From 'ritual' to 'mindfulness': policy and pedagogic positioning

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Abstract

Schools and professionals respond to statute in different ways. However, professional activity is more than mediated response to policy. Versions of pedagogy are not simply envisaged on high and enacted in the workplace. This paper examines how professional views formulate policy imperatives. It proposes that to understand pedagogy requires an understanding of the ways in which professional selves are realised in relation to the policy formation process. To do this, positioning theory is used to describe how practice produces policy. Accordingly, the paper examines the dynamic interplay between: first, the story lines unfolding within and outside school; second, the positions adopted by individuals in the course of pedagogic decision-making. Third, the illocutionary (that achieved *in* saying something) and perlocutionary (that achieved *by* saying something) effects of language. Following this 'positioning triad', the paper proposes 'pedagogy as ritual' and 'pedagogy as mindfulness' and how these are representative, respectively, of limiting and delimiting pedagogic discourses.

Any form of educational activity cannot be said to operate in a vacuum. Certainly, the immediate necessities born out of individual ability, resources, classroom structures and so on create a series of challenges and opportunities that contribute to the formation of the learning context. Additionally, it is surely the case that factors external to the immediacy of the classroom such as school ethos, parental support, local service delivery and local socio-economic and socio-demographic concerns will serve to locate the work that occurs in classrooms. Although politicians and educational commentators may well bemoan the overplaying of factors that lie beyond the boundaries of the school as reasons for explaining levels of achievement, attendance, attainment or other forms of educational engagement, it is the case that in most western countries such sociological factors are recognised even if they are elided in the drive for increased standing in OECD records.

The context of the classroom is, then, at one level highly localised and replete with the day-to-day practices and responses of professionals and pupils. It must also be noted, however, that wider forces are also manifest. For those aspects that could be said to lie within the meso- or exosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1979 Bronfenbrenner, U. 1979. *The ecology of human development*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.) such as home–school links or localised educational action, are themselves part of wider macrosystems that encompass and embrace national and transnational issues and concerns. This accepted, it seems necessary, at some point, to consider macro issues for their part in the playing out of pedagogy. Whilst the sociology of education and other areas have traditionally undertaken such work, it remains clear that policy analysis as a mechanism by which education and indeed pedagogy might be understood has gained considerable ground as an academic, practical and political endeavour in the last 25 years. Indeed, the political dimensions to policy analysis are now considerable and much time, effort and money is spent in both formulating methodologies by which such activity might be undertaken as well as undertaking the activity itself. This paper is a case in point; here I endeavour to clarify a particular lens through which policy and policy formation might be construed. Particularly, I start to set out some thoughts I have concerning mechanisms by which interactions between agents formulate pedagogic policy. I am here concerned with trying to understand *pedagogy as positioning*. In so doing I argue that understanding policy requires an appreciation of the ways in which professional selves are realised as *positions*. Specifically, I use positioning theory (cf. Harré, 2004 Harré R. 2004 Positioning theory Retrieved May 16, 2006, from http://www.massey.ac.nz/~alock/virtual/positioning.doc) to describe how practice both 'represents' and 'produces' seemingly fixed and yet often contradictory representations of professional pedagogic beliefs.

I am not proposing a definitive catch-all that dismisses that previously written. Rather, what I present is a think-piece designed to complement and extend previous work which considers the relationship between policy and discourse and subsequent professional activity. In this regard I agree with Ball:

the *complexity* and *scope* of policy analysis – from an interest in the workings of the state to a concern with contexts of practice and the distributional outcomes of policy – precludes the possibility of successful single theory explanations. (2006, p. 43, emphasis in original)

The remainder of the paper is split into four sections. The first section outlines the technocratic view of policy analysis, that is, that educational policy represents, in an objective and value-free way, that intended by the author/s. The second section outlines, briefly, how dissatisfaction with such interpretations has led to more critical perspectives and the adoption of a critical analysis perspective. In the third section I outline Positioning Theory as a means by which the policy–practice interface might be considered both for its illumination of the positions adopted by individuals in the course of pedagogical activity and as a means by which to consider how policy is itself formed through the very act of positioning. The fourth section moves on from this in an attempt to clarify some initial thoughts I have regarding 'pedagogy as ritual' and 'pedagogy as mindfulness'. In this way, I am concerned with trying to illuminate how such interactions and reactions are implicated in the never-ending formation and re-formation of particular policy 'moments'.

