 'ours'.

In the next chapter, I present an analysis of one of the texts that was produced through this project, focusing on the teachers' experiences of the bureaucratic environment of one TAFE college and their resistances to managerialism.

Chapter Nine

Discursive Engagement With Managerialism

1. Introduction

I now turn to an analysis of a text which demonstrates how teachers at Herrington College of TAFE were engaging discursively with management in the context of the rise of managerialism and the 'competitive training market'. Performativity in this context is understood in both in terms of technocratic management practices, and in terms of subjectifying policy discourse.

I analyse the transcript of a discussion in which the teachers share stories about what was going on for them at their college. I present extracts showing how they were experiencing contemporary management arrangements and the changing policy environment. I describe their discursive positionings and their micropractices of discursive resistance.

The group of teachers whose discussion is documented in this chapter spoke with anger and passion about managerialism in the institutional environment in which they are now working. Their representations of the organisational and management context of their teaching reveal the extent to which the organisational and pedagogical culture, the 'lifeworld' (Fraser 1989: 30; Angwin 1996: 30) of ALBE teaching is being reshaped to conform with the norms of managerialism and the market.

The Herrington teachers has been seriously affected by attacks on their industrial terms and conditions and the implementation (in a high-handed and coercive manner) of policies of marketisation and deregulation.

In their recent research, Angus and Seddon have made a study documenting the impacts on teachers in a secondary college and a TAFE college of coercive managerialist practices. The teachers they interviewed at 'Grandridge' secondary school spoke about the change in style of their principal from being a "participative and democratic" to being "managerialist and autocratic" whilst conceding that "he had been pushed into this position by the current circumstances" (Angus and Seddon 1997: 16). Teachers at the "Streeton" Institute of TAFE spoke of the "business oriented and outcomes driven policy environment of TAFE as being blatantly anti-educational" (p.20). Those who attempted to contest the new policy agenda and to defend the values and traditions of previous decades were referred to derisively as "dinosaurs" (p.21). The experiences of teachers documented in Angus and Seddon's research bear many similarities with those of the teachers at Herrington College documented in this chapter.

The research which I undertook in order to publicise the industrial issues, at the behest of the Herrington teachers, revealed that some (but not all) college directors used intimidation and demeaning incentives in their attempts to force teachers (who were on on-going contracts) to accept increases in teaching hours and reduced leave. The details of industrial struggles around the issue of hours of work illustrate the effects of managerialism in creating the institutional conditions for the corporatisation of TAFE colleges, down-grading and devaluing teachers and 'freeing up' their terms and conditions. A short (unpublished) report of that research is attached as Appendix 3.

2. Method

The text

The text analysed in this chapter is the transcript of the second of the seven discussions organised with the Herrington teachers.

The text documents a passionate discussion in which issues were aired and anecdotes were related and collectively elaborated upon. The anecdotes were mainly about the CGEA, the policy environment in general, and the management practices experienced at the college level

and through their contacts with DEET personnel. In contrast to the CGEA texts, which were produced as part of a formal evaluation process, this text was the product of a relatively informal group get-together of teachers who were well known to each other and to myself. The meeting provided an opportunity for regrouping in a safe place for 'letting off steam' about the new institutional context.

The discussion revealed in painful detail the distress that teachers are currently experiencing. It reflects a sense of crisis: anger, hurt and indignation at the changes now taking place in their work, and their sense of being professionally under siege. I was multiply positioned in the discussion; first, as a friend and colleague, as one of 'us'; second, as an action researcher attempting to facilitate a process of corning to terms with the situation; and third, as an academic researcher attempting to theorise their engagement with the issues for the purposes of this thesis, as discussed earlier.

Method of analysis

I used a variation of the method reported in Chapter 6 to analyse it:

- I summarised from the text a list of issues or propositions about the institutional and policy environment in which the teachers were working, both at the college level and at the system-wide level.

- I then iterated between the list of issues, the full transcript of the discussion, my journal notes and the 'map' of discourses which I had previously developed for the CGEA texts (Chapter 6).

- Through this process I developed a second web chart or 'discursive map' in order to again conceptualise how the discourses interacted with each other in a different setting and with a different group (Fig. 9.1).

- I then made a detailed study of the original transcript to make a new analysis of micro-practices of discursive resistance as discussed in Chapter 4.

3. Teachers' representations of their working environment

There was a high degree of consensus about the problems at Herrington and in the system more widely. The negative picture the teachers paint is typical of what I heard being said by teachers in other TAPE colleges and at other locations at this time[1].

In this section I present the list of issues in relation to the management of Herrington College as told collectively by Anita, Vera, Colette, Terese, and Ruth. The list goes from concerns at the immediate level of the college, to those at the broader institutional and policy level.

The experience of rnanagerialisrn at Herrington College of TAFE

The main problems aired in the discussion were as follows:

The CGEA was bureaucratically imposed

> ...it was an insult to me personally and as a teacher professionally, because we are all taught to think critically, we go through our university, looking for sources, making arguments, thrashing things out, and here was this thing suddenly down-loaded upon us (Terese).

> How did the CGEA suddenly come down upon us? It was rather weird that we were all called together, the whole lot of us, in that big room... There was no explanation for it. Nanette takes the podium with her role, shakes her little bell, and she is talking to all the assembled ESL teachers... people who have got vast experience and expertise and qualifications, and nobody even knows who the hell she is (Vera).

Terese and Vera are clearly reflecting here feelings of hurt and indignation at the way in which the CGEA "came down" upon them, in a way which discounted their professional knowledge and experience. Nanette represents the new 'content free' middle manager who has been elevated above the teachers, despite her relative inexperience, and is responsible for implementing an educational innovation which she may not fully understand.

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1. Others have documented the negative experiences of new styles of management in the areas of organisation, curriculum and assessment, funding and industrial relations (Newcombe 1996: 8). During 1996 and 97 there has been a number of locally organised union campaigns in response to attacks made to teachers' conditions and on teacher unionists directly and teacher unionists have been sacked (Thome 1997: 5).

The CGEA is being used to control teachers

> Well, it's making you do certain things with your time, isn't it, think in certain ways. You are no longer free to implement your own ideas. (Vera).
>
> ...but there's another agenda there, and it may not be a deliberate one, but it [the CGEA] is a way of controlling teachers too (Terese).

Both Terese and Vera see the competency framework as a form of regulation, a 'new technology of power and of the self' (Usher and Edwards 1994: 117).

Short-term contracts have reduced remuneration and job security

> We need a straight answer as to why we're only on six months contracts yet we've been told that we've had three year funding (Colette).
>
> ... what happens in the next 6 months, [if] our college doesn't get the number of students and they have given us a 12 month contract, and they haven't got enough classes, that's when they lose their money, and that's what they are doing, they are penny-pinching, at our expense (Colette).

These excerpts reflects feelings of bitterness about the ironic conjunction of a move to shorter contracts and sessional conditions with the complex and time-consuming additional requirements of the CGEA. With the CGEA, the teachers are required to meet frequently outside of classroom teaching, to prepare detailed curriculum and assessment tasks and to conform to detailed reporting and accountability requirements. As the availability of part-time hours declines, teachers' incomes have been drastically reduced, so that teachers are even less likely to want to work 'professional' hours and to devote a lot of unpaid time to their work. The bitterness evident in these excerpts is a reflection of feelings of powerlessness about the situation they are now in.

Teachers are intimidated and coerced by management personnel

> Well, management sat on the side and glowered and looked cross if people struted saying things (Vera).
>
> ... it was said to us, the co-ordinators, that if people started talking in the way that we were talking, "it's not like the old days where you could come back and know that you had your job on Monday moming" ... well, he [a manager] asked to sort of convey to people that you know, this is sort of the way people are beginning to talk ... (Anita).
>
> ... they [management] are in a political environment which will support them ... and people know that, so they're in this very delicate position. People have got families, they've got mortgages, they've got all the paraphernalia of adult life, and at the same time, their conditions are being eroded, they are living in an atmosphere of fear, because they don't know whether they are going to have their jobs after the next six months or not. All of this creates an atmosphere where the petty despot reigns, and that's what's happening now, to us (Terese).

These excerpts reveal the extent of the culture change that has taken place in some TAFE colleges over the last five years. The overt threat, related by Anita, of teachers being sacked if they "started talking in the way that we were talking" would have been unprecedented in the days of permanency and strong union involvement. The naked coercion revealed here is part of the new managerialism being experienced in institutions of education. That "the petty despot reins" may be a hyperbole, but it is clear that short-term contracts and sessional conditions provide a convenient lever to ensure compliance with unpopular policies and to stifle critique.

Management compromised their integrity

> Well, they're just Judases with their thirty pieces of silver, though. They're just being bought off.. (Vera).

> We know that our superiors are going to start profiting from what we do and they are going to get bonuses and we've just got enterprise bargaining (Vera).

Vera and Terese are alleging here that their managers have been (morally) corrupted by the system of bonuses. According to them, economic self- interest has won out over professionalism. That managers get bonuses and workers get enterprise bargaining is a sign of the shift in power that has taken place. Again, the teachers sense of their own powerlessness is clear.

Management is controlling teachers through the control of information

> ... we wanted to hear from [the personnel manager] what our contracts consist of, because we've all signed these bloody things at the end of last year, and we all got angry because we didn't know what we were signing... and even when we asked them we couldn't get straight answers, and we all felt that they owe us an explanation of what these contracts are (Colette).

> It's a very clever situation that they've got, because you don't write your own submissions. On the one hand, my view is, having had to write them, they are such a pain in the neck, who would want to, but on the other hand, when you don't, you don't realise, you're very disempowered, because built into all of those submissions are things like, rent for the college, and price per head per student is a complicated formula and within that formula there is quite an area in which the college can build in little perks for themselves. For example, they would charge DEET, lighting, library, rent of the rooms in the [department] and that money would go directly into the college coffers... The thing is, because we don't know the details, we are not in a position to negotiate with them or to question (Terese).

Here once again, the teachers are expressing their sense of powerlessness with regard to the control exercised over the control of information in the new environment - in this case, the detail of tenders is kept secret so the teachers doing the work will have no basis for questioning. Control of information can be exercised all the more effectively through the application of information technologies.

The teaching profession is being down-graded

> I think we are really at the cross roads, you know, especially those of us who have been teaching a long time. I think we've always, it's the first time in my experience, that what we are teaching is confronting and eroding our conditions (Terese).

> ... you go up to the CES office, and you are being questioned all the time, on your professional expertise at being able to assess somebody. People who are being case managed now, and it's all this outcome, outcome, outcome for the students (Anita).

The teachers' professionalism is being eroded from all sides: through casualisation, as the result of the fact that educational functions which were the domain of teachers have been handed to the Commonwealth Employment Service, and through the new, performative assessment arrangements of the CGEA. The metaphor of 'cross roads' suggests that teachers themselves have some choice about the future of the ALBE teaching profession. However, these excerpts again reflect a sense of frustration and powerlessness.

The CGEA contradicts pedagogical aims

> ... all the baggage that the adult literacy learner brings with them, you know the fears, the worries the deprivations, the tragedies, the lack of confidence, all of a sudden, those people who are kind of really at the bottom of the pile and have been damaged by society be it through mental illness or whatever, you have something which *imposes* at level 1, that they must meet these certain requirements!! It's ludicrous! (Terese)

> ... you end up being so concentrated on the tasks of labelling, numbering and assessing, that the actual thing itself escapes laughing into the bushes (Terese).

The Herrington teachers' comments about competency-based assessment are similar to those documented in Chapters 5 and 6, but are voiced rather more vehemently.

Competitive tendering undermines relationships and the ALBE community

> ... but this DEET funding has pitted a group of professional people - this is the saddest thing - against each other, that used to work in great harmony... when we are all trying to write our submissions and get our money and grab our students, it's introduced that element of competition which didn't exist before (Terese).

> ... whereas I think once there was much more open dialogue and stronger friendships (Vera).

> ... it's very much dog eat dog which it never was (Anita).

Marketisation in the field of ALBE has undermined relationships and collegial networks. In competing with each other for funding, there is

now a need to treat curriculum innovations as private property and to be secretive about other aspects of provision which might give a competitive edge to submissions.

Teachers have lost control of educational decision-making

> The decisions about student placement are now being made by CES officers who have no educational training whatsoever, and that's another issue which I think is really appalling and very frightening... the reality of the situation is that the allocation of students is made by the individual CES officer, and if you don't have a good relationship as a co-ordinator or an independent provider, with that officer, you don't get students (Terese).

When CES officers became responsible for the allocation of students to providers and courses, teachers lost control of what had always been thought of as a sphere of educational decision-making.

In summary...

These accounts support the findings of other researchers that those in positions of managerial responsibility appear fo have little commitment to educational principles *per se* (Hattam 1995; Seddon 1996). With the leverage provided by short-term contracts and lack of permanent tenure, unwelcome changes (such as the introduction of competency-based assessment and quality management procedures) are able to be implemented with minimum resistance.

These teachers have found themselves in a new era in which their expectations of professional and educational autonomy has been undermined on a number of fronts: by the loss of tenure and industrial conditions; by the souring of once collegial relationships with management staff; by the power of the CES to allocate funds and students; by the breaking down of networks and general insecurity caused by competitive tendering; by the with-holding of information about tenders by management; by the performative requirements of the CGEA; by the new imperative to prove their teaching capabilities and to report on outcomes.

In this situation, the teachers' professional identity and the collective power which in the past accrued from their having professional status and permanent employment is being systematically eroded. The bottom line is that they are individually expendable in the push to centralise

managerial power and to reduce unit costs so that the college can better compete with other providers.

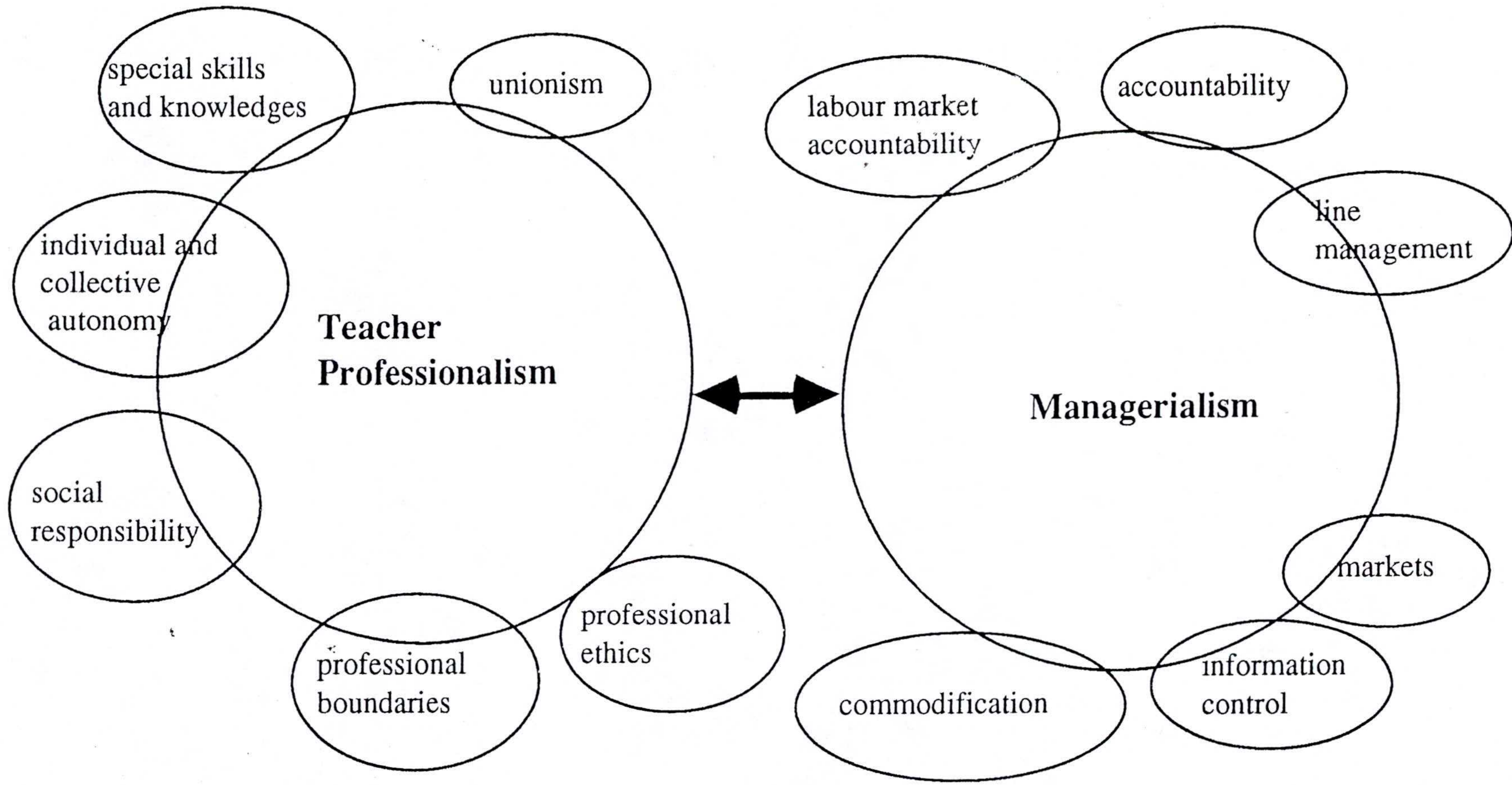
4. The discourse of professionalism as a discourse of resistance

The transcript as text

These six teachers speak scathingly about the impacts of competency-based assessment, the various effects of marketisation, and the down-grading of teachers' industrial conditions and professional standing.

The whole discussion is highly consensual. There is no evidence of disagreement and it seems as if the intensity of the conflict has formed the six voices into a single collective subject position, defined against the 'Other' of management. The collective subject position speaks on behalf of the ALBE and ESL teaching profession in general. This is reflected in the use of the 'we' ("we are at the cross roads", inter-changeable with "teachers", "the teaching profession", "people" etc). The "we" at times constructed teachers passively as victims of the current policies and college management, but at other times as agentic subjects who were able to act in defence of the rights of both students and teachers and in defence of good pedagogical practice. However, as the above excerpts show, while the teachers collectively take up a discourse of teacher professionalism, they do not appear to be speaking with professional confidence: 'power' of professionalism is not reflected in the detail of the text. Rather, there is sense of 'powerlessness' reflected in the anger and bitterness with which they denounce the new arrangements and those who carry them out.

Fig. 9.1
The Discourse of Professionalism as a Discourse of Resistance to Mangerialism



The discourse of teacher professionalism

The teachers all position themselves primarily in a discourse of teacher professionalism which is in implicit dialogue with the discursive forces of managerialism, marketisation and performativity. In a context in which old certainties about professional identity and agency are being shaken, they are consolidating around professionalism as a discourse of resistance.

I make a distinction between the 'professionalism' discourse and the 'professional teacher' discourse, identified in the earlier texts and discussed in Chapters 6 and 7. *'Professional teacher'* discourse is essentially a discourse which relates to classroom teaching and pedagogy. It is a discourse about the institutional functions and the technologies of teaching. It positions the teacher as an agent in implementing state-wide or national educational policies and as technical expert with a range of instructional and evaluative skills and a repertoire of classroom methods. The discourse of *professionalism,* by way of contrast, is a discourse about 'the profession' as such, rather than a discourse of pedagogy, although the two clearly overlap. It assumes the attributes of the professional as described by Preston (1996) These include:

- an extensive formal knowledge base continually developed through formal and informal scholarship;
- practitioner involvement in the professional education of other members and in research;
- control of entry into the profession and maintenance of explicit standards of professional competence and practice;
- individual and collective autonomy of practice;
- professional ethics - a commitment to clients and to the wider community; and,
- collective organisation for professional practice and representation (p.249).

The Herrington teachers' discourse of professionalism assumes many of those attributes, especially the attributes of an extensive knowledge base, individual and collective autonomy and professional ethics. Such a discourse is 'present' in the assumptions they are making and in their denunciations of current measures which are seen as disrespecting,

down-grading, undermining or usurping their professional authority, their domain of autonomous judgement and discretion and their commitments to students' educational well-being.

The discourse of professionalism is also implied in the (now frustrated) expectation of collegial decision-making and consultation within the college. The expectation of collegiality harks back to the 80s when collegiality and consultative democracy, rather than authoritarian line management, were the norm.

The discourse of professionalism constitutes teachers as having rights and responsibilities, a sphere of proper authority, intellectual and educational skills and resources and a set of socially committed value. It includes a professional ethic of responsibility to advocate for quality of provision on behalf of students:

> ... we concern ourselves with philosophical issues and the rights of our students because we believe that we need to safeguard them ... (Terese).

The discourse of professionalism assumes the 'good practice' discourse (the discourse of the 'progressivist professional teacher') discussed in Chapter 5. For example, there are traces of liberal progressivism in their concern for students as "whole persons":

> ... in teaching, the student after all is paramount and the leading of them to the gaining of some kind of knowledge, be it personal, be it academic, or what ever, you are in the business of developing somebody, aren't you, I mean, of giving something to them, that's always what you are looking for, that's why it is a wonderful job ... (Terese).

The discourse also draws on a discourse of industrial rights and unionism:

> I think we have to all get politicised, we have to stand united, if somebody like Bernice gets prejudiced, something happens to her, which has been suggested at various times ... well, we have to go out over that, we have to do something about that (Vera).

The discourse of unionism calls on traditions and histories of struggle for better teaching conditions as well as equity and access for students. This discourse constructs subject positions of solidarity, defiance against the oppressor, courage and collective action[2].

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2. There is an irony here in that there is a widespread perception that the Australian Education Union has not been effective in defending the interests of contract and sessional staff.

Problematics of the discourse of professionalism

As pointed out by Preston, there is an inherent contradiction, as well as integral link, between the industrial and the professional discourses of the teaching profession. The critical sociology approach, as discussed by Preston, finds that 'professionalism' has elitist and self-serving claims to special knowledge and privilege. These connotations (or discursive elements) of professionalism contradict, to a degree, the ethical and social commitments associated with teaching. In particular, there is a contradiction between the voluntarist and community-oriented traditions of ALBE and the more recent institutional and professional traditions[3], as described in Chapter 2.

The Herrington teachers were all trained teachers in an institutional base and were union members. It was clear, in the text, that the discourse of professionalism was also being used rhetorically in the manner described within critical sociology: to put up a boundary and to claim a sphere of special knowledge and therefore privilege. Terese, for example, protests against the role of CES officers in making educational choices:

> The CES is run by a whole group of people who don't have any kind of expertise, who at no level can meet or understand most teachers, because their agenda is completely different... *We* [my emphasis] see them as individuals...

Here Terese is defending the territory of the teaching profession, at the same time discounting the integrity and expertise of CES officers (whom she perceives as doing what used to be her job).

Preston points out another problem with teacher 'professionalism' which is a contradiction between 'the union' and 'the profession'. Teaching is a profession which requires a high level of autonomous judgement and 'complex situated practice and at the same time, it is a 'mass employed' profession. The conditions of mass employment create an inherent conflict between teachers and institutional authorities. Teachers have formed and maintained unions to protect and promote their industrial

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3. This contradiction was brought home to me when I addressed a professional organisation of ALBE teachers in another state on the issue of teacher professionalism and falling rates of pay. In this state, the field of ALBE is relatively unprofessionalised and there were some volunteers tutors and underpaid teachers from the community sector in the audience. Some of these responded quite emotionally, saying that their work and their commitment was to people in the community, and they did not wish to regard themselves as 'professionals'. Theirs was a labour of love and dedication, and they would prefer to work for half or no wages, rather than see programs cut and people turned away.

and professional interests and aspirations[4]. This historical tension would explain at least in part the animosity expressed by Herrington teachers towards their managers.

The connection between 'the union' and 'the profession' is further problematised by the historical complicity of the AEU in *Australia Reconstructed* and the NTRA, negotiated by the Hawke-Keating Labour government between unions, industry and government, as described in Chapter 3. The union movement participated in the introduction of competency-based training and accepted the discipline of micro-economic reform in return for a generously-funded labour market program which would help relocate and retrain their members in industrial employment. However, part-time, casual teachers in community settings and in 'marginal', language and access departments in TAFE colleges (that is, in the most feminised section of the TAFE work force) were largely neglected. Such neglect reflects a culture of patriarchy in the union movement generally and in the AEU in particular.

The Herrington teachers, despite their militant pro-unionism in one part of the discussion express an underlying lack of faith that the union has properly supported them in their current struggles, and in fact have been complicit in their professional demise. Terese says that:

> ... and I think that if there is anything in my career of teaching, the saddest I have ever seen in my life, is the fact that the teaching profession lay down and let the politicians do it... [they] just said, "oh yes, what we are doing mustn't be good enough..."

Here 'the profession' can be read as 'the union' which would normally be responsible to protect the teaching profession at that level. Despite this, the teachers continue to be loyal members of the AEU (Australian Education Union) which is still central to their thinking about resistance to the status quo and the struggle for a better future.

In summary, the teachers are focussing on their (now threatened) professionalism and speaking its discourse as a discourse of resistance against the policy-makers and managers who are agents of performative discourse. The discourse of professionalism encompasses the 'good practice' discourse of the progressivist professional teacher (discussed in Chapter 6). It includes a discourse of unionism which is somewhat muted in this text. There are a number of contradictions within the

4. See also Angus and Seddon (1997: 9).

discourse of teacher professionalism and these are reflected in the text of the discussion.

The teachers are taking up positions as ethical, professional subjects under siege by local management[5]. They are forcefully asserting a (quite problematic) discourse of teacher professionalism. Despite the vigour with which the discourse of professionalism is being deployed in this discussion it seems (at least in the present situation) that theirs is a losing battle within a particularly hostile managerial environment. Given short contracts and the explicit intimidation of management, they have very few spaces for resisting effectively either on a day to day basis or in the longer term. The detail of the text reflects the teachers' sense of powerlessness and defeat.

5. Micropractices of discursive resistance

In seeking to identify the micropractices of discursive resistance in the Herrington text, I have used the same analytic framework which I developed for the analysis of the CGEA texts in Chapter 6. These were:

- Rational critique
- Objectification
- Subversion
- Refusal
- Humour
- Affirmation of desire

Rational critique

The teachers' representations presented in Section 3 reveal that they assume a number of powerfu] arguments in defence of 'education' against 'managerialism' and in defence of their profession. In general, the critique of the Herrington teachers was made more passionately, more rhetorically and therefore less 'rationally' than that of the CGEA teachers.

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5. It is important to note that TAFE colleges were forced into competitive tendering by changes to direct funding.

Objectifying the discourse

Throughout the discussion, the wider political discourse underpinning the onslaught on teaching conditions and educational culture was named and objectified. Vera, for example, described 'it' as a new 'Zeitgeist'6:

> ...it's like a Zeitgeist where the spirit of the times is in all fields. It's moving in the political field, it's moving in the educational field, it's a larger amorphous response to general social conditions and stuff like that... it's materialism, it's the same thing that motivates our kids to want material things and be more materialistic than we were, is the sort of thing that is motivating our country and our directors to want outcomes in terms of competencies, and fee for service and all that sort of stuff. You know, the way that our cultures have changed from being places where education is important, to a place where education is there to serve the needs of the economy.

Vera's metaphor of a new 'archetype' ("a broad, social and collective unconscious type of change") seemed to be an apt way of thinking about the discourse now inhabiting education and training. Ordinary people take up the discourse (Zeitgeist) "which sort of seeps down into us". This is the result of economic insecurity, "...the whole fear of failure, fear of not having enough, fear of survival". Her analysis includes both a psychological understanding and (to some extent) a political economy understanding. The coercive management practices are seen as somehow connected with this wave of deep psychological insecurity, as well as being an effect of the greedy, materialistic 'spirit of the times'.

The fact that these teachers so clearly objectify and make alien the discourse in this way may be what helps them to resist the tendency to absorb or accommodate it into their language. This contrasts with what we saw in the CGEA texts which seemed to indicate that teachers were more actively accommodating the new language and thinking.

Subversion

At one point the teachers talk about how they might "fight fire with fire", by using the language and the procedures of quality assurance to bring their issues of quality before management:

> We recently we got a] list of recommendations, out from a staff meeting. I just handed it around today, but they got together in a staff meeting and it just sort of evolved, you know they got to be talking about all their problems, and so they thought, well, we'll fight fire with fire, we'll make a list of recommendations, and we'll put it through the system a *la* the quality assurance

6. 'Zeitgeist' translated from German as 'spirit of the times'.

> manual, and so that's what they have done., They have put it in writing to the head of department, and they have asked for....
>
> ... the point is that according to the policies and procedures manual, if you put in an item, whatever its called initially, then you have a corrective action - you can keep going with it. I mean, how effective that is, who knows, but it is about teachers recognising that they have got a number of gripes. So, lets write it down, lets formulate it and put it into the system, if that's the system that they have constructed. Now, whether that's going to..., I don't know how it will work (Ruth).

Here, Ruth is speaking of a plan to use official quality assurance procedures to defend the notion of 'quality' from the teachers' standpoint. That is, to turn it around from being a tool for managerial accountability and the control of teachers and to use it to demand accountability of managers to staff. Apart from this, they do not appear to be to subverting the *language* of performativity in the sense discussed in Chapter 6. Instead they are more focused on denouncing and rejecting it.

Refusal

The refusals of the Herrington teachers were similar to those of the CGEA teachers presented in Chapter 6. The CGEA teachers spoke of small sins of omission or commission (which they made individually and often covertly) in translating the CGEA into classroom practice. The Herrington teachers, however, celebrated their deliberate refusals or to ignore certain unwanted bureaucratic requirements . They described with peels of laughter times when they were able to get away with defying requirements which they held in contempt. For example,

> The end of last year, we were supposed to be including oracy in our assessment of students, and ... yes, we got out all the checklists and all the crap, the paper work, and we looked at it, we made up a nice little chart, didn't we, and we put it in the filing cabinet, and said, well look, if anyone comes to look at it, it's in the filing cabinet, but stuff it, we are not going to take it out of it and use it, because one, we didn't even have the time to think of it (Colette).
>
> J: So, how did you assess oracy?
>
> Well, we didn't ... (Vera).
>
> J: But did you give them a mark?
>
> (Giggles) Who knows, but who knows,? [unintelligible chorus] The whole thing is so stupid any way... the whole thing is about a bubble ... they are not doing general options and maths, so they can't get the Certificate anyway... (Colette).

And again:

J: So, do they know that you are not doing all the things you are really supposed to be doing?

(chorus of laughter)

Terese: I certainly as CGEA rep, was not going to tell them.

Vera: They have not put any structure in place which *makes* us moderate ...

This kind of passive resistance is based on a tacit understanding amongst the group of what can or can't be got away with. Such acts of resistance are reminiscent of De Certeau's 'art of the weak' (De Certeau 1984: 37). Refusing to comply, whilst keeping a semblance of compliance, is what he describes as 'popular tactics', in which order is "*tricked* by an art":

> Into the institution to be served are thus insinuated styles of social exchange, technical invention, and moral resistance, that is, an economy of the *"gift"* ... an aesthetics of *"tricks"* ... and an ethics of *tenacity* (countless ways of refusing to accord the established order the status of a law, a meaning, or a fatality) (De Certeau 1984: 26).

The refusals of this group of teachers can be seen as more a question of *tactics* (of self-defence and survival) than of *strategy,* as De Certeau writes about. That is, they are resisting "within enemy territory" (p.37). For their resistances to be *strategic,* they would need to have a power base (such as secure tenure and a strong organisation) from which to calculate and manipulate relations of power (pp. 35-36). I take up this discussion in Chapter 11.

Humour

Part of this popular culture of resistance which has developed amongst the 'users' of the products and practices imposed by the dominant orde_r (in De Certeau's terminology) is *humour,* as we saw earlier. The CGEA, the college managers and their "lackeys" are mercilessly lampooned:

> ... the word 'moderation' was enough to make me break out in a cold sweat... You had to herd the poor old teachers who already had enough on their plate, into these three hour sessions, where you got the certificate, (this appalling stuff) and they opened at level 1, ... and we had to look at what the students had written, and the thing is, ... the absolute ludicrous thing of looking at two lines some poor Maria had knocked up after about six months in Lit. 1 "I go to the garden". And people were saying, "has she got... [this or that competency]?" And you'd think, oh John Cleese, please, come and have a look at this! (Terese).

Affirmation of desire

In resisting the managerial requirement to comply with performative assessment practices, the Herrington teachers, like many of those who participated in the CGEA project, openly affirm a pedagogical lifeworld which is infused with the element of desire. This can be seen in their passionate engagement with the issues and in references to 'creativity and excitement' and 'love and dedication':

> The thing is that people are mistaken... It is love and dedication, *vide* Dorothy[7]. Dorothy will run a fantastic course, much better than it ever will be run now, without all the love and attention she put into it (Vera).

Vera also uses the analogy of bringing up a child to describe her pedagogy. She says that learning to read and write is:

> an organic, holistic thing ... it cannot possibly be ticked off like that... it's like trying to do that to life itself, and you can't do that.

Far from being purely an intellectual or technical pursuit, teaching has for these people been "like life itself". The affirmation of their emotional and moral commitment to teaching is in defiance of managerialism and performativity which would discount such commitment; there is no language or place for it in the world view or value system of the new orthodoxy.

6. Conclusion

In this chapter I have depicted the discursive engagement of a group of TAFE teachers in an institutional environment in which the effects of managerialism and marketisation are bringing about a profoundly destabilising culture change.

The teachers' descriptions, anecdotes and their analysis of the situation within their department make a grim picture. From their point of view, significant inroads have been made to conditions of employment, job security, professional autonomy, work relations and work satisfaction. They are deeply concerned about the fate of students. Not only their jobs, but the survival of ALBE teaching as a profession seems to be at stake.

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7. 'Dorothy' was a gifted teacher in that deparhnent.

The teachers position themselves collectively (and rhetorically) in a discourse of teacher professionalism. This discourse constructs sets of responsibilities as well as rights, a sphere of authority, intellectual and educational skills and a set of socially responsible value commitments. It is constituted in part by the pedagogical discourse of the 'progressive / professional teacher' or 'good practice' discourse which in Chapter 6 was seen as central to the teachers' resistances to the requirements and discourse of performativity. The discourse of professionalism as revealed in this text is also deeply problematic. The teachers are claiming exclusive expertise and knowledge and an ethical commitment to students lives and needs. At the same time, their professional claims are elitist in that they are marking a boundary which defends (against other possible claims) their 'privileged' status as teachers. There are signs of union militancy at the same time signs of an underlying disillusionment about the role of their union in current struggles, and a sense of defeat.

In contrast to what was found in the CGEA evaluation texts discussed in the previous chapters, there did not appear to be much evidence here of hybridisation between the discourses in which teachers were positioning themselves and the opposing discourses of managerialism, performativity and marketisation. Neither was there much evidence of reflexivity about their professionalist rhetoric. This can be explained in part by the context in which the discussion took place. It can also be explained by the level of polarisation which brings with it an imperative to contestation without compromise.

The level of polarisation locally could also explain differences I have identified between each set of teachers with respect to the sorts of micropractices of discursive resistance they used. The Herrington teachers talked more passionately and more openly about their resistances and were more explicit about their attempts to transgress the requirements. This was encouraged by the context of the discussion as well as the fact that they were a close-knit group of colleagues with a history of shared oppressions, struggles and achievements. In an informal context, they told jokes and denounced of the managerial 'Other' with enthusiasm.

Overall, a picture emerges of a group of teachers under seige by the policies and managerialist practices of performativity. Given the implicit threat of non-renewal of contracts (to conform, or 'disappear'), there appear to be few if any spaces for organisational resistance. The coercive

power of managerialism appears to be over-whelming. Against the arguments, denunciations and the rhetoric of professionalism, the power of managerialism prevails. In this context, discursive resistance seems inadequate as a way of challenging managerialism or of defending the teachers' professional expectation, industrial conditions or the conditions for pedagogical 'good practice'.

Chapter Ten

Pedagogical Engagement in the Classroom

1. Introduction

I have shown in previous chapters the ways in which teachers are both accommodating and resisting the meanings and practices of performativity. At the same time, they are reconstituting discourses of pedagogy in hybrid forms and producing new understandings of 'good practice'.

I now turn to texts about how the teachers are engaging pedagogically and explore what constitutes 'good practice' in their context. I apply the poststructuralist notion of discursive engagement to theorise the findings. As Green and Reid have pointed out, poststructural theory provides useful ways of dealing with "the hard questions of pedagogy as complex, contradictory and (ir)rational practices" (1995c: 1).

The discourse of performativity does not recognise and implicitly negates teaching as 'complex situated practice' (Preston 1996), constructing it instead in terms of a one-dimensional transmission of knowledge and skills which can be prescribed and objectively measured. The colonising of ALBE by the discourse of performativity has been accompanied by a move to redefine 'teacher' as 'trainer', students as 'clients' or 'customers' and 'curricula' as 'packages'. One effect of this move has been to negate a possible language and set of ideas which speak of, and to, the complexity of the teaching/learning process. The performative discourse leaves little space for the complex and value-laden notion of 'pedagogy'. It is therefore a useful term to focus on as part of a resistant discourse. As Levine has commented, "the key to improving the state of education at

every level... is situated within the practices and orientations for which I have re-appropriated the word 'pedagogy' (Levine 1992: 196).

'Pedagogy' as a field of discourse is about the practices, contexts, relationships and the politics of teaching and learning. Contemporary definitions and accounts of pedagogy are variously focused on notions of personal transformation (Rogers 1969) or social transformation (Rogers 1969; Freire 1971; Freire 1972; Giroux 1984; Simon 1992; McLaren 1994; Gilding 1995), processes of knowledge production (Lusted 1986), power relations (Ellsworth 1989; Gore 1993) , reflective practice (Schon 1983; Levine 1992; van Manen 1995), and complex, eclectic practice (Schulman 1990; Levine 1992; Green and Reid 1995c; Green 1998).

The text on which this Chapter is based is a transcript of the discussion with Herrington teachers which took place during Meeting 4, as described in Chapter 8. In particular, I present two teachers' critjcal incidents, each of which gives a window on complex pedagogical engagement.

The stories told by these teachers and the groups' reflections on those stories reveal them to be positioned in and across a range of dynamically interacting discourses. Their 'institutional' and 'embodied' power is integrated into and expressed in the course of complex and eclectic pedagogical practice. They reflect openly on their subjective predispositions which influence the way they teach and the ethical dimensions of their practice.

In discussing relations of power in the classroom, I make special reference to Gore's recent work (1993; 1995) and show that, in bringing a Foucauldian framework of institutional power to my analysis, I have chosen to broaden the conception of regulatory power in pedagogical practice with Foucault's later notion of power rooted in a "positive notion of the body and pleasure" (Foucault 1980: 190), as discussed in Chapter 6. This notion of power provides a way of talking about powerful teaching practice expressed in and through relationships and 'embodied' eclectic practice.

I first present my method, followed by two short narratives from the text. I then make an analysis of the incidents and the transcript as a whole organised under four broad headings: discourses and subjectivities; relations of power; complex, eclectic practice; and ethics. Vera's

comments, on reading a late draft of this chapter, have been added as footnotes.

The Herrington teachers' sharing and discussion of critical incidents, theorised in terms of discourse, power and complex, eclectic and ethical practice, suggests a rich pedagogical engagement which belies the minimalistic notion of teaching constructed by mainstream performative discourse.

2. Method

Production of the text: a focus on 'critical incidents'

The focus on critical incidents (Quinn Patton 1990: 342) in pedagogy was suggested by my earlier (1991) research in which teachers shared reflections and stories about the problematic discourse of 'personal development' in their classroom practice[1]. It was evident from the texts produced out of that project that the pedagogical 'moment' often happens in response to the challenge of the unexpected. In Giroux's terms, it is a dynamic moment of transformation and discursive 'border crossing' (Giroux and McLaren 1994). Moments of crisis and challenge in the classroom are also likely to be the times when the complexity of pedagogical practice is most clearly manifested.

The text analysed in this Chapter is the transcript of the fourth of the six meetings amongst the Herrington teachers (held in early 1996).

During the discussion, the teachers related many anecdotes and engaged deeply with each other's issues. However, only three 'critical' incidents as such were related[2]. A great deal of general discussion took place, most of which centred on descriptions of problems and their significances on a more general level.

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1. The 'critical' in critical incident technique uses 'critical' in the sense of 'crisis', not as in 'critical' pedagogy.
2. 'Vera' in her marginal note commented, "I know you originally asked for a critical incident, but of course they don't happen that often, or are often smaller and more subtle than one might expect".

Method of analysis

I referred back to my historical analysis and to the web chart (Fig. 6.1) and devised a framework of analysis which builds on theoretical discourses of pedagogy and which resonated with the transcript. I completed a preliminary draft analysis of the transcript which I fed back to the teachers (in Meeting 6) and to the field more generally at two seminar presentations. I then developed my analysis on the basis of their feedback. I organised my analysis of the transcript under four themes:

- discourses and subjectivities;
- relations of power;
- complex, eclectic practice;
- self-reflexive, ethical practice

I then analysed closely two of the critical incidents which illustrate the elements of pedagogical engagement which I was focussing on, and 're-wrote' these as commentaries highlighting the above themes.

I next present the two critical incidents as a basis for my ensuing analysis and discussion:

3. Anita's story

This is the critical incident related by Anita:

> [This] ties in with feeling responsible; I had this split second feeling of wanting to back away from what I had done, but I decided not to.
>
> I was doing my 'rallying speech' to the [...] class to encourage them to see themselves as being beyond the need for ESL, and I was going on about how they need to enlist the past and their past experience and use that to look to the future in terms of goal setting and positive self-image. It was real bleeding hearts sort of stuff but it was sort of that moment in the group when you are saying, "now, stop seeing yourself as NESB. Put it behind you." I think that the response that I got... my fear is that when you are doing that, you can have the effect of building up too high expectations. So, as I was giving this sort of speech, I looked around and one student was sort of in tears, positive tears, she was moved with what I was saying. But I had a split second feeling of "stop now". I just thought that what I was saying was too enormous, I was putting much too much onto an expectation of what might come for them. I had a quick flash that I should stop immediately because the absorbed attention that I had; I suppose it was a bit frightening, the whole class sort of hanging

> there and I had started... I went on, I thought no, they need to hear it, but my fear was that I had sort of raised the expectations and that the outside world doesn't view them as 'non-language needs' people. And so it's easy for me to do that sort of preaching in the classroom and to give then all that positive.. but then they go out into their work experience and you get the supervisor saying "can't understand them..". So it was that terrible dilemma of feeling that you really believe in them, and getting them to really believe in themselves and then knowing what they might come up against the very next day...
>
> It was resolved in terms of feeling, no, I'll go ahead with it and it just makes me feel that I've got to really work at equipping them with I suppose strategies.
>
> ... But you feel so enormously humble and so responsible at that moment because the feeling in the room was just palpable, there was just silence, and I thought, "God, what have I done?"
>
> ... They'll be embarking on work experience in a few weeks time and now is the really intensive time to prepare them for that and to point out the reality of it and what they are likely to expect in it, but at the same time to do lots and lots and lots of language work in terms of, for example, how to clarify messages, all those things that the outside immediately shun them if they don't understand...
>
> The course is seen as an exciting course. They are at the end of the road here, and yes they are, they are very, very well equipped to be out there. Given better economic times, I'm sure they would 100% be in employment.