Educational policy and policy analysis

In undertaking policy analysis, educational or otherwise, there is always the temptation to produce something definitive; something that demonstrates an underlying truth espoused through missive. In so doing, such analyses would seek to identify real meanings. Accordingly, the policy sciences traditionally sought to:

derive so called 'objective', value-free methods for the writing and reading of policy, [in an] … attempt to give technical and scientific sophistication to the policy process in order to buttress its intellectual legitimacy. (Olssen, Codd, & O'Neill, 2004, p. 2)

Duly, this technocratic approach assigns distinct roles and reasons for both the various stages of the policy-making process and the participants therein. The adoption of dispassionate endeavours is played out through positivist measures designed to remove accusations of bias in any initial provision of information. Such 'facts' are then described and accepted and form the basis of the production of the policy imperative. Any ensuing policy document is thus

assumed to capture the 'truth' of the problem to be solved, whilst the communication of this 'truth' and the articulation of a range of possible responses provide the means by which activity might be designed. It is also the case that such activity is often couched in terms of local mediation; that is, local contexts provide the backdrop against which initiatives and actions are formed and performed. In this way, technocratic readings of policy identify the need for local action within the frame of wider policy imperatives that direct, though their identification of 'truth', responses as legitimate or otherwise. This also provides policy makers and policy interpreters with usable scripts by which judgment might be passed. Local analysis is undertaken to provide possible local mediation of the policy messages and is thus oriented as a means by which to understand the true expression of information, ideas and intentions (Olssen et al., 2004 Olssen, M., Codd, J. and O'Neill, A.M. 2004. *Education policy, globalisation, citizenship and democracy*, London: Sage.).

When such mechanisms are presented as the logical conclusion of positivist methodological endeavours, the status afforded such data through its dispassionate collection and analysis would imply a set of 'truths', adherence to which would provide a means for understanding and action (Adams, 2008 Adams, P. 2008. Considering 'best practice': The social construction of teacher activity and pupil learning as performance. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 38: 375–392.). In short, this perspective derives from two underlying assumptions. First, those methods by which evidence are gathered to signal a need for policy change are dispassionate in their intent; they reflect the reality of the situation. Second, that these reflections are correctly transcribed in the policy and that, hence, policy corresponds to author intent (Olssen et al., 2004 Olssen, M., Codd, J. and O'Neill, A.M. 2004. *Education policy, globalisation, citizenship and democracy*, London: Sage.). However, to simply assume a causal chain that binds reality to action through policy created by unencumbered evidence collection, interpretation and expression is flawed; something else is thus required.

Policy as discourse

With such concerns, and many others in mind, it has become fashionable to describe policy in terms of discourse. Whilst by no means an agreed field (cf. Bacchi, 2000 Bacchi, C. 2000. Policy as discourse: What does it mean? Where does it get us?. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, 21: 45–57.) *policy as discourse* does provide grounds for further consideration of the interplay between policy creation and response. As a challenge to the view that policy, as a manifestation of knowledge, arises either in the individual or in the natural world, we can consider the work of Kenneth Gergen (1995 Gergen, K.J. 1995. "Social construction and the educational process". In *Constructivism in*

education, Edited by: Steffe, L.P. and Gale, J. 17–40. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.) and his proposal that all knowing arises in the social processes of language use and meaning-making. Here, rather than construe policy as the accurate expression of dispassionate, unbiased observations, such a view shifts our relationship with policy from a means by which the individual might comprehend the significance of the policy statement in terms of truth to an understanding that the language used within the policy statements itself actively constructs the world to which it pertains. Put another way, Gergen's view invites us to consider policy as having a 'performative' function and that that presented is neither a true representation of reality nor an accurate reflection of intent. Accordingly, policy can no longer be simply said to be understood and applied. Alternatively, this perspective construes policy as a representation of the interplay between the policy text (the material embodiment of the policy document and associated forms), discursive practices involved in the production, distribution and consumption of policy, and wider social practices which delineate, for example 'professional' and, indeed, other roles and associated activities.

This view acknowledges the parts played by history and culture in determining specific ways of viewing the world whilst illuminating how understanding is dependent upon prevailing social and economic arguments (after Burr, 2003 Burr, V. 2003. *Social constructionism*, 2nd edn, Hove, , UK: Routledge.). Policy, then, should not be seen as an accurate portrayal of some pre-existing status but is, rather, a social construction given legitimacy through the permission it gives to speak. Policy as discourse is, therefore, an interplay between 'conceptual schema attached to specific historical, institutional and cultural contexts … [and] … the differential power of some actors' (Bacchi, 2000 Bacchi, C. 2000. Policy as discourse: What does it mean? Where does it get us?. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, 21: 45–57. , p. 52) to act. With this in mind, it is clear that professional actions undertaken in relation to policy appear, not as objective responses to positions of truth, but rather as subjective realisations borne out of cultural, historical, economic and social specificity. Policy as discourse attends to both the uses and effects of policy insomuch as it considers the influences pertaining to the creation of the policy text, the mechanisms by which this is imported into the professional lifeworld and the prevailing social conditions which form the very language used to describe the policy itself, as well as associated roles and identities; in short, policy as social construction.

This view is not new; much has been written from this perspective. On this matter, Bacchi notes the tendency of this perspective to:

Concentrate on the ability of some groups rather than others to make discourse, and on some groups rather than others as effected or constituted in discourse. To put the point briefly, those who are deemed to 'hold' power are portrayed as the ones making discourse, whereas those who are seen as 'lacking' power are described as constituted in discourse. (2000, p. 52)

This redistribution of voice constitutes certain voices as meaningful or authoritative (Ball, 2006 Ball, S.J. 2006. *Education policy and social class: The selected works of Stephen J. Ball*, London: Routledge. , p. 49).

This social construction of policy requires an appreciation that the processes of problematisation and argumentation are the lifeblood of policy existence. The lenses offered by history, culture and economics through which 'problems' to be solved are identified determine not only the mechanisms by which 'reality' might be understood but also the very 'problems' themselves. Further, it is through the process of argumentation that certain solutions are presented as viable alternatives. Crucially, as Hastings (1998 Hastings, A. 1998. Connecting linguistic structures and social practices: A discursive approach to social policy analysis. *Journal of Social Policy*, 27(2): 191–211. , p. 194) notes, this 'highlights the instrumentality of the process of problem construction not only to successful policy making, but also to sustaining systems of belief about the nature of social reality'. Problem construction is, then, 'as much a way of knowing and a way of acting strategically as a form of description' (Edelman, 1988 Edelman, M. 1988. *Constructing the political spectacle*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press. , p. 36).

In this regard, policy as discourse establishes a number of key principles. First, it articulates a view that 'problems' do not exist as pre-human issues to be addressed but rather that they are the products of political reasoning located in economic, social, cultural and historical ways of viewing the world. Second, that these lenses also provide the means by which solutions, that is to say the pronouncements 'captured' as policy imperatives, might be constructed. Third, and most importantly, policy as discourse, through its recognition of cultural, historical, economic and social specificity, constrains the scope of both policy construction and policy response (Ball, 2006 Ball, S.J. 2006. *Education policy and social class: The selected works of Stephen J. Ball*, London: Routledge.). Put briefly, discourse presents a variety of representations from which action might be chosen:

Discourses are about what can be said, and thought, but also about who can speak, when, where and with what authority. Discourses embody the meaning and use of propositions and words. Thus certain possibilities for thought are

constructed. (Ball, 2006 Ball, S.J. 2006. *Education policy and social class: The selected works of Stephen J. Ball*, London: Routledge. , p. 48)

This world-to-person fit describes the 'subject position', determined by the availability of dominant discourses. Interpretational options are thus taken to be both pre-existing and available to the subject. In such a view, human agency occurs through the deployment of the subject's exercise of choice from the discourses available. In short, through the act of locating oneself within a frame of pre-determined potentialities, the subject is said to exercise agentic action.