Commentary

Anita's 'rallying speech' at the end of the course was about her role in mediating a crucial period of transition in the identities of her students: that is, their transition from identifying as migrants and students (ie, as 'novices', situated on the outside of the mainstream) to identifying as Australian citizens, as full members of the community and as competent members of the work force. Her overt task was to prepare students for work by teaching language, literacy and vocational skills. However, in order to assist them to move out of the learned dependency of the classroom and orient them to face the challenges of job-hunting and employment, she had to work with them on an affective as well as on a rational level.

The students' 'graduation' to their first week of work experience was like a rite of passage symbolising that transition. That the students were moved emotionally by her words of encouragement and exhortation suggests she had touched on contradictory feelings they had around leaving the supportive environment of the classroom and facing the uncertainties and hazards of the labour market. She had reflected back to the students an image of themselves which had somehow opened up

amongst them a pool of emotions: nostalgia for certainties of the past, disappointments, hopes, fears, imagined and yearned-for futures.

However, Anita knew about the harsh realities awaiting the students; the high rate of migrant unemployment and the disadvantage of having less than perfect _English. There was a contradiction between her raising their expectations and the reality of scarce jobs, racism and intolerance in the wider community.

At the same time, she had a flash of awareness about her own personal and rhetorical power; one student had been moved to tears and the others were hanging on her words. She did not feel altogether comfortable with the students' emotional responses to her "rallying speech" and with her sudden perception of herself in an 'inspirational' role[3].

Anita was experiencing two different kinds of pedagogical dilemma at the same time. First, there was an ethical dilemma, one which is common amongst adult educators in time of high unemployment. On the one hand there was the need to motivate, encourage and inspire the students to strive to succeed, to be ready to compete confidently in the job market; on the other hand there was a responsibility not give them false hopes and to prepare them to face the strong possibility of disappointment and/or discrimination.

Second, she had faced a dilemma about how best to respond, how best to teach at that moment. This was also a crisis in her own subjectivity as a teacher. On the one hand, there was the need to engage with the feelings of the students about the challenges before them. At the same time there was a responsibility not to 'over-do' it: *not* to encourage the emotional flood gates to open too far, and not to use the feeling of that moment in a way which would make her the focus of their attention.

This moment of crisis was resolved by her deciding that she would go on with what she was saying but that she would re-commit herself to helping them "with the confidence to deal with that and to push on through it which is vital to sort of getting out of labelling themselves...". She would "really work at equipping them with I suppose strategies... to do lots and lots and lots of language work in terms of ... how to clarify messages and all those things that the outside immediately shun them

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3. Robin Williams' 'inspirational' teacher in 'Dead Poets' Society' has often been held up in discussions amongst ALBE teachers an example of what teachers *should not* be doing.

[for] if they don't understand." Her decision to focus her efforts on developing the students' work skills also resolved the small crisis in her own subjectivity. She implicitly moved away from the emotions surrounding the migrant experience, to a 'commonsense' approach of supporting them as best she could as a teacher; realising that her most important contribution to their lives was simply to teach them what they needed to know in order to have the best chance of surviving. Rather than further stimulating or involving herself in the emotions of that moment (the shared experiences of sacrifices made in order to immigrate, hopes and fears for the future) she thought very practically about the additional skills she needed to teach them.

An alternative reading of this incident is that it is a moment of re-inscription of performative discourse in her subjectivity. It may have been open to her at this point to develop some critical discussion around the difficulties of finding employment, the current economic situation and so forth. Instead, she focused on skill requirements. However, a judgement about whether or not that would have been appropriate at that time and with that group could only be made by Anita herself.

4. Colette's story

Colette's was really a collective story. The other teachers contributed stories about similar situations and shared thoughts about similar issues. In this sense, the discussion illustrates well Lemke's point, that meaning-making is "an act-in-community, a material and social process that helps to constitute the community as a community"(Lemke 1995: 9).

I therefore present Colette's story in the context of the discussion which occurred before and after it. Following on from Anita, there was a discussion about how one 'finds the balance' in responding to very diverse needs in any one group:

> Vera: I find that one of the most important pedagogical issues is how to balance, what sort of future they have got... I mean I find that an issue that always confronts me, is who will I respond to in the class, and obviously being me, too, you respond to the ones who respond to you, don't you, and I find, but I berate myself for it, that I respond to the brightest ones, and the ones that you see things are happening for and tending to teach to them and for them... and all that sort of thing. I guess I always think that perhaps, in my particular sort of teaching I should make sure that others are there too...

Colette: ... I feel I am perhaps suited to the other end of the scale. I wonder whether I cater to those who are really struggling in the class... and maybe I don't extend... and my fear is that I never extend the bright ones because I'm always focussing at the other end...

Colette's story then followed:

In the low level class, Zelda always looks very heavy and depressed, particularly lately, because her mother died, and she has taken to wearing a scarf now which she never did, and her oracy is very good in the class, but she is very very low with her reading and writing, and we've all had that situation, where you start teaching, you know, going through a text and they are all sitting there like totally blank... and you think this isn't... they are not understanding a thing; then you start trying to explain a few words to get the vocab across, and you get to the first word, and you think, oh, this is hard work, then they are all just looking at you, like you know, unfathomable, they don't understand anything, then she always says to me, "Oh, we're so stupid, I'm so sorry Colette, you must be really annoyed with us but it's so hard for us [as if I didn't understand] but we've never been to school, we can't do this"

... and she speaks for the group and she always gets very sort of upset if the class is not catching on immediately and then I immediately stop and think now, am I giving them the impression that I am annoyed, or have I gone too quickly? What's happened for her to feel suddenly anxious about it? Then I immediately just smile and just stop everything, and I try my hardest to show that I'm not annoyed [jokes and laughter from the other teachers] and so... I immediately just try to make everyone relax and try and dissipate all that anxiety that they are feeling and to show them that I'm not trying to rush them through, that I'm actually totally relaxed and I'm in control, and that they are not to feel concerned that they are not catching up, because it's partly my responsibility, and I'm going to slow everything down, and I'm going to relax, and you're going to relax and there's nothing to worry about, so it's like regaining that feeling of control in the classroom and that responding to people who are having difficulty, and perhaps there are people who are keeping up with it but I get swung right back to that point of slowing down, and... so I think being able to change direction, to stop, to be able to keep smiling and reassuring those ones who are feeling anxious and then I always get a lot of feedback from the students who say, "you're very kind, understanding", you know, they feel relaxed about it.

[...]

Vera: It reminds me of what happens in the [...] class, because once again you are trying to get a group to understand quite complicated social and psychological concepts that they have no idea about, and they don't read the newspapers and they have no idea about what goes on in this society. Very few of them would know anything about the restructuring of social services, or anything like that. Some of them have been brought up in that very simple Vietnamese style of copying off the board and listening to what the teacher says and you know... so once again, I get that feeling, sometimes you introduce something from a newspaper article or somewhere and you get that glazed look and I think to myself, oh God, what should I do, I feel as though they should know these things, they're common knowledge among English speaking people half the time, but on the other hand, these people have to go out and work in the community and I don't want to have to destroy their sense of confidence because they don't know these things. And my way around that is to back track and go back as far as I can, even if I get off the point and just once again reassure them and say, don't worry if you don't understand...

> Zoe: I think, I mean, it's that whole issue of content, and... with the[...] group because I seem to have taught most of the Australian history component... and it is important to require them to have an understanding of Australian society and of its history. And I've just done the ANZAC day Gallipoli film. I had that sense.. I was moving it along, but you know the blank faces, were they bored, did they not understand? I feel that's important, I feel that it will help them out there is they hear the word Gallipoli, Oh, you know, "I've heard that somewhere". Even though I'm sort of feeling slightly uncomfortable about the lack of feedback or my interpretation of the feedback, I mean I'm doing things like getting them to work in groups to recycle the language through their listening, what did you hear and talk about it and feed it back and then I'll recycle it again. I see that as generating language, vocabulary and ideas, but it's always sort of like with that group I feel uncomfortable about introducing new information and ideas.
>
> [...]
>
> Terese: the issue you raised about content is one I think about a lot too, because I do find that some of the students are very obdurate, that's the word I would use, about moving beyond their worlds, and I think as teachers it is one of our duties to push them beyond their worlds. If you think that Australian history is important, because I think sometimes... the eyes glaze over, and we decide, well, this is going to be too difficult, but we're not doing them any favours, you know, by kind of giving in to that sometimes.
>
> [...]
>
> Zoe: It's breaking out of the barriers, moving out of the comfort zone...

Commentary

Colette's vignette is about what happens when she seems to get no response at all from the group, and how she deals with the anxiety that is produced when students seem unable to understand or to learn.

Colette spoke of one student, Zelda "who is very heavy and depressed" and who gets upset if the class does not catch on immediately. Zelda takes it on herself to speak for the group, to apologise on their behalf whilst no doubt projecting onto them her own fears and confusions. Colette deals with the anxiety by slowing down, relaxing herself and using her body to model relaxation, to absorb the anxiety and to assert control. She shows that she is taking on part (but not all) of the responsibility to ensure that nobody gets left behind, and that she will stick with them and their learning processes whatever it takes. In a sense she is dissipating the anxiety by taking it from them and modelling and projecting her own relaxation, her own control of the situation.

Vera struggles with the same issue in her course. The students whom she is training to take jobs in the community services have had little

education in their countries of origin[4]. They often have no conceptual language for social issues or any frameworks for understanding the institutional structures of social services. When they get "that glazed look", she too reassures them, back tracks, and explains the issues in as simple terms as possible, for as much time as it needs to take.

Zoe had the experienced the same reaction to her presentation of the film 'Gallipoli' to the [...] group. She believes that it is important to teach an understanding of Australian society; that there may be some future benefit of their being exposed to Australian culture and history, even if they seem not to understand at the time. She feels "slightly uncomfortable", but "moves it along", getting them to work in groups, to recycle the language, feed it back to her, and then she recycles it back to them. In that way, she is "generating language, vocabulary and ideas". Zoe's slight feeling of discomfort might be seen as a moment, in her narrative, in which she reports on her negotiation competing pedagogical discourses. A discourse of 'multiculture' (constructing, a respectful awareness of different cultural histories, and a sense of caution about using her teaching as a vehicle for 'imposing' mainstream Anglo-cultural history), might be clashing here with the 'received' discourse of teaching the cultural canon. Her sense is that initiation into mainstream culture, in this case, teaching the students *their* (Australian) history, is a legitimate and beneficial part of her work..

Terese has also thought a lot about this issue, and in particular, the need to challenge, to "push them beyond their worlds". As Zoe says, it's about "breaking out of the barriers, pushing them beyond the comfort zones". Each of the teachers, in her own way, is mediating, balancing and choreographing diverse student voices, diverse curriculum demands, their own personal teaching predispositions and their broader educational commitments. At the same time, they are negotiating, choosing between, integrating, weaving together an extraordinarily complex field of pedagogical discourses.

Together, the stories are about the constant struggle for balance in the way they teach: trying to find a balance between the needs of the slowest and quickest learners, the community of the classroom, the society of the

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4. Vera has added in here that some of the students had had a reasonable standard of education in their countries of origin but had had little cultural or social interaction in Australia.

outside world, between hope and realism. The stories also illustrate the teachers' reflexive awareness of their own pedagogical predispositions in the constant struggle to find that balance. Whereas Vera is self-critical about her tendency to respond to "those for whom something is happening", Colette reflects on her perception that she has the opposite tendency, and therefore "may not be extending the bright ones".

The stories reveal the multiple and ever-changing subject positions of ALBE teachers constituted by and in progressivist /professional teacher discourse. Colette's and Vera's stories, (like Anita's) are stories about nurturance. The teachers are fully engaged, personally and intellectually, in the demands of their teaching. They are focussing on the particular pedagogies required to teach those adults who have missed out on schooling or perhaps have failed in the past. Their critical incidents reveal qualities of patience and care which is deeply (although perhaps not exclusively) feminine[5]. In Grumet's terms, they are refusing the separation of public and private worlds. They are living out, as women teachers, their "knowledges and experience of reproduction and nurturance" (Grumet 1988: 3).

The practice of Anita, Colette and Vera could be described as 'engaged' pedagogy (hooks 1994a: 13), 'affective' pedagogy (Grossberg 1994) or 'connected teaching' (Belenky, Clinchy et al. 1986: 214). Equally, however, they are working with a strong sense of curriculum and a pedagogical project, which is not only to nurture, but to "push them beyond their worlds", to "break out of the barriers" of whatever their current limitations are and to introduce their students to new words, skills, cultures and ideas. The teachers move between these two positions using a variety of teaching techniques as they listen, respond, instruct, transmit, facilitate, support, challenge and encourage.

5. Discourses and subjectivities

What are the discourses of pedagogy circulating in this discussion? What are the different subject positions (made available by those discourses) which the teachers are taking up and moving between?

5. Connell (1985: 117) writes about those qualities amongst male and female school teachers.

The configuration of pedagogical discourses is similar to that which I identified earlier with respect to the CGEA texts (in Chapter 6) and the discussion amongst the Herrington teachers of issues of institutional management (in Chapter 9). Following the same method of analysis, I once again delineated 'progressivist', 'professional teacher' and 'performative' as the three major discursive constellations which are 'present' in complex interdiscursive formations. In the analysis of pedagogical engagement, however, I made a more detailed interpretation, examining more closely the elements (subdiscourses) constituting the hybridising 'progressivist' and 'professional teacher' discourses.

Progressivist /professional teacher discourse

A hybridising progressivist professional teacher discourse is clearly identifiable in the descriptions of critical incidents and throughout the discussion.

Anita's and Colette's stories are both about being tuned into where the students are at and responding appropriately to what is going on in the group on the level of affect. Their teaching is primarily focussed around the learners' needs and their issues of the moment and builds on the relationship between themselves and the class group. Anita's story also contains traces of 'multicultural discourse', 'welfare discourse' and 'feminist discourse' as discussed below.

Vera is clearly speaking from a progressivist positioning:

> You also have to see them as whole people, don't you, and the learning process as being related to the whole of their lives, and to the learning relationship and to the whole of your relationship with them, all the social relationships that go on in the class and everything (Vera).

Progressivist discourse is suggested here in the metaphor of the "whole person"; the students' lives outside the classroom and relationships within the group all need to be addressed in teaching. Having a 'real' relationship is seen as central to good teaching (Rogers 1969; Belenky, Clinchy et al. 1986; Gilligan 1995)[6]

6. The work of Belenky, Clinchy et al is reflective of humanist, progressivist discourse and has been extensively critiqued by feminist scholars for essentialising women and femininity, for example, by Lauren Berlant (1997) and for the linear developmentalism implicit in their hierarchy of progressively more powerful 'ways of knowing' (Sanguinetti 1992-93).

Terese says:

> You are in the business of developing somebody, aren't you, I mean, of giving something to them, that's always what you are looking for, that's why it is a wonderful job, it's one of those jobs where they often leave you better than they came and a lot of the work that we do, there will be every year someone who moves on, someone you have set on the path and feel that... it's very gratifying and it's a positive thing, and it's kind of contributing to society .

In speaking from within progressivist discourse, the teachers are expressing what to many ALBE teachers is an essential part of their professional lives: the pleasure and reward of doing work which contributes to other people's lives, is socially useful, and is often deeply appreciated. As Vera said, "[teaching] is the only thing you get any pleasure out of. It's the only way you get to base camp". 'Getting to base camp' is an interesting metaphor for the teachers' embodied knowledge about what is right, good and pleasurable about their work, as discussed in Chapter 6. It suggests that teaching for them is an activity which is fundamentally creative and life-sustaining: a feminine, if not feminist pedagogy, as discussed below. This is the reason why so many teachers stay in work which is extremely demanding and brings low status and low financial reward. This is what has also motivated generations of volunteer tutors to give of their time, their skills and patience to assist people in one-to-one settings to learn to read and write.

The teachers show professional teacher positionings in the technical as well as pedagogical dimensions of their stories. Throughout, the threads of progressivist, multiculturalist and feminist discourse are finely intertwined with professional teacher discourse.

As discussed in Chapter 6, the 'professional teacher' discourse constructs subject positions of professional authority. This is in contrast to some versions of 'progressivist' discourse in adult education which tend to discount the legitimacy of institutional authority of teachers and to construct teachers as 'equals' (the 'adultist discourse' which Lee and Wickert refer to (Lee and Wickert 1995).

Terese at one point says that:

> I do find that some of the students are very obdurate, that's the word I would use, about moving beyond their worlds, and I think as teachers it is one of our duties to push them beyond their worlds.

Here Terese is sharing the frustration she sometimes experiences when students appear to resist "moving beyond their worlds". For Terese, "one

of our duties" (as professional teachers) is to challenge and to "push them beyond their worlds".

The teaching of language, skills and cultural understandings to equip students for the workforce is a strong theme throughout the discussion. This 'training' discourse also relates to the professional work of teachers. Skills training is now accepted as being part of ALBE and ESL teaching. The 'skills' discourse also articulates with the more recent genre movement whose influence in ALBE is seen in accreditation and curriculum frameworks which prescribe a repertoire of textual forms and related skills (as in the CGEA). The skills discourse also articulates with the performative discourses embodied in the NTRA, as we saw earlier.

The teachers see themselves in many ways as 'traditional' (professional) teachers of language, literacy and work skills; involved with curriculum development, presentation, modelling, facilitation, giving structured practice and feedback, carrying out assessments, reporting student progress, etc. However, the professional teacher discourse which these practices relate to is modulated by the progressivist blend already described. This in turn includes traces of many other discourses which connect adult education with social transformation: welfare, rights, multiculturalism, critical literacy and feminism. These are discourses which reflect (in combination) the historical development of ALBE and mark it as a distinct pedagogical tradition. At the same time, they are discourses which reflect the context and the issues of the day.

In the next section, I briefly examine some progressivist sub-discourses in relation to the text.

Feminist pedagogy discourse

Whilst there are no explicit references to feminism or to feminist practice as such within the text, the discussion shows that they are teaching in a way which is affirmed and celebrated within feminist pedagogical discourse.

I identify feminist pedagogical discourse here in the terms Gore uses in her discussion of feminist pedagogy as an orientation which rejects 'technical rationality' and has an "an emphasis on nurturing, experiential learning and an ethic of caring" (Gore 1993: 31).

Grumet (1988: 4) writes, for example, that

> If our understanding of education rests on our understanding of the reproduction of society, then the reproduction of society itself rests on our understanding of reproduction, a project that shapes our lives, dominating our sexual, familial, economic, political, and, finally, educational experience.

Grumet's project is "to draw that knowledge of women's experience of reproduction and nurturance into the epistemological systems and curricular forms that constitute the discourse and practice of public education" (p.3). However, feminine epistemology and feminine practice is being "eaten away by technology as well as by an ethos of individualism that has drained it of its social promise and political power" (p.27). I have already referred to other feminist writers who write in a similar vein about femininity in teaching which contradicts (and is suppressed within) patriarchal educational cultures and institutions (Maher 1985; Belenky, Clinchy et al. 1986; McWilliam 1994; hooks 1994a; McWilliam 1995) .

In this text, 'nurturance' appears not so much in the 'maternal' or 'therapeutic' sense but as an ethic of care which is part of the collective professional ethic. Anita's and Vera's stories illustrate a 'nurturant' and 'care-full' approach towards groups of students and towards their teaching in general (as well as towards individuals).

All of the teachers talk with great passion about their students and the challenges of the classroom; it is the talk of teachers "who really care about teaching in uniquely passionate and caring ways" (hooks 1994a: 117). They talk about the pleasures of teaching, of the heroic struggles of the students and of their small victories in the long process of gaining confidence and literacy (in the face of layers of disadvantage and lack of confidence). They tell stories about interactions which are sometimes emotionally charged, sometimes hilariously funny, accounts of learning and teaching in their classrooms.

In persuading, cajoling and encouraging the students to look to the future, Anita is both instructing and nurturing. She is mobilising the force of her own and her students' desires, 'seducing' them (McWilliam, 1995: 15) to think about themselves differently and to take up more powerful subject positions. Her practice reflects traces of 'feminine' pedagogical discourse (of nurturance, care and pleasure).

What more can we learn from these texts about the nature of the 'feminist' (or 'feminine' subject positions which the teachers are taking

up? Gore (1993) has pointed out that feminist pedagogy may be the vehicle for subtle forms of coercion. However, I have not found in this text evidence of undue coercion in the teachers' representations of their practice. The critical incidents appear to illustrate the successful combination of 'nurturant' and 'care-full' practice with 'legitimate' professional and institutional authority. They do not seem to relate to students in the altruistic and self-effacing ways which McWilliam (1995) is critical of. Rather, they appear to be affirming their own projects and desires in their teaching. In this way, the Herrington teachers are similar to the CGEA group, in that 'nurturance' and 'desire' are integrated into traditional and highly professional approaches (in the 'progressivist / professional teacher' discourse).7

Welfare discourse

As discussed earlier, the 'welfare' discourse within ALBE has subsumed the 'philanthropic' discourse which goes back to the days of the mechanics' institutes and is still expressed in volunteer tutor networks. In denouncing the new ways, Terese speaks about "discourses of charity" which are now disappearing.

> The casino is a grand metaphor for our society - money, winners, losers... even discourses of charity and religion are ignored. We thought we had moved beyond discourses of charity because with social services there was enough support to allow people to hold up their heads. But at least in the old days when I grew up, charity was there...

The discourse of 'welfare' is closely related to a discourse about 'rights'. Terese says:

> I think that they deserve the best of Australia, they deserve a better life in Australia and just as human beings, and that is something that we can give them, and if Australia is to flourish in its migration, it has to give people a decent education too... and tolerate and accept their differences and not belittle the fact that the goals that they have worked towards, that they have finally achieved, are valuable ones.

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7. Vera's footnote on reading this chapter again illustrates the imbrication of 'feminist' with other pedagogical discourses:
"I am a feminist pedagogue in this sense - I also feel other 'discourses' flowing through my practice. They come from personal experience not academic information... I am thinking of 'the joy of knowledge' approach. I feel that knowledge is power and joy, an 'in itself' as well as an 'armouring' for the instatement of self in society. When I am in that mode (often) I am also 'objective' - the knowledge is a 'thing' I 'give' or 'transmit'! I have a lot of sympathy with 'cultural transmission'. This is the 'magician' approach. I mention it because it is different to the feminist pedagogy; it's 'hermetic' I suppose".

Terese here reflects broad understandings within the field of ALBE provision as a necessary form of welfare and as a 'right', rather than as an object of individual charity and benevolence and suggests that in today's context, good, old-fashioned charity is not such a bad thing. The discussion about the right of newcomers to Australia to be given "a decent education" is in the context of reductions imposed on access to language and literacy training for migrants and others. This is seen as reducing opportunities for migrants to be provided with adequate education and neglecting their welfare.

Holding up principles of welfare and rights in opposition to the new policies, the teachers speak of having a sense of "social responsibility" and "respect for human dignity".

Multiculturalism discourse

Anita's empathy with the predicament of unemployed migrant workers who are facing discrimination in their 'chosen' country, and her conviction that they are (and must see themselves as) full citizens of this country, equal to any other, indicates her positioning within discourses of anti-racism and multiculture.

A story which was related collectively at the beginning of the discussion illustrates the teachers' appreciation of the qualities, achievements and the different cultural resources which migrants contribute to multicultural Australia. The story (which I have here summarised from the transcript) was also told to illustrate the intransigence of the performative institutional and policy regime:

> Hatice came from a small village in Turkey where she had been married at the age of 12. She came to the College after twenty or so years in Australia with no reading and writing skills. Initially she had to be brought in by her children, as she did not have the confidence to travel alone by public transport. Within a few weeks she was coming in alone and her demeanour had changed dramatically. She participated in discussions and supported other students, although she was slow to learn to read and write. She participated actively in a special multicultural celebration at the College and brought in items from her small village, including elaborate head gear for her wedding. However, a very negative report was written about her by another teacher after she had been transferred to another campus. The report objectified Hatice in terms of her lack of 'progress', stating that she was not making

> sufficient effort and that she could not be catered for in a "normal classroom".

The teachers condemned that report as lacking in empathy, negating Hatice's personhood, and discounting her real contributions and achievements.

Hatice's story is typical of many stories of struggle, courage and achievement of migrant Australians, which are shared in the language or literacy classroom. In the drive for 'efficiency', people such as Hatice are processed, assessed and channelled through the system which demands conformity and 'measurable' progress. There is no longer space in this system to enjoy and respect their unique contributions as people and as carriers of different cultures. Their stories are diminished (indirectly) by a homogenising discourse which constructs a pedagogy of transmission, efficiency and market exchange. Yet these are the stories which should be celebrated and fed into a rich, multicultural, Australian heritage.

The teachers spoke passionately about the need for just and equitable treatment for immigrants - articulating with the welfarist and rights discourse discussed above:

> ... the factoring in that they are migrants, I think that they deserve the best of Australia, they deserve a better life in Australia, just as human beings ... and if Australia is to flourish in its migration, it has to give people a decent education too ... (Vera).

The multiculture discourse of the Herrington teachers resonates with issues raised by teachers in the CGEA study, about the cultural homogenisation inherent in the competency-based accreditation. As we saw with Zoe's discomfort in teaching about the ANZAC tradition, working between, and attempting to reconcile, 'multiculture discourse' with 'cultural canon discourse' and a host of other pedagogical discourses is often a dilemma which may not be readily resolved by curriculum frameworks, nor intuitively, in the 'pedagogical moment'.

Critical pedagogy discourse

Like the CGEA texts discussed in Chapter 5, the discourse of radical or critical pedagogy was not significantly present and there is little evidence that "the term 'critical' has been made to work for the adult literacy practitioner" (Lee and Wickert 1995: 64). That is not to say necessarily that these teachers do not apply principles of critical literacy in their teaching,

but that they did not (on that particular occasion) talk in a way which indicates that those orientations and principles (raising political awareness, demystifying texts or problematising knowledges) are a priority. Amongst this group of teachers, the 'political' is seen in terms of the 'moral': they have a 'moral' responsibility to connect with, and to raise in the classroom, social and political issues affecting students. However, critical literacy is not raised as a central concern in this particular discussion[8] . It appears that rather than setting out with a specific radicalising intent, or explicitly teaching the skills of 'reading the inscriptions of power' in texts, these teachers are, in a sense, practising an 'embedded' critical pedagogy which is situated and improvisational (van Manen (995: 41). The teachers respond to the dynamics of the moment, ask questions and feed in 'democratic' (rather than critical) perspectives about issues which arise spontaneously.

For example, Vera talked about how she fielded a class discussion about the newly-elected Prime Minister setting up home in Sydney, rather than in Canberra. In this instance, and with that particular group, it seemed that the most appropriate thing was to reassure the students who came from repressive countries and did not feel at ease with that discussion, that "it was all right" for them to express a political opinion.

Such ways of teaching are akin to those of who teach in the 'feminist' classrooms described by Weiler:

> ... in their choice of what to teach and *how* to teach, feminist teachers have the opportunity to call commonsense assumptions into question and to attempt to create more humane and to some limited extent, more democratic classroom relationships. Meaning is created in classrooms by both teachers and students, and by calling attitudes and deeply held beliefs into question and by valuing certain kinds of knowledge (the cultural knowledge of the students, for example) the feminist teacher shapes and influences the kind of meaning that is created in the classroom (Weiler 1988, pp. 112-113).

The Herrington teachers, like those described by Weiler, appear to be working to shape the production of meaning through listening and

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8. It could well be that since 'critical literacy' is now institutionalised as 'literacy for public debate' within the CGEA framework, it has become normalised in their practice and therefore was not seen, in this discussion, as a problematic issue or one which came to light in the sharing of 'critical incidents'.

respecting the students' knowledges, rather than through explicit teaching of the skills of critical literacy.

Performative Discourse

Performative discourse is present throughout the discussion as the discursive 'Other', in much the same way as we saw in the discussion of the College's management practices presented in Chapter 9. The teachers again ridiculed the language of marketisation now being introduced.

Vera said that:

> These 'customers' are people who talk about in class, you know, about being sucked by leeches as they were fleeing from the Viet Cong or something. I mean, you know, that's not a customer, that has come in to buy a few bits of the alphabet or something.

Terese said that:

> they expect us not to be responsible for the whole person ... it takes all your responsibility away ... [they see teaching as] a technical transaction, like medicos ... here comes another kidney, etc".

Both Vera and Terese are protesting about commodification: the separation of the teaching product from the relationship between teacher and students[9] The new discourse discounts the individuality and the humanity of adults who come as students and tell their stories in the course of learning. Whereas the term 'student' implies an educational relationship, a shared commitment to teaching and learning, 'customer' implies minimalistic, commercial exchange. Vera is affirming that the people whom she teaches embody diverse life histories of war, oppression, hardship and often great achievement, and that for her, it is these people, not 'the market,' that count.

Are the Herrington teachers completely immune from the effects of the new discourse, or have they absorbed some elements of it into their own local discourse, as we saw with the CGEA evaluation participants?

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9. Vera has since added in her comment in the margin:
"... education as transformation must take into account deep experience, it can't be just a superficial garment to be put on (as in the image of those rigid street theatre people with white faces and bowler hats - anonymous ciphers) that's 'training' people whose personal and social experience means nothing. I keep getting images of core and superfice. If you have any human warmth, you operate intuitively from centre outwards. We used to be "allowed" to do this. Now there's a perception that it doesn't "work" ... it's messy. Nurturing is a good verb because it [implies] messiness. You know the experiments with 'rational' nurturing of babies - the orphans in stainless steel hospitals with regular feeds died, the ones brought up by grotty peasants flourished!"

Anita's moment of crisis is resolved by her decision to prepare students for the harsh realities by focussing more strongly on the teaching of vocational skills. This may be interpreted as a shift into the performative discourse; in order to have any chance of finding jobs in a shrinking jobs market, the students must become more skilled so as to better compete. She herself must redouble her efforts to prepare the students vocationally. Is she, at this point, disciplining herself (the panoptical effect of the mainstream discourse) by taking responsibility to optimise the students' chances for future employment and demanding of herself that she work harder to fulfil this responsibility?

In Chapter 6 I found that the evolving practitioner discourse of 'good practice' (the 'progressive /professional teacher' discourse) was being re-constituted by processes of interdiscursivity through which elements of performative discourse are absorbed into the discourse of the field. 'Good practice' is now *understood to mean* attention to vocational outcomes and the integration of ALBE and work skills. It also now signifies a distancing from the progressivist past when nurturance and the relationship between teachers and learners were seen to be all-important and the 'ideal' teacher had to be 'supportive' in relatively unstructured and ill-defined teaching contexts. In this context, we can read Anita's focussing on actual skills and vocational outcomes as an instance of contemporary 'good practice' in ALBE; the 'progressive/ professional teacher' discursive blend hybridising with and in some ways strengthened by elements of the performative discourse, as we saw with the CGEA teachers. Further, her resolution in that moment of crisis is part of an evolving processes of interdiscursivity in pedagogical discourse across the field and within the community of ALBE teachers: one of countless small individual resolutions in similar situations of struggle and discursive contention.

Contradictory understandings of welfare, benevolence and nurturance

The Herrington teachers' progressivist/professional teacher positioning also includes a discourse about ALBE as an issue of rights and social welfare, as discussed.

Historically the welfare discourse is the product of a number of interdiscursive strands: the older discourses of 'charity' and the volunteer networks, the movement for human rights, participation and

equity which the adult literacy became part of in the 70s and 80s, and discourses of the welfare state. All of these assume and construct subject positions of 'benevolence' on the part of teachers and others concerned with the welfare of people who are less fortunate than they are.

There is a critique from the Left of welfare as the palliation of tensions caused by inequity, that it masks rather than addresses the causes of inequity. This critique dovetails with the critique of the 'deficit' discourse associated with adult literacy, as discussed in Chapter 6. The deficit discourse of adult literacy implies a level of patronage of the 'disadvantaged' by 'the advantaged'. That is, at some level it implies an unproblematised asymmetry in power relations between the 'powerful' and 'culturally rich' who are the givers and the 'weak' and 'culturally impoverished' who are the receivers.

Terese says:

> ... a lot of the work that we do, there will be every year someone who moves on, someone you have kind of set on the path, and feel that... it's very gratifying and it's a positive thing, and it's kind of contributing to society, because I think if you develop that woman and make her somebody who is more capable and stronger, then you are helping to develop her and her family.

Terese has verbalised how many teachers feel about our work in education; it *is* gratifying to see the product of our labour in the form of lives which appear to be 'transformed' or at least improved during the course of a program. To what extent does this kind of 'gratification' reflect an underlying discourse of 'deficit' and the corresponding attitudes of 'benevolence' ('philanthropy', or 'charity') of the white educated middle class elite towards those who are our students?

From one viewpoint, speaking about the gratification derived from helping others may reflect an underlying discourse of patronage and of 'top down' benevolence. However, the issue here is very complex. At a certain point, the border between pleasure (the pleasure of contributing to people's lives, and the pleasure of intense pedagogical engagement) and gratification (which has negative connotations of self-serving patronage) is blurred if not invisible.

The critique of benevolence (as an aspect of progressivist discourse) is therefore itself open to deconstruction. The critique is problematic in that it tends to undermine the 'progressivist' values and practices which are being made redundant in the economic rationalist (performative)

political context. At the same time, the critique of benevolence has had a significant impact in the field. It is a critique which as my earlier (1993) research showed, has been absorbed to an extent into the grass roots 'good practice' discourse and *already* informs the reflexivity of some teachers.

The text here reflects the contradictory moment which we (the ALBE and ESL teachers) are caught up in. On the one hand, we are constituted by the discourses of welfare and rights which construct the field historically. But we are now self-critical of some of their discursive effects on the grounds of the unequal power relations they assume and perpetuate. At the same time, welfare, rights, equity and compassion are core values of a relatively equitable Australian society which we have struggled politically to create over many years. With the ascendancy of economic rationalism and the decline of the social welfare state, these are the very values which performativity discounts. Values of care and compassion which may contain traces of 'patronage' are those which are now being supplanted by an ethic of neglect and 'survival of the fittest'. The discourse of 'benevolence', against this background, can be seen as a discourse of resistance: part of a (community-wide) oppositional discourse which is attempting to defend values of humanity and compassion against the economic rationalist onslaught.

The context of Terese's comment (above) was outrage about inroads being made in ALBE provision as an issue of equity. In this context, the critique of 'patronage' or 'benevolence' must be balanced by an understanding that these traces of older discourses now form part of new interdiscursivities of resistance which we call on when to speak about and to defend our work.

Alongside traces of 'benevolence' within the text, there are also traces of a discourse of 'solidarity' across the institutional (teacher-student) divide. This can be seen in Anita's story and in the story of Hatice, whose 'progress report' made it clear that she was being 'disciplined' and 'objectified' by the effects of performativity in the same way that the teachers felt themselves to be. Alongside that sense of solidarity (and not incompatible with it) is a sense of institutional and professional authority. 'Solidarity', 'care', 'benevolence' and 'authority' seem to flow together indistinguishably throughout the whole discussion.

Anita's moment of crisis and resolution in the classroom (Section 3, above) can also be seen as a moment of transition between the multiple

roles, subject positions and pedagogical discourses which she inhabits as a teacher: as 'cultural guide', 'support person,' 'nurturer', 'classroom manager' and 'developer of skills'. Her decision to follow a particular course of action in her teaching can be seen as an expression of her personal and professional agency. Her momentary self-reflection, her decision to carry on, and her resolution to teach particular work-related skills is a moment of agentic action, of her (re)constitution as a teacher and as a person; the continuing process of 'subject(act)ivity' (Angelides, 1994).

6. Powerful relations in the classroom

Foucault's conception of power has stimulated a re-theorisation of the classroom by many educational writers. The classroom is understood in terms of power relations, of discourses and practices which operate in constraining and productive ways (Gore 1993: 3). In this light, the ALBE classroom is seen as a mini-institution in which "the pedagogical process manifests power relations between and among teachers and learners" (ibid, p.60).

What can we learn from the Herrington text about how teachers deploy power in the classroom? What contradictions and dilemmas do they confront in expressing and mediating their own 'power/knowledge' at particular times and in particular programs? How does the teacher use her institutional and personal power to steer and develop her individual 'regime of learning' in the classroom?

Beyond 'disciplinary micro-power'

Gore's research into power relations in pedagogy is based on Foucault's theory of disciplinary micro-power, operating on the level of classrooms (Gore 1995). In *Discipline and Punish* (Foucault 1975) developed his theory of bodily subjectification and disciplinary power out of a study of torture and prisons in the nineteenth century, and of the disciplining and subjectification of bodies through a series of "meticulous, often minute, techniques" which he described as a "microphysics of power" (p.139). The disciplinary function of institutions was further effected by means of the 'Panopticon', constructed so that prisoners could never be sure whether

they were being observed at any one time. In modern times, according to Foucault, overt physical coercion has been replaced by disciplinary effects of discursive micropower. The 'Panopticon' is a powerful metaphor for the internalisation and normalisation of subjectifying power. Thus,

> We are in the society of the teacher-judge, the doctor-judge, the educator-judge, the 'social worker'-judge; it is on them that the universal reign of the normative is based; and each individual, wherever he may find himself, subjects to it his body, his gestures, his behaviour, his aptitudes, his achievements. The carceral network, with its compact or disseminated forms, with its system of insertion, distribution, surveillance, observation, has been the greatest support, in modern society, of normalising power (p.304).

Gore has applied Foucault's notion of subjectifying micro-power to an analysis of power relations in classroom pedagogy. She developed coding categories in order to explore and describe twelve specific practices involved in the functioning of power relations: 'surveillance', 'normalisation', 'exclusion', 'classification', 'distribution', 'individualisation', 'totalisation', 'regulation', 'space', 'time', 'knowledge' and 'techniques directed at the self' (Gore 1995: 103). She found these techniques of disciplinary power were regularly deployed in the course of teaching practice across four different pedagogical sites, including a feminist reading group and a women's discussion group.

Gore's study illuminates in detail the 'micro-physics' of teacher power in the classroom, and directs teachers to a more reflexive awareness of the functioning of the 'infinitesimal mechanisms' of power (Foucault 1980: 99) in their practice. Her critique of the liberatory claims implicit in radical pedagogical discourse is both practical and salutary; radical practice is limited by institutional power relations and by the nature of pedagogy itself, which enacts disciplinary power, even in non-institutional settings (p. 101).

In my analysis, I have taken it as given that teachers employ a variety of normalising and disciplining techniques as they teach. As teachers, they are concerned with the production of 'knowledge' and 'truth' (which are forms of power) and they are agents of a particular institutions. In the classroom, however, they do have a significant degree of agency in *how* they express their institutional and knowledge power and they have a certain sphere of autonomy within which they are able to transgress the norms of their authority.

My purpose here is to apply a more general notion of power in the belief that skillful deployment of "particular techniques of government" (Gore, 1993: 60) are only one aspect of the art and craft of pedagogy. I am focussing therefore not on the techniques of micropower but rather on a more diffuse notion of power: the power assumed by teachers engaging as agentic, professional and multiply-constituted subjects of their own pedagogical practice. This notion of power relates to Foucault's later works, in which he speaks about power not so much in terms of techniques but as a force which incites, induces and is immanent in all human relationships (Foucault 1981: 94).

This broader notion of power is reflected in other current theorisations of power in the context of pedagogy. For example, Green and Reid argue that 'power-knowledge' in Foucauldian accounts of pedagogy neglects "the complex interweaving and intrication of psyche and the social world, or the 'inner' and 'outer' dimensions of social subjectivity and social practice". In order to include "matters of affect and emotionality and indeed desire and investment" they suggest the formulation of "power-knowledge-desire" (Green and Reid 1995c: 3) . The analysis I have made (in Section 5 of this chapter) of discourses and multiple subject positions illustrates their point: that 'power', 'knowledge' and 'desire' are closely interwoven in pedagogical practice. The constituent elements of progressivist discourse which I delineated in the text ('learner-centred discourse', 'welfare discourse', multicultural discourse', 'critical pedagogy discourse' and 'feminist pedagogy discourse') all produce particular subject positions which are characterised by particular kinds of desire, particular knowledges and power investments.

The 'power-knowledge-desire' formulation is useful in my examination here of how teachers use power in the subtle, on-going pedagogical work of shaping discourses, practices and power relations in the classroom. Here I am also conceptualising the classroom as not only a 'mini-institution', but also as a 'mini-community' in which (over the course of the semester), practices, relationships, discourses and subjectivities evolve.

In applying such notions as 'power-knowledge-desire' and 'regimes of learning' in my analysis of the transcript, I am focussing on how these teachers use their institutional/pedagogical power in productive, creative and ethical ways to shape the evolving classroom community and to

effect learning. An analysis based on Foucauldian micropower is only partially relevant to an analysis of pedagogy as it is practised in ALBE classrooms in Melbourne today. To foreground the pedagogical techniques of disciplinary micropower tends to construct teachers primarily as agents of subjectification and to neglect such elements as desire, creativity and human solidarity in pedagogical interactions.

The techniques of micropower are used productively in teaching, but they are nevertheless techniques for disciplining, regulating and normalising: how a teacher practises *on* a classroom group, how she develops discourses and creates and enforces the institutional 'truths' of that classroom group. However, there are alternative ways of thinking about how power works in classrooms. Gore's analysis of disciplinary and normalising pedagogical techniques (and the students' resistances which use the same set of techniques) tells part, but not all of, a rich and complex story of how teachers act as powerful (knowing and desiring) agents in the classroom[10].

The stories of Anita, Colette and the other teachers are about the 'powerful' practice of teachers interacting agentically and self-reflexively with adult students in ALBE classrooms. Some of Gore's techniques are apparent in their accounts of critical incidents in classrooms. However, a more broad notion of power is appropriate to my purposes in this chapter, which is to explore how teachers are engaging as agentic subjects of their own practice in a field of pedagogical discourse, as well as in a field of power relations.

'Institutional power' and 'embodied power'

The application of feminist poststructuralism to theorising about pedagogy has led to the development of new ideas and debates about 'bodies' and 'embodiment' (Grosz 1994; Threadgold 1994; Cranny-Francis 1995). These ideas have led to a focus on the materiality of bodies in teaching and learning (McWilliam 1995; Green and Reid 1995c; Prain 1997).

Foucault, as we have seen, uses a broader notion of power than that of regulation, normalisation and governmentality in his later work. In *The*

10. Gore does not claim that hers is a comprehensive analysis of how power works in classrooms. She foreshadows the possibility of exploring other dimensions of power such as 'transgressions' and 'pleasures' in her data (1995: 109).

History of Sexuality, Volume 2, the body is seen not only as the site of subjectification and inscription; sexuality is the site of resistance, pleasure, care and "the incitement to discourse" (Foucault 1985: 105). In the 'Foucauldian classroom', the teaching body can be seen as a locus of contradictory powers. It is at once the vehicle of institutionally-endowed micropower, the power to regulate, to control, to normalise and to create truths; and it is the context for communication, pleasure and creativity. We can conceive of 'the teaching body' as integrating and balancing these two kinds of power.