Towards positioning: pedagogy and professional role

The interpretation of human agency as outlined above, whilst readily understandable through an implicit recognition of the place and form for socially and culturally identifiable possibilities, could be said to mirror discussions about role. However, the metaphorical notion of 'role' is distinct from that embodied in the concept of 'position' and it is the latter that is of concern in this paper. The social typification (Luberda, 2000 Luberda J. 2000 Unassuming positions: Middlemarch, its critics, and positioning theory Retrieved January 30, 2007, from http://www.sp.uconn.edu/~jbl00001/positioning/luberda_positioning.htm , p. 2) described by role is antithetical to position; the relatively static concept of role as described, for example, by 'teacher', 'pupil', 'parent' should not be confused with the 'more dynamic metaphor of "position"' (Luberda, 2000 Luberda J. 2000 Unassuming positions: Middlemarch, its critics, and positioning theory Retrieved January 30, 2007, from http://www.sp.uconn.edu/~jbl00001/positioning/luberda_positioning.htm , p. 3). Consider for example the role of 'teacher': whilst we might concur with certain features that might be said to portray the characteristics of the 'average teacher', we would be hard pressed to say with certainty that this abstraction of certain key features can capture accurately the individual beliefs, experiences, ideologies and thoughts of someone who finds themselves so described. Indeed, the role-term 'teacher' is but a label to begin the act of consideration; it may suffice when filling in a form or labelling oneself in shorthand, but even in such situations the language has no performative aspect, for it *is* exactly what it seeks to achieve. It is by no means certain that the moment-by-moment actions that form the existence of an individual thus described might be captured. The very act of 'teaching' itself repositions 'the teacher' through its inextricable connection to the immediacy of context and the history of experience.

The above may be countered by the assertion that role is not meant to be a static representation but simply a mechanism by which we might understand the perspective from which someone is operating. However, this would assume an

implicit stratification of the ontology of the social world into three levels: individual, institutional and societal, and the assumption that this stratification adopts a Newtonian and Euclidian space/time grid by which social phenomena might be considered (van Langenhove & Harré, 1999 van Langenhove, L. and Harré, R. 1999. "Introducing positioning theory". In *Positioning theory*, Edited by: Harré, R. and van Langenhove, L. 14–31. London: Blackwell. , pp. 14–15). Whilst it may be the case that all social acts occur *at some time* and *in some location*, this grid is insufficient as a means by which to understand these acts for they elide that the psychological and social do not neatly map on to the physical: the social and psychological past and future are not fixed in the same way as the material (van Langenhove & Harré, 1999 Harré, R. and van Langenhove, L. 1999. "The dynamics of social episodes". In *Positioning theory*, Edited by: Harré, R. and van Langenhove, L. 1–13. London: Blackwell. , p. 15). As Harré and van Langenhove note:

The same individual … can manifest any one of their repertoire of personas in clusters of behaviour displayed in the appropriate social context. Taken over a period of time it becomes clear that each person has many personas, any one of which can be dominant in one's mode of self-presentation in a particular context. (1999, p. 7)

Whilst the term 'role', then, may well suffice as linguistic shorthand, a means by which we might label for convenience, as a mechanism by which we can describe and understand action it is severely limited. It is for this reason that the term 'position' is deployed as a means by which the fluidity and temporality of individual identity might be acknowledged.