In this transcript, the teachers speak in a way which reveals their deployment of both of these kinds of power in the practice of 'powerful' pedagogy. Anita's incident, for example, is about the 'incitement to discourse'; working on/with the student subjectivities, inspiring students with the possibility of their taking up more powerful subject positions as citizens and as potential workers. At the same time, she is planning how she can train them more effectively in vocational skills. Colette's story is about how she worked to diffuse an atmosphere of fear and anxiety, using her body to model and express calm and relaxation. In McWilliam's terms, she was 'seducing' them to let go of anxiety so as to be able to learn. At the same time, she was no doubt also applying techniques of 'totalisation' ("the specification of collectivities, giving collective character") and 'normalisation' ("invoking, requiring, setting or conforming to a standard - defining the normal") as described by Gore (1995, p.103).

What this text also reflects, however, is that the teachers are developing their 'regimes of learning' by deploying 'embodied' or 'seductive' power.

In the Herrington context, the teachers are agents of institutional power, as well as of the power of class, educational status and Australian-ness. However, they are deploying these powers simultaneously with, and through, their 'embodied' power. When Anita is exhorting and encouraging her students to think about themselves differently, and to have more positive self images, she too could be said to be using the technique of 'normalisation' or 'totalisation. However, it is clear from her account that the power she was projecting could also be described in terms of her persuasive ('seductive') skills, the way she used her body and her personality and the psychic momentum created by the fact that she cared deeply and wanted to do the right thing by the students.

Shaping 'regimes of learning' in the ALBE classroom

Anita's story provides a tiny glimpse of how she is steering her 'regime of learning' and developing the mini-community of the classroom. As an experienced teacher, she has integrated her 'institutional' and 'embodied' pedagogical powers (her pedagogical 'selves'). This has enabled her to develop a classroom 'regime' which can be understood in terms of relationship, negotiation and an 'ethic of care' as well as 'regulation' and the techniques of discipline and normalisation.

Colette's story similarly is about a regime of learning characterised by relationship and negotiation, in which the pace of progress is dictated by the students' feelings and perceptions. Colette's 'ethic of care' is an implicit understanding that no one is to be left behind. She has modelled in her body language and actions an understanding that the whole group must stick with the struggles of those who find the most difficulty in learning.

In these stories we see the teachers negotiating power in different ways. Anita's and Colette's stories are about being in constant (verbal and non-verbal) dialogue with the students in their teaching, tuning into the students' projects and feeling states, and taking their cues from them. Their institutional and embodied power is put to the service of listening, responding to and facilitating the students' issues and their voices. In Simon's terms, to 'empower' is,

> to enable those who have been silenced to speak. It is to enable the self-affirming expression of experiences mediated by one's history, language and traditions. It is to enable those who have been marginalised economically and culturally to claim in both respects a status as full participating members of a community (Simon 1987: 347).

'Empowerment' by this account is about creating a context for students' voices, issues and stories to be expressed. However, the grammatical semiosis of the word 'empowerment' (an abstract noun) in itself tends to suggest a 'grand narrative' or totalising story about teaching. The verb 'to empower' also somehow connotes an 'action' of 'giving' power. My preference is to restrict myself to the more deconstructive adjectival form: the teachers here are teaching in 'empowering' ways. This formulation implicitly constructs 'teaching' as the central activity of which 'learning' is the main and appropriate outcome. 'Empowering' ways of teaching may

include an orientation to listening, supporting, making space for and responding to the tudents' issues and stories in the course of carrying out the 'everyday' practices of instruction.

Such a notion allows for the use of disciplinary power as a necessary part of complex pedagogical practice, as we saw, for example in Terese's reflection about the necessity to sometimes over-ride the students' resistances to learning and insist on her own teaching agenda. With this group of teachers, it seems as if such 'regulative' and 'normalising' micropractices are carried out in a local context of democratic relations in student-centred pedagogies.

In small institutions, the need for structure, control and regulation is obviously less than in large institutions. Anita's and Colette's classrooms are 'mini-communities' as well as being 'mini-institutions': that is, institutional structure is kept to the minimum required for effective teaching and learning to take place while social processes of relationship- and community-building unfold. As relationships and shared values and meanings develop, the 'institutional' structure can be relaxed, the life of the group takes over and a 'mini-community' develops progressively in the micro-context of the classroom.

This transcript (which is of a discussion recorded in mid-semester) gives an insight into class groups which have been developing for some months as 'mini-communities'. The students' agendas bubble up, are listened to and negotiated by the teachers who work to stimulate, nurture and seduce *and* to regulate, individualise, normalise and so forth.

The evolving 'mini-communities' which Anita, Colette and Vera are building are structured by relations of power. By actively steering and creating democratic and supportive 'regimes of learning' they are creating *and modelling* a different kind of regime of power than the coercive, managerialist regime which they are inhabiting as staff members within the macro-context of the College itself.

7. Complex, situated and eclectic practice

The work of teachers has frequently been described as complex, eclectic and multi-dimensional (Connell 1985; Schulman 1990; Reid 1995; Comber

1996; Hatton 1991; Levine 1992; Sanguinetti 1993; Green and Reid 1995c; Preston 1996; Green 1998).

Levine explains the eclecticism of teaching thus:

> "Teaching is an eclectic undertaking, and complexly so, its character frequently arising from putting together often very disparate, even unlikely, concerns related to theory, knowledge, understanding and experience" (p.200).

Hatton's notion of teachers as 'bricoleurs' (who craft their teaching in an *ad hoe* way out of the limited repertoires and means available to them) is another way of conceiving of the eclecticism of teachers' work (Hatton 1991).

The theoretical and methodological eclecticism evident amongst these (experienced) teachers is a reflection of pedagogical skills developed over years of practice. They have access to extensive repertoires which they combine eclectically and constantly develop as they teach, in the manner described by Lee Schulman. Schulman uses notions of repertoire, flexibility and eclecticism to describe the working of 'excellent pedagogy':

> The pedagogical mind sweeps effortlessly across the range of methodological options, never chained to a single approach (Schulman 1990: 20).

The significance of the eclecticism he writes of is that it is a part of praxis: the continual development of personal/professional knowledges as repertoires, insights, skills, sensitivities and the ability to listen, to respond and to teach appropriately. It can also be understood in terms of Van Manen's formulation of

> pedagogical tact and thoughtfulness... the improvisational pedagogical-didactical skill of instantly knowing, from moment to moment, how to deal with students in interactive teaching-learning situations (1995: 41).

Green and Reid use the notion of 'practical-theory' which also carries a sense of 'praxis':

> the transaction and negotiation between theory and practice, text and action, curriculum document and classroom, idea and instantiation... the practical-theory of the performance of pedagogy (Green and Reid 1995c: 12).

The teachers who feature in this text can be seen to embody in their teaching an eclectic combination of pedagogical discourses, methods and skills, combined with strong moral and ethical investments, developed in processes of praxis. In Van Manen's terms, their teaching can be seen as the enactment of 'active, noncognitive knowledge', developed as praxis, in on-going cycles of action and reflection. In Schon's terms, it can be theorised as tacit "knowing-in-action" (Schon 1983: 54).

Zoe, for example, is working on her own teaching and is trying to "get away from teacher-focussed to student-centred and group work". She was teaching about the Australian government, the electoral system and party politics. The students had been to the electoral office, had watched a video and had "done the groundwork". She decided that a good way of revising what they had learned would be for them to produce some posters. She mapped out some models of what the posters might look like, prepared the materials, and organised the students into three groups. However, the students "didn't feel happy" in the groups she had directed them into and wanted to sit together according to friendship and language groupings. However, Zoe "insisted and instructed" the group, over-ruling the resistance from one particular student. She explained to them why she wanted them to cooperate with others in the group whom they did not normally work with and why it was important to do the activity in English. The result was a successful activity in which the students produced three attractive 'how to vote' posters, recycled the new language and ideas and seemed to enjoy themselves. In relating this incident, Zoe reflected on the fact that in order to develop group work she needed to openly address issues of group dynamics with the students, so they would "understand more about the different roles we play within groups", thereby learning explicit skills of collaboration.

Zoe's lesson shows many elements of complex, situated and eclectic practice. She employed a diversity of methods in teaching about the Australian government: going on an excursion, participation in a 'mock election', watching a video, instructing students with the factual "groundwork". The small group poster-making activity fulfilled the multiple aims of content revision, group formation and English language practice. When students initially resisted, she used her 'institutional' power to insist that they comply. However, she explained the educational purpose behind her direction, thus preserving a sense of (educational) community. Her subsequent reflection (about the need to further discuss

group dynamics with the class) indicated that she saw the value of further involving the students to think theoretically about how learning takes place within groups.

Zoe's 'complex, situated and eclectic practice' can be further demonstrated by examining her account of that class against Bickmore-Brand's 'Seven principles of literacy and learning'[11]. Six of the seven principles are evident in her story: she was creating a real life *context* through taking them on an excursion and involving them in a mock election; she was stimulating *interest* by introducing a variety of activities and possible learning styles; she was providing opportunities for the students to *model* what they were learning; she was using the simple framework of information on a poster as *scaffolding* to more complex ideas; she was creating opportunities for *metacognition* by the students by discussing group dynamics with them; and she was implicitly contributing to the developing *community* of the classroom through her group work and her explicit direction to students to try to build relationships with new people in the group.

8. Ethical practice

In *The Struggle for Pedagogies* Gore (1993) notes that "critical and feminist pedagogy discourses have tended to neglect the ethical" and that "methodologies such as those oriented at ideology-critique tend to overlook the relations to one's self that emerge from particular practices

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11. **The Seven Principles of Literacy and Leaming**

CONTEXT:	- creating a meaningful and relevant context for the transmission of knowledge, skills and values.
INTEREST:	- realising the starting point for learning must be from the knowledge, skills and/or values base of the learner.
MODELLING:	- providing opportunities to see the knowledge, skills and/or values in operation by a 'significant' person.
SCAFFOLDING:	- challenging learners to go beyond their current thinking, continually increasing their capacities.
META-COGNITION:	- making explicit the learning processes which are occurring in the learning environment.
RESPONSIBILITY:	- developing in learners the capacity to accept increasingly more responsibility for their learning.
COMMUNITY:	- creating a supportive learning environment where learners feel free to take risks and be part of a shared context (Bickmore-Brand 1993).

and discourses" (p.154). I have found that amongst this group of teachers, neither critical nor feminist discourses figure explicitly in the way they describe their work. Rather, there are traces of critical and feminist pedagogical discourse which seem to be subsumed into a hybridising 'progressivist /professional teacher' discourse. At the same time, the teachers' pedagogical practice is shown to be deeply ethical. This is not inconsistent with Gore's critique that radical pedagogical discourses fail to address the ethical. What this text seems to show is that the Herrington teachers who *do not* consciously ascribe to or attempt to practise those pedagogies *do* teach with an eye to the ethical and reflect on their work from committed ethical viewpoints.

The Herrington teachers' ethical practice can be seen in four different ways. Firstly, their critical and selective implementation of the CGEA has an ethical basis. Terese says, for example, that she "sifts" and "translates" it while "adhering" to her philosophy. This is that the student must be paramount and that bureaucratic requirements must not take precedence over what is best for particular students.

Secondly, the discussion reveals that as teachers, they regard themselves, as having to uphold a "sense of social responsibility" which contradicts the (performative)way things are now expected to be done. They speak of empathy, compassion, and about making a contribution to students' lives and to society through their work. Terese puts it nicely when she says that this alternative set of values is "a bit of baggage that you don't always have to wear on your sleeve".

Thirdly, their self-critical reflections on who they are as teachers, and on what their predispositions (or weaknesses) are, show that their processes of self-directed personal/professional development is also a process of ethical development. The discussion was a collective reflection, prompted by the research context and critical incident task. However, the openness with which the teachers shared their particular predispositions indicates that such sharing is part of the informal, on-going culture of that group.

Fourthly, we saw Anita's self-reflexivity in relation to her own personal power. Having had a strong emotional effect on the students, moving some to the point of tears, she hesitated, down-played the 'inspirational' role and took up a more humble 'professional teacher' subject position. Anita's self-reflexivity can be understood here as an instance of moral

self- subjectivation which Foucault writes about. Foucault's writes that ethics and morality can be understood historically, as,

> ... a history of the way in which individuals are urged to constitute themselves as subjects of moral conduct would be concerned with the models proposed for setting up and developing relationships with the self, for self-reflection, self-knowledge, self-examination, for the decipherment of the self by oneself, for the transformations one seeks to accomplish with oneself as object (Foucault 1985: 29).

Gore (1993: 127-132) points out that Foucault's notion of ethics is significant in that it is about people having a choice as to whether they will act in one way or another. The Herrington teachers illustrate her point well as they exercise their agency in working on who they are as teachers and consciously steering their own personal/professional development as part of a shared project of pedagogical 'good practice'.

9. Conclusion

In this Chapter, I have explored how one group of teachers is engaging pedagogically: moving between and drawing on a range of pedagogical discourses and modes of subjectivity; steering the development of democratic and supportive 'regimes of learning' in their classrooms; constantly developing their repertoires of complex, eclectic, teaching practices; and being openly reflexive about the ethical dimensions of their teaching.

In the context of the classroom, the teachers enjoy a relatively high level of personal and professional autonomy, in contrast to the disempowerment they experience in the wider institutional setting. We have seen how, in the classroom, they have scope to put aside the requirements of policy and management and to engage as powerful subjects of their own pedagogic discourse and practice. The text gives us a glimpse of teachers (who have been constituted and inscribed by the received discourses) engaging agentically with the 'new' discourse of performativity, and continuing to deploy 'institutional' and 'embodied' power in educationally productive and situationally appropriate ways. In steering democratic and supportive 'regimes of learning' they are, in the microcosm of the classroom, creating 'mini-communities' whose relationships and shared understandings are in stark contrast to those

which characterise administrative relationships within the College at large.

Such pedagogical engagement is the basis of complex, eclectic and ethical 'good practice' in ALBE; it also constitutes an important site of resistance to the pervasive effects of performativity.

Part IV

Chapter 11

But it is not enough to stand on the opposite river bank, shouting questions, challenging patriarchal, white conventions. A counterstance locks one into a duel of oppressor and oppressed; locked into mortal combat, like the cop and the criminal, both are reduced to a common denominator of violence. The counterstance refutes the dominant culture's views and beliefs, and, for this, it is proudly defiant. All reaction is limited by, and dependent on, what it is reacting against. Because the counterstance stems from a problem with authority - outer as well as inner - it's a step towards liberation from cultural domination. But it is not a way of life. At some point, on our way to a new consciousness, we will have to leave the opposite bank, the split between the two mortal combatants somehow sealed so that we are on both shores at once and, at once, see through serpent and eagle eyes. Or perhaps we will decide to disengage from the dominant culture, write it off altogether as a lost cause, and cross the border into a wholly new and separate territory. Or we might go another route. The possibilities are numerous once we decide to act and not react.

Gloria Anzaldua, *Borderlands La Frontera: The New Mestiza.* 1987, San Francisco, aunt lute books, p.78.

Chapter Eleven

Discursive Engagement, Reflexivity, and Making a Difference

1. Introduction

I framed my study around the notion of 'discursive engagement', a term which I use in two different senses. In the first sense, teachers are *engaging with* discourses as agentic subjects of their own practice. In the second sense, they are *engaged by* an (already structured) field of discourse. The sense of being *engaged by* focuses attention on context, habitus, discursive constitution and discursive inscription. I have used 'discursive engagement' in both of these ways, in order to tread an ambiguous and deconstructive path between the teachers 'speaking' and 'being spoken by' discourse.

Many of the teachers in this study are resisting or attempting to resist the local manifestations of managerialism and the requirements of performativity. My use of 'discursive engagement' includes the notion of resistance but avoids the binary which the term 'discursive resistance' implicitly constructs, of 'good' subjects versus 'bad' institutions and regulating discourses. However, while I have tried to avoid being trapped in binary constructions of 'good and bad', 'power and resistance', 'structure and agency', I have attempted to be open about the ways in which my own desire to resist and to participate in struggles for change (my *own* normative sense of good and bad) have influenced the ways in which I have interpreted and represented their engagement.

In this final chapter I draw together the various strands of my thesis and reflect on the findings more broadly. In particular, I review the implications of poststructuralism for action research; the poststructural method of discourse 'mapping' which I have used; my findings about how ALBE teachers are engaging with and resisting performative discourse; and my findings about how teachers are engaging discursively in their pedagogical practice. Finally, I reflect on the strategic potential of resistance 'in discourse'; the significance of reflexivity in political practice; and on the possibilities and limits of the politics of discourse as a form of political struggle[1].

2. Understanding PAR in poststructuralist terms

The CGEA PAR project was at once an orthodox, institutionally-funded, action research evaluation of a curriculum innovation *and* a discursive intervention on behalf of teachers who considered themselves to be marginalised from the decision-making which produced the CGEA in the first place. The teacher-participants had a key role in constructing the research design and in formulating the key questions around which the evaluation was based. The focus of their critique went beyond the CGEA, challenging competency-based training from the point of view of 'good practice' and protesting the erosion of teachers' professional autonomy associated with it. The report pointed to the fragmenting effects of 'competency' and the contradiction between sessionalisation of teachers in the 'competitive training market' and the stringent and complex requirements of the Certificate. The project (on one interpretation) had the effect of de-legitimating the discourse of performativity and opposing it with an educational discourse of 'good practice'. On another interpretation, it had the effect of domesticating or appropriating resistances to its discursive underpinnings.

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[1] My research was based amongst women teachers in the context of struggles with and against performativity. Undoubtedly the speed of change in ALBE is related to the fact that the field is highly gendered. The focus of this thesis, however, has not been on the specific struggles of teachers as women, nor on the contribution of feminist theory to those struggles. Rather, it is on teachers of ALBE and how they are engaging discursively. Feminist theory has not been applied specifically to issues of gender in this context.

I used PAR in order to explore how teachers are engaging discursively in work environments increasingly characterised by the discourses and requirements of perforrnativity; and to explore how they (we) could be more effective and strategic in every day professional practice. However, I was aware that PAR traditions are embedded in modernist episternologies and I was keen to explore the implications of a poststructuralist approach to PAR.

I have found that a combination of poststructuralisrn and PAR is both possible and productive. Poststructuralisrn gives a language for a more sophisticated theorising of inconclusive or otherwise problematic outcomes of action research. Conversely, action research gives an appropriately 'loose' structure for open-ended, praxis-oriented processes of enquiry to be carried out.

In both projects, PAR was a means of producing knowledge from the experience of teachers at the work face. In so far as the thirty teachers involved were representative of the field as a whole, it could also be said that the knowledge produced came from their collective 'standpoint' (Harding 1993: 56-57). Both projects involved groups of teachers collaboratively corning to terms with their institutional teaching situations and constructing shared meanings in that context. Both have produced knowledge which is structured around the experiences and agency of teachers; knowledge which can feed into critical and self-reflexive learning about their/ our discursive practices and discursive constitution in the current context.

Both were therefore examples of 'research as praxis', that is, research in which data and theory develop out of processes of reflection and dialogue about the teachers' own situated practice and their struggles (Lather 1991c: 72). In effect, they illustrate the possibility of bridging between modernist, critical action research, and research which is grounded in feminist, critical praxis and informed by insights of poststructuralisrn (Stanley and Wise 1983; Lather 1991b; Lather 1991c; Yates 1993; Weiner 1994; Fine 1995).

Theorising contradictions and unknowables

Poststructuralisrn provides a language for speaking about multiple and over-lapping interpretations, the framing of contradiction and lack of closure. The notion of discourse foregrounds the instability and ambiguity of possible interpretations, the multi-layering of knowledges

and the discursive constitution of interest groups and stake-holders. This orientation is a valuable addition to the discourse of PAR in that it is a way of handling contradictions which may otherwise not be worked through because they are 'too hard'.

The CGEA project produced a strong critique of the impact of competency-based assessment in ALBE which was published and fed into the curriculum development process. It facilitated dialogue between teachers and the curriculum authorities and contributed to the production of a new 'compromise' version. However, the extent to which teachers' participation in the project either strengthened their position, or undermined it, by accommodating their concerns into the mainstream performative agenda, is a matter of judgement.

The report on one level had a delegitimating effect. On another level, could be seen to diffuse the teachers' resistances and to channel their insights into the production of a revised (but still competency-based) version. It is difficult therefore to make a simple summative judgement about the complex and contradictory effects of the CGEA project.

'Insider' and 'outsider' research

Poststructuralism also provides a 'way in' to theorising the contradictions and tensions which have arisen in the attempt to be both an 'action researcher' and an 'academic researcher'. The feminist notion of the discursively constituted and fragmented subject 'in process' in contrast to the modernist notion of the unitary, rational self has been useful in thinking through the contradictions in my own positioning.

My strategic purpose (as action researcher) was at times contradicted by my academic purpose (to present a sophisticated, critical analysis of the findings). I have dealt with this duality of purpose by crossing back and forth from my position as an *insider,* a teacher who shared the problems and experiences of the other participants in the new policy environment, to my other position as an *outsider,* an academic researcher whose role was to put *their* discourse under the microscope and to interpret and to theorise the politics of their engagement. As *insider* action researcher, I have tended to highlight and to celebrate the teachers' skills, commitments and resistances. As *outsider,* I have sometimes taken a more critical view of the 'progressivist professional teacher' positioning.

As *insider* I have interpreted their/our discursive engagement in terms of the possibilities for discursive transformation and creativity.

My moving between the notions of 'resistance' and 'engagement' is another way through which I have attempted to inhabit both 'insider' and 'outsider' positions, reflecting my strategic and my academic purposes respectively. My continuous iteration between these positions is part of the 'within/against' purpose of the thesis, which, according to Lather, means "recognition of the non-innocence of any practice of knowledge production... doing it and troubling it simultaneously" (Lather 1997: 26).

Iterating between insider and outsider positions has also been part of "being reflexive about being reflexive" (Schratz and Walker 1995: 11); using each of the positions to interrogate the other and working on the tensions thus produced to think critically and reflexively about what it means to do research. In Fine's terms, I have been "working the Self-Other hyphens" by examining what is happening in the interstices of the relationships of the research: to be aware of "whose story is being told, why, to whom, with what interpretation, and whose story is being shadowed, why, for whom, and with what consequence" (Fine 1994: 72).

Action 'in discourse'

The notion of the discursively-constituted subject shifts the focus from 'action' to 'reflection' and gives a deeper meaning to critical praxis. A poststructuralist version of critical praxis includes reflection not only about the social context of problems but also about the dilemmas of our own discursive positioning in understanding that context and in the way we conduct the research.

In my use of PAR in this research, the 'action' at the centre of my study is action 'in discourse': reflecting on, challenging and acting in ways which engage with the values, meanings and power dimensions of performative discourse.

3. Mapping the dynamics of discursive engagement

I developed a method for mapping the discourses constructing the teachers' texts and the field of ALBE at large. This method is different

from critical discourse analysis as discussed in Chapter 4. It is informed by Foucault's characterisation of the formation and transformation of 'clusters' of discourses and their correlation or relationship with other types of discourse and his (genealogical) insights about the historical relationship between language, practice, power and subjectivity.

The method is a way of exploring the textual self-representations of teachers and linking these to ALBE's historical context and current issues of policy. It connects with the historical evolution of discourses and their political significance and is a way of analysing the different subject positions which these discourses make available and the power effects of each.

The method of discourse mapping basically involves working systematically through a process which is implicit in the intuitive interpretations and descriptions which we make when we try to understand where somebody 'is coming from'. In this case, it was a process of iteration between three points of reference: the texts produced by the research, my historical and political analysis and my own strategic purposes. From this process of iteration, it was possible to identify and name echoes or reflections within the texts of the relevant historical, theoretical and political practices, power relations and world view associated with particular institutional settings at particular times. What counted as discourse with respect to each particular correspondence was then determined by the application of a simple set of criteria: 'discourses' are defined and named when sets of statements are identified which recur in identifiable patterns across the texts, can be associated with particular institutional sets of practices and reflect a particular world view and set of power relations. A web chart of the 'named' discourses was then sketched and the detail of the web chart collapsed into a few main 'orders of discourse', and their sub discourses. Finally, the texts were marked up to show where the traces of these discourses were apparent. The web chart could then be used to represent graphically the oppositions, articulations, disarticulations and hybridities which appeared to be evolving.

The process of discourse mapping then, has enabled me to draw boundaries around and to 'name' clusters of statements (however unstable these might be) in order to say what is or is not a discourse for the purposes of this research, and to examine the relationships between those discourses within the texts. Such 'discourses' are of course my own

constructions, made in relation to the texts at hand, the historical and theoretical context, and the purposes of the research.

I have applied this method of discourse mapping to the 'CGEA' texts, to the 'managerialism' text of the Herrington teachers and to the text of the Herrington teachers' discussion about critical incidents in pedagogy. The method has helped me to make a complex description of how teachers were engaging discursively with respect to the requirements of the CGEA, the managerialist culture in one TAFE college, and the challenges of classroom teaching.

Discourse mapping is thus a useful tool for locating the way people speak in the bigger picture, giving insights into how institutional and political changes are played out in the world of practice and the extent to which people are able to engage agentically to shape and modify the direction of change.

4. Engaging with performativity

Complex dynamics and contradictory interpretations

The discursive struggles evident in the texts provide a window on the 'politics of discourse' in ALBE. The teachers are struggling to defend and to extend their understandings of 'good practice', which are part of their teaching habitus, their culturally acquired and embodied predispositions as teachers.

The discourse of the progressivist /professional teacher (a hybridising discourse of 'good practice') operates as a discourse of resistance against the performative discourse. Paradoxically, the progressivist /professional teacher discourse also appears to be strengthened by the articulation of elements of the performative discourse into it. For example, the teachers are integrating into their educational repertoires the notion of a structured, multi-generic curriculum, procedures for moderation and acceptance of requirements for greater accountability to students and to institutions. At times, a more sophisticated practice seems to be developing. At other times, the effect appears to be the erosion of progressivist /professional discourses by performative discourse, and a

narrowing of practice. In adapting their practices, some teachers appear to becoming progressively constituted by the performative discourse and are reproducing it, albeit in a form which is 'weakened' or modified. Others are resisting the discursive and material aspects of performativity and strongly positioning themselves within progressivist/ professional teacher discourse.

In comparing the various texts and case studies discussed in this thesis, a picture emerges of how these contradictory tendencies (resistance and accommodation) are working themselves out. The texts show the different ways in which the teachers are moving (individually and collectively) between these two tendencies, both resisting and accommodating the language of performativity (and its world view).

It seems that in the classrooms and staffroom of the teachers studied in this thesis, and in the community of practice at large, new and sophisticated pedagogies of ALBE are evolving. However, it is not possible to predict how the tension between the _contradictory discursive tendencies will resolve itself in the field at large. It is often said in the field that whereas the older teachers who are the 'culture carriers' of pedagogical traditions in ALBE are resisting and transforming the policy-led changes, new teachers (most of whom are younger, are sessional and lack an institutional base through which the culture can be 'learned') are more vulnerable and are conforming more readily. On the other hand, the historical discourses of ALBE are inscribed by wider social forces, and shown in Chapter 2, continually re-appear in new interdiscursive and hybrid forms.

Micropractices of discursive resistance

The six micropractices of resistance *(rational critique, objectification, subversion, refusal, humour* and *the affirmation of desire)* which I have delineated, provide a different window on the complex discursive struggles in which the teachers are participating. These micropractices have been identified with the conflict between the discourses of new policies and the discourses which have constituted their teaching 'habitus' up until the introduction of the new. My delineation of these micropractices helps to make visible ways in which teachers are engaging, resisting, making choices about how they practise and how (in their interviews and reflective writing) they make meaning of their practice.

The micropractices of resistance are the ways in which teachers respond (both intuitively and deliberately) to the subjectifying and inscribing effects of managerialism, marketisation and performativity.

The teachers' agency can be seen in the choices which they make on the micro level of their everyday practice. The professional choices they make in the midst of challenge are revealed in this research as having an ethical basis. Many teachers are willing to transgress the bureaucratic boundaries of their institutional roles and to engage with the hegemonic discourses by speaking differently about them; by critiquing them; objectifying them, subverting them, transgressing them, laughing at them or by affirming their embodied teaching selves and their desires.

By mapping the discourses in the texts and delineating micropractices it has been possible to build a two-dimensional picture of the teachers' discursive engagement: that is, their engagement in discourse as linguistic (textual) practice and as material practice.

5. Pedagogical engagement and the teaching body

Conundrums of 'progressivist /professional teacher' discourse

The discussions and vignettes of teaching at Herrington College of TAFE" provide a picture of discursive engagement in policy, management and classroom pedagogy which was similar in many respects to that provided by the CGEA teachers.

The Herrington teachers appeared to situate themselves within (and further reproduce) an evolving 'progressivist professional teacher' discourse. Progressivist discourse appeared to subsume discursive elements such as 'welfare', 'rights', 'multiculture', 'critical pedagogy' and 'feminist' discourse. It was evolving interdiscursively with elements of 'professional teacher' discourse: the cluster of discourses of institutional educational practice which teachers have brought with them from their institutional training and experience.

Whereas the group of teachers involved in the CGEA evaluation appeared to be adapting to, and accommodating, the performative discourse into their understandings of 'good practice', the Herrington

teachers (who were speaking in a very different context) seemed unequivocal in their opposition to all of its manifestations. Articulations between progressivist /professional teacher discourse and performative discourse were not so apparent in the texts of the Herrington teachers. Their denunciations could be interpreted as 'intransigence', or a determination to cling to a (nostalgically remembered and privileged) past. Alternatively, their opposition could be seen as a strong ethical stance: as discursive resistance by 'good' subjects against the 'bad' coercive and educationally debasing effects of performativity and marketisation. The adaptations and hybridisations of the teachers in the CGEA project could be seen as weakness and compliance, or alternatively could be seen as forms of discursive struggle leading to more complex pedagogical practice.

Balancing different kinds of power

I applied the notion of 'discursive engagement' to a more general analysis of how the teachers at Herrington College were engaging in their pedagogical practices.

Their narratives and discussions reflected 'feminine' ways of teaching, similar to the multi-layered ('feminist') pedagogy described by Weiler (1988). The stories resonated with Grumet's observation about women teachers bringing 'the rich sphere of the domestic' to their teaching and mediating 'private' and 'public' oppositions as they teach (p. xv). While working to nurture classroom relationships and individual learning processes, these teachers did not shirk the exercise of appropriate authority or institutional power. At times when they asserted their institutional power against the expressed desires of students, they explained the educational reasons for their insistence, thus preserving their pedagogical authority along with a sense of trust. The ethic of care implicit in their practice was directed towards giving space for, and listening to, the students' voices; enabling them to move beyond various anxieties; celebrating their achievements; taking them seriously as people with lives beyond the classroom. By teaching in these ways they developed their classroom groups as supportive, democratic 'mini-communities'. Their holistic, 'empowering' practice was based on the social quality of the classroom environment, the care-full inclusion of all members of the groups in activities, and the teaching, in that context, of useful knowledge and skills.

The teachers were balancing and combining their 'institutional power' and 'embodied power' in different ways. Their assertion of power in the classroom, their projection of particular 'techniques of government' in Gore's (1995) terms, constituted only one aspect of their 'complex situated practice' (Preston 1996). They also employed the 'seductive' powers (McWilliam 1995) of persuasion, exhortation, empathy and care. They integrated and embodied in their teaching habituses the powers of their pedagogical role and institutional authority with the (feminine) powers of nurturance, pleasure and creativity.

Ethical, self-reflexive practice

A strong ethical project was evident in the texts produced by both of the groups of teachers who participated in this study.

The critique of the CGEA and the managerial institutional environment was based in a commitment to students and their rights and needs as a paramount concern. Attention to students' needs was the basis for the many instances of resistance to and refusal of the requirements of the CGEA and their critique of its educational impact. This commitment translated into what one teacher called a "sense of social responsibility" which she brought with her to her teaching.

The Herrington teachers openly reflected on their subjective, personal/professional constitutions as teachers and shared with each other reflections about their tendencies and potential strengths and weaknesses. Anita shared a critical classroom incident in which she had a moment of reflexive self-awareness about the effects of her own charisma and modified her behaviour to take on a more humble, 'professional teacher' persona. This level of collective reflexivity is suggestive of Foucault's representation of ethics as "care of the self" (Foucault, 1985: 239-240).

The Herrington teachers appear to live Foucault's injunction by consciously working on who they are as teachers and steering their own personal / professional development as part of a shared project of pedagogical 'good practice'. Their ethical practice is the basis of complex,

eclectic, pedagogical engagement in ALBE. It can also be seen as the basis of their resistances to the discourses and requirements of performativity2.

6. Possibilities nd limits of the politics of discourse

Discursive engagement and discursive resistance

I set out in this thesis to explore the ways in which teachers in two particular settings were engaging discursively. 'Discursive engagement' is a term for how we live, struggle and engage 'in discourse'. The 'politics of discourse' can be thought of as the application of normative values and intentionality to the processes of discursive engagement.

I have found that in engaging the discourses of policy and pedagogy in ALBE, the teachers are both 'resisting' and 'complying' in different ways. In so far as I have interpreted 'resistances' and 'compliances', these interpretations cannot be seen apart from my own positioning and my own political project.

Discursive resistance as 'art of the weak'

I have read the texts of the Herrington teachers as reflecting the discursive life of a thriving and resistant sub-culture within a bureaucratic institution. The sub-culture of the Herrington teachers is characteristically feminine. The teachers work in many ways as a collective, sharing common values and educational purposes, teaching with care and with passion, within and against the dictates of performativity. Typically, they have formed close friendships in the course of their work and in the intensity of their struggles. While they do not all profess to be committed feminists, they participate in a culture (or sub-culture) which is feminist in the sense that it is deeply opposed to patriarchal management styles and structures and valorises people's needs and their lives beyond the classroom:

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2 In writing about the practices of Herrington teachers, I am in some senses also writing about myself. It would be fair to say that my somewhat celebratory depiction of ethical commitment and of holistic, affective and empowering pedagogies at Herrington comes from the *insider* voice in this thesis.

The Herrington teachers are resisting in their discursive micropractices rather than in organised action. Such resistances are at times intuitive and at times more deliberate. Their capacity for adaptation and survival (at a time when the traditional institutional and non-institutional spaces for participation in decision-making have been severely curtailed) is revealed. What are the political effects of participation in discursive resistance on this level? How effective, or strategic are the kinds of micropractices of discursive resistance practised by the teachers in this study?

Seen in the light of De Certeau's (1984) distinction between 'tactics' and 'strategy' (discussed in Chapter 9) such discursive resistances are embedded within 'indigenous' cultures of institutional resistance, as

> the clandestine forms taken by the dispersed, tactical and makeshift creativity of groups or individuals already caught in the nets of discipline... which compose a network of anti-discipline... (De Certeau 1984: xv).

It is as if, in De Certeau's terms "a polytheism of scattered practices" survives beneath and alongside the coercive system of managerialism and the disciplinary effects of performativity (1984: 48). De Certeau would probably say that the micropractices of resistance are more 'tactical' than 'strategic'. These resistances would be seen by De Certeau in the same light as the resistances of indigenous Indians at the time of their colonisation by the Spanish:

> ... even when they were subjected, indeed, even when they accepted their subjection, the Indians often used the laws, practices and representations that were imposed on them by force... they made something else out of them; they subverted them from within - not by rejecting them or by transforming them (though that occurred as well), but by many different ways of using them in the service of rules, customs or convictions foreign to the colonisation which they could not escape. They metaphorised the dominant order: they made it function in another register (p.32).

The teachers at Herrington have their own culture, characterised by an intense solidarity amongst themselves, shared values about the meanings and purposes of their teaching, by small, clandestine resistances, and by jokes and code words with which they label and 'metaphorise' the dominant order. They are able to turn the CGEA to the service of their own student-centred (and implicitly feminine) ways of teaching. So long as they remain teaching, they (and other teachers like them) will probably

survive, and will modify and/or subvert the discourses and practices of performativity.

The transformative and strategic potential of the teachers' discursive practices must be seen in the light of the macro economic context. The impact of policies of marketisation and the coercive power of institutions on teachers' jobs and conditions has resulted in the disappearance of approximately 50% of teaching jobs in ALBE and ESL (in Victoria), and has taken away any possibility of a secure and creatively fulfilling career for most of the remaining teachers.

Just as European colonisers had the power to colonise and subjugate, big educational institutions ('corporations') and their managers are able to suppress and limit the development of resistant, oppositional discourse through the political economy of sovereign power. At Herrington, this happens on a number of levels: through new information technologies and reporting systems; through the demand for increased productivities; through increased control over the allocation of duties in work hours; through a managerial style which discourages and stifles debate; through overt intimidation ultimately backed by the threat of non-renewal; and through the ascendant culture of performativity which discounts innovation and prohibits critique. The opportunities and contexts for the kind of professional and collegial engagement which would produce transformative and resistant discourse are progressively diminished and the imposed orthodoxy leaves little space for it. Those who transgress can be (and are) removed from the institution.

The micrqpractices of discursive resistance can be seen (in De Certeau's terms) as forms of tactical self-defence. Self-defence lies in the survival of teachers' morale, their sense of community and the highly evolved, heterodox discourses of 'good practice' which they produce. However, De Certeau's view is fundamentally pessimistic and apolitical. It does not allow for the possibility of any real change in relations of power between the dominators and those who are dominated.

The hope that might be read from this study (with De Certeau in mind) is that we might learn to become more strategic in our discursive micropractices by developing attitudes of critical praxis and building more reflexivity into our pedagogical and professional habituses. This hope is nourished and supported by the history of the women's movement and by feminist theory.

This thesis shows the potential for shifting the micropractices of discourse politics from the tactical to the strategic, through being more reflexive about, and explicitly theorising, those practices. The hope for future change that *can* be read from De Certeau's notion of networks and cultures of tactical, clandestine, antidisciplinary resistance is a long-term hope, based on notions of human resilience and cultural durability. The teachers' micropractices of resistance are not only transforming and metaphorising the performative laws and practices, they are contesting and delegitimating them, albeit in small, localised ways.

Collective meaning-making and new discourse

What then, are the longer term strategic possibilities of the politics of discourse? Bearing in mind that "discourse... is the thing for which and by which there is struggle, discourse is the power which is to be seized" (Foucault 1984: 110), can the teachers' struggles on the level of discourse be understood as contributing in any way to political change more broadly? Feminist teachings about the 'politics of discourse' would put the teachers' critical and practical engagement with the mundane, day-by-day details of performativity, its meanings and practices, at the heart of broad struggles for political and social transformation.

Poststructuralist theorising suggests a link between the practices of meaning-making within communities and the development of meanings, social understandings, values and social movements in the community more widely. Teachings about the 'social theory of discourse' (which developed out of the same theoretical tradition), also attribute political significance to on-going grass-roots resistances such as those of the ALBE teachers. According to Lemke'ssocial *semiotics,* social meaning-making practices develop at the micro level within communities. At the macro level, the totality of discursive practices function politically to challenge or to sustain relations of power (Lemke 1995: 9). These teachers in their day by day language and in their practice are developing and creating meanings which tend to delegitimate the discourses of performativity, managerialism and marketisation. Through their voices, representations and actions they are asserting an alternative set of values, an alternative lifeworld. Within their sub-culture, they are evolving oppositional discourses which feed into the development of discourse in the broader community. This, according to Lemke, is a process of 'semiotic formation' which he describes as "the regular and repeatable,

recognisably meaningful, culturally and historically specific patterns of co-deployment in a community" (Lemke 1995: 102). Hence, the 'microsocial' semiotic formations of the teachers at Herrington ("utterances, texts, particular acts and events") eventually become part of the 'macrosocial' ("dialects, institutions, classes, ideologies") (ibid). Thus, members of the 'community of discourse' of ALBE teachers in Victoria (and perhaps in Australia and beyond) create microsocial discursive stirrings which feed, by a myriad of social and discursive processes, into the macrosocial.

However, it is not possible to judge, at this point in time, whether the discursive practices of the teachers (and the semiotic or discursive formations emerging in the course of their struggles) represent a phase of development of a new social movement or a phase of retreat. The social theory of discourse (including theories of the politics of discourse) assumes a connection between resistant discourse practice and transformative social change. The tiny glimpse captured in this study, of teachers struggling to survive and resist performativity, does not in itself suggest the stirrings of a new social movement. Perhaps such theories are somewhat Utopian in that they do not take fully into account the might of the political economy of globalisation or the regime of 'terror' which underlies performativity (Yeatman 1994: 113). It seems that collective meaning-making (as an aspect of discourse politics) should be viewed as complementing collective, practical struggle, rather than replacing it. The politics of discourse should complement and perhaps reshape the more traditional politics of mobilisation, and not be thought of as the new 'Answer' to exploitative and coercive power.

Teachers' work, the politics of discourse and struggles for change

I began this thesis with two basic and related purposes: to explore the discursive engagement of teachers at the interface of policy and practice and, by so doing, to produce insights which would support and resource the reflexivity of teachers about how we might practise (professionally, and politically) in the current context.

I have found that the discursive engagement of teachers (on the level of meaning production and on the level of practice) is extraordinarily complex and open to multiple interpretations.

Inevitably (considering my own experience, beliefs and positioning), I have focused on 'resistance' as an aspect of that engagement. I have

found that teachers were resisting by taking up subject positions which resist the colonising momentum of performative discourse and reinscribe (in hybridising ways) the 'good' discourses of the past: the progressivist discourses of benevolence, welfare, rights and rnulticulture and the professional teacher discourses of curriculum, assessment and 'complex situated practice'.

In resisting the various pressures of performativity, the teachers were taking up ethical subject positions of educational and social responsibility and were reflecting critically on their own practices. However, in the overall context of job insecurity and managerial intimidation, the potential of ethically-based micropractices of resistance to contribute to change is clearly limited.

The works of Foucault, Yeatman, Lather, Fairclough, Lemke, and many other authors whom I have cited throughout the thesis have all contributed to a (poststructuralist) metalanguage of reflexive practice. Their works contain images and conceptual framings for theorising the 'heteroglossia' of everyday language and practice with the notion of discourse as political. The metalanguage of discursive engagement and of discourse politics is a language of *reflexivity,* a language for reflecting back on and understanding our own (individual and collective) discursive constitutions and ourselves as objects as well as subjects of the project for change. For teachers 'living the contradictions' at the interface of policy and practice, the metalanguage of discourse illuminates practice and suggests new possibilities for critical and reflexive praxis.

According to Yeatman, reflexivity about our own commitments is the essential ingredient of 'rhetorical praxis', which she equates with 'postmodern democratic political practice' (Yeatman 1994). Yeatman writes that the state can be understood in terms of opposing dynamics of perforrnativity and democratisation. The state's culture of performativity and resultant policies are opposed by democratic contestation through 'rhetorical praxis'. Rhetorical praxis is about democratic contestation based on rhetoric which does not essentialise or universalise its own claims, and which discursively situates the speaking subject (p. 113).

On an individual level, rhetorical praxis is also about reflexivity: the habit of working on and with our own discursive constitution in the midst of struggles, and developing an awareness of the social and historical shaping of our practices. For ALBE teachers such as myself,

who are invoking the traditions and discourses of the past in their rhetoric, this might mean having a reflexive awareness of the norms embedded in our arguments, the origins of those norms and the instabilities and ambiguities of our constructions.

This thesis is offered therefore as a contribution towards developing and strengthening a culture of reflexivity amongst teachers of ALBE and ESL. Such reflexivity might help them (us) to be more strategic and more effective in their (our) discursive practices. More broadly, it might lead to the development of a 'postmodern democratic politics' which will challenge the performative state and the immoral, destructive system of globalised capital which it services.

The agents of financial power use discourse politics to inscribe and defend their interests and purposes with devastating success. How can we develop 'our' discourse politics so as to inscribe and defend a different set of interests and purposes ? How can we develop a more conscious, theorised awareness of our discursive engagement? Will these findings be of use to teachers and others living the contradictions and struggling 'in discourse' in postmodern, economic rationalist times? Those questions, which initially motivated this study, have not been answered.

My thesis has, however, opened a small window onto the discursive practices of a group of teachers who are resisting the coercive as well as the discursive effects of performativity. Clearly, the politics of discourse have a role, as have the politics of mobilisation. How, then, can we integrate the politics of discourse into practical struggles and social movements? Will practising with a deeper understanding that 'the personal is political' make a difference in struggles against the depredations of globalised capital and for a more compassionate, just and sustainable society?

The end

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APPENDIX 1

Adult Literacy Research Network Node for Victoria

Negotiating Competence:

The Impact on Teaching Practice of the Certificate of General Education for Adults (CGEA)

by Jill Sanguinetti

THE NATIONAL
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AND LITERACY
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Jill Sanguinetti, May, 1995

PREFACE

The Adult Literacy Research Network Node for Victoria (ALRNNV) was established in 1993 with funding from the National Languages and Literacy Institute of Australia (NLLIA). The ALRNNV is part of a national network to promote research into adult literacy and professional development of Adult Literacy and Basic Education (ALBE) staff. *Negotiating Competence* is the ALRNNV's second publication, and maintains the high standard set by *Practice in Reading Values,* edited by Delia Bradshaw (1995).

The ALRNNV identified evaluation of policy and practice as the focus for its first major event, a conference at Victoria University of Technology, on June 24, 1994. The burning issue for ALBE practitioners in Victoria at that time was the introduction of the Certificates of General Education for Adults (CGEA) by the Adult Community and Further Education Board (ACFEB). This volume is the report of an evaluation project initiated by the ALRNNV in order to follow up on the issues raised by practitioners on that day. The project was coordinated by Jill Sanguinetti who is a PhD student at Deakin University and an experienced teacher of adult literacy and English as a Second Language (ESL).

The CGEA represents one of the first attempts in Australia to define standards of attainment in ALBE, to articulate ALBE courses into formal training and education and to introduce competency-based criteria of performance. It encompasses four learning streams and four levels of attainment. The streams are: reading and writing, oral communication, numeracy and general curriculum options. The foundation Certificate is awarded to those who pass in all four streams at level two. The full Certificate is awarded on completion of the foundation Certificate and on attainment of competency at level four in any one of the four streams. Moderation processes have been introduced to ensure that standards are consistently applied.

The advent of the CGEA has been a significant challenge to ALBE practitioners in terms of curriculum development, pedagogy and new requirements for assessing and recording student progress. *Negotiating Competence* records the diverse ways in which teachers have responded to and negotiated that challenge.

Negotiating Competence makes a significant contribution to the dialogue between practitioners, curriculum officers and policy-makers. In its pages we hear the voices of committed ALBE practitioners grappling with new ideas which have profound implications for their students and for their own notions of pedagogical good practice. What emerges is a balanced picture of the benefits as well as the continuing tensions surrounding the introduction of the CGEA. It is hoped that the issues documented in the report will be addressed in the review and revision of the CGEA scheduled to take place in 1996. Two of the issues raised, assessment and recognition of prior learning, have provided the ALRNNV with a more specific focus for future research.

Negotiating Competence will be of interest to those working with the CGEA in Western Australia and New South Wales as well as in Victoria. As an account of the tensions and dilemmas experienced by practitioners in responding to a changing policy environment and the requirement of competency-based assessment, it

will also appeal to a wider audience of teachers, educational researchers, bureaucrats and policy-makers.

The ALRNNV congratulates all contributors to *Negotiating Competence.* We hope that this publication is some return for the hours of work invested. We are especially grateful to Jill Sanguinetti for crafting the contributions into an engaging narrative. Finally, the ALRNNV thanks the NLLIA for publishing the volume.

Professor John Dewar Wilson

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The project, of which this report is the outcome, was made possible with funding from the Adult Literacy Research Network Node for Victoria. The project was managed by the Network coordinator, Beverley Campbell, with support form other members of the Network Steering Group. Special thanks to all who contributed to the Project and to the final report, and to the NLLIA staff.

SUMMARY

The introduction of the competency-based Certificates of General Education for Adults (CGEA)l in Victoria in 1994 sparked an energetic response amongst teachers of adult literacy and basic education (ALBE). At the 'Evaluation as Research' Seminar organised by the ALRNNV on 24 June, 1994, teachers debated a number of pedagogical issues in relation to the CGEA. Following that seminar, the 'Impact on teaching practice of the CGEA' evaluation project was launched in order to document in detail the teachers' responses and their experiences of the benefits of the Certificate as well as the difficulties of implementation in its first year of offering.

The project was planned as a contribution to discussions among practitioners, curriculum developers and policy makers about what constitutes 'good practice' in adult literacy and basic education and how accreditation can best serve the interests of students and the adult education and training sector. A participatory action research approach was adopted to work with teachers as they documented their reflections on the processes of implementing the Certificate.

This report therefore presents the diverse views and experiences of almost thirty practitioners who participated in the evaluation of the CGEA. The teachers come from a variety of providers (TAFE college, community-based providers, private providers and the prison system) and include two country providers. There is a spread of participants across the Reading and Writing, Oral Communication, Numeracy and the General Curriculum Option streams.

The participants contributed a multiplicity of views and experiences out of which some broad themes have emerged. Most practitioners are positive about the need for an accredited certificate in ALBE in order to 'bring ALBE in from the margins', to fulfil accountability requirements necessary to ensure funding to provide recognition of students' achievements and to provide a credential which will facilitate access to training pathways. On the other hand, funding for moderation and professional development is widely seen as inadequate. Furthermore, DEET's arrangements for funding by competitive tender (necessitating sessional staffing on short term contracts) is seen to undermine the continuities and relationships necessary for successful implementation.

In considering the impact of the CGEA on their teaching, the participants have acknowledged a number of benefits: it has provided a useful framework for planning of more 'balanced' curriculum across the four domains ('self expression, 'practical purposes' 'knowledge' and 'public debate'). It has encouraged teachers to 'tighten their practice'; to 'clear away the cobwebs of habit'; to be more rigorous in their planning and assessment; and to be more aware of the theoretical underpinnings of their work.

On the other hand, teachers have experienced considerable stress in their attempts to implement the Certificate in the first year. This is the result of the additional workload in planning, assessing, documenting and reporting entailed in competency-based assessment and what is perceived as increased 'bureaucratisation', decreased professional autonomy, some administrative and policy uncertainties and a number

of flaws and inconsistencies in the Certificate document itself. Some participants were also concerned about pressures that complex assessment procedures have placed on students, many of whom have failed in the past and are making their first tentative steps back into the educational and training system.

There was a high level of consensus on the issue of assessment in the CGEA. The majority of participants felt that the complex and stringent requirements of performance criterion-referenced assessment threatened to constrain and to distort good pedagogical practice. The emphasis on the need to perform all the criteria pertaining to each element could result in students, who are otherwise competent at a particular level, but who do not meet one or two of the criteria being failed. This pressure may encourage teachers to narrow their teaching to the assessment requirements instead of responding to the diverse areas of need and interest that students bring to classes. Teachers felt that their teaching practice tended to become fragmented; that they were becoming too focussed on 'ticking the boxes'; that the necessity to assess elements performatively within each domain led to an artificial separation of texts into rigid categories, and that the complexity of 'mapping' curriculum onto the framework of domains, criteria, range and conditions led to artificial assessment tasks. The view was frequently expressed that this form of competency-based assessment is ultimately not compatible with the complexity of literacy development and the different ways that individuals learn.

The report also includes a discussion of possible alternative modes of competency-based assessment that may be considered in developing future versions of the Certificate. It concludes with a discussion of issues for further research and analysis and makes recommendations for the future revision of the Certificate which is due to take place in 1996.

Eleven reports contributed by participants are attached as an Appendix. These reports, based on personal/professional diaries, record reflections and experiences of teachers working to implement the CGEA in diverse settings.

1. INTRODUCTION

The implementation of the CGEA needs to be understood in the context of the continuing evolution of 'good practice' in ALBE.

Dramatic changes are taking place in the ALBE sector, with the advent of DEET-funded labour market programs as the main source of funding and the advent of the competitive training market and competency-based training. At the same time, our ideas of what constitutes 'good practice' are also rapidly evolving. The recent changes in the direction of ALBE funding and the responses to them within the field can usefully be seen in terms of a contestation of discourses (Weedon, 1987; Yeatman, 1990). Current government policy discourses challenge many beliefs and principles which are embedded in the ALBE tradition. Discourses of competitiveness and human capital theory challenge 'social justice' discourses; discourses of efficiency and competency-based training confront discourses of critical literacy, progressivism and holistic, learner-centred pedagogies (Gilding, 1994; Lee, 1994; Luke, 1992; Marginson, 1993; Seddon, 1994).

The journal reports (reproduced in the Appendix) and the interviews upon which this report is based are case studies of teachers engaging discursively with the CGEA and the policies guiding its introduction. They also illustrate an intensified reflection on practice which has come about in response to the challenges that it represents. New understandings of 'good practice' are evolving as practical solutions to current problems are being sought and found.

These accounts of implementing the Certificate testify to the commitment of teachers who have worked hard and creatively to overcome a range of difficulties. This has sometimes been frustrating but overall has resulted in some rich learning that needs to be fed back into the further development of the CGEA. Many teachers felt shock and anger at the magnitude of the change required to their practice. Others experienced feelings of disempowerment and loss of confidence as they set out to fulfil requirements which sometimes were confusing and appeared to reduce their professional autonomy. Despite this, they have found ways of fulfilling the requirements or else have made creative compromises when they thought that was necessary. They have contributed many unpaid hours in writing new curriculum and devising assessment tasks. Many of the participants have also reported that the challenge of implementation, although frustrating, has raised their own awareness of what, why and how they are teaching and has been an opportunity to improve their practice and widen their repertoire.

The critique of the CGEA that has emerged from the experience of implementing the Certificate during 1994, and which is documented in this report, builds on the tradition in ALBE of struggle for better practice.

This evaluation project may be compared with the evaluation undertaken recently of the implementation of the competency-based Certificate of Spoken and Written English (CSWE) by the Adult Migrant Education Service (Bottomly, et al, 1994). That project documented the processes of implementation of the CSWE, the attitudinal changes undergone by the group of teachers and administrators who were

involved in implementing it and evaluated the goals of the implementation, the approach used and the level of commitment to its continuing delivery. By contrast, this CGEA evaluation project documents teachers' experiences in implementing the CGEA in the classroom and the perceptions of a group of teachers of its impact on their practice and on the field generally. Its object is to evaluate the CGEA framework itself, including, to some extent, the processes of its implementation. In this project, the focus therefore is on the teachers and their perceptions of pedagogical issues in relation to the CGEA. It also focuses on aspects of the CGEA that they have identified as needing to be addressed in a revised version.

2. AIMS

The aim of this project was to evaluate the CGEA, as a document and as an innovation for accreditation, curriculum planning and assessment in ALBE; in particular to evaluate its impact on teachers' practice during the implementation period.

In *Adult Literacy and Basic Education: A Guide to Program Evaluation* (Lambert, and Owen, 1993) the authors state that:

> In its broadest context, evaluation is the collection and analysis of information in order to facilitate informed decision making (p.1).

They identify the five basic purposes of evaluation as:

> program development,
> program clarification,
> program improvement,
> program monitoring,
> program justification (p.5).

In this evaluation project, all of these purposes are reflected in differing degrees. However, it could perhaps best be described as 'program improvement' which, according to Lambert et al, asks as typical questions:

> How is this service or activity going?
> Is it working?
> How is it affecting the target group or clients?
> What specific aspects need improvement? (p.8)

The design of the evaluation process was strongly informed by the principles of participatory action research. Participatory action research is theorised as a form of collaborative, self-reflective enquiry and documentation carried out by practitioners on their own practice in order to find ways of improving it. This enquiry includes developing a critical awareness of the social and political context (Brown, 1990; Carr and Kemmis, 1986; Kemmis and McTaggart, 1988; McTaggart, 1991; Wadsworth, 1991) . In this case, a small core group of adult literacy teachers was actively involved in shaping the research process, developing the key questions, considering the findings and making the recommendations.

In this project, we have focussed on teachers and have not aimed to include students or to directly document their experiences. An evaluation project which would foreground the experiences and responses of students studying for the CGEA, is also needed.

3. METHODOLOGY

The implementation of the CGEA has been the subject of much controversy in the field, and the need for its evaluation was widely recognised. On June 24, 1994, the Adult Literacy Research Network Node (ALRNN) organised a seminar entitled **Evaluation as Research** and attended by about 80 people involved in ALBE. The morning session focussed on evaluation methodology and the afternoon session consisted of four workshops, one on each of the four streams of the CGEA, in which teachers shared their responses to it. The ALRNN circulated a leaflet at the seminar inviting participants to indicate their interest in becoming involved in a process of evaluating the CGEA.

Following the seminar, I was asked by Bev Campbell, co-ordinator of the ALRNN, to co-ordinate the project: to convene a group of participant-evaluators and to write a synthesis report for publication by the ALRNN. I was also asked to collate and write up the result of the four afternoon workshops (one for each stream of the CGEA) and these summaries of discussion form some of the data on which this report is based.

The participant evaluators (or 'working group') helped to plan the research process, generated much of the data and acted as a reference group in writing this report. The group comprised 13 members, including myself, 10 of whom had volunteered at the June seminar and two additional members whom I recruited to improve the representativeness of the group. (Five others had initially indicated their interest but withdrew or else contributed their views by interview instead.) The 12 members of the group were from four different TA.FE colleges, three different community-based providers and the prison system.

At the initial meeting on August 19, the participants worked through the key issues involved in teaching to the CGEA and identified the following questions:

1. How does the competency framework affect my teaching program and teaching practice? (This was the key organising question.)

2. Is it possible to "go with the flow" (with a group or topic) then look back and retrospectively fit this around the requirements of the Certificate? To what extent do I do this?

3. What has driven me as a teacher? How do I hold onto that? Am I compromising myself?

4. What works? what doesn't?

5. Can I fulfill the assessment demands without compromising student needs?

6. How can I cope with teaching and assessing at the different levels, and the range within each level?

7. What do I do with learning outcomes defined in the Certificate that are ambiguous, or don't make sense, or that I disagree with?

8. What does the Certificate offer *me* as a teacher?

9. How do I cope with having ESL, literacy and disabled students who are being integrated, at the same time as teaching the Certificate?

10. What is the impact on students of the assessment?

11. In what ways have I been creative in testing/assessing students?

12. What are the administrative constraints (of moderation, etc)?

13. What is the impact on 'negotiating the curriculum'? Is my course driven by the needs of the learners or by the Certificate?

14. What are the significant outcomes which *are not* part of the framework?

There was discussion of the theoretical and ethical issues involved in undertaking participatory action research. The following material was distributed to participants:

- *What's the Use of Research?* (Nunan, 1993),
- *A Point by Point guide to Action Research for Teachers* (Henry, and Kemmis, 1985)
- *Keeping a Personal Professional Journal,* (Holly, 1987).

The participants undertook to keep reflective journals in which they would record what was happening in their teaching in the light of these key questions. In their journal entries, made during September, October and November 1994, they documented the changes, challenges, benefits and difficulties they experienced in working with the Certificate.

It was decided that whereas the journals themselves were to be private, each person would submit a report based on what they had written, summing up the issues as they experienced them and their overall reflections. The participants each received a small payment ($200) for this work. The 11 journal reports contributed by the 12 participants (including one joint report) are in the Appendix.

At the first meeting, it was decided that the group should be broadened so that the evaluation would be based on more widely representative feedback.

Accordingly, I recruited a second group of practitioners chosen on the basis of broadening the representation of different institutions, types of providers, geographical locations, streams, and in some cases on the basis of historical involvement as CGEA project workers or of their historical involvement in developing the VAEL-NAFF or the ABEAF framework. These participants were interviewed rather than being asked to keep reflective journals.

The data for this evaluation thus consists of the eleven journal reports, the tapes and transcripts of the 13 interviews and a number of related documents, including the report of the June 24 seminar, reports of rural seminars and project reports (some of which were in draft form). The documents that have been used or referred to in this report are listed in the bibliography.

The draft findings were negotiated with ten of the participants at the final meeting of the working group on November 18, 1994. There was general affirmation of the findings and some additions and changes were made. It was further presented at a forum of fifty people at the VALBEC conference on November 24, 1994, where the findings and recommendations were strongly affirmed.

The draft findings were presented and discussed at a meeting of the CGEA Monitoring and Evaluation Committee (on December 9) and used as one input for recommendations drafted by the committee to the Program Standing Committee of ACFEB for funding for a project to review and modify.the current VAELLNAF.

4. FINDINGS

The benefits and difficulties that practitioners have experienced in implementing the CGEA and their developing critique are discussed under the following headings:

4.1. Institutional and environmental issues
4.2. Impact of the CGEA on teaching generally
4.3 Assessment
4.4 Reading and writing stream
4.5 Oral communication stream
4.6 Numeracy stream
4.7 General curriculum option stream
4.8 Moderation
4.9 Implementation

4.1 INSTITUTIONAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

4.1.1 Bringing ALBE in from the margins

The accreditation of the CGEA is seen by some as bringing ALBE in from the margins and raising its profile by making it more coherent and ensuring a measure of public accountability to funding authorities. There is a recognition that accreditation will help ensure funding for ALBE provision from State and Commonwealth programs and in gaining resources for professional development. A few people expressed the view that greater public accountability is necessary and suggested that higher levels of scrutiny and accountability will lead to increased awareness and self-confidence of teachers.

> *... where I feel that there is great strength with this document, is that it is the spearhead for the changes that the sector is undergoing... I think what it can do is, at best, provide an opportunity for people to start to think about how they are going to move into the 90s and into the 2000s, and as a field, stand alongside of all the other things that are going to get a lot of funding and be able to talk the language* (I.6.) [2]

4.1.2 A credential and recognition for students

There was general consensus that it offers access to mainstream credentials and pathways for students, as well as official recognition and affirmation of their progress.

> *... it gives the student a credential, for all the time they have spent here (and we've been running courses for so long, and all they have got is a bit of paper that no-one recognises) (I.3.).*

4.1.3 Inadequate funding for moderation and professional development

DEET is currently the main source of funding for programs and it has been difficult to build in, with competitive tendering arrangements, sufficient resources for moderation and professional development. This has been especially true of rural areas and very small community-based providers that simply did not have the funding for travel time; at least one provider is planning to cease offering the CGEA for this rea-

son.

... rural isolation: difficulties of access to moderation sessions; no funds for travel... (VALBEC, 1994) .

We may drop awarding of Certificates to avoid cost involved with moderation/training etc, but will plan around the Framework and keep the spirit alive (1.2.).

4.1.4 Funding by outcomes encourages 'creaming'

There is a perception that the trend towards funding programs according to demonstrable outcomes impinges on student selection and pedagogy - it creates a pressure to place students who are most likely to succeed, and to concentrate on getting results, as the main focus.

I think the level is going to be upped and upped all the time, because people have to have outcomes in 18 weeks, so if I think they can't do that in 18 weeks, they are going to take two years to get to that level,.. on choosing who you put into the program, you know you can get those outcomes, but what happens to the people who you know can't get them (I.5.)?

4.1.5 Sessional staffing

There is a contradiction between the demands placed on teachers and the conditions of sessional staff; the level of skill, commitment, and extra time required to implement the Certificate cannot be expected from people being paid a minimum hourly rate.

Tutors need to be experienced, qualified teachers. Pay structure in ACFE is not sophisticated enough to attract and keep good people. There needs to be a scale. I am asking a top professional, at the moment, to work for $27 per hour, eight weeks per term (if the course runs and the funding holds) no holiday pay, no sick leave, etc. The Certificates are supposed to raise the standards, expectations, credibility, etc, of adult education for students but there has been no move to improve things for the tutors who have an increased work load and higher professional responsibility. Is it right to expect part-time and casual employees to implement a system that hasn't even been properly trialled (I.2.)

Much of the work in implementing the CGEA has relied once more on the good will and voluntary time of those in the field (R.9).

4.1.6 Pathways

Despite the initial aim of helping students into pathways to mainstream, there are still some areas of confusion: The CGEA does not clearly articulate into year 11. At a meeting of participants on November 18, an anecdote was related of VCE teachers exchanging pieces of student writing with CGEA teachers to informally compare levels. Two pieces of writing (assessed at CGEA level 3) were rated as an A and a *B* at VCE level by the VCE teacher, and writing that had been passed as a *B* in VCE had been assessed at level 3 in the CGEA. Some reading and writing elements appear to be more demanding than the equivalent standard of skills required at year 11 and 12. This is obviously an anomaly. There were other stories of students who have passed year 11, but have been assessed by ALBE teachers at about level 2. There was general agreement at that meeting that some of the performance criteria are unrealistically high, especially at levels 3 and 4.

4.1.7 Industry and workplace settings

There was feedback that the CGEA is not well understood by providers of industrial and vocational training. Employers are critical of its complexity and there are difficulties in applying it for mixed literacy and vocational course development (I.2., R.8.). When learning outcomes of the CGEA match the vocational outcomes it is useful, but there are only certain elements which match up with most vocational and industrial training courses (1.1.).

On the one hand, there has been feedback that the CGEA has been useful in workplace settings both as a curriculum development tool and as an assessment tool (ie, as a framework for describing literacy and numeracy levels across an industry and as for assessing the skill levels of clients) (1.1.). However, its use as a credential in workplace and industry settings seems more problematic. One workplace teacher commented on the problems of 'selling' the CGEA to industry, when industry is more interested in their own certificates: what is the value of a basic education credential to them (1.1.)?

The time constraints of workplace and industry courses make it difficult to plan, deliver and assess across all streams as well as addressing the demands of workplace training:

> ***The time was a bigfactor with my workplace work... the managers wouldn't release themfor a long period of time, so it was thirty orforty hours maximum per worker.*** [Instead of the recommended 80 hours per stream per level - JS] ***You can understand that they want them on the job so to try to work students through the eight competencies in one stream was very pressured and the thing that I noticed most was that I didn't have time to do any redrafting work. You know I'd get afirst draft back and I'd ask them could you possibly redraft it and think about those things, but we just didn't have time in class and they were loathe to do any outside work so it was oftenfirst draft or slightly amended stuff (1.14).***

4.2 IMPACT OF lHE CGEA ON TEACHING GENERALLY

Teachers discussed the impact of the CGEA on their teaching in balanced terms acknowledging benefits as well as difficulties:

The competency framework has affected my teaching in a positive way, in that it has made me more rigorous in covering the four domains, and also given me a dialogue and common ground with other teachers. It has also helped me to deconstruct my teaching processes and to be able to be more explicit about the genre of those processes... However, it has placed enormous pressure on me both administratively and for outcomes which I think impact negatively on my students (R.1.).

Certainly, there have been some positives that have come out of the CGEA, for example the necessity of moderation has forced teachers together and provided an invaluable opportunity for discussion and sharing. This must be continued and built on, as the need in the ALBE field for peer support and sharing is *enormous... (but)... we need to come up with something more realistic and less restrictive... the Certificate stifles creativity and confidence and has the potential to remove students away from being the main focus of my teaching (R.2.).*

I like the Framework as a curriculum organiser and I even like the elements because they do give you an idea of what the students should be able to do at the end, but like other people, I find the performance criteria are the things that are problematic. Just the process of assessing students, which we haven't had to do before, places a lot of strain on the teacher and on the students (I.12.).

Many of the participants have acknowledged in their reports and interviews, the importance of the ABEAF Framework as the basis of the VAELLNAF, which they have found useful for curriculum planning:

The ABEAF had already gained wide acceptance in developing greater structure and balance in our curriculum planning and helped us to move towards a common language and had a sound theoretical base and in itself took us well beyond the focussing on personal stories and to a more rigorous analysis of who the students are, what are the domains of social activity for which they may need to be prepared, what we are teaching them, and why. So its basis in the ABEAF must be acknowledged in so far as that common language of domains and levels has further taken root throughout the implementation of the CGEA (1.5.).

There has already been much discussion of the various flaws in the VAELLNAF document. Many noted that the language is inaccessible to students and teachers, somewhat intimidating and at times lacking in intelligibility. There is also reference to a lack of coherence in the document itself: in the wording of the performance criteria, in the way performance criteria relate to each other and to the elements, and also to some extent in the way that the streams relate to each other. A typical expression of the frustration experienced by many practitioners in struggling to implement the framework in its current form is this:

Given how confusing the document is *I find this a terribly difficult situation. Similarly, an enormous amount of time has been spent trying to understand the performance criteria that are extremely convoluted and unworkable, only to have them changed into Agreed Variations. It has made me extremely suspicious of the value of using a certificate that* is *so flawed that it can't be implemented without*

> *having to rewrite it... It seems to me that what we've been going through is a trialling of the Certificate only without the funding for a trial and under the pretence that we are just fine tuning a completed document (R.7.).*

Many of the inconsistencies in the document have since been clarified by the 'agreed annotated variations' process and the production by ACFE of a simplified and more 'user-friendly' version of the competency statements and performance criteria (Lyons, 1994). However, according to the majority of participants, the requirements of criterion-referenced assessment (rather than the flaws and inconsistencies in the document) were seen to have the most negative impact on teachers' practice. This issue is documented in section 4.3. Possible approaches to resolving the issues are discussed in section 5 of this report.

4.2.1. An aid to developing 'good practice'

Many teachers commented that the framework facilitates a more rigorous approach to theoretical underpinnings, curriculum planning and delivery:

> *I think I am more rigorous in my attitude to my teaching, I think I spend a lot more time analysing students' work and how they are going,.. so now I analyse a piece of work much more carefully, in terms of what is wrong with this piece, not really totally in terms of the Certificate, I suppose it is the genre theory that I have taken over from the Certificate (1.5.).*

> *So it made me think about how I teach things, what people do in certain styles of writing, what could I do to improve that writing, so it made me analyse that writing in a far more detailed way (R.4.).*

> *A structure for courses, a help to planning, a guide for less experienced staff (VALBEC, 1994).*

> *For me as a teacher, the CGEA framework has been very useful as a curriculum "map". If I use the metaphor of the map, it is as if I have been able to chart my teaching as it was before on the map, as well as to take some new uncharted roads. By that, I mean that my teaching has broadened to encompass more of a balance of the four domains. Unlike previously, my students are developing a language for analysing the purpose of a text (R.11.).*

> *Having taught ABE for some years now, I must admit to my stockpile of "things that work" and "this is how I always teach" approaches. The CGEA has helped to clear away some of these cobwebs of habit. The demands of assessing 12 elements in Reading, Writing and Gracy at a level forced me to reorganise some of my planning and try to better integrate my classroom activities (R.9.).*

> *Having the strands and attributes clearly defined is a great resource for a numeracy teacher and is a point of reference to ensure a full and varied program... (R.2.).*

> *... and I think it's great that people are having to think about planning and are having to think about what it is they want to do over a 10 or 20 week course. Even if it is only 2 hours, I think it's high time that people did start talking the language of*

process and outcome, not just process... (1.6).

A number of teachers are going beyond using the VAELLNAF as a planning framework and are succcessfully integrating the concept of the framework and the elements into their pedagogy:

I try to include the students and explain what I'm doing, and I give them the performance criteria and if they can't understand I explain it to them. They don't seem to be fazed by them... they don't know the complexity behind those performance criteria. From time to time I go through my records with them... they can see what areas they need to build up in order to get the full Certificate. They understand about the four domains, and they're very interested in debating whether this is a 'knowledge' or a 'public debate' text... (1.9).

4.2.2 More curriculum guidance required

A number of participants noted, however, that there is inadequate guidance in terms of how to develop the curriculum itself:

I believe an awful lot of curriculum writing should have been done before we got into this. We probably put the cart before the horse when moderation happened before people were really trained in curriculum writing for it... I would have liked to have seen a lot of curriculum writing, a lot of professional development, and then for the curriculum to be moderated, so everyone could get together and see what everyone else is doing, to say whether it's going to fit the criteria (1.2.).

Several commented that the concentration on the assessment has detracted from the issue of how they actually bring students to the outcomes specified:

Another criticism is that it tells you what the outcomes should be, but there is no guidance whatsoever, on how you get to those outcomes. There's no pedagogical guidance. Most curriculum documents have something about teaching, but this competency-based framework doesn't have anything about that, you can arrive at the competency in any way. That has its advantages if you are just looking at the credentials, ... but I think people, especially those who are not all that experienced, would like a bit more guidance from curriculum bodies... on how to teach. We don't get any more professional development on that sort of thing (1.9.).

4.2.3 The benefits of moderation and professional development

There is a separate evaluation of moderation processes that has been carried out by Jeanette Johns and Clare Claydon. These findings should be seen in conjunction with the findings of that evaluation. (ACFEB, 1994b)

Feedback on moderation has included strongly positive and negative positions. However, the majority view of participants in this project was that moderation processes have had a key role in developing common understandings and a common language around issues of levels and assessment. Most reports acknowledged the positive role of moderation as a process of professional development. As one participant said in relation to moderation, 'professional development has never

been so good' (R.9.). Many commented on the increased sharing of ideas, confidence-building, networking and the process of building consensus and a common language in the field as important outcomes of moderation:

> *... the necessity of moderation has forced teachers together and provided an invaluable opportunity for discussion and sharing. This must be continued and built on, as the need in the ALBE field for peer support and sharing is enormous (R.2.).*

Issues of moderation are further discussed in section 6 of this report.

4.2.4 Pressures experienced in implementing the Certificate

Almost all participants referred in some way to the increased levels of pressure they felt that they and their centre had been put under in implementing the Certificate this year. This pressure can be seen as an inevitable part of the cultural change that the CGEA represents. For some, the stress experienced lessened as the year progressed and the language and requirements of the Certificate became better known. This often seemed to come about as teachers became more bold and creative in modifying and changing things according to their perceptions of best practice:

> *I find the Certificate quite restrictive to good teaching and unnecessarily bureaucratic but in the end the inventive pragmatist in me will find ways of minimizing the impact of accountability procedures and I will continue to utilize an extensive teaching repertoire developed over the years through critically reflective practice, to go on lighting fires in the imagination rather than filling buckets with busy work (R.6.).*

However, 'creative modification on the run' can bring its own set of stresses, when people are committed to the overall integrity of the Certificate. One of the stresses of creative modification was that there have been and still are different interpretations of the guidelines given by different people at different times. This has created an atmosphere of uncertainty and sometimes conflict.

A few participants saw the stress as a potentially positive part of change:

> *Teachers have been frightened by it. Maybe they feel that they are being tested or judged, because it really does put a lot onto the teachers' accountability, which I think is a positive thing but it has made some people feel unsure about their own abilities as a teacher which is really sad, because they are very good and experienced teachers ... Other people have coped with it very well and found it to be positive and flexible, so we have the opposites (1.13).*

Quite a few teachers reported on how their attitudes towards the Certificate have changed over the course of the first year of full implementation. Having grasped the complexities of the framework, they were able to better appreciate the benefits of working with it:

> *I'll tell you one thing, I feel a lot more positive about the Certificate now than compared to the way I felt when I was right in the middle of it all last term, when it was all totally new to me. I can see a lot of good points in having such a certificate (1.14).*

4.2.5 The pressure on time

There is a large amount of documentation now required, with the preparation of complex assessment tasks, the cross-referencing of performance criteria, 'mapping over' between streams in integrated curricula, and the assessment and moderation requirements. The stress of additional work has been reported by most participants, but is acutely felt by sessional teachers who are donating hours of voluntary time in developing curricula and recording assessments. Several people commented on the amount of time spent on either debating the issues of competency-based training or of record-keeping, so that there is no longer time left for focussing on what and how we actually teach:

> *There's a lot of debate about issues which sometimes doesn't get anywhere. I think that it is good there is debate on issues, but because we are so busy debating these issues, and whether or not there should be competencies, we don't put our energy into helping each other expand our repertoire in teaching, and I feel even though I am an experienced teacher, I can always improve on what I did last week, I like that challenge, and I like sharing my ideas with other teachers and getting them to try things. But I feel there's less time for that, because we are spending more time on record-keeping (1.9).*

4.2.6 The requirements of the Foundation Certificate and the semester length course

The full Foundation Certificate entails the assessment of 19 different elements (Reading - 4, Writing - 4, Oracy - 4, Numeracy - 4, GCO - 3). Each of these has around 5 or 6 performance criteria that may each relate to different skill areas. The normal course of 18 hours per week for 20 weeks is often not long enough to complete the amount of work that this schedule of elements requires, particularly given the wide range of ability, educational level and language development that is present in any ALBE class. The notional 80 hours per stream is a guideline only; however it has at times put great pressure on teachers to adapt their normal processes to enable students to be awarded the Certificate within the amount of time specified.

In theory, the focus of the assessment could be on the awarding of single 'statements of attainment', rather than the full Certificate; however, 'a course' is generally associated with the gaining of 'a certificate', which has more significance in public discourse. Where the full Certificate is being offered, there is an implicit pressure to give at least some students the opportunity of acquiring it. This often means teaching 'to' the Certificate given the limited time available. This dilemma may be resolved in time, as teachers and students learn to consider the 'statement of attainment' as the basic unit of certification, rather than the Certificate itself.

4.2.7 Suitability for part-time courses

There was feedback from a few teachers of part-time (2, 4 or 6 hours per week) classes that the complex requirements were not compatible with part-time courses for students who wish to study for just a few hours per week, and who may not be interested in accreditation:

> *But with the two hour one, I just haven't put the pressure on myself I gave them some assessments last term the last night, just a few simple reading and writing ones, and I didn't put pressure on people... I'm not going to worry because I think it's more important, adults come, especially evening class to help their sounds, their reading, their writing (1.14).*

4.2.8 Pressures on students

There were quite divergent experiences reported in terms of pressure on students. Some teachers (particularly those working with an integrated model) reported that their students loved working with the Certificate, appreciated the additional structure, the knowledge of what was required and where they were going and valued the awarding of a credential for their achievement.

> *In general, the students are positive about the opportunity to work towards something more significant than just another short course certificate (R.8.).*

A few reported that many students are not interested, and that it is often not sufficiently relevant to the specific skills that they are seeking to develop.

> *In my experience I have found the CGEA to be irrelevant for students... the course document is not compatible with the students' stated goals and/or their desired learning outcomes (R.3.).*

It was common experience that, in any one classroom group, some wanted to do the Certificate and others were not interested. Teachers were able to assess only those who wanted to be assessed, and

> *...for those who did attain a module it was rewarding and presentation day really was very affirming and some of them were inspired - they were asking what's the next course (1.14).*

A consistent theme, which requires further reflection and analysis, is the possibly inevitable effect of engendering a 'pass/fail mentality' amongst the students, which would 'infiltrate and undo some of the good work'(I.4.).

> *I make it subliminal, and/or you can demystify it, but it's still difficult, you still have to say whether people pass or fail basically and in our area we have been used to just pushing people along and extending them, whatever level they are at. We haven't had the divisions where we have to say, 'yes, you are on this side, or are on that side,' (we've just had that continuum) and I don't like that. On the other hand, the field has got bigger and we need to be able to communicate with providers... (I.9.).*

> *For me, the negative thing has been student expectations. Students latch on to the idea that they want to get the Certificate and in level 4, they have got their heart set on getting that Certificate, but in actual fact the skills are incredibly high that they have to reach and some people take a lot longer than others to get there, and some want to do it in six months and not take a full year. I know the theory is that you can take your time to work through it but I think it causes problems (I.5.).*

Given that the majority of students would come from a background of failure in school, it is particularly unfortunate that they are put into a pass/fail situation immediately upon their re-entry into ALBE. Perhaps this is an inevitable side-effect of assessment and credentialling. More research and analysis is needed on this issue.

One teacher raised the issue of what happens to students who do not have the opportunity to complete the Foundation Certificate in one course. Students may be moved by DEET from providers who offer the Certificate to providers who do not, so that the students go from doing something which was 'much more focussed' to 'a more or less general course'. On the other hand, they may be enrolled in courses which are funded on a 'one off' basis (such as in many workplace training courses) and hence have little opportunity to complete it (1.14).

As yet there has been no comprehensive evaluation of the students' experiences with the Certificate; the current evaluation project focuses on the experience of teachers principally. Further research and evaluation, ensuring that the students' voices are heard, is now required.

4.3 ISSUES OF ASSESSMENT

4.3.1 Perception that assessment is over-riding other considerations

One of the issues that many participants wrote or spoke of is the way in which the Certificate framework focuses attention on assessment rather than pedagogy or curriculum and hence distorts 'good practice'.

> *The document has created an unnecessary obsession with assessment. As soon as someone can do an activity or task there is a tendency to want to make sure that it is recorded for CGEA 'evidence'. (It wasn't so important that a student had successfully performed a certain skill but that it would somehow match the performance criteria.) There is this awful feeling of becoming obsessed with collecting samples of work. The nightmare associated with this is that it is impossible to fulfil the requirements of the frameworks without contriving the most unreal of tasks (R.2.).*

> *Assessment hangs over my head and that of the students. They need to know where they stand but this also neglects the joy of learning. The process does not take into account individual strengths and weaknesses (R.3.).*

> *The last thing I wanted to do was repeat the same confidence destroying activities with which the students had already experienced a history of failure. For that reason I began to incorporate the Certificate into my everyday teaching, the idea being that I would just observe people's development inconspicuously and jot down when they reached the competency. The problem with this is that every lesson had to fit the criteria of the Certificate for the work to go into someone's folio to enable them to access the Certificate. That led to activities that resulted in a piece of independent writing and a piece of independent reading... The students found producing*

these pieces of work patronising and useless (R. 7.).

Assessment has become the focal point. Initial assessment, placement and RPL are the first hurdle, then formative, informal and assessment tasks, followed by exit assessment. We are going to be bogged down with assessment and this will drive everything (1.2.).

I see assessment tasks becoming the curriculum. An 'integrated course' is becoming one humungus assignment comprising multi assessment tasks - beautifully put together, interesting and efficient but there is little deviation from the all-important assessment! (1.2.).

The preoccupation with range and conditions may divert from the real business of teaching (R.5.).

One teacher referred to the process of 'rushing through' material that otherwise would have required more time spent on it, in order to meet performance criteria (I.4.). Several others commented that although moderation is successful and appreciated, the focus on the legalities of assessment amounts to a waste of professional development time when there are many other issues that need to be worked on jointly across providers.

4.3.2 Criterion-referenced assessment

The consensus emerging from this study is that the 'elements'3· are useful as broad descriptors of milestones of student learning. However the requirement for the display of a fixed number of performance criteria, as the mode of assessing whether or not these milestones have been reached, has come in for much criticism. The criteria themselves are seen as sometimes bearing a tenuous relationship to the element and are not accepted as constituting exclusive and necessary conditions that that element has been achieved. Some of the performance criteria have already been 'scrapped' through the inter-regional moderation process of Annotated Agreed Variations; many teachers are modifying the criteria or simply ignoring those that they believe are not relevant.

The whole idea of denying someone a certificate because they don't fulfil one or two very narrow performance criteria really irks me (R.7.).

Well it was artificial, the whole setting up of these competencies and assessing people. I felt it was too guided and I never felt they could actually do what they would set them up to do (1.14).

Almost all the elements could stay intact... it's when you look at the performance criteria that it becomes horrific. So I give people a model of the actual elements, and I give the overall competencies, and I say, "this is what we teach and we're teaching these elements, so don't get hung up on these performance criteria"(I.5.).

I think a lot of practitioners have gone straight to the competencies and haven't made the theoretical link that is necessary, and that has become problematic, so now you have people teaching to performance criteria and narrowly defined elements of

that (1.5).

Some of the performance criteria, in a natural way, cannot be met, if we are following the document to the letter, so that you have to contrive the task to meet the performance criteria and teachers are saying that they refuse to do that, that they are adopting good adult learning principles, and do the holistic thing. If some performance criteria are not being met, they are documenting that and the reason why and they have found that there are gaps in the Certificate because things like resumes, business letters, cannot be included as assessment tasks because they do not meet the performance criteria (I.10.).

The elements and performance criteria are virtually impossible to meet and hence it is virtually impossible for 'students to be awarded the Certificate (especially in maths) (I.4.).

I have doubts about whether competency-based is the best thing for language because language is dynamic; it does change, it changes within communities and it's so complex that to adopt a competency-based approach where it is very 'tick the box' 'you have to do it this way, this way, this way'. I understand how it has transpired through the way it has been accredited and it seems that it is a pity that that's the only form of accreditation, in that it had to be written in those terms (I.10.).

(There has been) ...disbelief, especially with new people, that a task needs to reflect all the performance criteria. People find this extraordinary at first... then there is the next stage, which is "oh well, we will just get around it somehow"(I.1.).

Competency-based assessment does neglect the personal development aspect which is acknowledged in the Background Works as "traditionally an ALBE aim". The entry level of the student is neglected in the certification process and so does not reflect individual development. (It) does not take into account the point the person has come from and the learning the individual has done (R.3.).

(The ABEAF) wrote the performance criteria in a more flowing way, they were not numbered; they were indications, not criteria. But they then got turned into this terrible thing of being numbered. Rather than be taken as pointers, they got turned into necessary and sufficient conditions to be interpreted literally. You have to have all of them and if you have one missing you have got to fail them (I.7.).

Why can't the Certificate just be a way of allowing people to name their destinations and what the paths were that their students were going through? It wasn't intended to change people's practice much at all, except to make them aware of other possibilities that students may need. Now it has made it mandatory that you do it all, it is compulsory. At level 2 you are not allowed to specialise, yet at 3 and 4 you can just do oracy and get your Certificate. Why would anybody want to do that, unless it is for ESL (1.5.)?

Some teachers questioned whether competency-based assessment in fact was a guarantee of transferability of skills from one context to another:

... it's the same old thing. Just because you can do something in a structured situation, does it mean you can do it in real life? I have real doubts about that (1.14).

4.3.3 Fragmentation of teaching practice

There were some strong statements and a number of explicit examples given about the way in which the assessment framework affects and may distort good practice through fragmenting the curriculum and the processes of teaching and learning. A view expressed by several people was that whereas an experienced teacher will find ways around it, a less experienced teacher would be inclined to follow the lead of the document and tend to use the framework as a curriculum outline:

How to divide a curriculum into small 'chunks' whilst retaining its integrity is an issue which faces everyone teaching short-term students. The way in which the VAELLNAF is organised - into modules which are themselves composed of elements - encourages a simplistic carving up which runs contrary to good practice (R.10).

I find a fragmented approach to teaching creeps into my practice as I try to ensure that the integrity of the Certificate is maintained. The overall intention of the Certificate model is for students to demonstrate competency in participating in social life (according to the Background Works). However, in order for students to demonstrate competency in all the performance criteria the 'whole' must be broken into bits. Often this results in contrived and fragmented sessions (R.3.).