To return to the discussion of agentic action it is still not entirely clear how that outlined above concerning the relationship between discourse and position is not contradictory. It might be argued, for example, that if individual action can only be realised through the deployment of available social possibilities, then surely this denies agency. However, this counter argument is problematic for at least three reasons. First, it assumes that choice itself is imposed rather than the range of options available from which the act of choosing might be made; it is the very act of choosing which confers agency. Second, postmodern theorising does not ascribe the status of truth to the discourses that ordain possibility. It is not assumed that these present secure knowledge systems; rather performed knowledges compete and so orient questions towards the use to which knowledge is being put. Put another way, the point of departure for analysis is not the pursuit of truth but rather the illumination of the preservation strategies that seek to maintain the status quo. At a macro level, Foucault's work (cf. 1972 Foucault, M. 1972. *The archaeology of knowledge*, New York: Pantheon.) sought to do just this, whilst at a micro level the work of, for example, Bamberg

and Andrews (cf. 2004 Bamberg M. Andrews M. *Considering counternarratives: Narrating, resisting, making sense* 2004 Amsterdam John Benjamins) outlines how personal sense-making strategies seek to either legitimate or subvert these socio-cultural 'realities'.

Third, a denial of agency due to the constraining factors imposed by the availability of social possibilities assumes a positive correlation between thought and action, speech and act. This supposes a static representation of a persona that exists concordant with internal thoughts, beliefs and ideas. It assumes that the actions portrayed are, indeed, representative of internal psychological referents played out in the obvious social world. It is here that caution must be taken. Without wishing to deny any form of constancy for particular points of view held as part of the general make-up of a person, it is surely inconsistent to assume a socially constructed world whilst positing decision making as the result of the 'attitudes' people 'hold' (after Burr, 2003 Burr, V. 2003. *Social constructionism*, 2nd edn, Hove, , UK: Routledge.).

What we do and what we can do, then, are restricted. The acquisition, adoption or imposition of certain duties, rights and obligations serve to provide possible positions. This view has relevance for the production of professional selves insomuch as it explains positions as grounded in discourses which in turn provide the meanings and values whereby individuals might be positioned (cf. Davies & Harré, 1990 Davies B. Harré R. 1990 Positioning: The discursive production of selves Retrieved January 30, 2007, from http://www.massey.ac.nz/~alock/position/position.htm). As these discourses are inherently contradictory and in competition, agentic action is required in that the individual is forced to choose which position to adopt (Bamberg, 2003 Bamberg M. 2003 Positioning with Davie Hogan – Stories, tellings, and identities Retrieved January 30, 2007, from http://www.clarku.edu/~mbamberg/positioning_and_identity.htm). This theoretical perspective originates from two underpinning social constructionist principles as described by Harré and Langenhove (1999, p. 2) and is well documented in the literature:

• What people do, publically and privately, is intentional, that is, directed to something beyond itself, and normatively constrained, that is, subject to such assessments as correct/incorrect, proper/improper and so on.
• What people are, to themselves and others, is a product of a lifetime of interpersonal interactions superimposed over a very general ethological endowment.

This perspective originates in a view that choice is oriented through a relatively strong underpinning (Bamberg, 2003 Bamberg M. 2003 Positioning with Davie Hogan – Stories, tellings, and identities Retrieved January 30, 2007, from