... inventing assessment tasks that are out of context with student growth and classroom dynamics and interests (R.5.).

People are opening the book and doing their whole curriculum according to how many assessment tasks they have to set in order to assess, not talking about it in order to allow students to show what they know. It is a major shift in what we do: in fact, testing,.. no flexibility in what you are testing as well. Everything is just seen in terms of the end product, which is a task that assesses people and that is a concern. People are jumping from assessment task to assessment task (I.3.).

The predetermined assessment framework goes against learner independence (R.3.).

The problem with the whole competency-based movement, if it's taken literally, is that it disenfranchises the best teachers. It says to them, "you are only allowed to use these explicit, verbalised criteria in this grid; you can no longer rely on the 20 years of experience you've had in assessing students' work". So rather than having a sort of dialectical or interactive process between the stated criteria and the experientially developed intuitions of the teacher, there has been an attempt to claim that the actual wording of the (criteria) is transparent and captures perfectly the grounds for judging student performance (I.7.).

Its narrowness ... takes the edge off a broad educational approach ... training rather than education (I.2,).

It puts a strain on good practice - does having timber and knowing how to use

hammer and nails add up to building a house (I.4.)?

(It) *leads teachers to become "tickers of boxes". Whereas teachers will engage with students and say "yes, that's interesting", the need to fulfill predetermined criteria leads them to check these off, rather than think about that student's developing process of learning as a whole and to discover what is new and interesting in what she has done and what her particular problems are* (I.7).

.. but as verification gets closer then I am thinking, you should be tick, tick, ticking here, to make sure that they're covering everything, rather than designing a program in a class, and then saying, "oh yes, look they've done that and they've done that". So in that respect it's putting me in the position of, yes, I must become a ticker... I don't want to be a ticker (I.8.)!

4.3.4 Rigid seperation of the four domains

The separate assessment of elements in each domain, each with its own set of performance criteria, has the effect of regarding the domains as 'fixed' rather than as constructions that in real life always flow into one another and can't be clearly separated out. It is hard to find texts that fit neatly as examples of this or that domain. Some practitioners seemed to have solved this by means of creative interpretation and holding onto the 'spirit' rather than the letter of the law. For others, trying to work with the interface between the complex requirements of assessment and documentation and the complex texture of their practice (especially in reading, writing and oracy) seems impossibly daunting.

To me, the performance criteria stultify the domains. I know from the Background Works that each domain has traces of the others and that genres are always shifting and being subverted, and having those performance criteria is dangerous in that people are writing to a formula, rather than writing something that may go across two or three domains, and that the difficulties of assessing that might be stultifying good writing, just because not all the performance criteria are exhibited. My concern is that there could be a burgeoning of very rigid, formulaic texts coming out... students might adhere to all the performance criteria... but they lose the authenticity of texts (1.1.).

To avoid narrowing my focus I use texts, even in assessment tasks, if they do not fit all the range and conditions. More and more the challenge becomes a case of designing assessment tasks and selecting materials that allow students to develop the skills to demonstrate the performance criteria but that represent literacy in the real world... Shouldn't the CGEA reflect and value the literacy of the real world, and not the other way around (R.9.)?

Some commented that within each domain, the performance criteria themselves have the effect of limiting skills or text types:

That's one of the biggest problems I have with the CGEA, that within each domain, only one very very narrow area is focussed on for assessment - like Practical Purposes, the only thing you assess is instructions, yet in Practical Purposes, let-

> *ter-writing, CV writing, etc, should be part of it. It's even narrower in oracy and so I think people might just teach that very narrow competency... I've heard of people just whizzing them through very fast (I.12.).*

The necessity to assess each domain separately within each stream was also questioned. Instead it was suggested that students be given more choice in working within the domains that were important to them and to use the framework as a way to help them to name their destinations. In the GCO (General Curriculum Option) there is an element of choice - why not in the rest of the Certificate? Whereas the framework implicitly broadens curriculum by the possibilities opened up by working across the four genres, it also limits it by enforcing an even spread across them through the form of assessment. This limits its appropriateness, for example in vocational and industrial settings and in other settings such as groups of women who are not seeking work, or for very low level students. In level 4 also, the appropriateness of the assessment in the knowledge domain has been criticised as reflecting a 'school-based' notion of literacy, rather than what students may need in work or social situations; at that level, it has been suggested that "people need to be able to choose the domains that they work in" (I.5.).

4.3.5 Complex 'mapping' required when working with an integrated model

There were a few (full-time) teachers who reported that they were teaching in a fully integrated way across all streams with successful outcomes - the extra work and time spent consulting with other teachers was worth it. The complexities of working across domains and streams has been overcome by some practitioners through concentrating on the content and identifying elements and assessment tasks in the material which flows from themes, activities and projects:

> *The theory was that the projects would bring it back to life, and you would see how it is, if you are going to do GCO with Reading and Writing, that there are certain criteria that overlap, and you don't have to do them again and again, if you integrate, so I'm wondering whether the feeling of compartmentalisation and aridity and artificiality ... that when you actually get into the meat of designing your own curriculum, can't be dissolved (I.6.).*

Others talked of the huge amount of research and preparation required and the difficulty of finding texts that were authentic, appropriate and matched the criteria, range and conditions. The time needed to develop complex curricula which map over and incorporate all elements and criteria across the different competency frameworks (GCO, Numeracy, Oracy, Reading and Writing) was also an issue (I.2.).

A few said that the richness of teaching to the integrated model is circumscribed when it comes to applying the complex requirements of the assessment. One teacher described what happened after she had taken her class through a complex series of classroom activies around the theme of travel and the requirement for asssessment had to be addressed:

> *And then in term three, the reality of the assessment task became clear. One must do justice to what one's students have achieved in terms of competencies, levels,*

> ***moderation requirements, range and conditions. Down to earth we came, with something of a thud. The "spirit" of the CGEA was being documented, recorded, systematised, moderated and pulled into line (R.6.).***

The complexities of assessing the integrated model are so great that the mapping process can result in curriculum which becomes contrived ("this goes with that") and interferes in the organic way in which themes tend to unfold and take on their own momentum:

> ***With some of the stuff that has come out, they pick a theme, then they pick... "we'll do oracy and we'll do the four domains", and ... by the time you fit in maths and other things it becomes so contrived. A lot of the time you are doing an activity for the sake of an activity, not because its meaningful for the student or appropriate, because people say, "Oh, this fits into this! I've got to get all these things in here, this fits, OK, we're going to do this theme... (1.5.).***

4.3.6. Difficulty of devising adequate assessment tasks

A number of participants reported feelings of anxiety about the difficulties of devising adequate assessment tasks and the criticism that they may be exposed to at moderation. Some people spoke of how this has impacted negatively on the professional self-esteem of teachers whose intuitive and experiential understandings in doing student assessments is now severely curtailed. One comment was that some people now felt paralysed unless everything was more and more narrowly defined and legalised. The view was put forward by a number of participants that the form of assessment effectively 'deprofessionalises' teachers in de-emphasising their professional judgement and prescribing a narrow framework of performance criteria, range and conditions against which student performance is to be assessed. A few participants spoke of feelings of guilt because students, as a result of the stringency of the performance criteria, range and conditions, may be unable to be awarded the Foundation Certificate; or guilt in knowing that "a piece of work had been let through knowing that performance criterion 5 of element 4.7 had not been met".

4.3.7 Conclusion

The complex and rigidly prescribed requirements of assessment by means of performance criteria do "present dilemmas in terms of teaching holistically"(l.4.). By far the main problem with the CGEA identified by the participants in this evaluation project is that the required form of assessment (criterion-referenced, 'behavioural' assessment) is pedagogically inappropriate. Titis suggests a radical simplification in the revision of the Certificate and a move to a more flexible and holistic form of assessment. As one teacher said, "we need something more realistic and less restrictive"(R.2.). This suggests that further research should be undertaken to explore ways in which the assessment framework should be modified to enable more flexible and holistic assessment processes to be used. The issue of performative competency-based assessment and the possibility of introducing more flexible and holistic alternatives in the revised version of the CGEA is discussed more fully in section 5 of this report.

In the following four sections, issues in relation to each of the four streams are addressed separately.

4.4 READING AND WRITING STREAMS

4.4.1 Separation of oracy from reading and writing

The pedagogical relationship between literacy and oracy is discussed in *Talking Curriculum,* **the report of the ACFE-funded oracy professional development project, by Barbara Goulbom and Susan Manton (ALRNN, 1994c) . The** *Talking Curriculum* **report contains valuable background material, analysis and curriculum guidance, and should be read in conjunction with this and the following section.**

The separation of oracy from literacy, and the construction of 'oracy' (or, 'Oral Communication') as a separate stream, alongside 'Reading' and 'Writing' is seen by a number of people as problematic on the grounds that this separation implicitly goes against generally agreed notions of literacy as a form of social activity in different domains of life.

> *... the superimposition of the oral communication framework which straightway separated out cognition from language again. So now we have 'written language', 'spoken language' and 'content', as three separate objects of pedagogy and this means that written and spoken have to then be framed as forms or genres, as conduits of content... language has become completely disembedded from its context, or from the educational context. So, rather than having language across the curriculum, where language is integrated into actual engagement with a contextualised content, we are in fact going back to a reduced and abstracted form of language (1.7.).*

A number of people referred to the need to reintegrate oracy with reading and writing and the project entitled *Keeping it Together: Integrating Reading and Writing with Oral Communication* **offered guidance on how this can be done. In fact most people are already teaching it in an integrated way but assessing it separately (ALRNN, 1994b).**

4.4.2 CBT and the complexity of literacy development

Teachers involved in the Reading and Writing streams were particularly concerned that the complex interrelationship of factors affecting the acquisition and performance of reading and writing skills in an ALBE classroom is discounted by the application of a 'minimalist checklist' of criteria:

> *The complexities of the writing process are not always adequately recognised in a minimalist checklist of performance criteria. The performance criteria on their own cannot measure other important qualities of written texts such as the complex prewriting decision, subtle variations in tone, use of language and analogy and creation of mood, the often multiple purposes of a test. There are problems associated with text-based criteria that are becoming more and more apparent (R.9.).*
>
> *I think we have to be critical of the whole competency system because of the way it does compartmentalise language. It's saying, in order to be competent, you have to display this set of skills and it doesn't allow for other factors that might influence that, such as gender, socio-cultural background, ethnographic aspects. So, whose competencies are they really (I.13)?*

In some cases teachers were faced with making assessment decisions about student writing which had met all the performance criteria as such but still did not work as effective **texts:**

> *Last month a student completed a 'Practical Purposes' text that met all the performance criteria of level 3. The student had designed a poster explaining new government regulations. It contained 'detailed factual information', 'technical knowledge' etc, yet it did not achieve its purpose which was to clearly inform the student population of the changes which would affect them. As a text it was not effective; yet it met all the performance criteria (R.9.).*

Some referred to the literacy (reading and writing) competencies as being "too narrow and too prescriptive" (VALBEC, 1994). Another view was that the framework does not allow for some areas (grammar, pronunciation, spelling, punctuation, purpose and audience, etc) that are particularly required by NESB students, to be dealt with fully (R.8.).

On the other hand, because of the rigidity of the performance criteria and the inability at present to make an integrated judgement about individual students, there are always groups that may be made to fail because of a particular short-coming:

> *Another problem is that individual students will be at different levels in each of the four domains (R.7.).*

> *I think with language it's especially difficult to assess, with any kind of language, and it's got particular kinds of problems in relation to the CGEA. A particular one is people who meet all the criteria except for grammar and spelling ones and the grammar one is solely because they are second language speakers. Yet there are other ones who can spell and can use standard grammar and so on, who can't produce the sort of texts that each element is asking for. There's that variation. The performance criteria are not flexible enough, and I don't know if they ever could be* (1.9.).

> *I think it boils down to the task, the sort of text that you give them to produce, moving away from the abstract to the concrete, speech-like, to written like. What is problematic is the cut-off points. I think they are inherently problematic in assessing language (1.9.).*

4.4.3 Limitations on Text Types

A few participants referred to the tendency, in devising texts that will fit in with prescribed levels, criteria, range and conditions, to oversimplify and therefore to patronise students and to deprive them of authentic material.

> *A constant source of frustration to me is the range and conditions that are written for texts at level 2... I have discovered that The Age, Herald Sun and magazines and brochures are not using the same criteria in their production of texts.*
> *... Students stand to be disadvantaged because of restrictions and limitations that are formally put on them as learners, and on me as facilitator of their learning, as*

to the type of texts that are seen to be legitimate for them.... I refuse to allow students to be shielded, removed and protected from hard words, complex sentences, complex arguments that are part of their daily lives and discourses (and certainly part of the texts on television) and to insult them with simple sentences and simple debates, which is largely what the range and conditions of level 2 demand. ... Where does this leave me? Inventing assessment tasks which are out of context with student growth and classroom dynamics and interests (R.5.)?

... if independent performances are required to exit level 1 then I think we are stuck with a contradiction that can't be worked around. In my experiences with this group over a period of time I have found that students require a certain amount of teacher support for almost all of their activities. When they have this level of support then I think that they are capable of dealing with much more text than is prescribed by the Certificate. I found through my teaching that it is extremely difficult to find authentic texts that are made up of only 1 - 2 sentences. It is almost as though level one of the Certificate has given birth to its own genre, the two sentence narrative (R.7.).

In the past, teachers used (with level 1 students) all sorts of quite complex texts which the teacher read aloud and the students followed. The problem is that level 1 readers and writers are not level 1 thinkers. They are able to handle difficult texts and answer quite complex comprehension questions based on text that has been read to them by the teacher, or that has been read with the assistance of the teacher, or that has been read in a group of students all helping each other out or which has been played to them from a tape recorder. Students are also able to write quite complex texts by getting the teacher to scribe, by working collectively with other students and by sending pieces back and forth for teacher direction. Being able to do these things, to me, is a more significant achievement and use of time than being able to independently read two sentences or independently write two sentences which by their very size are unlikely to be socially powerful or relevant. (R.7.).

The idea in the Certificate that at level 1 you can read and write two sentences, at level 2 you can read and write a short paragraph and at level 3 you can read and write three to four paragraphs (and so on) seems to me to miss the point that literacy is about more than a very strict definition of independent reading and independent writing. I have come to this conclusion with my own group, after a period of teaching based on reduced texts and asking the students to independently have a go at writing one to two sentences on a given topic. It got to the stage where students were rarely reading authentic texts and the writing they were doing seemed overly simplistic and worthless to them (R.7).

4.4.4 ABEAF Framework (Background Works)

Despite these issues, there seemed to be fewer problems with the Reading and Writing streams than with the other streams. Quite a few people said that the CGEA (despite the assessment issues) does provide a rigorous and theoretically rich framework for analysis of the students' needs and the development of curriculum in Reading and Writing, acknowledged the original ABEAF framework (now the Background Works) as the basis of this. Practitioners had been widely consulted in the development of the ABEAF Reading and Writing framework and there had been a series of professional development workshops so that the 'skeleton' of the CGEA

framework, as it relates to Reading and Writing had already gained a degree of acceptance in the field. A number of people specifically expressed their appreciation of the work of Delia Bradshaw and Rob McCormack in developing the ABEAF framework. A frequent suggestion was that the revision should retain this framework with a simplified and more flexible means of assessment.

4.5 ORAL COMMUNICATION

The Oral Communication stream has been perhaps the most challenging and the most problematic of the four streams of the Certificate. The scope of this report does not allow for a full analysis of these issues. The project report of the Oral Communication Project, *Talking Curriculum* (Goulburn and Manton, 1995) contains a detailed discussion of the issues as well as an analysis and explication of the theoretical basis for developing the competence statements in the oracy stream. The report also includes advice, lists of activities and case studies of how teachers have taught the Oral Communication stream.

It is evident from the reports of the two oracy projects (Brearley, 1994b; Goulbum and Manton, 1995) that, despite the difficulties and the change of focus represented by the Oral Communication stream, teachers are teaching it and are doing so with integrity and innovation. For some this has meant simply adding a new layer of assessment onto the kinds of activities that they would have done in the course of general literacy; for others, the requirements have led them to explore new and productive activities to develop oral communication skills. With integrated programs the oracy stream has been used in conjunction with GCO as part of Reading and Writing or in the development and assessment of activities arranged in themes. However there are problems:

> *The oracy stream has been quite problematic; people wonder how best they can present tasksfor oracy. Do you contrive one that you then record? Is there a natural way to assess oracy or should it be an on-going and continuous thing that you strivefor in your class, that you as a teacher make objective (1.10.)?*

Some teachers have found the public debate elements useful, as a framework in expanding skills of discussion, listening and debate, and the knowledge elements useful in developing presentation and public speaking skills. Oral communication has always been regarded as an important component in literacy. The problem many people are finding now is that of assessing oral communication by means of a framework of performance criteria, range and conditions. At this stage there is a lack of acceptance within the field of the need for a separately assessed Oral Communication stream.

4.5.1 Separation of Oracy from Literacy

> *Ijust see oracy as part of reading and writing, so I don't teach it separately. I don't think, in oracyfor self-expression, I have any right to assess people's casual conversation in any way, so I chuck that one out (1.5.).*

A few participants expressed doubts about the oral communication stream on the

grounds that the theoretical and pedagogical issues involved in teaching Oral Communication directly have not been sufficiently addressed.

> *If you take one of the distinctions between writing and speech, it is that writing is composed and deliberate, and is therefore quite shallow in its grammar, and not very expressive. The point about speech is that it is spontaneous; it's so complex in its grammar, it's intuitive. To make people conscious of their speech is a serious issue. Much more intrusive than to teach people to write (I.7.).*

On the other hand, some teachers have found that there are advantages to having a separate oral communication stream because it can encompass some important communication skills (interviewing, public speaking, phone technique, etc) and because in some cases it takes pressure off students whose reading and writing is very low.

> *You can do oracy more consciously in a separate class, that is the good thing about having a separate oracy stream, also the students see it as something worthwhile doing if it's separate... When I introduce my level 2 class to the CGEA... there are students who don't see the point. Having it separate makes it seem like something worthwhile doing, rather than just chatting and getting off the point in Reading and Writing. There were some chaps in level 1 who could only write their name. In a separate oracy class it worked incredibly well, because these guys didn't have to worry too much about reading and writing skills that they felt bad about. It had a job-seeking focus, so they taught them a lot of interview skills for an interview. As a result of this class, the guy learnt to take over the interview and used the techniques he had learned in the oracy and he said, would you mind showing me around the factory ... he learned to take control (I.12.).*

Nonetheless, the Oral Communication stream is being taught in an integrated way with the Reading and Writing streams by the majority of teachers, as has been revealed by the Oral Communication project reports. Does the advantage of teaching and assessing oral communication in conjunction with other streams outweigh the disadvantage of adding on of a further layer of complexity in 'mapping' the oral communication elements over the reading and writing or GCO elements?

4.5.2 Theoretical basis not well understood

The Oral Communication stream uses the four domains in terms of four different kinds of speech episodes - social episodes (self-expression), support episodes (practical purposes), presentation episodes (knowledge) and exploratory episodes (public debate). The elements are developed around the notion of 'speech episodes' constructed as either transactional and interactional, relatively structured or relatively unstructured, monologic or dialogic. The performance criteria are further derived by the application of the concept of 'strands' of competence; defined in the Reading and Writing framework in terms of increasing complexity and increasing levels of skill. In Oral Communication the five strands are 'subject matter', 'tone, 'language', 'shape' and 'as listener'. It appears that this framework is not well understood or accepted as a useful framework for the assessment of skills in oral communication. A few people saw this framework as a narrow interpretation of the significance of oral communication in the process of developing literacy overall:

There is a body of linguistic theory which points to the primacy of oracy in the learning process, as a skill which is integral to the development of literacy in the broadest sense. There are no agreed benchmarks for oral competence as a social communication skill. The Certificate offers a particular view of oral competence, which does not necessarily preclude a broader perspective on what we mean by 'oral competence' but it does detract attention from the functional place of oracy in the acquisition of knowledge and the thought processing necessary for literacy acquisition. Oral competence must include the ability to use spoken language as a cognitive process in conceptual development (R.6.).

4.5.3. How, or what, to assess?

A number of participants have strongly resisted the assessment of oral communication, especially in the self-expression domain. As one participant asked, how does one teach or assess 'chat'? The framework of developing oral communication skills has not been derived from educational experience and there is no evidence that students progress consistently across the strands and domains, or even that the elements and performance criteria can be explicitly taught at all. To what extent are teachers being asked to assess attributes that students already bring to the class? To what extent are we actually able to teach those skills described in the elements and performance criteria in a classroom situation? Should we be assessing oracy at levels 1 and 2 at all? Why should native speakers of English have to have their oral communications skills assessed at all?

I just don't think (the oracy stream) should be there, and I don't think it should be assessed for ESB (English Speaking Background) people, particularly at levels 1 and 2... they already have a lack of skills in their everyday life, which they have to go through with, and this is something on top of that... it's absolutely outrageous, I think (I.5.).

The self-expression one is stupid... I don't see the point of it...
..I have given everybody a tick in the box, I haven't given any assessment tasks, because as soon as you make an assessment task for self-expression it's no longer self-expression, so I've given a tick in the box on the basis of a chat in the class, etc. You can do some teaching around that area by making people conscious about what they do... eg, write down the times that people chat about the weather. We can teach an awareness of self-expression but not directly teach casual conversion (I.12.).

4.5.4. The CGEA in relation to ESB and NESB learners

There are problems in the usage of the CGEA in relation to both ESB and NESB learners. It is clear that quite a lot of providers are using the CGEA and particularly the oral development stream for NESB students, in some cases, in place of ESL ("the push is now on that this is now a document for ESL as well" LS.). This is problematic; the theoretical framework is not one of second language acquisition and the Certificate was not planned as an ESL curriculum framework:

It doesn't cover the language competencies that you want o work with and you find you are sort of constantly trying to squeeze in language, but in fact it's such a comprehensive large framework there isn't really room for the language (I.14.).

The intelligibility criterion[4] · was criticised as being a potential source of discrimination of non-native speakers. Is the acceptance of standard (Anglo-Australian) English as the benchmark fair in the context of multicultural Australia?.

> *A lot of people have been frustrated by the oracy stream because they feel that the performance criteria are unfair. For example, "makes reasonable demands on the listener". Now, who is 'the listener' here? As teachers we can understand things quite well but the man in the street might not. So what does that mean for the ESL student in their communication. Are we saying that they are not communicating well, when in actual fact they probably are, but it doesn't really acknowledge that the communication is a two-way thing, and the listener has to put herself into that process (1.13).*

4.5.5 Conclusion

The responses documented in this section indicate that more research and consultation is needed on the Oral Communication stream. There are many questions that need to be examined, for example: whether or not the four domains are a useful basis for the kinds of oral communication skills that are appropriate to teach; whether such a single framework can handle the relationship between ESB and NESB language and literacy development needs (Lyons, 1994); how we define 'oral communication'; what the pedagogical processes are in developing it; how assessment can be fitted around these processes; and whether or not the problems in trying to assessing oral communication separately outweigh the educational benefits. The two oral communication project reports (mentioned earlier) examine these questions and suggest a range of educationally creative approaches to addressing the dilemmas.

4.6 NUMERACY

Feedback on the numeracy framework has been mixed: one teacher found the framework to be a useful guide to planning and assessment and a means of facilitating holistic and innovative best practice, especially in teaching in an integrated model across all streams:

> *The competency framework has changed my teaching for the better through facilitating a thematic approach which I am able to develop in tandem with the literacy teacher (R.4.).*

Others have found it puts limits on content areas and constrains good teaching practice. Many of the performance criteria have been criticised as "vague and unworkable" and a number of suggestions have been made as to how these could be improved and developed. The majority view appears to be that there are substantial issues that need to be addressed in a revision of the CGEA.

> *The numeracy section of the document is, I believe, unusable in its present form. At its best, it cramps a natural 'good practice' approach to numeracy teaching and allows for only the most contrived of assessment tasks if one is to attempt to match all the performance criteria to each element (R.2.).*

The following summary of issues presented is based on the conclusions of the June 24 Evaluation as Research workshop (ALRNN, 1994a) as well as the journal reports (R.2., R.4., R.8.) and interviews (1.3., **1.4.,** 1.11., 1.14.) with teachers involved in the present project.

4.6.1 All criteria applied to all elements

The descriptions of the elements, the performance criteria and the domains at each level have been truncated, in comparison with the other streams. In the numeracy part of the VAELLNAF there is only one page to describe the competence level and performance criteria, compared with four for the others. As all criteria are supposed to serve all four elements, this is another source of confusion and difficulty.

> ***There** is **only one page for each level so each page tries to encapsulate all of level two numeracy with elements and Q11f. set of performance criteria. These criteria are somehow supposed to serve all the elements. In literacy you have each element with a separate set of performance criteria*** **(ALRNN,** 1994b)

4.6.2 Atomisation of the curriculum

As with the other three streams, "cutting up the curriculum into elements and performance criteria" often goes against pedagogical best practice addressing the skills in a social context. The sum of the parts does not necessarily equal the whole. Performance of the elements and criteria as listed may not mean that the overall competency has been achieved.

> ***My view** is **that it's very hard to cut up mathematics. The analogy that I use** is **that I know how to saw timber and hammer nails, but I don't really know if I could build a house. I think that breaking up the course (has to be done) to measure how people are going, but I'm not sure if this** is **the best way to do it (1.4).***

Teachers are now constrained in the extent to which they are able to follow up students' interests and follow through on a skill area because they are obliged to cover all skills equally at each level.

> ***People are (now) locked into the fact that they have a time limit, and sometimes in maths you get a group of students who want to do everything in there, but they don't understand the basic concepts, they don't understand fractions, so you might spend eight weeks on fractions. At the end of the program, the students will be really pleased with the program they have done, because they have accomplished something that has bugged them for their whole lives. But now you can't do that, and you can't pick up all the incidental stuff, like one of the teachers was saying the other day, she had been doing basic percentage stuff, and now she wanted to move onto measurement, and the students didn't want to move on to measurement, They wanted to move onto the next step in percentage, which** is **how you would have previously taught it. You don't teach adults a fragment of it and then come back to them next year and teach them the next fragment (I.3.).***

4.6.3 Mismatch between skill levels of students across streams

Classes are usually grouped according to their writing ability rather than their Numeracy ability. In level 4 classes there are some people who probably don't

quite make level 2 mathematics and are therefore unable to be given Certificates at level 4 for Reading and Writing. Some higher level Reading and Writing students who require Numeracy teaching at the lower level may therefore miss out because of the problem of timetabling. This mismatch of students' levels between Numeracy and Reading and Writing has also been experienced at level 2: students may be "kept down" from gaining Certificates when they have achieved well in all the other streams (I.4.).

4.6.4 The pressure to "push on" goes against experiential learning

Good practice in the teaching of Numeracy "tends to swallow up the time". "For example, learning by discovery tends to go by the board. Especially in levels 3 and 4, there is a lot to fit in with the nominal 80 hours"(I.4.).

> *In the past we tried to get students to a certain level, without the rigidity that's been built into the Certificate, and you could probably afford to spend more time on one thing, so that if students were struggling along, give them some extra work out of a lesson, to try and give them more chance to grasp what's happening. This year I'm finding that there are these elements that have to be met, because of the performance criteria. I am finding, that especially towards the end of the semester, I am not doing justice to a particular thing. I might be rushing through, in two or three lessons, something I might have spent two or three weeks on in the previous year, just trying to get parts of the Certificate covered, so that the students have a fair chance of becoming competent in that particular thing... I think it puts pressure on the teacher, but then puts more pressure onto the student. I imagine that the teachers have got the skills to cope with that, but for the student, if they are being rushed through their work, it is going against a lot of good practice (I.4.).*

The effect of the Certificate in engendering a 'pass/fail' attitude also came up in the maths stream (1.4.). The requirements put pressure on the teacher, but even more so on the students.

4.6.5 Essential elements omitted

The elements as presently described limit the scope of the course. Many aspects considered essential by numeracy teachers have been left out, for example, there is not enough on measurement or number work (I.4., R.4.). At level 4 there is lots of work on parabolas, graphs and equations, but in real life (and for vocational work) this is not necessary. On the other hand, there should be more "bread and butter" skills as they relate to vocational areas: basic calculator skills, estimation and validation skills and basic book keeping skills (R.4.). There are short-comings too if it is to prepare students for Year 11 (1.4.). The numeracy stream is caught in a 'double bind' in attempting to provide both basic maths for further education (years 11 and 12) and numeracy for industrial purposes or further vocational training.

4.6.6 Conclusion

The numeracy stream needs to be redeveloped: preferably by a team of numeracy teachers who have had the experience with working with the existing framework. One participant said,

> *The Background Works are my lifeline and I would like to see these, along with the*

other positives I have mentioned, combined with some creative and ALBE type thinking to reconstruct the numeracy section of the CGEA into a realistic, workable and enjoyable document (R.2.).

4.7 GENERAL CURRICULUM OPTION (GCO)

Assessment for the GCO requires display of competence in any 3 of the 7 Mayer competencies, which have been expanded from the original three levels of developing competence to four levels, to be compatible with the VAELLNAF. The Mayer competencies (and the performance criteria that have been described at each of the four levels) reflect a broader and more generic notion of competency, than that which is evident in the other three streams. Being described at a high level of abstraction, they are able to be interpreted much more flexibly than those in the other streams.

The advantage is that there is greater flexibility and an opportunity to use the GCO framework for developing new curriculum to meet a diverse range of needs and interests. Providers have made use of it to fund and accredit a number of different sorts of offerings - including vocational content areas and creative arts activities. Others are using the competencies as a way of developing their teaching around group processes and to work more consciously at developing the generic competencies as they follow through themes. The curriculum development project report, ***Exploring the Options*** (ACFEB 1995) documents a number of curriculum case studies that have built on the GCO framework in health and lifestyle, science, social history, creative arts, legal studies, horticulture and as "tasters' in vocational areas.

However, as with the three other streams, there are a number of problematic areas in relation to the GCO that teachers have commented on.

4.7.1 Dilemmas of assessment

The (GCO) competencies have encouraged innovation and flexibility which is so valuable in a neighbourhood house, because those competencies are so useful. Although it's been the catalyst for some terrific stuff, I'm glad that I'm not a teacher in having to document the assessment tasks in a way that I would feel comfortable with (1.10.).

There is a set of inherent contradictions and problems associated with the GCO; the one most frequently cited is the fact that there is no way to assess the content of the general offerings that were to be accredited by means of the GCO. How can one assess Australian history, or women's health, or even vocational skill areas, against a set of such abstract and generalised competency statements relating to cognitive or group processes? Should the students' understanding of the content be assessed at all? Does 'problem solving' have any common meaning when applied to different contexts?[5].

There is no way, even in Mayer, to know whether a chef ordering vegetables from

> *the market, is a level 2 comparable to a computer student, constructing a data base. The only way to know whether they are comparable, is over about 20 years, where we find out empirically that it takes students of comparable competence about the same amount of time and attention to learn to do them both (I.7.).*

On the other hand, we need to ask whether students' understandings of the specific content or their subject-specific skills need to be assessed at all in ALBE? Is the assessment of generic skills the best compromise we can have, given that it would be impossible to have a measure of assessment that correlates the wide range of subjects, skills and themes that can be taught within the GCO?

4.7.2. Maps over 'good practice' in all streams

In fact, the GCO "maps over good practice in all the streams" and it seems that many providers are going for an integrated model, recognising that the social, analytic, organisational, technical and communicative skills described by the Mayer competencies are in fact developed by means of sound teaching practice in any educational setting. The GCO framework can therefore be used to acknowledge and legitimate what is already happening. This has given some teachers the easy way out in some instances, by saying, "of course people do all of those things in our class" and automatically accrediting students with the GCO elements.

> *I know that the (GCO) was set up so you could accredit a whole range of different things, but they are really just process stuff that happens in the class anyway... it depends on how you structure projects etc (I.5.).*

In one provider, teachers across all streams consulted with each other as to whether or not the competencies would be awarded without any particular curriculum being taught. This practice may undermine the original 'raison d'etre' of accrediting and offering knowledge-based subjects as part of ALBE. For people wanting to use the CGEA as a springboard into VCE, the process competencies may not be appropriate. There is a paradox here; on the one hand there is no way that the range of knowledge and skills that can now be taught as part of ALBE, *can* be fairly assessed on a common framework, but on the other hand, having a common framework based on process skills has facilitated and legitimated a proliferation of learning opportunities that otherwise may not have come about.

4.7.3. Generic skills and attributes already possessed by functioning adults

Some participants have commented that many of the Mayer competencies, especially at levels 1 and 2, are trivial, in comparison with what the adults are clearly already doing in their work and social lives. Can we give RPL on the basis of what we already know about their lives?

> *If someone is paying off a mortgage and doing these things in their daily lives and we know that they are functioning in the wide world with children and have kept down jobs, we know that they are more than likely to be demonstrating GCO level 2, so why is it that we need to create new tasks, in order to validate that? As someone else said, it's insulting to ask an adult, "show me how you can organise an activity"(I.6.).*

4.8 MODERATION

This section of the report should be considered in conjunction with the evaluation of moderation processes that was carried out under the auspices of ACFE during 1994 (the 'Inter-regional Moderation Project').

The majority view of participants in this evaluation process is that moderation has been very useful in developing common understandings and a common language around the assessment of the CGEA. Most participants have acknowledged the positive role of moderation as professional development. Moderation has succeeded as a process of professional sharing of issues, networking with colleagues and building a common language in the field (as well as building consensus about problems within the CGEA).

Some other issues have also emerged:

4.8.1 Cost of Moderation
Not all providers have been able to afford the recommended two hours per tutor per stream per semester. Travelling time and costs are not allowed for, disadvantaging isolated and rural providers. With competitive tendering for DEET programs, those building in moderation costs may be disadvantaging themselves in relation to other providers who are not offering the Certificate (I.13).

4.8.2 Personal stresses
Some people reported negative experiences, hurt feelings, competitiveness and conflict breaking out at moderation meetings and that these stresses lead them to teach artificially to 'the perfect' assessment task in order to fulfil requirements.

> ***I havefound many of the moderation sessions that I detailed in the journal were quite negative and I oftenfound it extremely difficult not to take it personally when my students work was assessed as not quite at competency standard (R.7.).***

As already discussed, others found moderation to be "positive and flexible" (1.13).

4.8.3 'Rubber stamping' and 'creeping standards'
There is a temptation to take 'the best' rather than a piece which is borderline. This leads to a group 'rubber-stamping' rather than critically discussing the tricky issues and cases. As one person said, the tendency for teachers to produce the most exemplary pieces could lead to a problem of 'creeping standards'.

> ***We have to be careful that we don't get creeping standards. There is always that danger, the last time when you look at (another teacher's) task, that task seemed a little better than mine, so I might be trying to take along a slightly harder task next time (1.4).***

4.8.4. Validity and reliability?
One teacher questioned how valid or reliable moderation is, if only one piece per teacher needs to be taken. We know nothing of the judgements that teacher may make in relation to all her other assessments. Another questioned what is actually

meant by 'level 2', or 'level 3'? How are these judgements actually made?

> *Here I am assessing three people, level 2 people, and they are performing at what I think is level 3, and I begin to think, what really is the difference; the more I think about it the less I really know. I think there is a lot of conflict out there, as to what is assessed as level 2 in one area and level 3 in another area. There is always a range within the performance criteria at each level, but I think that people's judgements are different in different areas. I mean people are still playing around with it all, especially when people get to the grammar and spelling, but it's very subjective, the judgements that people make (1.9.).*

4.8.5. Areas of confusion

There are areas of continuing uncertainty with respect to moderation. One is the actual focus of moderation: is the judgement to be made in respect to whether or not the elements as a whole have been displayed at a particular level, or whether the performance criteria (the range and conditions) have each been fulfilled separately to an agreed level of competence?

> *We weren't really worrying so much about the performance criteria; the main worry was [whether the work was at] level 2, level 3, and so on. If you try to address all of the performance criteria and all the elements you could make a real straight jacket for yourself (1.4).*

> *Recently I attended a moderation session where [teachers] brought along samples of student work at level 2 to be moderated and verified. I took along samples of responses to readings and student writing which I had, in the classroom context, celebrated in a big way. I felt the students were beginning to be critical, to be brave, to be adventurous. They told me I could take their work. They were proud that it was going to be looked at by other teachers because I felt they were good examples of their developing abilities. Up until this point, I had been desperately pouring over performance criteria and was pretty well convinced that these had been met. The discussion around the table did not centre on the performance criteria but on the range and conditions, because, as they did not believe it met the range and conditions of a level 2 text, the whole exercise was virtually disqualified (R.5.).*

Another uncertainty is the extent to which one can go in interpreting 'the spirit' of the document. What is the degree of latitude of teachers' professional judgement? Should a first or fourth draft be taken to moderation? Should all performance criteria have to be displayed in the one task, or over many? What constitutes a task? Could it be a series of related tasks? There are different understandings of this in different regions?

In some instances a student's work may not fit the criteria but is judged by the moderating group to be competent anyway:

> *Students who might be able to write something that really expresses what they are trying to say very clearly, but they might not have fulfilled the criteria as specified, but it's obvious they can do what they are supposed to be doing... (1.14).*

The converse case is that of pieces of work that fulfilled the formal criteria but in fact were not effective as pieces of text that were meant to communicate a particular purpose (I.14., R.9.).

Ethical issues of student confidentiality at moderation sessions have also not yet been adequately addressed.

4.8.6 Conclusion

Despite the issues raised in this section, moderation as a whole is regarded positively by most participants:

> *For the majority of teachers it has been extremely positive... by far the most important point is the professional development aspect, in the sharing of what they are doing with their students and confidence building... an affirmation that they are really doing a good job for their students and are on track (1.10).*

The continuation of moderation will be vital in any revised form of the CGEA.

4.9. IMPLEMENTATION

Many participants expressed frustration in relation to what they perceived as shortcomings in the processes of implementation. These criticisms generally took into consideration the historical circumstances that resulted in the rushed process of gaining accreditation. Many commented that more consultation should have been carried out before the VAELLNAF was finalised and that a limited pilot should have taken place before it was fully offered. One provider had in fact done a 'trial run' during 1994 in order to give the teachers a chance to get to know the VAELLNAF in preparation for offering it fully (I.13.).

The main issues relating to the implementation process that have arisen in this project are summarised in the following section.

4.9.1 Timing and Sequencing

Moderation guidelines and the Assessment Kit came out well after teaching had begun so that people were working from a lack of knowledge of what is required. This has led to an undermining of confidence. Curriculum development and support was needed at an earlier stage.

Dissemination of information has been too slow and industry has not been sufficiently included. However, a number of people expressed appreciation of the 'CGEA Hot Line' service, the Information Sheets produced by ARIS (ARIS, (1994 - 5) and the CGEA Assessment Kit (ACFEB, 1994c) and other projects supporting implementation.

4.9.2 Implementation through projects

Implementation through projects has been fragmented and there has been a lack of central direction or responsibility for the implementation of the CGEA overall. Projects overlap and have been of an uneven standard; some have not yet been published.

4.9.3 Annotated Agreed Variations process
There is general agreement that the Certificate document is a 'flawed document'. The process of Annotated Agreed Variations (AAVs) through inter-regional moderation has been a method by which certain performance criteria have been simplified, re-worded or scrapped altogether. However, this process was criticised by some participants and described by one as "chipping away at the edges": too slow, inadequate in terms of the overall review of the document that is required and having no official status. It would be important for the revision of VAELLNAF to take into account the revisions that have already been made through the AAV process.

4.9.4. Need for a standard format and image for the Certificate and statements of attainment
There is concern about how a 'provider produced' certificate will win recognition in any other place, particularly when produced by small community-based providers, as against large TAFE colleges. There is a feeling that the actual certificate should come from ACFE, and have a uniform image Statewide or else it won't be taken so seriously. Having a proliferation of locally produced certificates {which all look different) is seen to undermine the value of the Certificate as an accreditation. It seems out of keeping with the extensive processes of moderation and verification that aim to ensure the validity and reliability of the Statewide credential {1.8.) 6·

4.9.5. Recognition of prior learning procedures
Whereas RPL is implicit in determining students' commencement level, there are no official processes for acknowledging RPL. There is one example of the student who goes straight into level 3 or 4 classes and cannot be given RPL for the Foundation Certificate if she has not actually done the numeracy assessment. There is also a need to give RPL (officially) for some of the Mayer competencies to people who, by the way they operate their lives and manage families, are obviously demonstrating those competencies.

4.9.6 TAFE procedures
Participants from TAFE colleges reported on pressures experienced in TAFE settings in making the Certificate fit in with the complexities of enrolment and accreditation in a TAFE setting {1.4., R.8.). These issues need to be addressed at the level of the colleges themselves.

4.9.7 Impact of National Framework
A major concern is lack of knowledge of the National Framework and the uncertainty about whether and to what extent the National Framework will supersede the CGEA or change it. In fact, the National Framework is not a curriculum document but a framework to guide the writing of curriculum documents. However, the prevailing uncertainty may undermine commitment to the CGEA. A number of people have asked whether "all this will be for nothing". It is important that the experience of this first year of implementation be fed into the processes of developing the National Framework and National Reporting System and that the relationship between the two be clarified?·

4.9.8 Professional development workshops appreciated
There was positive feedback about the professional development workshops that

have been successfully run as part of the implementation projects. Some commented that more were needed, especially in the reading and writing streams. A few participants commented upon workshop leaders giving differing versions of the implementation guidelines.

5. DISCUSSION: EXPLORING ALTERNATIVE MODES OF COMPETENCY-BASED ASSESSMENT

This evaluation report confirms that the field is committed to continuing to implement and to develop an accredited certificate in ALBE and that the implementation of the CGEA has been an important step towards this aim.

The single biggest difficulty that has been encountered in all streams and in the Certificate overall is the performative, criterion-referenced assessment which is seen as over-prescriptive and educationally inappropriate.

Teachers are confronting the conflict between their pedagogical practices and commitments and the requirements of competency-based assessment which are constructed within a very different set of discourses than those which have constructed their pedagogical understandings and practices in the past (Lee and Wickert, 1994). In this final section of the report I offer a brief discussion of the issue of competency-based assessment in ALBE, based on the reflective reports, the interviews, a reading of the current literature, the debates surrounding competency-based training and my own understanding of 'where the field is at'.

Clearly policy-making bodies at the State and national level are committed to a competency-based approach. Now that we have had a year to become familiar with what this means in practice, we have the opportunity to further analyse the 'competency movement' in the context of ALBE. Any modifications of the CGEA must incorporate notions of competency which are more in keeping with our (evolving) notions of 'good practice'.

In the introduction to *A collection of readings in relation to competency-based training* Brown (1994) states that (the VEETAC) industry-based definition of CBT[8] · (on which the CGEA is based) is regarded as authoritative, but that there are a number of other ways 'competency' can be defined in relation to training and education. In fact, there is no single definition of CBT. There are degrees of 'competencyness', and different versions of it. He goes on to suggest that teachers can "do their job the best way they know how, exploring the boundaries and making creative interpretations of what constitutes competency-based training" (p.14).

There is a well-documented critique of narrow 'behavioural' competency-based approaches which focus on the display of performance. For example, the work of Michael Collins (Collins, 1994), Nancy Jackson (Jackson, 1994a), Barbara Preston and Jim Walker (Preston, 1993) Victor Soucek (Soucek, 1994) and Simon Marginson (Marginson, 1994).

The adult basic education profession and competence: promoting best practice report (Scheeres, 1993) exemplifies a more holistic understanding of 'competency'. The elements and performance criteria are described by means of descriptive benchmarks of complex practice; they are a guide to professional development or the development of career paths and are not intended to be used (nor could they be used) as a framework for the performative assessment of teachers.

The draft National Framework of Adult English Language, Literacy and Numeracy Competence (ACTR.AC, 1993) also moves away from the behavioural version of CBT taken up by VEETAC and defines 'competence' more broadly and holistically. Competency is described as "relationship between knowing and doing". "Competence requires a connection of performance and knowledge and skills, co-ordinated in such a way as to achieve social goals in particular contexts" (p.5). The competence descriptors within the National Framework defy division into separate performance criteria, range and conditions because of the complexity built into the statements of competence themselves.

In a paper entitled, ***Competency-based Standards in the professions and higher education*** (Preston and Walker, 1993) the authors discuss the characteristics of the behavioural approach to competencies which they say calls for activities which are discrete and observable; in which there is no room for the element of judgement; and where no account is taken of the impact of group processes or of surrounding culture. The 'holistic' or 'integrated' approach to competencies, on the other hand, "recognises the complexity and contextual variety of competent performance, the role of judgement, and the importance of self-evaluation and improvement".

The existence of these alternative understandings of 'competence' and 'competency' problematises the definition of competence that has been used as the basis of the VAELLNAF. What alternative ways could be found for describing and assessing levels of competence in ALBE? Axe there interpretations that would be less restrictive than the one utilised in the VAELLNAF and more compatible with our understandings of pedagogical best practice? As one project participant stated:

> ***A question that needs to be asked is to what extent the notion of competence in an occupational or vocational training context, can be applied to 'competence' as constructed in relation to notional levels and stages in processes of learning and developing literacy in a wide range of contexts and environments. 'Competence' in education is not really about the competent performance of tasks but is constructed abstractly to describe (notional) stages in complex processes of learning (1.7.).***

This participant put forward a powerful critique of criterion-referenced assessment (the form of competency-based training currently informing the framework) on the following basis:

> ***All the evidence about practical knowledge points to the fact that people don't use abstract criteria, they use cases, prototypes. So it would be much more important [in making a judgement] if somebody would say, "here is the sort of thing we are talking about, here's one, here's another, etc". So the assumption that people use necessary and sufficient conditions in deciding whether or not something is a case of something or not, is completely out of kilter with cognitive psychology which says that people use prototypes. I certainly don't use an explicit set of criteria for making judgements.***
>
> ***Highly skilled practitioners are using a whole range of knowledge to make their judgements. For example, you and I may agree in our judgments even though we are using completely different theoretical frameworks. The problem only arises***

> ***when somebody insists that we have to justify our judgements by reference to detailed explicit criteria. Do we use your categories, or mine? So we select one, but then whoever it is who is excluded is screwed. Does this mean you have to abandon your way of knowing whether this counts as, say, a two or a three? So, CBT is actually based on a completely false theory of what knowledge is and what competence is. This is a terrible thing.***
>
> ***Even the theories of how this is an example of that and how to read something, compete with one another. We should produce lots of different theorisations about making those judgements. The things I might focus on may be quite different from the things you focus on. Theory of both pedagogy and language is contested. There is no way that is the right way and always will be right way. Discussion and negotiation is part of the educational culture (1.7.).***

In the ***DEET Assessment Practical Guide*** David Rumsey talks about flexibility as a principle of competency-based training as follows:

"Within a competency-based system, a number of different types of assessment can be used. These can be grouped under various headings:

- ***holistic assessment.***
- ***summative assessment***
- ***formative assessment***
- ***diagnostic assessment***
- ***RPL and/or experience "***

"Assessment is said to be holistic when it covers, in an integrated way, multiple elements and/ or units from relevant competency standards. The integrated approach seeks to combine knowledge, understanding, problem-solving, technical skills, attitudes and ethics into assessment tasks" (Rumsey 1994, p.12).

In the ***DEET Assessment Technical Manual,*** Hagar, Athanasou and Gonczi argue that in assessing complex performances, there is a need for judgement and a need to find ways of aggregating the evidence on the various assessment events. "Complex performances do not lend themselves to a detailed check list or rating scale..." (Hagar 1994, p.69). Hagar et al quote Wolf (1993): "People operate within complex, tacit models of performance in which they compensate and weigh evidence by comparing the individual performance to their tacit model. The consistency of their judgement can be aided by clear verbal criteria, but even more important is the identification, from actual examples, of what the typical performances look like. In other words, the articulation of tacit models is actually like the process of developing criteria for different levels of performance in a short-hand and context-specific way" (p.92).

Criteria for higher level performances could be developed as 'guides for assessors' rather than as additional performance criteria. This is in line with the 'judgemental' model. This entails a need for groups of assessors to come together to discuss their exemplars "in order to bring to the surface their tacit performance criteria and create greater reliability" (p.92).

It seems that the model of CBT that the ALBE sector has acquired through VEE-TAC could be reconstructed in order to better suit the unique conditions and needs of assessment in our educational sector, taking into account the recent theoretical work that has been done on integrated and holistic models of competency-based learning discussed in the 1994 *DEET Assessment Manuals* and elsewhere. As an educational sector, we have an opportunity, based on our initial years of experience with the existing model to feed into and enrich the competency-based approach itself and to develop a more flexible model of competency-based assessment. Such a model would acknowledge the complexity and high level of discrimination required in judgements about levels of competency in developing language, literacy, communication, numeracy and group process skills.

An appropriate model of assessment of competency in ALBE would turn upon the professional judgement of the assessor and the weighing of evidence, rather than the application of criteria, range and conditions. Whereas the performance criteria with their range and conditions imply the necessity of criterion-referenced assessment, the broad competency statements in the VAELLNAF (one for each level for each of the four streams) in fact imply the need for more holistic and multi-dimensional professional judgements to be made. For example, the competency level 4 for Reading and Writing is "read and write at a level that displays more detailed, sophisticated technical knowledge and vocabulary and sophisticated language use, includes more objective and analytic processes and is precisely structured and sustained in length". Such an abstract statement of competency, defined in purely relative terms, could surely only be assessed in a holistic, rather than a reductionist way, involving the weighing of evidence and making of a professional judgement in the light of a model of competency which is clearly described and about which there is a degree of shared understanding with other practitioners.

So, in what way can flexibility and the element of professional judgement be reintroduced in the next version of the Certificate framework?

One suggestion is that we retain the competency statements at each level of each stream, and expand the description of the elements so that the performance criteria, instead of being separated out as unitary 'tests' of performance which must each be seen to be fulfilled in every case, are written into an expanded and complex description of the element itself. As Hagar, Athanasou and Gonczi suggest, they should be 'guides to assessment,' rather than criteria of performance. These then become *indications* of complex performance, rather than *necessary conditions* of it, in a manner similar to that of the original ABEAF framework. The judgement that is made about the competence of the person becomes a question of professional judgement which weighs a range of evidence, taking into account the suggested indications of competence and including the teachers' knowledge of the performance of the person throughout the course, within an agreed descriptive framework of levels of competence.

The emphasis then would be shifted from legalistic scrutiny of particular assessment tasks, and ticking off criteria, to a gathering and assessment of a range of evidence which is assessed as a whole; a judgement that integrates experience with evidence and takes into account a range of criteria (or indicators) of competency

and how these might be reflected in different contexts.

The adult basic education profession and competence: promoting best practice (Scheeres, et al, 1993) is clearly not an assessment document, but it is a good example of an approach to competency which responds to the complexity of educational contexts. It may therefore be relevant to those of us who are struggling to develop a competency-based model appropriate to the ABE classroom itself. The authors state that,

> ***The approach to competency descriptions here, as outlined earlier in this report, is based on the belief that stated competencies are not necessarily observable in themselves (and certainly not observable in discrete tasks), but rather they are able to be inferred from performance. The cues are not to be seized upon as mandatory criteria, but are examples of guides to the sorts of evidence relevant to performance criteria (p.9).***

A common understanding of what constitutes competent performance would be aided, as Hagar suggests, by developing a bank of exemplars which are shared across the State. Validity and reliability would be supported through the processes of moderation that has already been developed. (Hagar talks about "assessors coming together to discuss their exemplars".) Teachers would be accountable to each other in terms of the evidence that they have gathered that the element has been achieved - with room for leeway in special circumstances. For the CGEA, this could be done by a portfolio of work of each student which may include, for example, one piece of work that is completely independent and a written report by the teacher as to why a student has or has not reached a certain level of competency. Moderation would consist of practitioners sharing their judgements about student competence, but with a different emphasis.

The assessment of competence by stream and by level could be done at a global level, rather than at the reductionist level of criteria which together are said to constitute the elements, which in turn are said to constitute the general statements of competence . For example, competency level 2: "Read and write at a level not entirely concrete nor only related to personal experience but starting to show some diversity in organisation and style". The description of each element would be expanded so that the performance criteria become descriptors (and there might be more or different ones). The assessment would be based on a folio of a minimum number of pieces of work which taken together should cover each of the four elements or domains. However, it would not be expected that each piece of work reflects exactly all aspects of the description of each element, but that overall, the elements were covered. Such a procedure would be validated and supported by local and regional moderation processes.

These and other models or possibilities of 'exploring the boundaries' of the discourse of competency-based training and constructing more flexible and holistic competency-based assessment procedures need to be explored in preparing for the next version of the CGEA.

6. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

6.1 ACHIEVEMENTS

The introduction of the CGEA has contributed positively to the development of adult literacy and basic education in Victoria notwithstanding a number of difficulties experienced by participants in this project. In documenting the diverse outcomes, I have attempted to be even-handed in enabling the range of voices and opinions to be heard. At the same time, my own positioning as a teacher of the Certificate and my own critique has no doubt helped to shape the selection of issues, the analysis of outcomes and the formulation of recommendations.

In summarising the findings in this section, I have attempted to strike a balance and to articulate the tensions and uncertainties which co-exist with the perceived achievements. Given the complex and contradictory environment in which the CGEA came into being, it is impossible to make any singular or totalising statements about the overall success of the CGEA. There is no 'objective' viewpoint outside the interaction of particular discourses which we are all part of. The discourses with which the majority of project participants (including myself) identify and which are reflected most strongly in this report are those of pedagogical good practice, learner-centredness and student needs. However, there is a recognition of the underlying issues and the discourses informing the National Training Reform Agenda. Teachers are engaging with these discourses as they seek to reconcile them with older discourses of pedagogical good practice where possible. There are many uncertainties and unknowns about the opportunities for and limits to this project.

Evaluation of the CGEA needs to be located in this context of ambivalence and uncertainty:

- The CGEA has "brought ALBE in from the margins". It has raised its profile by giving it a coherent framework and a greater role in public educational policy. This involves an increase in accountability to government funding authorities but a corresponding decrease in accountability to the communities and students who are served by it.

- The advent of accreditation and the challenges of implementing the Certificate in its first year have lead to increased professional awareness and self-confidence in some teachers; and to feelings of frustration and disaffection in others.

- Students now have access to a recognised credential which aims to stream-line their pathways through the wider educational system and affirm their progress as they achieve milestones in the development of their skills. The extent to which this will be achieved, however, is not yet known.

- The Certificate framework has introduced greater rigour into curriculum planning and a heightened awareness of domains and genres of literacy and the differing pedagogies that relate to each of these. As it stands, however, the framework is seen by many as being too rigid and constrains of good practice.

- Moderation processes have been very successful in providing an opportunity to moderate student assessments and to develop a common language of description of student progress. The opportunities for discussion of issues and networking have also been appreciated by many participants. The confusions and frustrations that have been reported in relation to moderation probably relate to problems of implementation and to short-comings in the framework itself.

- In taking up the challenge of the CGEA, many teachers have been through a phase of intensive reflection on their practice; in adapting their pedagogies to the requirements, they have found opportunities for creativity, developing new pedagogical insights and techniques. On the other hand, more professional development is required to build on this phase of reflection and to ensure that sessional and part-time contract teachers are included and supported.

6.2 ISSUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS

In this section, issues that are referred to in the findings (section 4 of this report) and which call for further research, analysis or policy development are summarised. Many of these issues relate to the struggle to maintain and develop quality of provision in the policy context which is now characterised by both marketisation and greater managerial accountability. The issues listed in sections 6.2.1 to 6.2.5 include issues of significance in terms of national policy directions and broader educational questions that have been raised in the course of this evaluation. Sections 6.2.6 to 6.2_.12 summarise issues to be considered and further researched locally in preparation for redeveloping and revising the CGEA.

6.2.1 The CGEA in the context of tendering and marketisation

- What will be the long-term impact on the quality of provision of the CGEA of the practice of tendering and the increasing trend towards marketization?

- How can traditions of collaboration between providers (for example, in moderation, professional development and sharing of curriculum resources) be maintained alongside the competitive tendering for programs?

- How are sessionally-paid teachers on short-term contracts coping with the increased demands of teaching to the CGEA? Are there any differences between permanent or long-term contract staff and sessional staff in their approaches to working with the CGEA?

- Given that DEET are requiring that SIP-funded courses be accredited, and that renewal of funding for individual providers requires evidence of job- or training-related outcomes, how will the pressure to achieve such quantifiable outcomes impact on student selection and on classroom pedagogy?

6.2.2 The impact on funding

- What will be the impact of accreditation on the provision of funding for ALBE programs in the future? What funding will be available for ALBE programs that are outside the CGEA framework and which cater for students for whom it is not appropriate?

- How does the offering of the CGEA impact on small, community-based providers? How can small rural providers be supported to meet the additional costs of moderation and professional development that the_CGEA entails?

6.2.3 Issues of pedagogy and assessment

- To what extent do the values of 'learner-centredness' and social and individual development (which are central to traditional notions of adult literacy pedagogy) risk being compromised by the competency-based approach as it currently stands (or to what extent can the two be made compatible)?

- What are the pedagogical and methodological issues that arise in relation to the tension between maintaining the 'integrity' of curriculum and implementing the prescribed structure of streams, levels and domains, elements and performance criteria?

- What creative solutions are teachers finding to this tension?

- If competency-based assessment is not appropriate in the context of adult literacy and basic education, what other forms of assessment would be appropriate and acceptable to the field and to policy-making bodies? In particular, what alternative forms of assessment could be developed which are reliable, valid and fair, but which utilise professional judgement and the weighing of evidence, rather than the application of prescribed criteria?

- If at this stage a competency-based approach is inevitable, could a simpler and less restrictive form of competency-based assessment (one which is compatible with notions of a holistic and eclectic pedagogy) be developed? What would be the processes for doing this?

6.2.4 Impact on students

- What are the students' perceptions of their learning experiences in CGEA courses?

- What is the attitude of students to the CGEA and to the awarding of a statewide credential?

- What are the subsequent learning pathways of students who are awarded statements of attainment or who complete the CGEA at either level 4 or at foundation level?

- Has accreditation improved access to provision of training and further education for students in the mainstream?

6.2.5 The impact of the CGEA on teachers

- How significant is the increased work load associated with the CGEA? Does this remain constant or does it decrease as teachers become more confident and experienced with the requirements?

- How are sessionally-paid teaching staff managing the increased work load associated with the CGEA?

- How do teachers understand the processes of change that they are experiencing, in coping with the stresses of teaching with the CGEA ?

- To what extent are teachers acceding to the new requirements, and to what extent are they resisting and attempting to change aspects which they find unacceptable?

- In what ways has the introduction of the CGEA facilitated the development of 'good practice'?

- How do teachers describe 'good practice' in the light of the CGEA framework with its domains, levels and competencies?

- What professional development is needed to support teachers in developing competency-based curricula and teaching in a competency-based framework?

- What is the effect of higher levels of accountability on the professional standing of teachers of ALBE?

6.2.6 Impact on course planning

- How well is the nominal 80 hours per stream per level fitting in with the curriculum and assessment requirements, in the experience of teachers teaching the Certificate?

- How compatible is the CGEA with the 20 weeks of a normal DEET-funded course in terms of the time required for students to reach appropriate levels of competency for either the foundation or the full certificate ?

- For students who are unable to gain a certificate in one 20 week course, is the awarding of statements of attainment, a credible and valued alternative?

- To what extent have 'statements of attainment' been successful in terms of their portability and as building blocks in subsequent courses?

- What are the costs and benefits of using the CGEA in part-time (4 hours or less)

or evening courses?

- What are the issues in using the CGEA framework for pre-level 1 students?
- What are the issues in using the CGEA in providing for mildly intellectually handicapped students?

6.2.7 Reading and Writing Streams

- Is competency-based training an appropriate system to support the development of complex language and writing skills?
- What is the impact of the competency-based framework on pedagogy at the very early levels of gaining literacy?
- To what extent is the framework of the four domains appropriate in meeting the diverse needs of literacy students?

6.2.8 Oral Communication Stream

- How are we to understand the development of oral communication skills in relation to the different processes of acquiring literacy, numeracy and conceptual skills? Which theoretical frameworks are useful in understanding this process?
- What are the educational reasons for either retaining a separate oral communication stream or recombining it with reading and writing?
- How can oral communication be assessed without artificiality or the risk of cultural imposition or discrimination?
- What are the issues of power and cultural dominance that teachers need to be aware of in assessing oral communication skills?
- Is the CGEA an appropriate framework and certificate for the teaching of ESL or ESL literacy to NESB students? Could it be made more appropriate?

6.2.9 Numeracy Stream

- What is the impact of competency-based assessment on teaching and learning in numeracy?
- Can the numeracy stream be developed to meet vocational as well as further education goals in numeracy?

6.2.10 General Curriculum Option

- What are the issues in combining in the one credential the Mayer (key) competencies of the General Curriculum Option with the skill-specific competencies (the elements) in the other three streams of the Certificate?

- How useful has the CGO been in accrediting locally-determined subjects? What kinds of subjects have been offered as General Curriculum Options?
- What are the issues in the application of the GCO to industrial and vocational training and/or as a means of gaining skills relevant to the VCE or tertiary education?
- How are the principles of Recognition of Prior Leaming {RPL) to be applied in the delivery of the GCO?

6.2.11 Issues of articulation

- How well does the CGEA articulate into either vocational training or the VCE? Where have students who obtained Certificates in 1993, 94 and 95 gone on to?
- How do the assessment levels of the CGEA compare with those of their school equivalents (Year 10, VCE Years 11 and 12)?
- How successful is the CGEA as a framework for industrial or workplace training or used in conjunction with industry based courses?

6.2.12 Moderation and Implementation

- Can moderation be extended to become a regular forum for networking and professional development within regions and Statewide?
- How can it be adequately funded?
- How can moderation be further developed to address the issues that have been raised in this report and to clarify the areas of continuing confusion?
- What is the process for the development of RPL guidelines in relation to the CGEA?
- What professional development will be offered to support practitioners in relating the CGEA to the National Framework and National Reporting System?
- How successful has the provision of the CGEA in other States been? What feedback is available?
- What can be learned by comparing the implementation of the CGEA with that of its equivalents in other States (and in the UK)?

6.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

Following are the major recommendations that have arisen from the findings of this evaluation project:

1. A review and revision of the VAELLNAF and the CGEA, taking into account the findings of this evaluation and a number of other CGEA project reports, is necessary. This work should commence as soon as possible.

2. The revision must be properly resourced and undertaken by practitioners who participated in the implemention of the Certificate in 1994. It should take into account the experience of teachers throughout the initial period of implementation of the CGEA, and the issues that are detailed in sections 4 and 5 of this report. It should include a review of the latest literature on assessment and competency-based approaches with a view to developing a form of assessment which is more appropriate to the current understandings of pedagogical 'good practice' in ALBE.

3. A central unit should be established to oversee and co-ordinate the processes of implementation, moderation and revision of the document and the co-ordination of support projects. In particular it would be responsible for the provision of relevant professional development.

4. The ALRNN should co-ordinate with ACFEB to seek funding to support a range of further research projects suggested by the findings in this report. In particular, competency-based assessment, the articulation of the CGEA into mainstream training and education, its role in workplace basic education, its impact on students and issues of classroom pedagogy need to be researched in ways which bring theory and practice together and contribute to the development of better practice in ALBE.

ENDNOTES

1 Following the custom in the field the acronym 'CGEA' has been used, rather than the 'CsGEA' or the commonly used term, 'the Certificate'. This may also be taken to mean the Victorian Adult English Language , Literacy and Numeracy Accreditation Framework (the VAELLNAF) as all these terms are often used interchangeably.

2 Quotations used throughout the report are referenced as follows: Journal Reports 1-11 (R.1., R.2., etc), Interviews 1-13 (I.I., etc)

3- The elements are broad statements of competency that relate to each stream within each module. For example, "Reading and Writing Module 1, *Element 1.2: Writingfor Practical Purposes:* Write a simple practical text of 1 - 2 sentences".

4- The 'intelligibility criterion' runs throughout all the domains and levels of the Oral Communication stream: level 1, "intelligibility (grammar and pronunciation) may make demands on other participants"; level 2, "intelligibility makes occasional demands on listeners"; level 3, intelligibility rarely makes demands on listeners"; and level 4, "intelligibility makes no demands on listeners".

S. General Curriculum Option Element 2.6: Can solve problems

1. Clarify desired outcomes and processes
2. Maintain focus through to an appropriate completion
3. Respond to faults and difficulties as they arise
4. Check the accuracy of the outcomes and the utility of the process

6- Pre-printed certificates have since been produced by ARIS on behalf of ACFE and distributed through the regional offices.

7- A framework for translating CGEA levels of competency onto the The National Reporting System has since been developed.

B. The VEETAC definition is as follows: "Competency-based training is concerned with the attainment and demonstration of specified skills and knowledge and their application to minimum industry specified standards as endorsed by the National Training Board (NTB). (VEETAC Working Party on the Implementation of Competency Based Training, 1992).

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ELEVEN **TEACHERS** REFLECT ON THE **IMPACT OF** THE **CGEA ON THEIR PRACTICE**

Eleven reflective reports written by the teachers who constituted the evaluation working group follow. Each of the teachers kept a personal/professional diary between August and November, 1994, documenting their thoughts and experiences in relation to the impact of the CGEA on their classroom and professional practice. The teachers then submitted reports, relating critical incidents and summarising the key issues. The reports have been slightly edited for length and style. The reports are anonymous; the names of the authors are grouped with the names of other project participants in the acknowledgements.

1. REAL LIFE TEXTS CANNOT BE NEATLY BOXED

My response to the CGEA sounds like an ABE student's review of a film he saw: "It is good in parts". Having worked with the document for over a year, the warts have become evident. While the original Frameworks (the 'Background Works') enlightened my practice and informed my planning, the accredited certificate which followed it has sometimes had the opposite effect. A year later, I am still not convinced that CBT and language and literacy sit comfortably together.

At the end of last year I was forced to re-examine my practice and planning. Preparing documentation, assisting tutors and rewriting obsolete curriculum documents to make way for the Certificate, I had to make explicit the theory that underpinned my teaching. Before I could deliver the CGEA I had to prioritise the elements of past programs which could not be compromised. While I recognised CBT would mean a change in my assessment processes, I did not think it should entail giving up aspects of programs that I knew worked, or giving up on students' needs. The transfer to the CGEA has set me on a course of reassessing the assumptions which I took into the classroom.

Having taught ABE for some years now, I must admit to my stockpile of "things that work" and "this is how I always teach..." approaches. The CGEA has helped clear away some of these cobwebs of habit. The demands of assessing 12 elements in 'Reading', 'Writing' and 'Oracy' at particular levels forced me to reorganise some of my planning and try to better integrate my classroom activities. An example best illustrates this. Usually I start programs with what is now known as the 'self expression' domain. Always students had personal experiences they could write about and I had a collection of accessible, high interest texts that struck a chord. However in a new class, I did not expect students to contribute personal experiences amongst strangers and so 'Oracy for Self Expression' always came later. Yet this semester, more conscious of integrating activities, I changed my usual tack. I introduced 'public debate' in the second class and it worked. The issue was straight forward enough for students to take up and all were willing and eager to contribute to discussing a fairly safe subject without feeling threatened or exposed. This change in old habits really has resulted from the CGEA which focused me more rigorously on oracy practice and assessment. Being a communications skills teacher I had always thought I included a great many opportunities for oral episodes, yet the CGEA has made explicit the standards that I should be aiming for in assessment of oracy.

To a lesser extent this is true of the whole document; it does provide me with a ready made checklist of stringent performance criteria to assess student work, but I am sure this is what assessment is all about. I am still not prepared to swallow the whole performance criteria approach hook, line and sinker. There are monumental achievements of many ABE students which I cannot assess with the CGEA document. Increased confidence and self-esteem, a first contribution to a discussion, completing a piece of writing, perceiving the self as learner and gaining pleasure from a text for the first time are just as important outcomes to me as "using and, but and so" or "ordering information by the cause and effect or by classification connections".

Last semester I gave the CGEA a go, but my classes were far too 'assessment task' driven. Counting off the 12 elements, setting numerous assessment tasks and seeing if students had achieved all the performance criteria were far too much my focus. Now down the track somewhat and more familiar with the shortfalls in the certificate document, I am more circumspect. I look to the earlier ABEAF frameworks document more to inform my practice. The later accreditation document is mainly something I consult when designing assessment tasks and moderating. To design a syllabus, I focus on my students' current skills and future goals and my understanding of what works in the classroom.

With my current group I am not willing to let assessment intrude and take time from other classroom activities. I am integrating assessment tasks where possible. I am attempting to assess reading not only through written question/answer type approach, but through group discussion, role plays, students posing questions, students compiling surveys etc. The small size of the group allows me to assess many of the oracy elements through observing classroom interaction, rather than setting artificial teacher driven tasks. Unobtrusively, I can assess participation minus the unwieldy checklist ready to tick off all the students against the many performance criteria. In a numeracy class where we are integrating literacy, the possibilities of integrating and lessening the number of assessment tasks across the streams are becoming obvious. The challenge here is to develop uncomplicated record keeping procedures, inform students of our intentions to include assessment from their other subjects and correlate all the material with other teachers.

Yet even when using the Certificate for assessment purposes, I am finding there are difficulties. The complexities of the writing process are not always adequately recognized in a minimalist checklist of performance criteria. The performance criteria on their own cannot measure other important qualities of written texts such as the complex pre-writing decisions, subtle variations in tone, use of language and analogy and creation of mood, the often multiple purposes of a text. There are problems associated with text based criteria that are becoming more and more apparent.

Last month a student completed a 'practical purposes' text that met all the performance criteria of level 3. The student had designed a poster explaining new government regulations. It contained 'detailed factual information', 'technical knowledge' etc, yet it did not achieve its purpose which was to inform clearly to the student population the changes that would affect them. As a text it was not effective, yet it met all the performance criteria!

It seems to me there are more complex interrelationships between language and audience and text that result in an effective document than the performance criteria acknowledge.

Moreover real life texts cannot be neatly boxed into the range and conditions either. I have found so many texts that fit all my criteria (i.e. high interest, appropriate level, relevant, well written) only to find they do not match the specified range and conditions. Texts vary so much and so often contain features of multiple domains. The 'knowledge' domain usually contains features of 'public debate' and vice versa. Is a film review 'self expression', 'public debate' or 'practical purposes'?

The 'practical purposes' domain seems particularly problematic. (At moderation sessions we refer to it as "writing for recipes"!) Whoever heard of business letters or job descriptions with diagrams (as prescribed in Element 4.2., *Writingfor Practical Purposes?* Why should students battle to understand texts with "ill-placed and/or highly complex diagrams" (as described in the range and conditions of Element 4.6, *Readingfor Practical Purposes?* Surely the whole purpose of this domain is to to learn to convey information and instructions in clear, non-technical, English.

To avoid narrowing my focus, I use texts, even in assessment tasks, which do not fit all the range and conditions. More and more the challenge becomes a case of designing assessment tasks and selecting materials that allow students to develop the skills to demonstrate the performance criteria, *and* that represent real literacy in the world.

The difficulty of students bringing in texts from their 'real lives' for assessment remains a problem. While the text has achieved its purpose (e.g. minutes that reflect a meeting's content) it may not meet all the performance criteria. While some performance criteria may be met (and the text may include a great deal more besides) if all the criteria are not met, do I assess the text as "not yet competent"? I have great difficulty with this. If a text has clearly and effectively communicated to its audience in a workplace, how can I suggest changes? Shouldn't the CGEA reflect and value the literacy of the real world and not vice versa?

There are some "good parts" of the CGEA: project reports, moderation and discussions about administrative guidelines have provided practitioners with rare opportunities to share ideas and good practice. Moderation is perhaps the biggest bonus of the CGEA. Exposure to the knowledge and experience of other providers rekindles my enthusiasm and reassures me that I am not alone in my struggle to wrestle with the CGEA.

Professional development has never been so good! In our region, participants, having worked with the document for over a year and a half, are particularly well-informed. Sessions are stimulating exchanges in which we swap assessment tasks, discuss practical solutions to problems and critique the Certificate.

However the feedback from interregional moderation is less enlightening. The "annotated agreed variations" is a bandaid approach to a flawed document. How can the wording of an isolated performance criterion be changed, yet the confusing and narrowly focused 'practical purposes' domain remain intact? Will there be other variations from future moderations where more "warts" are uncovered? Will there be other "variations" and will we be having to refer to multiple documents to assess students' work?

The same interregional moderation urged us to "interpret the spirit"of the document.' I thought the move to CBT was to ensure validity and consistency across providers. I hope I interpret the 'spirit' of the CGEA the same way as others. Is a 'spirit'an assessable, demonstrable quality?

Attending recent professional development sessions has caused me to reflect on the

direction the field has taken with the implementation of the CGEA. Many individuals or small groups have been granted inadequate funding and too tight timelines to investigate and direct the field into the future. These budgets and timelines have not allowed widespread consultation, have meant projects have not been available to those implementing the CGEA by the deadlines, and access to these projects' reports and recommendations is not always easily available. Even the focus of some of the projects is questionable. Do ABE courses have to be matched and cross credited with all existing Victorian courses? It seems irrelevant to the needs of Ivanka who just wants to help her daughter with her homework. Other projects such as the soon to be released RPL seem to have lost sight of the needs of our client group. If any ABE student can successfully undertake the complex RPL process outlined, then automatically they are above Level 4 of the General Curriculum Option. Sometimes I come away from such sessions feeling that in our efforts to gain recognition for the field, we have lost sight of our client groups' needs.

While funding sources for projects is available, time release and money are still not available to allow teachers to participate in moderation and deliver or attend professional development. Much of the new information in the field is still disseminated around the photocopier or hurried informal exchanges in the corridor. While our Certificate may be accredited, much of the work implementing the CGEA has relied once more on the good will and voluntary time of those in the field.

I began this report with the statement that the CGEA has "good parts as well as bad". Yet when I reread my report I see I have written mainly about the bad. Perhaps this is revealing. It has been a demanding year implementing the Certificate and trying to maintain student confidence, enjoyment and direction, when I was not always certain of the direction the CGEA was taking me. Yet I am determined to continue with the Certificate and not just look to the National Framework as an answer. My resolution for 1995 is to focus more acutely on meeting learners' needs, rather than spending time battling college bureaucracy, translating obscure performance criteria and guiltily worrying that I had let a piece through knowing that performance criteria number 5 of element 4.7 had not been met.

2. THE NITTY GRITTY OF TEACHING WITH THE CGEA

Introduction

'Through the process of maintaining my journal, a number of themes seem to have presented themselves again and again. For that reason this overview is theme/issue based and does not take into account the order in which these issues arose. Many of them lead from one to another but others arose then disappeared then came back again. Some ideas came up, then I changed my mind based on new experiences then other experiences made me reassess my original opinion. Overall I think the process of journal keeping allowed me to move beyond the general criticisms I had of the CGEA to the nitty-gritty of what makes it workable or unworkable.

The Group

My journalling was based on my experiences with a level 1 group, whom I taught for six hours a week during the period I kept my journal. The group was made up of eleven men and one woman. They were predominantly of ESB (English-Speaking Background). I was doing other teaching at the time but I wanted to focus exclusively on the effects of the implementation of the CGEA on level one provision as I think that many of the issues in level 1 are also present in the other levels but I have also been concerned about the lack of attention focussed on this group in analyses of ALBE practice. I also included in my journal my interactions with colleagues during this time and how they influenced my teaching and my attitude to the CGEA. I believe that this is important because the teachers I work with like to work as a team. We are very open with each other about our teaching and we often share resources and ideas with each other. So my impressions during the journalling were influenced by these interactions as well as by my interactions with my students.

Writing Independently

One of the issues that seemed to come up continually in my journal was the extent to which students need to be able to complete pieces of writing independently in order to reach competency level. This has emerged as extremely unclear with different reports coming back from moderations and professional development about some providers using exam conditions and others sending third and fourth drafts of pieces of work along to moderations which had been explicitly shaped by the exercise the teacher had constructed (and which the student would be unlikely to replicate outside a classroom situation).

When we first began looking at the Certificate we all talked a lot about how we wanted only to map the Certificate over our current teaching practice and still continue with our existing approach to 'good practice'. The problem now, however, is that if independent performances are required to exit level 1, then I think we are stuck with a contradiction that can't be worked around. In my experiences with this group over a period of time I have found that students require a certain amount of teacher support for almost all of their activities. When they have this level of support then I think that they are capable of dealing with much more text than is prescribed by the Certificate. I found through my teaching that it is extremely difficult to find authentic texts that are made up of only 1 - 2 sentences. It is almost as though level one of the Certificate has given birth to its own genre: the two sentence narrative.

In the past, teachers used (with level 1 students) all sorts of quite complex texts which they read aloud while the students followed. The problem is that level 1 readers and writers are not level 1 thinkers. They are able to handle difficult texts and answer quite complex comprehension questions based on text that has been read to them by the teacher, or that has been read with the assistance of the teacher, or that has been read in a group of students all helping each other out, or which has been played to them from a tape recorder. Students are also able to write quite complex texts by getting the teacher to scribe, by working collectively with other students and by sending pieces back and forth for teacher direction. Being able to do these things to me is a more significant achievement and a better use of time than being able to read two sentences or write two sentences independently which by their very size are unlikely to be socially powerful or relevant.

The idea in the Certificate that at level one you can read and write two sentences, at level 2 you can read and write a short paragraph and at level three you can read and write three to four paragraphs (and so on) seems to me to miss the point that literacy is about more than a very strict definition of independent reading and independent writing. I have come to this conclusion with my own group, after a period of teaching based on reduced texts and and asking the students to independently have a go at writing one to two sentences on a given topic. It got to the stage where students were rarely reading authentic texts and the writing they were doing seemed overly simplistic and worthless to them.

I have found it interesting, by way of comparison, that the National Framework document defines developing competency in terms of the movement from 'requiring support' to 'working independently', rather than in terms of the amount and complexity of the text involved.

Curriculum Guide or Assessment Tool ?

Another issue that constantly arose was the extent to which the document should be used as a curriculum guide and the extent to which it should be an assessment tool. If the level 1 module were to be used as a curriculum guide as I used it initially, the students would be learning a genre of writing that has no currency outside the classroom (as I've already pointed out). Much of my journal was about the responses of my colleagues and myself to the idea of using the Certificate to dictate practice, or else the possibility of mapping the Certificate over our existing good practice without altering it significantly.

When I first began working with the Certificate I was terrified of replicating 'school style' examinations. The last thing I wanted to do was repeat the same confidence destroying activities with which the students had already experienced a history of failure. For that reason I began to incorporate the Certificate into my everyday teaching, the idea being that I would just observe people's development inconspicuously and note down when they reached competency. The problem with this is that every lesson had to fit the criteria of the Certificate so that the work would go into someone's folio to enable them to access the Certificate. That lead to activities that resulted in a piece of independent writing and a piece of independent reading. During this time I became very disillusioned with my teaching practice. The students found producing these pieces of work patronising and useless.

It was difficult for them to experience a sense of success and development. It also required a stack of work on my part and led to a situation where texts were teacher-constructed most of the time. It also meant that I moved the students away from activities that broke up the text such as word games and word lists, 'doze exercises' and visual literacy work. It also lead to less use of non-print text then I had previously used. This lack of authenticity became really worrying to me.

The result of this is that I have come almost full circle in my attitude towards assessment. I now concentrate on teaching. I use all sorts of texts and activities and rarely could the work that I set the students be used for assessment purposes for the reasons I've already outlined. When I feel that a student is ready to exit level 1, I would then give them activities to do that would allow them to demonstrate this competency. I would try and incorporate this assessment into the entire class so that they didn't feel singled out, but I would be quite explicit with them about the process. I feel that this is a reasonable compromise and it allows the student to say whether they want to go for the Certificate or not.

Having come to that conclusion, I'm conscious of the fact that assessment tasks take very little time at level 1. If a student can write "I don't think that people should smoke. It's bad for your health and you might get cancer" in order to reach competency in writing for 'public debate' at level 1, it isn't going to take much time for them to write a few sentences describing their childhood and thus reach competency for writing for 'self expression' at level 1. At levels 3 or 4, it might take weeks to draft and redraft a long essay about smoking or to write a lengthy narrative abut a childhood experience. Given that writing can no longer be based on personal opinion and familiar ideas at these higher levels and must in fact be heavily referenced and quote a wide range of sources, there must be an abundance of time spent researching for assessment pieces before they can actually be written. I think teachers working at these levels would have real difficulty avoiding using the CGEA as a curriculum guide as well as an assessment tool.

Wasted Time

I was struck when re-reading my journal by the amount of time that we have spent trying to come to terms with various aspects of the Certificate that should have been adequately devised and explained when it first arrived. The difficulty in deciding what constituted a curriculum guide and what constituted an assessment tool that I have outlined above took me and my colleagues an enormous amount of time to work through and who knows whether the approach I've come up with is adequate.

What protection do I have if future employers and colleagues interpret this document in a different way and demand a more rigorous and strictly defined usage? My colleagues and I have spent ages working out a system of assessment and placement only to have the assessment and placement project arrive with much higher demands for each of the levels. One of the texts that I have used as an assessment tool for level 2 appeared as an assessment tool for level 1. When the assessment and placement project was presented at a workshop I attended, I brought this up. I asked, if the Certificate at level 1 only requires a few short sentences about personally familiar material to reach competency, why, for the purposes of assessment and

placement would students be expected to read five paragraphs about an issue that is unlikely to be personally familiar in an environment where they already feel extremely threatened? I received a response of sorts but it was a moot point because the project was finished and the standards set, with all means of recourse closed off. I'm sure that this will be the case when many of the other projects become available. By saying this, I don't mean it as a criticism of the author of this or any other project.

My concern here is with the process by which projects come out months after practitioners have begun working with the CGEA. Given how confusing the document is I find this a terribly difficult situation. Similarly, an enormous amount of time has been spent trying to understand performance criteria that are extremely convoluted and unworkable only to have them change into 'agreed variations'. **It** has made me extremely suspicious of the value of using a certificate that is so flawed that it can't be implemented without having to rewrite **it**. Why put our students through all this when sections of the Certificate might have altered before you have the opportunity to put them to use. And if the Certificate is flawed, if it does need rewriting, why are we going through the farce of treating it as a completed document when it so obviously isn't. And if it is to be rewritten, why go through such a feeble process of slowly chipping away at the edges. **It** seems to me that what I've been going through is a trialling of the Certificate, only without the funding for a trial and under the pretence that we are just fine tuning a completed document.

Moderation and Professional Development

Through the journal writing process I have become aware of how much of the precious time that is set apart for professional development has been taken up by the CGEA. If this time were just being used to assess and moderate students' work I wouldn't mind so much but when it is spent doing the work of trialling a draft document then it becomes extremely problematic. What concerns me is the amount of other ideas and activities that weren't followed through because I was so busy dealing with the CGEA. Initially I was really happy that the CGEA moderation and professional development at least led to a situation where we could discuss our practice. However as time has gone on, the moderations have taken on a less enjoyable tone as we get down to the tin tacks of passing or failing students and, by extension, passing judgment on other teachers' practice. I have found many of the professional development sessions that I detailed in the journal were quite negative and I often found it extremely difficult not to take it too personally when my students work was assessed as not quite at competency standard. I found it hard to separate these judgments from my feelings towards the student. The whole idea of denying someone a certificate because they don't fulfil one or two very narrow performance criteria when they can do a thousand other brilliant things since they first arrived in class still really irks me.

Overview

Overall my journalling of CGEA practice has unearthed more negative experiences than positive ones. The implementation has at times made me question my own abilities as a teacher and put my students into a position where their feelings about course content had to sit second to a set of criteria dictated by people who don't know them or me and who have imposed a half - baked, unworkable system upon us.

3. A BEITER INFORMED TEACHER, BUT A MORE ANXIOUS ONE

What I teach must be relevant to the interests of my students and their life contexts. It must be accessible, and link to previous knowledge and experience. I aim to provide meaningful learning outcomes that fit in with critical literacy principles, so that if we are discussing an issue which is current in the media, then students will feel they can participate in the issue by writing letters to the editor, linking the debate into their own life context, researching, ringing people etc.

I believe that if this is so, that if the topic or context is relevant, then learning will occur, thinking will be stimulated, ideas will be provoked and challenged. In order to challenge and provoke I facilitate as many group discussions as possible so that a broad a range of opinions, ideas, and knowledge can be thrown into the ring.

I don't consider myself to be the most expert in the room, and am often learning heaps myself. I may go into the classroom with a script of what might happen, but it rarely goes to plan and I like to go with the flow. I am alert to opportunities for highlighting or making explicit what skills we are using or learning, but these are not the focus.

It has been my experience that there needs to be a purpose for skills before one is motivated to acquire them - the thinking and the discussion stimulate a desire to express and then we seek the means. It is a bit like painting - I see something I want to paint, I look at it a while, I think about it, I see it from various viewpoints and in different lights and then I tentatively begin. I use the techniques I know, but they are not always enough so then I have to learn more.

And so it goes for writing. Writing, I believe, arises out of motivation to express. This motivation comes through reading, through discussion, through observation of life and linking in our thoughts and experience. Reading is then enhanced in this circular process.

Specifically, what I teach is negotiated out of the context of my students' interests and expressed wants and needs. Topics are usually selected in the same way and very often based upon current social issues in the media. For many of my students, being able to critically engage with the media is a priority. Often, students will come to learn because they want to 'stimulate the brain', 'brush away the cobwebs', and be to confident in their opinions.

I have been working with a level 4 group at an inner suburban TAFE college and at an outer suburban TAFE college. The group at the inner suburban campus consists of both men and women of mixed ages, whilst the group at the outer suburban campus is predominantly aged 35 plus and all women. These two groups are vastly different in their goals and purposes for learning, their socio-economic backgrounds, their life experiences. I can't plan to approach lessons in the same way for both groups, and what works for one would rarely work for the other.

With the outer suburban group I can assume that they watch the news on T.V. regularly, read the local paper each issue, care about education, believe that they could

go on to further study, that they see themselves as active in the world, even if that is only in their own home environment.

With the inner suburban group, I was struck by their lack of personal empowerment. I was struck by their blind faith in the media and by their lack of general knowledge and so assumptions about basic concepts could never be made. An excellent example of this was when, at the beginning of semester 2, I was looking for a socially interesting topic that was current in the media. The Republican issue cropped up in the holidays and I happened to tape a debate on T.V. that put both sides to a jury. I assumed that the group would know that we had a Constitution, that we were separate from England in our government and had been since the early 1900s. They in fact had never heard of a constitution and didn't have any conception of what it might visually look like. How the Queen fitted into our government was a mystery, and why this was important was totally lost. I ditched the lesson after half an hour and we went on to something else. What I had seen was real panic in the eyes of some of my students - was this going to be another lesson in failure and stupidity! I had chosen that topic because it fitted so well into the domain of public debate and the reading text (the video), so clearly into the competencies. It was really unsuitable, and thus I learnt through this disaster that I must not let the competencies drive my selection of texts or topics. This same text had worked well at the outer suburban campus by the way.

How do I teach?

I don't pretend to be an expert, and in fact it is very empowering for my students to be consulted by me on matters of spelling, knowledge about topics, origins of words, possible avenues for research, relevant life experiences. I respect my students unconditionally, and am interested in all comments they bring to the classroom. I hope that they see the classroom as a safe place to try out conversations, test out ideas, raise issues etc. and to question and to ask. I believe I must always be honest, and that often involves admitting ignorance. I try to model what I believe are the traits of a good learner - a willingness to find out and to try. I believe that learning should foremost be enjoyable in order for motivation to occur. I try to plan out lessons a bit like dinner parties, in that I try to anticipate what will be fun, be stimulating and what will be positive and build in success. I try to enhance students' self esteem always through my own positive regard for them, but also through helping them to access the learning process so that they are successful. I praise everything, and look always for the positive in what is said or done.

In plannning a class I will have a topic in mind (if we aren't following on) and some stimulus text for this that might be a video or a speaker or a newspaper article or story etc. I will have planned some focusing questions and generally get the group to discuss these in small groups before tackling them as a whole group. Writing usually arises out of the reading and the discussion, which provides the purpose for the writing.

How have the competencies impacted on my practice?

In thinking about this I am thinking back to what and how I taught before the CGEA. I taught level 4 students back then, but I was not so rigorous in covering

the domains highlighted by the Certificate. I tended to focus a lot on argumentative writing, a bit of creative/personal expression and a bit of knowledge. I taught more along the lines of what explicit skills the particular group wanted, what would stimulate them to think, to discuss, to engage in learning and then link the skills to that. We would scaffold up through personal expression, to researching, to using the research as evidence to writing in public debate. Everything was interrelated and much more thematic, and less compartmentalised as separate competencies.

I think that this approach was better. I like the way the competencies have stimulated my thinking about genre. I like them as a framework for developing curriculum, but as a set of competencies for assessment they are too prescriptive.

Because my students are at exit level 4 they are entitled to get the Certificate at the end of the year if they meet the competencies. This has created enormous pressure on the curriculum and classroom practise this semester, as I am very conscious of failing in my obligation to my students if I do not create opportunities which will enable them to gain it if possible. I am also acutely aware of how easy it would be to engineer a folio for some students. To what end, I have bitterly asked myself, when all we are ending up with is a rod for the bureaucratic system to beat us with.

The competencies are a measurable way of documenting if our students have gained mastery of certain 'skills'. As such, they could all too easily lead to teaching transmission style. It leads to a concern for the product and not for the process. I think this is a real danger. This was highlighted for me in my struggle with the 'practical purposes' domain.

Everything I have tried to do in 'practical purposes' had failed dismally as it had been dull, dry, artificial and not linked in any way to authentic real life experience... until a lucky break at the end of term 3. Teaching the genres of reading and writing in practical purposes had not worked for me in the past as they seemed to be something I had to teach 'chalk and talk' style; most texts seemed to be in a written format unfamiliar in everyday contexts. I was constantly worrried about the structure of the writing, so the stimulation from the discussion and the thinking became a secondary focus. I was worried about losing control of the situation as it was an area I wasn't comfortable in. I felt I didn't know where it would lead, yet I was trying to fit the teaching and learning into the prescribed criteria. In short, in this domain I was the flip side to all I believed was good practice in teaching.

My success in this area occurred when we took a genre that my students and I had some real life knowledge of (however scant) and could apply it to a situation where we had knowledge and opinion. This turned out to be 'minute taking' and we were the 'Stop Violence Committee'. Through this experience I have learned how important it is to stick to methodologies that are based on principles of learning. I have also learned that I am letting the Certificate make me very anxious and that this is affecting my classroom practice. There is a danger that the competencies can drive the curriculum, however hard we try to resist this happening. If we say (with principle and with arrogance) that we will throw the Certificate out the window and get back to 'good practice', what then of our obligations to the students who want and expect to get the Certificate?

Finally, on the positive side, the competencies have supplied a useful basis for dialogue and professional development with other teachers that I value highly. It has made me more aware of how to deconstruct a teaching process and in focussing on the competencies, how to teach genre more explictly. Therefore, I believe I am a better informed teacher, but I am also a more anxious one!

Finally, to address the key questions, here are my thoughts:

The competency framework has affected my teaching practice in a positive way in that it has made me more rigorous in covering the four domains. It has given me a dialogue and common ground with other teachers, as well as helping me to deconstruct my teaching processes and to be able to be more explicit about the genre of those processes.

However, it has placed enormous pressure on me both administratively and for outcomes which I think impact negatively on my students. Also in the beginning it made me worried about the performance criteria and affected my confidence in myself as a teacher.

It is possible to go with the flow with a group or topic and then look back and fit this retrospectively around the performance criteria? I now do this all the time. However it took 18 months before I felt I knew the Certificate well enough not to worry about it any more.

I would hate the Certificate to drive the curriculum and to lose the focus of students' authentic needs. I see a danger in people new to the Certificate picking it up in this way.

What works and what doesn't as far as classroom practice goes is still the same. I think the framework needs to be gone over with a fine tooth comb when it comes up for re-accreditation!

In some cases fulfilling the assessment criteria for the Certificate means setting tasks which are not relevant and are artificial and boring to students.

Finally, what of the broadening of outlook and the learners' ability to become more independent? What of issues of raised self-esteem and confidence, of students engaging in the world about them and opening up new worlds? Where do these dimensions of good practice fit in with our competency-based world?

4. THE CGEA NEGLECTS THE JOY OF LEARNING

Preamble

This report is based on my work with a Return to Study group of 7 women, whose ages range from 25-62.

Their reasons for enrolling in the CGEA course include considering enrolling in further study, wishing to demonstrate to their children that education is important, wishing to improve their memory, or just enjoying the company of other students.

The group meets for 3 hours per week and the course, which includes all four streams of the Certificate, goes for 20 weeks. The students are of mixed ability and are around levels 3 - 4.

The issues that have arisen for me in implementing the CGEA are:

1. The language of the document
2. Compartmentalisation of the framework
3. Difficulties with assessment
4. Relevance of the four literacies
5. Relevance of the performance criteria
6. Lack of cohesion in the document

The language of the document

Trying to explain the Certificate to students is quite difficult. The language used to outline performance criteria is not easily accessible to students, or to teachers for that matter!

The document should be written for students, after all they are the ones who are undertaking the course and they need to know what is expected of them to successfully complete the course.

The document as it stands at present has to be interpreted by the teacher and moderation sessions reveal that there is not even clear agreement as to the meaning of some parts of the document among teachers. Most students become intimidated by the wording of the document as it currently stands and it does not offer a supportive framework to reduce student anxiety over expectations.

My practice encourages self-assessment by students; I expect students to appraise their own work and to be able to evaluate their work critically for themselves. This is difficult to promote when the language of the document is so complex and the students find it difficult to describe their achievements in terms meaningful to them.

Compartmentalisation of the framework

I find a fragmented approach to teaching creeps into my practice as I try to ensure that the integrity of the Certificate is maintained. The overall intention of the Certificate model is for students to demonstrate competency in participating in social life (as is explained in the ***Background Works***). However in order for students to

demonstrate competency in all the performance criteria, the 'whole' must be broken into bits. Often this results in contrived and fragmented sessions.

It seems good practice to me to tackle the streams of literacy, oracy and numeracy at the same time because through using listening, talking, reading and writing practice and sharing experiences students are able to make more sense of their learning. I believe a holistic approach provides greater opportunity for students to each meet their individual needs; morover, it is sensible to encourage learning in different areas at the same time.

In order to work on all streams simultaneously, it is necessary to slot the students into the Certificate framework, rather than the other way around. 1his generates a plethora of records.

A difficulty for me, as the teacher, has been coming to an understanding of how the document can be used holistically.

Difficulties with assessment

It is necessary to design assessment tasks to enable students to demonstrate competency in all performance criteria. Teaching the full range of domains and levels, I try to offer open-ended assessment tasks which will cover a number of streams and allow students to demonstrate competency at their level, rather than one which has been pre-determined by the Certificate. 1his becomes quite a nightmare!

Balancing good assessment design, with the time available for a sessional tutor (not allowing the Certificate to encroach too much into personal time) is a challenge! What can the teacher do when students loosely interpret the task to suit their own purposes? The fault is often not with their work and not with the assessment design either; the fault lies with the performance criteria which are not always relevant to the students' needs.

Open-ended tasks do not always direct students to specific competencies which must be met. On the other hand, the need to meet the competencies does not allow students to take an independent approach.

Competency-based assessment does neglect the personal development aspect which is acknowledged in the *Background Works* as "traditionally an ALBE aim." Competency-based assessment does not take into account the point the person has come from and the learning the individual has done. Hence, individual development is not properly recognised in the certification process. On the other hand, the predetermined levels do not reflect the needs of the majority of students.

Assessment hangs over my head and the heads of the students. They need to know where they stand but this also neglects the joy of learning. The process does not take into account individual strengths and weaknesses.

Relevance of the 'four literacies'

I have found it a good practice to examine and to work with the four different literacies (the domains). Ensuring that the different literacies are tried is valuable in

broadening the students' experiences. The framework of the Certificate enables this to occur. The students tend to enjoy 'self expression' more than the other three and feel more comfortable with this style of writing and reading. They may in fact be well practised in this area and tend not to be as competent in 'practical purposes' or 'knowledge'. I have found it necessary to give more practice time to build up the students' skills in these areas, yet they do not always see them as relevant to their lives and future directions. (Obviously this depends on the reason for them undertaking the Certificate in the first place.) The Certificate is often not able to help students work towards their personal goals.

Another problem is that individual students will be at different levels in each of the four domains. 'Public debate', particularly in oracy, requires a certain degree of confidence for students to express their opinion and outline their arguments coherently. For many students, this takes time to develop, and the Certificate as it stands gives no credit for such developing confidence. For some students the personal growth has to be enormous and for others it is not such a challenge.

Texts do not always fall into the clear identification of the literacies either, as is acknowledged in the ***Background Works.*** There can and should be overlap. Why then should the performance criteria be so inflexible , and not cater for texts or for students' writing which does not fit neatly into the compartments?

Relevance of the performance criteria

The students who fulfil the assessment tasks to the letter may be restricted in terms of what else they might have explored in their writing. If they do not comply with the instructions because they see a different purpose, or they have a strong desire to explore different interpretation, a better piece of work may result. This may be more valuable to the students but it may not meet the performance criteria.

The prescribed performance criteria do not necessarily challenge individuals and on the contrary are sometimes far too simple.

Lack of cohesion in the document

The different streams interpret the guidelines in different ways so that the document is very confusing.

There is far too much to read in the support material which often gives differing interpretations of the framework itself. The support material (the Assessment Kit, Moderation Kit, etc.) have come out too late to actually provide teachers support. They have become another burden in a messy, flawed process.

Concluding remarks

In my experience, I have found the CGEA to be irrelevant for students. They have a desire to learn, a desire to experience schooling that they may have missed out on. The course document is not compatible with the students' stated goals and/or their desired learning outcomes. The Certificate messes up a valuable learning experience.

5. FIRES IN THE IMAGINATION, OR BUCKETS OF BUSY WORK?

The question of how the CGEA has impacted upon my teaching is an interesting one. Since the first consultation on the framework for an ALBE certificate took place (in 1991) I have taken a keen and active interest in its development. Despite having some misgivings about the implications of accreditation for adult literacy students, I was prepared to put those concerns to one side and look at the positives of the Certificate, of which there are many. These have been well- documented in the literature circulated by ACFE and the many projects funded to assist with the implementation.

The framework upon which the Certificate is founded provided practioners with a broad definition of literacy, one which incorporated the notion of critical literacy. The four literacies accommodate the value and purpose of literacy in various contexts: the personal. the practical, the academic, the political. The framework provides a basis for discussing what we mean by 'literacy' and how adults can best learn in the ALBE, ESL or ESL literacy classroom. It describes some of the complex skills being developed by the adult learner.

As the result of a period of extensive consultation and trialling of the reading and writing competencies (in the original form that they appeared in in the ABEAF framework) these were generally understood and were widely accepted by practitioners. The oral communication and general curriculum option stream on the other hand had not had the benefit of extensive research or trialling and I anticipated that changes would need to be made.

My interest in the Certificate was theoretical as I was particularly interested in the inclusion of oral communications skills, a relatively new area of interest to the field but one which I had explored through my own post-graduate research in secondary schools. Whilst I could see the weaknesses in the Certificate in terms of pedagogical theory and its implications for teaching practice, I thought I would be able to accommodate the Certificate in the pragmatic way that teachers often accommodate 'new improved versions' of what went before.

The big thing the Certificate had going for it was that it was just that, something which had some authority. It gave us authority. It gave students authority... authority to say they had completed an educational course and hence been 'accepted into the fold'. I would never deny students access to accreditation, so maybe a compromise was required. One can always do a little more paper work, go to a few more meetings; it's good to have the time to talk with other teachers about our work. Sure, some positive things can come from moderation.

I accepted that there might be teething problems and that some of the procedures for implementation would require modification and then fine tuning. I was realistic about the time required to implement such a curriculum innovation. It's often difficult to see how something will work in practice so I was happy to incorporate aspects of the framework into my teaching until further information arrived about the administrative and accreditation requirements for its implementation.

My concern with the Certificate was that teachers may become preoccupied with the performance criteria, range and conditions required to demonstrate competence (in various genres related to the four literacies) in speaking and writing. They would possibly be diverted from the real business of teaching students: for example, how to think through and to direct problem-posing and problem-solving discussion; how to introduce activities which make the learning processes explicit to the learner.

Some of the skills described in the oral competencies of the CGEA are skills which are required for classroom discussion and learning to take place. On this basis, I thought it might be possible to accommodate the performance criteria of the oracy stream into a broader program of what I call "talking to learn". I wanted to believe that one could simply map my existing practice into the Certificate with minor compromises and a bit more record-keeping.

However, 'mapping' my usual practice onto the Certificate turned out to be quite problematic. Many classes start with a loose structure and become something else with the input of the participants. Whilst we might not always feel in control when immersed in the cut and thrust of dialogue with students in the classroom, the learning process may become apparent in retrospect. In writing about the experience subsequently, the order and structure which may not be initially apparent in a dynamic classroom situation can emerge. Reflective writing by teachers can provide the opportunity to spell out what was informing one's (intuitive) contribution to the process. It's sometimes surprising to see the logic and purpose intrinsic in practical classroom interactions being revealed in this way. This process is the opposite of what we are being asked to do with the CGEA!

Teaching for me has never been a practice isolated from other parts of my life. It is my life as much as any other part of my life. The teacher brings everything that they are and do to the classroom. We teach according to who we are, what we are told to teach, what we believe we should be teaching and what the students want to learn. When we assess our students we also assess ourselves. That's what the assessment task is about.

In term two of 1994 when I was teaching to the "spirit" of the CGEA my curriculum reflected each of the four domains. We were uncertain of what was expected of us procedurally (in terms of record-keeping, form-filling, certification and so forth). We were engaged in considerable public debate about the value of the CGEA and were trying to deal with issues that it raises such as the relative importance of form and substance and where 'knowledge' actually comes from.

At that time, my class and I went on a 'dream vacation'. I wrote this reflective piece which captures the kind of teaching and learning that I feel most strongly about, an approach which integrates learning with life itself... and how teaching to the CGEA might impact on this.

Sometimes when I'm in my class I wish I was somewhere else: maybe a tropical island or even a Bohemian cafe. When that happens I know it's because I'm not really there, not really teaching, not really interacting with my students, not really

thinking about how it is and what it is that we are learning. On one such occasion, the first day back after a term break, I decided to share my desire to be elsewhere with my students. They all agreed. It's funny how many people would rather be elsewhere when they are cooped up in a classroom trying to learn. I told them I hadn't really had a holiday, gotten away from it all as it were. This was why I was dreaming of wonderful exotic places when I should be planning our term's work.

What came from this inspired confession was a most enjoyable research project that the students worked on enthusiastically for a term (10 weeks) in our 4 hour per week literacy class. The point of the story is that this is not a systematic piece of curriculum design derived from using a model that 'incorporates competencies within the four domains in an integrated way across two streams' or whatever. It was not a carefully mind-mapped plan following a precise list of competencies to be achieved. The ideas did not arise out of a process of systematic curriculum planning; however it could very well be written up as a successful activity linking literacy, numeracy, oral communication and a general curriculum option called 'geography' or 'world affairs'.

The 'dream vacation' project was the product of an experienced teacher who has worked in a variety of contexts, with a large number of very different people, and who sees teaching and learning as an interactive process; a process that treats the learner as an equal partner in the exchange of skills, ideas and knowledge. Such a teaching and learning process reflects a pedagogy in which the teacher creatively utilises her 'bag of tricks' (curriculum models; theories of language and learning; knowledge of various disciplines such as history, politics and sociology; practical techniques for teaching different skills, etc) as well as a genuine desire to share her knowledge with students in a way which encourages them to see the learning they do in the classroom as a natural part of life.

> *So where would you go if you had the money? Just imagine if you could plan a trip, for say three months, anywhere in the world. Let's say you can go to at least three different countries. Of course you have to plan it very carefully to make sure you can do all the things in your dream. Where would you go and what would you need to know about this place before you got there?*
>
> *Everyone loves talking about the weather but this is one instance where you really need to know whether it's likely to be snowing or sweltering when you get there. What's the best time to visit? What's happening in the country? Festivals, holidays, civil war? Is it a safe place to visit ? What are the customs? What about dress, courtesy, religion etc.? What about the food? Will you be able to eat it? What do you want to see in this country? Art, history, religion, architecture, music, sport?*
>
> *Once you have gathered as much information as you can about the countries you hope to visit, you have to work out what you can realistically see in three months. Do you want to take a package tour or go on your own or do you want a combination of the two? Maybe you have relatives and friends to visit, maybe you want to spend some time just stopping still in some gorgeous village by the*

sea and not go sight-seeing all the time... but then will you regret it if you don't see what there is to see?

Travel agents just love to talk to people about these kinds of decisions. They have lots of colourful brochures to entice you to all sorts of places. How do you decide and should you believe everything the travel agents say? It might be worth checking the paper to see if there's a war going on, or some hostages have been taken during an innocent sight-seeing tour. Never rely on one source of information. So you need to use libraries, travel agents, friends, newspapers, travel programs on the T.V. Read, look, talk and listen. Write away for information. Interview people who have travelled to these countries. Talk to your friends and find out what they know. The more information the better...

Then there's the money! How much will the airfares cost; travel around the country- train, boat, plane, bus, car, rickshaw. What about food, accomodation, entertainment, entrance to places of interest: how much money will you need? Travel insurance? Luggage? What if you're driving? How long will it take to get from one place to another? How much will petrol cost? There's lots of counting and calculation to do....

Before you start finding out this information write down your dreams of where you'd like to go and what you'd like to see and do. It can be like a plan in which the details can be filled out as new information is gained. Once you have found out everything you need. you can explain to the whole class what you intend to do on your dream vacation. You can be the teacher and tell us what you have learned. You could use books, maps, wall charts, music, video, postcards to show some of the things you might do. The written assignment can be submitted after the show...

Everyone had a great time doing this and we visited many countries in our dreams. I'll leave it to you, the reader of this tale, to "spot the competencies" as they were performed in the course of a wide range of activities stimulated by this research project.

And then in term three, the reality of the need to assess tasks hit home. One must do justice to what one's students have achieved in terms of competencies, levels, moderation requirements, range and conditions. Down to earth we came with something of a thud. The "spirit" of the CGEA was being documented, recorded, systematized, moderated and pulled into line. So instead of reflective, inspirational writing about my experiences in the classroom I had to start writing assessment tasks. I had to prove to my peers that I was teaching and assessing the competencies, elements, streams, domains.

Writing an assessment task is not as easy as one first imagines. Contextualizing the task is important. I try to think of what to leave out. The teacher either 'assists' or 'intervenes'. I had never thought of my interaction with students as one or the other. I wonder how my theory that teaching is a continuing dialogue with students, can be accomodated under 'extent of teacher intervention or assistance'? We are expected to make the task clear in terms of meeting the prescribed

criteria for elements covered. We quickly realize that all the competencies required at a particular level and element are not acquired or demonstrated within one task. Students may demonstrate competence at varying degrees of the spectrum of a particular level or varying degrees of competence with different criteria. The assessment task becomes more problematic.

How much contextualizing does moderation require? How many assessment tasks is one meant to write? I am faced with the problem of having to cover all the performance criteria in each element in the one assessment task. How does one write a 'dream vacation' assessment task? In fact one would need to break down the instructions given to students, dis-integrate them as it were, redefine them in terms of the competencies described in the Certificate, write several discrete tasks and assess them as they are demonstrated. Separate and systemize elements of the whole and you will have anything but a 'dream vacation', even in the imagination!

The Dream Vacation task in fact crossed four domains, a couple of streams and a few levels. After all that hard work why would one have to write an assessment task? To make sure we really did it? So should I keep teaching the way I always have, or should I modify my practice to make it easier to fit in with the requirements of the Certificate?

I realize that my concerns as a teacher are changing with every assessment task I write. No time to reflect upon practice by using theory to illuminate common sense perceptions of the classroom. There's no time to explore new ideas, approaches, ways of saying understanding, critically analysing. That's all 're-inventing the wheel'. The Certificate gives me a common language so I can talk to other practitioners. **It** gives me names for the things I see my students doing. **It** tells me how I should assess my students' performances. **It** implies what I should teach. The pedagogical message of the Certificate is dear. **It** doesn't matter what people learn as long as they prove it by **demonstrating the prescribed performance criteria and element for the right stream!**

Shades of Orwell's 1984 swirl around the teachers' assessment folders as they struggle to memorize, internalize, adopt the new language: 'Certificate speak...'

> *Bonzetta, in an unfamiliar situation, when it is raining, with two or three persons unknown to her, can utter three coherent sentences about the weather ...*

It is easy to poke fun at the absurd common language that we are asked to speak but my real concern is that it undervalues teacher skill and it patronises students. **It** patronises students because it encourages teachers to set achievable, definable, simple tasks, tasks they know students can perform.

> *Bonzetta can organize a birthday party for her daughter (incorporating the four domains).*

The fact is that Bonzetta could probably do that without enrolling in the CGEA but there are certainly a lot of other things that Bonzetta might like to learn.

Challenging new knowledge and skills, things for which she might not be able to meet all the criteria. Things that might not be easily described in an assessment task nor demonstrated in practice. The things that adults come back to school to learn: all the stuff they don't know about, such as economics, politics, geography, history, current affairs, the language of the dominant culture.

I find the Certificate quite restrictive to good teaching and unecessarily bureaucratic but in the end the inventive pragmatist in me will find ways of minimizing the impact of accountability procedures and I will continue to utilize an extensive teaching repertoire developed over the years through critically reflective practice, to go on lighting fires in the imagination rather than filling buckets with busy work.

6. HOLISM, REDCUTIONISM AND THE SUZUKI METHOD

Introduction
The introduction of the CGEA has had a considerable impact on the ALBE field. Subconsciously or consciously, we as teachers have felt the pressure. We have had a new focus imposed on our practice, one which has not always blended well with the politics and principles of the field. We have had to introduce the CGEA and have had to have certain (if unspecified) numbers of students doing it. It has affected curriculum, classroom activities and professional development.

The CGEA has added the dimensions of moderation and the assessment of 'competence' to our teaching. Students are now assessed for purposes other than placement and regardless of psychosocial factors. Its implementation has not been accompanied and supported by thorough and consistent statewide guidelines on procedures and processes, so there has been considerable uncertainty.

This report will discuss the CGEA in the early stages of its implementation. I will discuss its impact on my teaching in the light of my teaching journal, and will draw on my own current experience as an adult learner of piano.

The characteristics of adult literacy learners
Any credential carries with it a pressure to perform or to achieve. Many adult literacy students have felt all too acutely the pressure to perform throughout their previous educational experience. With the introduction of the CGEA, I have been concerned that if teachers become too focused on the achievement of a credential, pressure will be felt by students, including those on whom such pressure would have a negative impact. As Margaret Curlewis in her document'An Adult Literacy to VCE Pathway' (1993) wrote, "Students whose perceptions of education were totally negative may begin to view their achievements more positively." "The very act of learning to be literate has an enormous impact on their self- esteem and social behaviour. Horizons expand, political awareness is fostered and feelings of inadequacy are reduced."

In any program for adult literacy students, there needs to be flexibility enough for this process of growth and self-exploration and development to take place.

The students upon whom this reflection is based are members of an 'ESL literacy' class of ten students. The majority are retired women who migrated to Australia in the 1950s and 1960s. They have grown-up children and have often expressed a desire to learn English now that they have time for themselves. Many conversations among the students focus on their regret at their level of English 'after all these years in Australia'. On one level they know that this is due to their limited early years of education, as well as the economic hardship and lack of opportunity for education they experienced previously as migrants. On another level they blame themselves. This perception of themselves as poor learners runs deep, so it is with tentative steps during their early days in a class that they slowly become aware of new and expanded horizons.

My reflection for this report includes reflection on my own processes of learning

as an adult learner. The approach through which I am learning has a lot in common with approaches used in adult literacy. I am learning to play the piano through the Suzuki approach, which is based on the way children learn the mother tongue. Fundamental to the Suzuki method is the belief that anyone can learn. According to Shinichi Suzuki, "any child, properly trained, can develop musical ability just as all children in the world have developed the ability to speak their mother tongue".

For me, it is this belief in one's ability to learn, however late and whatever the starting point in terms of confidence or skill, which shapes the whole learning process. As with adult literacy students, my return to learning piano took a lot of courage. The teacher asked me what I could play. I sat down, braced myself and began to play a piece. After a couple of bungled attempts at the first few lines I could go no further. I carried with me a mild sense of failure at not being able to play anything despite my learning as a child. However, I was motivated by a powerful urge to play music. This kind of deeply-felt motivation is something I have seen in adult literacy students. Inspired by the courage I have seen in my students, I allowed myself to embark on the learning process without too much self-criticism, judgement and internalised expectation of 'what adults should be able to do' by a certain age. Many adult students make their learning process more difficult by being their own worst critics. On one level I knew all this, but I had to learn to apply it to my own learning. Effective learning demands space for trial, error and practice. Successes, however small, must be acknowledged. A positive environment, encouragement and support are vital.

Competence - holistic or reductionist?

A major concern of mine during the introduction of the CGEA has been the shift in focus away from the "whole" task and onto the "parts" of a task. A good task with clear educational merit is required to undergo further scrutiny as to whether it enables the student to demonstrate a number of performance criteria, some of which have been acknowledged by the field to be faulty and are in the process of being amended. Nevertheless these performance criteria, with periodic "agreed annotated variations" are what we have had to work with to date, and they have led to a great deal of anxiety. In some ways it has felt like a peripheral focus, and sometimes a distraction from the real program. The following example from my diary demonstrates a very important event in the students' learning, but which in most cases did not (without major and distracting reworking) enable students to meet all the required performance criteria.

> *Last week was our ACM. It was an extraordinary night due to the degree of student involvement. A number of the students from the class participated in a presentation about their respective travels. Four members of the class got up and spoke in front of a crowd of about a hundred people. It was wonderful. You could feel the excitement in the air. 'Anita' had redrafted a piece about migrant women learning, which she had written previously. Feedback from the class had led her to cut the original down for the oral presentation, focus on the section about herself and link the two sections more effectively. This was a further draft of an already finalized piece of writing, but the oral purpose made it necessary." Diary entry 21/9/94*

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The public performance of these women was wonderful. It was fun, it was encouraging to other students, it gave the other students an insight into their lives and it was useful to our program in terms of public relations. In contrast to any reductionist approach to competency based learning, it demanded competence in a holistic sense. The performance was purposeful and meaningful. Competency -based learning in itself is not necessarily a flawed concept, but unless one keeps in mind that the whole is more than the sum of the parts, the learning task can become vacuous. This is particularly so when the parts which are valued are only those parts which it is possible to quantify. It would be absurd to imagine a Suzuki teacher thinking in the following terms (which I have extrapolated from the CGEA) and which certainly describe aspects of the required performance in the first book:

Play a piece at least half a page long.
Use melody in the treble clef played by the right hand.
Use an alberti base played by the left hand.
Play in C major.

Suzuki method is based on a set of graded books through which students can progress. Competence in the first enables one to approach the second. Quality of musical performance is required right from the first piece of music. Mastery of the first skill is as vital as those later on, and acts as a base for later work. The competence (which is no doubt the aim) is by no means defined in a reductionist way; it is never reduced to the sum of the parts. It demands a total performance of the piece of music, paying attention to every detail.

One fundamental strength of the CGEA is its 'Background Works' (developed two years earlier for the Adult Basic Education Accreditation Framework Project) which defines literacy in a number of ways. The notion upon which the reading and writing competence statements are based is that comprehensive literacy may be defined in terms of four key contemporary social contexts in which literacy exists. These four key contexts have become the four domains, termed 'literacy as self-exploration', as 'procedure', as 'knowledge' and as 'public debate'. Prior to the CGEA, the adult literacy field had at times been criticised for a tendency to concentrate on the aspect of 'self-esteem' and psychological states of learners, leading to an emphasis on 'literacy as self-exploration'. The broadened notion of four distinct literacies is useful, but again, we must be mindful not to slip into the trap of becoming reductionist, as is often the case when something is boxed so neatly. Whilst it is possible to make distinctions between the domains to some extent, it is important to remember that the domains should not be regarded as finite or discrete as each of them merges with the others.

Curriculum

For me as a teacher, the CGEA framework has been very useful as a curriculum "map". This is more to do with the 'Background Works' than the accreditation framework itself. I have found it useful to overlay my curriculum onto the CGEA framework (which becomes a curriculum "map") in order to chart some areas which I may not have focused on previously.

In addition, my students are developing a language for analysing the purpose of a

text, which is inspired by the CGEA framework . An example of this is given in an extract from my journal {13-10-94):

> *... we went on to read the articles in the TWT [The World Times student newspaper] issue on 'water', discussing each one in terms of its purpose as a text... considering whether its purpose was to give information or to try and influence someone's thinking. I chose a series of extracts from the articles we had read in the paper and we analysed them in terms of their purpose and language features. Were they fact or opinion? It was a new concept to most of the group but they had the idea by the time we finished... this class was incredibly stimulating.*

The writing task which followed was also influenced by the CGEA:

> *... Knowing that students hadn't done much 'writing for knowledge' and that this demanded a different way of looking at things, I encouraged them to consider writing an informative piece for the Year Book, based on something they had read in TWT. They were to select five facts relating to a topic, sequence them into an appropriate order and use connectors where necessary to make them read as a short factual report. First, I modelled one (devised by the group) about Melbourne Water, going through the process of brainstorming, mind mapping and sequencing of ideas. We discussed the audience, language features and purpose.... "*

Giving feedback to students

The framework of the CGE has assisted me in giving feedback to students. An example of this from my recent journal is of a student who had had terrible trouble with her writing. In fact, her spelling, handwriting, conceptual level and ability to complete anything very structured was excellent, but she had maintained all year that she couldn't write and would get a terrible headache when she tried to.

> *With my help she had written a couple of sentences to describe some photos of a trip to her birthplace in Indonesia. Along with some other students in the class she had got up at the AGM in front of about 100 people and read her work. Inspired by other students' feedback she had gone away and redrafted her sentences and written a very informative and interesting piece about her trip. She read it out to us and was greeted with great showers of praise and congratulations. I seized the opportunity to encourage her to put it in for accreditation in the CGEA. In giving feedback I was able to draw on the performance criteria at different levels saying that the piece was already a very good level 2 piece and if she wanted to redraft it giving some other people's points of view it would easily be level 3. The very next class she had included the points of view of her 84 year old mother and her Australian friends who had gone with her.*

Incidentally, this proved to be a turning point for her as she is now engaged in the task of writing an informational piece about Chinese wedding traditions, based on some photos she had brought in.

Choice and negotiation

A further diary entry:

> *I reintroduced the* CGE *today, first day of term 4, reminding the group that what they have done all year ties in with it. I explained that they would need to submit four completed pieces of work, one from each domain. I said that I was sure that everyone could do it; it was just what they were already doing. Gina and Hatice simultaneously said, "Except for me!" But my reading of the situation was that everyone was alert, interested and smiling with what I interpreted as enthusiasm. I encouraged them to 'have a go' but did not call for a commitment yet as I wanted to reduce the pressure on them. I hope as weeks go by they will see the value of handing in work for assessment.*

For many adult literacy students, taking responsibility for their learning is part of a much broader change in their self-perception and growth. In my mind it was essential to be able to offer students an option which they were free to take up or ignore. This leaves the responsibility in the hands of the learner. It also respects them as adult learners who know what they are looking for. I believe that my teaching expertise has the most value if my students understand what I am doing and why. So it was imperative that a process of communication or negotiation take place whereby I continue to deepen my understandings of the learners' needs, and I continue to inform them of my methods and purpose, as well as their options in the classroom setting.

Initially, talk of a credential can be very confronting to some students, who, given time and the chance to "test the water", may choose to do it at a later date.

> *It was not until they were inspired to try for the* CGE *that they did try. It seems now that most students are interested. (30/10/94)*

Whilst I realise that for some students in a different context this element of choice may not seem so essential, in the community setting in which I work it has been considered of utmost importance.

In the same way, my piano teacher offers her adult students a choice. She encourages us to listen widely to music and bring in examples we would like to learn or listen to. Some students choose to work through the Suzuki books, others prefer to play pieces that they like. She makes her purpose clear and respects the students' choices. I have chosen to work through the Suzuki books as a kind of a backbone for my learning, and can see the benefit of my choice, but I am grateful that I have the option, and therefore feel in control of my own learning.

Why the Certificate?

It is the purpose behind any pedagogical approach that is of key importance to its effectiveness. That is what will be felt by the teachers and in turn will affect the students' learning. What is the purpose, then, of the advent of competency-based education (in the form of the CGEA) into the adult literacy field? To what extent is it designed to enhance the students' learning and development? Or rather, to what extent is it designed to enable the outcomes of the program to be quantified in terms which are understood by economic rationalists in government and business in order to decide its dollar value .

Teachers of adult literacy, government officers, industry personnel and students

would all have a different understanding of the purpose of the CGEA... but the purpose overall is unclear. This is in contrast to the Suzuki approach which is clear in its purpose to facilitate musical development. The Suzuki teacher is answerable to the students, and a good measure of success will be their feelings about their progress. It is the student and the teacher, and perhaps people close to them who in fact judge the outcomes of the learning.

In contrast, adult literacy is reliant on funding and therefore answerable to government funding agencies, rather than to the students. A number of times recently I have heard the advice given, "Yes, it's fine, now just 'package it up' so it fits in with ...". In some senses this reshaping and redefining may bear no impact on the outcome for students. However, what are we doing when we 'package it up' to make it look like something else, in language which is not our own, and to meet someone else's (other than our own or our students') objectives? I wonder how far this ultimately steers one to work in a way which isn't our own?

Stephen Kemmis spoke about this at a participatory action research forum at Deakin University on 21/10/94:

> The structures within which we work promote certain kinds of irrationality, like the process of curriculum development that has made the whole of the curriculum for adult basic education do very well on paper with people moving from competency to competency, but not so well in lives: either the lives of students or the lives of teachers who are actually disrupted from the process of forming relationships with one another under which long term education is actually possible...

Like many other teachers I have experienced the benefits of the Certificate: it has given us a new focus and promoted a healthy dialogue amongst teachers about our practice; it has been useful in broadening my curriculum and in some cases, give feedback to students. However, I am concerned about its impact on pedagogy and I am concerned that the pressure from above weighs heavily on the work being done by teachers and students.

7. BETTER NUMERACY TEACHING WITH THE CGEA

The competency framework has changed my teaching for the better through facilitating a thematic approach which I am able to develop in tandem with the literacy teacher.

The main thrust of my teaching has always been to go with the flow, to generate stacks of fun and learning through play. This I have achieved through the use of role plays, stories and games (as my journal shows). For example, the lessons based on the 'mobius strip' used a hands-on approach which aimed at developing students' observation and deduction skills. It requires a certain amount of time and practice before it is possible to ascertain whether or not students have acquired problem-solving skills such as these. Skills of this kind also fall into Elements 2.5 and 2.6 of the General Curriculum Option ***('Can*** communicate ideas and information 'and 'Can use mathematical ideas and techniques').

At our Centre we do not split up the four streams to be taught by four different teachers as it would be unrealistic to do so. The two literacy teachers take Reading, Writing and Oracy, I take Numeracy, and working as a team we give accreditation in the GCO as the need arises. The Certificate therefore calls for close co-operation and team spirit, which is a plus.

In the past I have always felt that my teaching was a bit too fragmented. Using a thematic approach is like adding flesh to the skeleton. It adds meaning to the content, involves students on a feeling level and adds a totally new dimension to numeracy. The following extract from my journal illustrates this:

> *This week has been spent on the reading of graphs. If this exercise is performed routinely it can be worse than boring. What can numb the brains more than looking at lines and columns? However like any other topic it can be brought alive: Element 2.1. can be satisfied at the same time as having fun! I tackled the exercise by photocopying line and bar graphs of rainfall and temperature of Australian capital cities from an atlas and made them into display cards to be used in groups. I then set a whole list of questions investigating the seasonal temperature cycle of the capital cities, calculating temperature range. The students further investigated the relationship between temperature range , latitude and geographical position. All the information was presented on the map. The level 2 students enjoyed the exercise, but on the other hand the level 1 students got headaches and felt giddy. One student commented that I wasn't teaching mathematics since I made them put information on a map, so it must be geography. I told her that if we just read lines and columns with no relation to the real world we would be bored to death. Note that although the fact that I wanted to prepare students for Element 2.1 or 1.1, was lurking in the back of my mind, this did not divert my main flow of energy. My main aim was that students discover the wonders of nature in action. Whatever element/s fell out of this exercise was secondary.*

We have tried to use a thematic approach across all streams; ie, all teachers in the same program develop different skills that all relate to the same theme. A common problem in working thematically in teams is that teachers cannot stay on the same

theme for the same length of time. If a teacher decides on a new theme, she tries to make sure that the other teachers follow suit.

My experience is that it had been an on-going battle for me to make students present their work in a reasonable form, self-check and validate their answers. The prevailing attitude had always been. "I know how to do it and therefore it's OK to just write the correct answers with no working". There are several drawbacks in such an attitude. The students, by not presenting their work in a reasonable and logical fashion, may miss out the link between language and mathematical symbols. It's a sloppy practice which creates sloppy attitudes which does not prepare them for making more complex calculations or for the work force. The students need to be sure that any solutions that they come up with make sense. I have been teaching them more than one way of reaching a solution. The performance criterion No. 3, 'check the reasonableness of methods against initial estimate and prediction' can be applied to validate one's own solution by any logical and reasonable means. Performance criterion No. 4 is also useful: 'interpret and apply methods and results in particular contexts and, in similar contexts'. Repetition of the skills in a variety of contexts is a very good way of ascertaining that students understand the concepts and so the skills are then portable. The ability to check and reflect on ones solutions builds confidence and self-esteem.

The certificate framework reinforces what I think is good practice in the classroom. It also provides a pathway for the students. Previously, students' skills were never formally recorded, so that it became a nightmare to establish the level of individual students in such a fluid student population. In that situation students may learn only part of a concept, ending up with huge gaps in their knowledge as they migrate from one provider to another. Teachers using the Certificate are forced to tighten their practice and not leave unpopular topics such as fractions to the year 2000. Students working through the Certificate should be able to observe their progress as they achieve their accreditation.

I think there is a prevailing attitude in adult education of being too scared to assess, despite the reality that assessments are carried out in the real world at all times. Sometimes I ask myself this question: are we teachers forming an artificial shield for the students? Yes, assessments can cause tension, as recorded in my diary:

> *There's difficulty addressing the amount of consultation that goes on in the class. Despite my previous efforts to explain the difference between an 'assessment task' and a 'task', students are still consulting each other. When I try to intervene, tension builds up, and this indeed is an awkward situation. Ideally I would like to handle all enquiries to make sure that the level of assistance given is no more than clarification of the problem. Remember I have 17 students all at different levels so all this negotiation is giving me a receding hair line! Recently a compromise was reached with afurther assessment task given to 2 or 3 students who were given too much assistance.*

However I see these problems as teething problems. Students will eventually get used to the idea of being assessed and accept it. They may even see the advantage of being assessed when their skills are recognised and can be transferred.

I have always taught mixed levels and have customised my courses for individuals in class to suit their needs. This is very hard work and very time consuming but I choose to do so because I believe in giving the utmost to all my students. When students' needs clash with the requirements of the Certificate, it requires creative solutions. For example I had a student who wanted to further her studies in accountancy and was capable of doing so. She had a time limit of 6 months, and I wasn't going to plough through all the 4 levels in six months. After careful negotiation with her, we decided to cover the contents in the Foundation Certificate and then plunge into accelerated business mathematics. At the same time I would continue to design assessment tasks that also gave her some accreditation in levels 3 & 4 around the business mathematics. In this fashion I have fulfilled my student's needs and helped her to gain accreditation in the Certificate.

Having different levels (sometimes 4 in one class) can be very troublesome. Students are graded according to their ASLPR levels, not on numeracy, so all levels tend to be represented in one class. To overcome the problems this causes I use separate themes at the same time: one for level 3/4 and a different one for levels 1/2. I have found that it works a lot better this way.

My main complaints about the Certificate are: the administration required is time consuming; the performance criteria do not always fit what needs to be taught; there are too many different parts included in the one element (which makes it indigestible); the language used has to be modified into lay person's language to be accessible.

But I feel that these are problems that can be fixed and that the good points of the Certificate outweigh the bad.

Finally, I would like to offer this checklist of my responses to the CGEA and suggestions for its improvement:

Positive aspects of the CGEA:

- It provides a better pathway for numeracy.
- In the GCO, it enables us to be explicit about unconscious conceptual and group processes.
- It provides a workable framework for delivering training and assessing the skills related to these processes.
- It provides a good framework for co-operation between teachers running programs thematically.
- It provides a much better focus on actual skills for students.

Suggestions for improvement:

- Some elements should be broken into smaller parts.

- Separate set of performance criteria are needed for each element.
- At level 3, more emphasis should be placed on calculator skills. It is at a level where students could choose vocational electives for example: retail calculations which has a strong focus on accuracy using the calculator. Therefore a much stronger emphasis on using calculator functions M+M- and RM. As well there should be much more checking and validating of students' own answers at this level. These are bread and butter vocational skills.

- GCO Element 3, ***Can use technology,*** could be expanded as follows:
  - level 1, could include word processing and using graphic icons for drawing shapes;
  - levels 2/3 could include Excel (plotting bar and line graph pie chart);
  - level 3 could include Logo;
  - level 4 could include Excel for programming, number crunching, generating answers using formulae.

- I would like to see level 4 being split into vocational and bridging (ie, preparation for year 11 and VCE) extending to logic and algebra, etc.

- The vocational curriculum should focus on bread and butter skills as they relate to specific vocational areas, as follows:

Group 1: commercial, clerical, community service, hospitality, housekeeping, retail or transport:
- basic calculator skills
- estimation and validation skills
- basic book keeping skills:
  - petty cash
  - journals
  - payroll
  - one-write system

Group 2: technical/trades/building

Group 3: health sector/hospitality(food handling)

- The Certificate of Occupational Studies (COS) core has adopted the CGEA for the numeracy competencies. It is grossly unsuitable because retail and hospitality students don't want to know about alternate angles.

- It appears that there may be a significant number of students who will remain at level 2 in numeracy and literacy. This poses great problems: again we urgently require new creative pathways for such students.

Finally, I feel that in adult education, the resounding message is literacy including numeracy! This is certainly possible if curriculum is delivered holistically and thematically.

8. THE CGEA WITHIN THE VICTORIAN PRISON SYSTEM

Introduction

The introduction of the CGEA has had an enormous impact on ALBE teaching within the Victorian prison system as it has across the whole ALBE field in Victoria. Furthermore, as far as prison ALBE is concerned, the introduction of the CGEA has not been limited to Victoria; Western Australia and New South Wales have already begun to implement the CGEA within their prisons and other states have shown a keen interest.

Many of the issues which have arisen in relation to the CGEA in prison ALBE apply to the field more broadly but we do have our own set of issues related to the prison environment itself. All education and training in Victorian prisons is provided by the TAFE system. From the beginning of 1994, all ALBE programs in Victorian prisons and Youth Training Centres (YTCs) must be within an accredited course. While there are a few examples of vocationally focussed ALBE programs being offered within the Certificate in Occupational Studies (COS) in some Victorian prisons, most prison ALBE has had a more general education thrust and these programs must now be within the CGEA.

As the Head of Department of Basic and Continuing Education at Broadmeadows College of TAFE I have been responsible for implementing the CGEA within the metropolitan prisons and YTCs. Through the Corrections Educators' Association of Victoria (CEAV), which is made up of a network of practitioners across the prison system, we have been working towards a system-wide approach in attempting to improve educational pathways for prisoners as they move through the prison system.

In this paper I want to present a brief overview of the issues around the CGEA and its implementation as I have seen them in doing my job over the last year or so. I will consider both the positive and negative aspects and while many of my comments would apply to prison ALBE system-wide, it must be noted that no two prisons are identical. All of the metropolitan prisons are maximum security institutions and, on the whole they have a more highly transient population than the country prisons.

The positives

- I see the positive aspects of the CGEA as falling into three main categories:
- those related to staff development
- those related to prisoner students having access to a mainstream credential
- those related to the improvement of educational pathways across the prison system

Staff development

The introduction of the CGEA has meant prison ALBE teachers have had to re-evaluate their programs in the light of a new curriculum framework. For all, this has been a challenging task, involving substantial modifications and extensions to program content. In many cases, working behind the walls of 'closed' institutions, teachers had become very isolated and teaching methods and program content had

not changed along with developments in the broader ALBE field. Despite the changes imposed in 1990 when the TAFE sector took over responsibility for prison education from the Ministry of Education, traditionally, prison ALBE teachers were primary teachers, trained in Special Education. Many had been working in the prisons for years without engaging in staff development activities which brought them into contact with either primary or ALBE teachers outside the prisons.

The Victorian Adult English Language, Literacy and Numeracy Accreditation Framework (VAELLNAF) in which the CGEA is embedded has provided a focus for staff development. Whilst we may not agree with every detail of it, it has been the starting point for many teachers to reflect seriously upon their own conceptions of 'literacy' and think critically about both what and how they should be teaching. It has been particularly rewarding for me to witness the professional development of several teachers in the department who have welcomed the challenges and opportunities provided by the first major curriculum initiative which has seemed to have any relevance for their own teaching and their students.

With its requirements that teachers maintain records of students' work and engage in moderation activities, ALBE teachers in prisons, like ALBE teachers elsewhere, have been exposed to higher levels of scrutiny and accountability. Many have also been drawn into professional forums outside the prison system, and even those who have actively resisted such interaction (although the numbers are dwindling there are still a few in this category) have been affected by the changes.

Through the changes wrought by the introduction of the CGEA I sense an increased self-confidence amongst prison ALBE teachers as professionals. There was always a certain 'bravado' about the group but as an outsider, coming into both the TAFE and prison education systems in 1991, it had seemed a predominantly defensive stance, imbued with the atttitude that just to be able to 'get along with' prisoners was enough. Actually doing some hard critical thinking about what and how we should be teaching them in literacy programs was effectively blocked by notions that it was too hard to achieve anything useful given the constraints imposed by the system. Of course, the CGEA alone is not responsible for the change in culture I'm pointing to. Other factors, such as the influx of outsiders like myself have played a role. The crux of it all, however, seems to be the fact that new ideas - about what we should be doing, how we should be doing it and what we might realistically aspire to achieve have wormed their way into what was previously a fairly closed system. The CGEA has been a critical part of this process.

Access to Mainstream Credentials

This is an important motivating factor for both prisoner students and their teachers. Like most adult learners, ALBE students in prisons have instrumental educational aims. They want to learn things that will be useful to them and a credential which doesn't label them as an ex-prisoner is important.

Given the relatively short sentences of most prisoners (less than six months and that spent in a series of institutions) it is important that we do our best to set our students up to continue with their education on release. Mainstream credentials are essential for this.

A balance must be achieved, of course, in meeting the needs of particular groups (eg youth, women and indigenous people) within the prison population. The arguments and issues here, however are no different to those which apply for the non-prisoner population. What we want to avoid is any increase in the marginalisation of already marginalised groups.

Educational Pathways Across the Prison System
As mentioned previously, movement is an inherent part of the prison system. Given the predominance of short sentences and the movement of prisoners from prison to prison it is essential that educational pathways are developed across the whole system. The VAELLNAF and CGEA have contributed to improvements here, although the problems are not as readily solved as we'd like. At least all ALBE teachers are 'speaking the same language' curriculum-wise and are engaged in what is finally a statewide moderation process.

We still have all the issues relating to effective information and student record flow between prison education centres and various approaches to 'atomising' the curriculum to deal with. (More on the latter, later.)

THE NEGATIVES
These seem to fall into four main categories:

- the administrative burdens
- the 'atomising' of the curriculum
- the gulf between ALBE and 'vocational' programs
- problems within the curriculum framework itself

None of these, I would argue are insurmountable obstacles, rather they point to the need for an effective evaluation process and the need to find that delicate balance between retaining as much flexibility as possible in the way in which any individual student can gain a CGEA and ensuring the credential is widely recognised as valuable.

The administrative burdens
The moderation and record-keeping requirements of the CGEA are seen by many teachers as burdensome and taking away from valuable teaching time; Although there have been difficulties in establishing an effective moderation process, I see it as crucial if the credential is to have validity. What we need to guard against, I think is rigid processes which teachers see as unnecessarily cumbersome and not serving the interests of the students. As teachers become more familiar with the CGEA and processes become established I think these aspects will be less of a concern.

There will remain the issue, however, of funding for teachers to attend moderation meetings. Within the prison ALBE area, funded by TAFE, this has been less of a problem with a relatively low proportion of our teachers employed on a sessional basis. (The impending privatisation may change this.)

The atomising of the curriculum

How to divide a curriculum into small 'chunks' whilst retaining its integrity is an issue which faces everyone teaching short-term students. The way in which the VAELLNAF is organised- into modules which are themselves composed of elements- encourages a simplistic carving up which runs contrary to all ideas of good practice.

Within prison ALBE there have been some disturbing trends in this direction. I would argue the way to counteract such trends is to produce and share examples of smaller units of work which show an integrated approach. Staff development must be the key here. Sound practice is based on a sound understanding of the meaning of 'literacy' itself and this is contentious philosophical territory. There does not seem to me to be any way to design a curriculum framework for ALBE which will be both broadly acceptable and yet impervious to a narrow 'skills-based' approach given the common-sense view of what literacy is.

The gulf between ALBE and vocational programs
To an extent, the introduction of the CGEA has reinforced the notion of a fundamental divide between 'general education' and 'vocational education'. The VAELLNAF is essentially a basic education curriculum framework with the Curriculum Options tacked onto the end. Despite the fact that adult basic education students, and particularly prisoner adult basic education students, are going to be at the end of the jobs queue, our students themselves frequently see education as a means of improving their employment prospects. And, given the gatekeeping function of literacy in our society, they are right.

We cannot afford to ignore the 'vocational' because a 'critical literacy' stance is more ideologically palatable. We must find ways to combine the two. I see this as beginning to happen already with projects such as those looking at cross-crediting between CGEA and COS.

Problems with the curriculum **framework**
This is probably the greatest source of complaint from teachers. A competency-based framework is only ever going to be as good as the competencies and performance criteria themselves. ALBE teachers in prisons have the same kinds of complaints as others across the ALBE field, including: widespread problems with the Oral Communication and Numerical and Mathematical Concepts streams; concerns about 'standards' and how to include legitimately, content criteria in relation to Curriculum Options; and problems with some of the performance criteria in the Reading and Writing stream. It's interesting that the Reading and Writing stream which was developed through such an extensive consultation process has been so much less problematic than the other three around which there was little consultation. There must be a lesson to be learnt here if we are going to have an effective evaluation process leading to improvements.

CONCLUSIONS
Overall, I think the introduction of the CGEA has had significant benefits for the teaching of ALBE in prison settings. Of course, there have been problems around the implementation: some to do with the curriculum initiative itself, and some to do

with the more general issue of people's responses to change. For the CGEA to gain widespread acceptance as a valid and useful credential, I think two main things must happen: first we need to have a thorough and open evaluation process out of which significant changes to the underlying framework would come; and secondly, we need to work at finding ideologically acceptable ways to bridge the gap between 'vocational' and 'general' education and incorporating them into the CGEA.

9. THE USE OF AUTHENTIC TEXTS FRUSTRATED BY RIGID DOMAINS

I have been teaching level 2 reading and writing groups this year. I teach across campuses, working with a group who are predominantly ESB students and a group who mainly come from ESL backgrounds. I teach each of these groups for six hours per week, with the time table structured this year to ensure that we spend one entire day together. In this way we can work substantially on texts and tasks and avoid the frustrating experience of running out of time and attempting to carry activities over into ensuing weeks or days.

Working for a whole day together means that there is ample time for the range of teaching and learning activities that I like to use within a given session. The needs which I perceive in these classrooms are:

- enough time for adequate discussion,
- students working with and advising each other in small groups,
- drafting, conferencing and redrafting student writing,
- time to use multiple texts,
- time to read silently and aloud,
- time for stopping where necessary to move beyond current text(s),
- time for students to work so that they experience completion and/or success,
- time for teaching where and when the need is seen,
- time to use texts which students bring in to the classroom, and
- time to make use of the library or other resources and to link the students directly into current classroom discourses.

Of course not all these issues are addressed every day, but they remain the ongoing concerns which I bring to the classrooms. Additional concerns that I have are:

- that students are made to feel comfortable at all times so they are willing to take risks,
- that students are active participants in their learning,
- that each student's success is seen as relative and judged in terms of his or her own progress,
- that students are free to wonder and question,

- that I am seen not as a body of knowledge and expertise, but as someone who will assist in these processes,
- that texts we use in the classrooms are authentic and available to anyone who is a member of a community,
- that students show some change in skills, knowledges and attitudes through being challenged by text, each other and by me,
- that these challenges are not confrontationist in nature, damaging to self esteem nor denigrating of students' realities, lifestyles and cultural standings, and
- that students with difference are active members of the group and are valued for their abilities, not excused or excluded because of disability.

Both these groups, **if** you can generalise about groups, began this year as very tentative readers and writers. One group actually showed more courage in approaching written texts and saw their needs as mostly ones of writing. The other group consisted of students who were very nervous readers and displayed extreme anxiety with any writing task. Both groups have caused me enormous concern because I felt that they <u>had</u> to develop some confidence with text, but could only do this through experiencing <u>success</u> with text. How to achieve this has been my constant worry.

One way I have attempted to address this is to concentrate on reading. Not reading, as decoding is often called reading, but reading for what authors are doing in texts; how they put the information together; the sort of evidence and examples they provide; the way they begin texts; the way they finish them off; why they were written in the first place; how they influenced us; how they may have been intended to influence us. Always I have tried to highlight the link between reading and writing: that while these can be separate entities, or activities, reading is impossible without an author in the first place, and writing is only meaningful **if** it has an audience. For this reason, I have not used diaries and journals in these classrooms this year, although I have used them in the past with other groups for different reasons.

My aim then has been to draw actively on the links between reading and writing, highlighting both as active interactionary processes. I feel I have had a fair degree of success, in that students are less afraid of writing, and are even willing to share it. Perhaps of even more importance is the talking about what we have read, what we have written (or tried to write) and I feel extremely satisfied with this.

My concern though is that when I 'think Certificate', I know that these three processes are separated, that they are prescribed in ways that actually polarise integrated parts of processes. Just when I have come to a collective way of thinking about reading, writing, publicising learning and making choices about modes of communicating this learning, the credential that I wish to make available to these students is the antithesis of what I am coming to believe about active participation

in the discourses of our worlds and communities. A year ago, two years ago, I would have been really excited about what I am learning and about the learning I am witnessing as I watch the confidence of individuals grow and strength of the groups cement as students learn to trust each other as well as themselves. This excitement of mine is constantly being tempered by thoughts of guilt and inadequacy because I do not think many of these students will be able to receive a Foundation Certificate in December, 1994.

A constant source of frustration to me is the Range and Conditions that are written for texts at level 2. In my attempt to use authentic texts, I have discovered that the Herald Sun, The Age, magazines and brochures are not using the same criteria in their production of text.

Recently I attended a moderation session. I took along samples of both responses to readings and student writing at level 2 which I had, in the classroom context, celebrated in a big way. I felt the students were beginning to be critical, to be brave, to be adventurous. They told me I could take their work. They were proud that it was going to be looked at by other teachers because I felt they were good examples of their developing abilities. Up to this point I had been desperately pouring over Performance Criteria (another issue for later!) and was pretty well convinced that these had been met. The discussion around the table did not centre on PC, but on the range and conditions because, as they did not believe it met the range and conditions of a level 2 text, the whole exercise was virtually disqualified (my choice of term, not theirs). The student's 'performance' was irrelevant, not considered, because the text was 'too hard'. What <u>were</u> considered appropriate were texts that had been 'plain Englished' to meet the range and conditions.

The resolution at that meeting is actually irrelevant to this report. The issue that is relevant, for me, is that students stand to be disadvantaged because of restrictions and limitations that are formally put on them as learners, and on me as facilitator of their learning as to the type of texts that are seen to be legitimate for them. Whether or not the Certificate (or those who wrote it) intended this to be the case, the truth is that it is the way it is being interpreted in the field. My own stance is that I REFUSE to allow students to be shielded, removed or protected from hard words, complex sentences, complex arguments that are part of their daily lives and discourses (and certainly part of the texts on television) and to insult them with simple sentences and simple debates, which is largely what the range and conditions of a level 2 text demand.

Unfortunately for me, I cannot argue this very effectively in moderation sessions. The document states that, for example, a 'Reading for Knowledge' text "will deal mostly with a familiar topic in mostly everyday language" and "describes relationships between events, phenomena or ideas sequentially". If at moderation I am challenged on the sequence, for example, or the everyday language, and the group vetos my text despite the fact that the student has dealt with the text, then it is not accepted as moderated. Where does this leave a student? Where does it leave me? Inventing assessment tasks that are out of context with student growth and classroom dynamics and interests? This is a real dilemma for me. I find the range and conditions for all domains at level 2 limiting and my feeling from hearing others talk

is that this is consistent for those who teach at other levels.

The issue of genre is one that concerns me too. In my everlasting search for authentic texts, I find the rigidness of the descriptions of these domains, or genres, frustrating. On one occasion I was writing in my planner and recording texts and domains (we have provision for this in our session planners). I wrote 'Public Debate', crossed it out and wrote 'Knowledge'. Not happy with this, I thought finally that it was Self Expression. But this was not true. Hard to believe I was so stupid? I asked another teacher what she thought. Finally we decided it was not one these, it was all of these. What was an interesting session in the classroom was a real problem for moderation.

I do not wish to enter into a debate, here, of the inconsistencies of the performance criteria across and between levels. It seems to me they have been stated over and over at meetings and at moderation sessions. I hope something is being done to address these concerns. I do need to say something though about the domain of 'Practical Purposes'. I find these performance criteria more difficult than any of the others. In some ways I can manipulate the others to fit in with what I call 'good practice', but 'Practical Purposes' is constantly a problem. One reason that I see for this is the 'procedure' aspect of it. I used a text one day which I felt was good for 'Practical Purposes' - it involved reading your way around a TV Guide, interpreting the abbreviations that are typical to a TV Guide, working out lengths of programs and designing a balanced viewing night for yourself (balanced between informative and entertaining). I felt, as I have said, that this was a practical reason for reading and writing, but there was no procedure. In order to bring procedure into the classroom it has to be removed from its real context and set up, contrived, pretended to be purposeful. There are few classroom situations that call for text to be read and instructions followed and performed and then documented and assessed. I feel very strongly, that while a rewrite is in need right around the Certificate, the issue of 'Practical Purposes' needs seriously to be addressed.

Our interviewing process ensures that students at similar stages are in groups together (this is not foolproof of course, but it is roughly good enough) so I do not have issues of multi levels within a reading and writing group. It does seem to me though that I need to explain that I do not teach the Certificate.. I teach to the needs of the students and for those who I feel are approaching Exit level 2, I look at the details in the Certificate (performance criteria, range and conditions) retrospectively. There are not enough students interested in the Certificate to justify a more rigorous teaching to it. My rigour is directed at text! Many students are not interested in the Certificate (luckily for me, many students are not interested in the Certificate. How could you possibly give a student Exit level 2 on the Numeracy stream as it currently stands? Where does this leave the notion of a Foundation Certificate? I have students I want to move to a level 3 group next year. How can I do this while I continue to actively resist introducing assessment tasks to our classrooms? These always appear like tests and inevitably students adopt a pass/fail mentality.

There is enough evidence in their folders, but more importantly in their belief in themselves, for me to be able, with a clear conscience, to move them to a level 3

reading and writing group in 1995. I will do what many teachers will do. I will use my professional understandings and definitions of success, few of which are mentioned in the Certificate, to make that decision. In working with a document that is fundamentally flawed, there is no other choice.

10. THE CGEA STIFLES CREATIVITY AND CONFIDENCE

I am going to begin this report with the final comment from my reflective journal:

> *Anyway, at this stage I think we need to come up with something more realistic and less restrictive... to say the least. I am a bit embarrassed about being so negative but I am the poor soul who is now struggling to enjoy something I used to love! But then maybe I'm doing quite well... who knows?*

I am not a negative person and I most definitely love my role as a teacher. How then did I so spontaneously write the above comment? For a number of reasons. The CGEA stifles creativity and confidence and has the potential to remove the students away from being the main focus of my teaching. I believe a new numeracy section must be written, to cater for ALBE students. Hard words I admit but I no longer apologise for them.

As I was asked to reflect on how the CGEA (Numeracy) has impacted on my practice, I shall restrict my comments to the numeracy area.

The numeracy section of the document is, I believe, unusable in its present form. At its best, it cramps a natural 'good practice' approach to numeracy teaching and allows for only the most contrived of assessment tasks if one is to attempt to match all the performance criteria to each element. (And that is the rule, as far as I understand it). For example, level 2, Performance Criterion 1, asks students to:

> **Recognise that mathematics is involved in the activity,**
> **Identify mathematics for use, and**
> **Make a reasonable prediction of the expected result.**

Firstly, how is it possible to assess the first part of these three performance criteria in a natural way, beyond just asking if maths is involved in the activity? There are plenty of times when as a group such a discussion would occur but it becomes stifling to <u>have to</u> ask it for all tasks that are to be assessed and then to have to record the students' response.

Secondly, it is laborious (to put it kindly) to have to work to fulfil performance criteria such as these. If one third is not achieved, then must it be assumed that the whole element has not been met?

The document has created an unnecessary obsession with assessment. As soon as someone can do an activity or task, there is a tendency to want to make sure that it is recorded for CGEA 'evidence'. (It wasn't so important that a student had successfully performed a certain skill but that it would somehow match the performance criteria, as set out in the frameworks.)

Prior to attempting to implement the CGEA, I have always kept 'running records' and anecdotal jottings about a student's efforts and performance and was always confident that I could discuss a person's progress and skills easily and with relevance. Now these records seem unnecessary and yet they give me a far greater pie-

hue of a student than the performance criteria of the numeracy modules. So, self doubt grows... am I missing a hidden value somewhere? Have I not been doing 'good practice' in the past with my anecdotal records?

At moderation sessions I was concerned by the emphasis on assessment. While I recognise the need to evaluate students' work and maintain accountability at all times, assessment has not been my main focus. There is this awful feeling of becoming obsessed with collecting samples of work. The nightmare associated with this, is that it is impossible to fulfil the requirements of the frameworks - without contriving the most unreal of tasks.

Strangely, (and I'm not sure I can explain this on paper!) I feel the numeracy section in the CGEA is too 'formal' for the ALBE students I am responsible for. It is so inflexible, restrictive or narrow that it separates the students from their needs. I generally use numeracy to extend a student's literacy skills as much as to develop 'pure' numeracy skills and to develop their confidence. I find now that my literacy and numeracy don't integrate as naturally as in the pre-CGEA days. The CGEA doesn't sit happily with the integration of numeracy and literacy as a natural occurrence yet this is essential for level 1 and 2 students.

It is difficult to say whether it is the document alone that has so disrupted my teaching or the document combined with the way it has been implemented. I do not believe the numeracy section is a workable document in its current form, nor does it reflect (nor cater for) my philosophy as an ALBE teacher. Is it right that I have to alter so drastically my teaching practice to enable me to issue a CGEA? I hope not.

Certainly, there have been some positives that have come out of the CGEA, for example the necessity of moderation has forced teachers together and provided an invaluable opportunity for discussion and sharing. This must be continued and built on, as the need in the ALBE field for peer support and sharing is enormous. Having the strands and attributes clearly defined is a great resource for a numeracy teacher and is a point of reference to ensure a full and varied program. The ***Background Works*** are my lifeline and I would like to see these along with the other positives I have mentioned, combine with some creative and 'ALBE type thinking' to reconstruct the numeracy section of the CGEA into a realistic, workable and enjoyable document.

11. WE ARE NOT EXPERTS, YET!

I teach in courses in an access area for students who may not be ready for, or confident enough to enter into mainstream education, often having been away from formal training environments for many years. Most have not had positive experiences with education in the past and are now dubious about what they can offer and what education can offer them.

The students range in age from 15 to 60, and cover a broad spectrum of races, educational backgrounds and human needs. Students bring with them life experiences and problems which may or may not affect their performance in the classroom and their ability to reinforce skills outside the classroom environment (ie, homework or off -campus research).

English speaking background students within the classroom have different needs from non-English speaking background students and these can be met in an integrated program based on the CGEA. Based on personal experience, I believe students of non-English speaking backgrounds require a minimum ASLPR level of 1+ / 2 in speaking and listening to participate effectively within a CGEA program.

There are many aspects of effective communication which students need to have some mastery of, in order to communicate effectively and therefore participate fully at work or in the community: for example, grammar, pronunciation, spelling, punctuation and an understanding of the purpose, audience and genre implicit in any communication.

Unfortunately, the CGEA does not allow for some of these areas to be given sufficient time and emphasis in the classroom. The four domains (as they are currently described) exclude a number of important genres or styles of communication. The writing of letters of application and resumes (which are fundamental skills in pre-vocational Adult Basic Education and ESL courses) do not fit easily into any of the streams or domains. Neither do business letters, poetry, visual literacy (working with pictorial or graphic material) fit easily within the designated categories.

In general, students are positive about the opportunity to work towards something more significant than just another short course certificate. The majority of students have expressed their desire to work towards the CGEA and returning students have stated their desire to continue on this educational pathway before moving into a more vocationally specific course or further education in the mainstream. These students are working to complete set assessment tasks. Students not wishing to participate in the CGEA are also encouraged to complete assessment tasks in order to further extend their skills.

Some students leave the decision to the teacher as to whether or not they participate in the formal assessment of the CGEA. Each student has different needs, demands and requirements and so courses need to be specifically tailored to meet their needs.

Until the present time, four groups of students have been enrolled in CGEA cours-

es in our TAFE college. The implementation of the CGEA has involved setting up a new system within an already complex enrolment process and co-ordinators have encountered some difficulties in relation to enrolment policies, the issuing of certificates and statements of attainment. One of the difficulties teachers and co-ordinators face is the need to enrol students into the anticipated level that they will exit at the end of the course.

In the past, the practice has been to make an initial assessment of the students' oracy and literacy skills in order to place them into courses in specific subject areas at appropriate levels. 1his becomes complicated when the CGEA course covers a number of levels. There is also the problem of whether a student entering at level 3 needs to enrol in levels 1 and 2 in order to be credited with having passed the lower levels. If not, the RPL process must be set in place. In larger institutions this entails a cost. Most students completing these courses are unemployed and may not be able to afford this additional cost. Can we use the initial assessment tests to exempt students from the levels they have already exceeded? If we do not enrol students in the lower levels then there is no record of them having completed or received a credential for these streams unless they go through the formal RPL process. Undoubtedly, these problems will iron themselves out as more and more students are enrolled in the CGEA. As yet, students have been shielded from the problems.

All students learn skills at different rates. The specified 'nominal' 80 hours per stream per level, may be seen as the maximum figure for student training time in terms of monetary allowance or training time allowances from DEET. In a 360 hour course, delivered over one semester, the actual literacy and numeracy component may be limited to much less time than this overall. If the student does not reach the exit level that she is enrolled in, what is recorded next to the students official subject record - F- Fail? N - not complete? Can students re-enrol into the same level and stream and continue on without having a fail recorded next to their name?

The dissemination of information on the CGEA has been slow and not always effective. Many different training groups are still without knowledge and understanding of the Victorian Frameworks. Industry-based training groups have been left out of much of the preliminary professional development and teacher training. Even community centres, neighbourhood houses and TAFE colleges are still experiencing initial shock reactions to the principles, guidelines, responsibilities of delivery, and the language of the CGEA.

From the point of view of vocational or industrial training, the domains within the reading, writing and oracy streams may not always be relevant. 1his may be a particular issue for workplace basic education programs funded by industry. Primarily, the material will have a specific industry focus and employers may not regard the domains of self-expression and public debate as appropriate. 1his makes the offering of statements of attainment to the students problematic.

The professional development programs provided over the past two year period has enabled teachers and co-ordinators to develop and enhance their ability to deliver the CGEA. However, new providers and trainers should also be entitled to the same introductory professional development sessions where terminology, moderation and

assessment requirements, support materials and support mechanisms are discussed.

It is a difficult certificate to teach and to implement and it challenges many of our usual pedagogical practices. However, it does enable us to stop and take a good look at our teaching strategies, practices and philosophies. It is important for teachers to develop a pedagogical perspective as there are different theories and pedagogies relating to 'adult literacy' and 'ESL' respectively. Whether we agree or disagree with all demands of the CGEA, we as professionals must use its existence to enhance and develop our own skills and understandings of processes of teaching and learning.

Like all new things there must be time to trial, implement, question, improve and re-write. We must continue to do so until re-accreditation takes place. With an experienced project team and enough money to review the CGEA in 1995, it could become a prestigious certificate and gain the recognition and support it demands.

If the re-accreditation process is done scantily, the CGEA could very well end up on a shelf with the dozen associated projects and be replaced by the National Framework. My hope is that this does not happen! Teachers of ALBE in Victoria deserve to have their efforts in developing and teaching the CGEA recognised and students have the right to a recognised training course.

As someone recently said, teaching the CGEA demands patience, tolerance a sense of humour and understanding- remember, we are not experts-yet!

Certificate of General Education for Adults

STREAMS

Level				
Level 4	Reading and Writing 4	Oral Communication 4	Numerical & Mathematical Concepts 4	General Curriculum Options 4
Level 3	Reading and Writing 3	Oral Communication 3	Numerical and Mathematical Concepts 3	General Curriculum Options 3
Level 2	Reading and Writing 2	Oral Communication 2	Numerical and Mathematical Concepts 2	General Curriculum Options 2
Level 1	Reading and Writing 1	Oral Communication 1	Numerical and Mathematical Concepts 1	General Curriculum Options 1

Certificate of General Education for Adults (Foundation)

Certificate of General Education for Adults (Reading and Writing)

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SUMMARY OF READING AND WRmNG COMPETENCIES

Suggested changes have been made to some of these performance criteria (below) through the Annotated Agreed Variations Process.

Self Expression	Practical Purposes	Knowledge	Public Debate
Module 4: Read and write at a level that displays more detailed technical knowledge and vocabularly and sophistirnted language use, indudes more objective and analytical processes, and is precisely structured and sustained in length.			
Write a longer narrative, recount or piece of creative/imaginative/expressive writing Demonstrate that meaning has been gained from reading a more complex, sustained narrative or literary text	Write a more complex text on unfamiliar processes Demonstrate that meaning has been gained from reading a complex practical text that describes an unfamiliar procedure	Write an informative, explanatory or academic report Demonstrate that meaning has been gained from reading a reference or informative text that is complex in presentation and content	Write a reasoned argumentative text Demonsirate that meaning has been gained from reading a complex persuasive text
Module 3: Read and write at a level that displays emerging technical knowledge and vocabulary, a developing personal style, increasing complexity in language use and a growing capacity to sustain longer pieces of work.			
Write a short text about less immediate aspects of personal life and experience Demonstrate that meaning has been gained from reading a more complex narrative or literary text of at least one page in lrngth	Write a more complex procedural 1ext Demonstrate that meaning has been gained from reading a more complex practical text that describes an unfamiliar procedure	Write an informative or explanatory report Demonstrate that meaning has been gained from reading a reference or informative text on an unfamiliar topic	Write an argumentative text that justifies an opinion Demonstrate that meaning has been gained from reading a persuasive text on an abstract topic
Module 2: Read and write at a level no longer entirely concrete nor only related to personal experience but starting 10 show some diversity in organisation and style			
Write a paragrnph which describes personal routines and familiar situations Demonstrate that meaning has been gained from reading a simple, less familiar narrative or literary text	Write a short procedural sequence in a familiar format Demonstrate that meaning has been gained from reading a practical text that describes a familiar procedure	Write a short well-organised report on one subject Demonstrate that meaning has been gained from reading a short reference or informative text on a mostly familiar topic	Write a simple argument expressing a point of view on a matter of personal interest Demonstrate that meaning has been gained from reading a short persuasive text on a familiar topic
Module 1: Read and write a concrete text 1ha1 is related to personal experience or the familiar, and is short and rudimentary in format and style			
Writt one or two sentences recounting a simple personal activity, idea or experience Demonstrate that meaning has been gained from reading a simple narrative or literary text	Write a simple practical text of 1-2 sentences Demonstrate that meaning has been gained from reading a simple familiar practical text	Write several facts abour a familiar or personal subject Demonstrate that meaning has been gained from reading a simple reference or informative text	Write a statement of opinion on a familiar matcer Demonstrate 1ha1 meaning has b'Cn gained from reading a simple persuasive text

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READING AND WRITING	MODULE 2

Element 2.1: Writing for Self Expression

Write a paragraph which describes personal routines and familiar situations

Performance Criteria:

1. **Combine 2 - 4 personally familiar events, ideas or experiences**
2. **Refer to some external factors, including other times and places**
3. **Use pronouns correctly**
4. **Use descriptive details about concexcs and thoughts considered unfamiliar ꝏ the reader**
5. **Write a coherent paragraph linked by language devices of *time***
6. **Spell with spasmodic accuracy**
7. **Use standard grammar spasmodically**

Range!Conditions:

1. **Familiar subject matter related to personal life and meaning**
2. **Use of dictionary of own choice**

Examples of texts:

stories, poetry, autobiographies, diaries, journals, plays, myths and legends, creative writing, greeting cards, interviews (magazines, TV, radio), TV soapies, films ("real life" documentaries, biographies)

Examples of assessment tasks:

- **Write a short job history as part of a job application letter**
- **Write about one highlight of your weekend**

ORAL COMMUNICATION MODULE 2

Element 2.1 Oracy for Self Expression

Can participate in shore social episodes - relatively structured exchanges with an interpersonal rather than transactional goal.

Performance Criteria

1. **Talk about several personally familiar events, ideas or experiences**
2. **Include a broader view than the personally immediate**
3. **Intelligibility occasionally makes demands on other participants**
4. **Inconsistent use of inceractional routines; some topic setting and supporting**
5. **Some provision of feedback**

Range/Conditiom

1. **Few, known people**
2. **In a participative role**
3. **Involving a number of turns**

Texts and Assessment Tasks

Task
Roleplay

Text/context - example
Recowit (weekend activities)

Method
Checklist - teacher/tutor

NUMERICAL AND MATHEMATICAL - MODULE 2

Elements:

2.1 Interpret data and organise it into tables and charts

2.2 Develop and use data, number, measurement and shape relationships

2.3 Use natural number and common fraction/decimal fraction/percentage equivalents

2.4 Use estimation and calculation with shape and direction

Performance Criteria for all elements at thir level:

1. Recognise that mathematics is involved in the activity
   Identify mathematics for use
   Make a reasonable prediction of the expected result
2. Carry out the mathematics required using a number of familiar methods and/or appropriate technology
3. Check the reasonableness of methods and result against initial estimate and prediction
4. Interpret and apply methods and results in particular contexts and, in similar contexts
5. Describe and record method and result using familiar language including some formal symbolic and graphical representation

RangelConditionr:

At Level 2 the activity or task:

- contains clear mathematical information
- is located in a reasonably familiar social, personal, work or cultural context
- uses language that is straight-forward and informal and may contain some formality including mathematical symbolic representation

ExampleI of aiseJsment tasks:

Interpret probability of rain as a common percentage e.g. 10% probability of rain
Calculate the distance between two locations on a map (simple scale only)
Interpret a 5 km distance race as number of 400m laps to be run

GENERAL CURRICULUM OPTIONS MODULE 2

Element 2.1: Can collect, analyse and organise information

Perf()rTfllZnce Criteria:

1. Follow existing guidelines for the collection, analysis, and organisation of information
2. Access and record information from given sources
3. Organise information into predetermined categories
4. Check information for completeness and accuracy

Range and Conditiom:

1. The subject matter will be everyday and may include some unfamiliar aspects
2. The established guidelines for the completion of the task may need to be interpreted for the present situation
3. The nature of the task will be simple, with information required from more than one source or a more complex task with information from a single source

Examples ofassessment tasks:

Accessing routine information from a more complex listing, such as Yellow Pages
Determining from class members an optimum excursion date and venue
Updating a simple resource list

APPENDIX 2

List ofAcronyms

AAP	Australian Assistance Plan
ABEAF	Adult Basic Education Accreditation Framework
ACAL	Australian Council of Adult Liteacy
ACE	Adult and Community Education
ACFE	Adult, Community and Further Education (Victoria)
ACFEB	Adult, Community and Further Education Board (Victoria)
ACTA	Australian Council of TESOL Associations
ACTRAC	Australian Committee for Training And Curriculum
ACTU	Australian Council of Trade Unions
AEMP	Advanced English for Migrants Program
AEU	Australian Education Union
ALAC	Adult Literacy Action Campaign
ALBE	Adult Literacy and Basic Education
ALLP	Australian Language and Literacy Policy
ALRNNV	Adult Literacy Research Network Node of Victoria
AMEP	Adult Migrant Education Program
AMES	Adult Migrant Education Service
ANHLC	Association of Neighbourhooc;i Houses and Learning Centres
ANTA	Australian National Training Authority
AQF	Australian Qualifications Framework
ASP	Australian Standards Framework
CAE	Council of Adult Education (Victoria)
CALP	Commonwealth Adult Literacy Program
CBE	Competency Based Education
CBL	Competency Based Learning
CBT	Competency Based Training
CES	Commonwealth Employment Service
CGEA	Certificate of General Education for Adults
CSDA	Commonwealth Services Delivery Agency
DEET	Department of Employment, Education and Training
DEETYA	Department of Employment, Education and Youth Affairs
DFE	Division of Further Education
DIMA	Department of Immigration and Multiculturfll Affairs
DSS	Department of Social Security
ELICOS	English Language Intensive Courses for Overseas Students
EPE	Employment Placement Enterprise
ESL	English as a Second Language
GCO	General Curriculum Option
IEA	Intensive Employment Assistance
ILY	International Literacy Year
ITAB	Industry Training Advisory Boards
LMP	Labour Market Program
MAATS	Modern Australian Apprenticeship and Traineeship System

MCEETYA	Ministerial Council of Employment, Education and Youth Affairs
NCAELLS	National Collaborative Adult Language and Literacy Strategy
NCP	National Competition Policy
NESB	Non-English Speaking Background
NFROT	National Framework for the Recognition Of Training
NOWinFE	Network of Women in Further Education
NPL	National Policy on Languages
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
NRS	National Reporting System
NTB	National Training Board
NTF	National Training Framework
NTP	National Training Packages
NTRA	National Training Reform Agenda
NVETS	National Vocational Education and Training System
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
OLMA	Office of Labour Market Adjustments
OTFE	Office of Technical and Further Education
PAR	Participatory Action Research
PEPE	Public Employment Placement Enterprise
RALBEO	Regional Adult Literacy and Basic Education Officer
RPL	Recogntion of Prior Learning
SIP	Special Intervention Program
STB	State Training Board
TAFE	Technical and Further Education
TDCS	Trade Development Council Secretariat
TESOL	Teaching English as a Second or Other Language
TNSDC	TAFE National Staff Development Committee
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
VAELLNAF	Victorian Adult English Language and Literacy Accreditation Framework
VALBEC	Victorian Adult Literacy and Basic Education Council
VALC	Victorian Adult Literacy Council
VCE	Victorian Certificate of Education
VET	Vocational Education and Training
VETAB	Victorian Education and Training Accreditation Board
WEA	Workers' Education Association

The Path to the Clever Country: Co-operation or Control ?

'... there will be pain during the birth of those reforms. Figuratively speaking only I hope, blood will be shed, but from the darkness there will be light... But above all there will be pain before the gain and the question is, how much pain are you prepared to endure... ?

The most valuable resource that the college has, is not its staff but its clients and the market in which it operates'.

Mr Richard King, Executive Director of the TAFE College Councils Association of Victoria recently urged TAFE council members and directors to "revolutionise" their management practices to exert greater control over their teachers in order to compete better in the vocational training market.

However, the suggestion that managers should 'shed blood' in order to take command over a wayward (and dispensible) teaching force may actually have the opposite effect to the long-term aim envisioned for the Training Reform Agenda. The recent history of enterprise bargaining in TAFE is a case in point.

TAFE teachers in Victoria moved to federal awards in early 1994. However, they were stjll bound to participate in enterprise bargaining in order to gain pay increases in exchange for greater productivity and more flexible work practices.

Throughout 1995, Victoria's 26 TAFE colleges carried out enterprise bargaining with staff and AEU (Australian Education Union) officers. lvlost directors reached interim agreements which delivered productivity gains and were acceptable to teachers. A few however, have taken the path of managerial conquest.

'Non-attendance time' became the sticking point of enterprise bargaining in TAFE. Non-attendance during term break has always been recognised as part of the total employment package but was never actually written into the award. (The same applies to school teachers.) TAFE is now moving from an acceptance of non-attendance time simply as an employment benefit to the recognition (by teachers, unions and managers) that it could be used more effectively to enhance productivity and quality. However, teachers argue that using non-attendance time to increase productivity should be compensated for and the union has lodged a bid for a 15% pay increase.

The first two colleges to conclude successful enterprise agreements were Swinburne and RMIT. However, the State government refused to approve these until reference to non-attendance time was deleted. An informal understanding was reached with teachers at these colleges about where and how they would perform their professional duties during term breaks. Most other colleges reached agreements for the 1996 teaching year

which included some form of recognition of professional activities done during non-attendance time.

At the Northern Metropolitan Institute of TAFE (NMIT) a more aggressive approach to enterprise bargaining by management has resulted in industrial action and the alienation of staff. Negotiations for a 1996 agreement broke down over management proposals which included increased teaching time and reduced non-attendance time, but no offer for any compensatory pay increase. Most teachers voted to remain on av1ard conditions rather than sign the local contract. Management took its offer directly to staff and has now established a two-tiered set of employment conditions (reminiscent of the CRA vVeipa case) privileging those wh9 signed the 'management position' and punishing approximately 200 teachers who have not.

Those who signed the 'management position' have 40 days leave and can apply for a professional development program (including two--week overseas study tours with airfares, four star hotel accommodation and a ,veekly allowance) which is only open to "those ı.who have demonstrated flexibility". Non-signers have only the 20 days leave specified in the a,,·ard and were forced to attend an empty college during the Easter break. Parents with school-aged children were particularly affected. Leave ·without pay for such teachers was refused. 1'vlany contracts, previously twelve month, back-to-back contracts, have been reduced to six months, including contracts for DEET programs with three year funding agreements. Management practices such as these are damaging the professional culture of the college and leading to the loss of those teache who have alternatives.

TAFE teaching staff provide training to industry in more enlightened management styles than those which they are currently experiencing. For all the rhetoric of TAFE institutes acting as business corporations, it would appear that the management practices of some fall way behind accepted best practice in the private sector.

The issue of non-attendance time has now gone back to the Industrial Relations Commission for arbitration. The AEU's case for a national TAIT award (including variation of the award to recognise non-attendance time) is new waiting to be heard. The AEU are arguing for teachers to enter into negotiated work plans with management as to how they vvill spend designated non-attendance time in professional development, curriculum development or industry liaison activities. Teachers have always spent personal and non-attendance time on course preparation and self-directed professional development. This now must be encouraged and accounted for if TAFE teachers are to be at the cutting edge of technical and educational expertise.

Down-grading the teaching profession to achieve competitive efficiencies is likely to prove counter-productive in the long term.. An enthusiastic

and committed body of teachers is vital to achieving excellence and relevance in vocational education and training. TAFE teachers have already delivered significant productivity improvements and are ready to work with management to contribute to Australia as a 'clever country'. However, the clever country will not be achieved by reducing TAFE teachers to a Taylorist, management-dominated work force. Colleges, management and staff, should be working together to build a culture of professional cqrnmitrnent to developing Australia's people power.

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