http://www.clarku.edu/~mbamberg/positioning_and_identity.htm , p. 1) and recognises 'the power of discourse to influence thinking and consciousness' (Phillips, Fawns, & Hayes, 2002, p. 242). Accordingly, individuals are said to be positioned, that is, they are assigned parts (McKenzie & Carey, 2000 McKenzie P.J. Carey R.F. 2000 , May 'What's wrong with that woman?' Positioning theory and information-seeking behaviour Paper presented at Canadian Association for Information Science (CAIS) 2000: Dimensions of a Global Information Science, Proceedings of the 28th Annual Conference, May 28–30, University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta, USA) within available personal, social and institutional discourses. In this way, understanding is constructed via communal activities (Harré, 2004 Harré R. 2004 Positioning theory Retrieved May 16, 2006, from http://www.massey.ac.nz/~alock/virtual/positioning.doc). This is reminiscent of Vygotsky's (1978 Vygotsky, L.S. 1978. *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.) principle that higher-order mental processes exist, first in the group, that is, between people (interpsychologically) before such thinking is adopted within the mind of the individual (intrapsychologically). What is clearly of note is how the unfolding of the social episode occurs as an indication, acknowledgement and appropriation of rights and duties (Harré, 2004 Harré R. 2004 Positioning theory Retrieved May 16, 2006, from http://www.massey.ac.nz/~alock/virtual/positioning.doc). For example, the rights, duties and obligations a teacher may have to adopt in a particular position in relation to a pupil stem from the particular social and cultural order in which the interaction takes place. Clearly, such rights, duties and obligations will differ due to the willingness of the pupil to adopt a particular position, the institutional codes by which such positions are defined and the societal expectations placed upon both the position of 'pupil' and 'teacher'. It is also clear that whilst the definitions of such positions might be more tightly or more loosely defined, the very act of such definition defines the possibility of acting in a manner defined as 'other'. Accordingly, society and institution confer rights, duties and obligations which can be accepted or challenged; definition may limit action but does not constrain it. For example, whilst the teacher–pupil dyad may be representative of wider social, institutional and cultural perspectives, it is also clear that the immediate interpersonal nature of the relationship is itself subject to positioning acts. As such, an act of defiance may be a challenge to the position offered within the interactional episode itself rather than a challenge to prevailing socio-cultural norms. This signals the 'dynamic and negotiable aspects of interpersonal encounters' (Moghaddam, 1999 Moghaddam, F.M. 1999. "Reflexive positioning: Culture and private discourse". In *Positioning theory*, Edited by: Harré, R. and van Langenhove, L. 74–86. London: Blackwell. , p. 74) and demonstrates how positioning theory is foregrounded by the contextual nature of discourse.

Positioning theory

What we have arrived at, therefore, is a starting point for deliberation regarding professional activity and its relationship with and to discourse at a number of levels. I have outlined, briefly, ways in which discourses, through their societal and cultural specificity offer mechanisms for meaning-making and perspectives thereof. The assumption is that such 'implicit patterns of rights and duties … pre-exist the people who occupy them, as part of the common knowledge of community' (Harré, 2004 Harré R. 2004 Positioning theory Retrieved May 16, 2006, from http://www.massey.ac.nz/~alock/virtual/positioning.doc , p. 6). However, questions still remain concerning the positions people take up in relation to discourses *and* the here-and-now intentionality of conversational utterances.

The metaphorical concept of 'position' within the three social entities of people, institutions and society notes the ways and means by which the individual negotiates the various discourses that seek to order action (Phillips et al., 2002 Phillips, D., Fawns, R. and Hayes, B. 2002. From personal reflection to social positioning: The development of a transformational model of professional education in midwifery. *Nursing Enquiry*, 9: 239–249.). Importantly, as the act of position-taking relates to prevailing discourses and as such discourses are played out in unfolding social episodes, the 'matter' of social reality (Harré & van Langenhove, 1991 Harré, R. and van Langenhove, L. 1991. Varieties of positioning. *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour*, 21: 393–407. , p. 394), it is clear that positions are inter-relational. Accordingly, the dynamic and negotiable aspects of interpersonal interactions requires a theoretical consideration that acknowledges how discourses position individuals in terms of the availability of legitimate repertoires whilst also recognising that the positions adopted will be subject to moment-by-moment interactional influence. 'Positioning theory' is a concept that develops this instantaneousness of meaning-making; the individual positions him/herself in relation to discourse *and* conversation. Positioning theory duly locates meaning both against the background of discourses and the local repertoire of admissible social acts (Harré, 2004 Harré R. 2004 Positioning theory Retrieved May 16, 2006, from http://www.massey.ac.nz/~alock/virtual/positioning.doc , p. 6). This perspective 'begins with a view of "positions" as interactively drawn up, resisted, and amended by participants' (Korobov & Bamberg, 2007 Korobov N. Bamberg M. 2007 'Strip poker! They don't show nothing!' Positioning identities in adolescent male talk about a television game show Retrieved January 30, 2007, from http://www.clarku.edu/~mbamberg/Papers/Strip_Poker.doc , p. 5) and is thus more ethnomethodological in orientation. Positioning is thus the 'discursive process whereby people are located in conversations as observably and subjectively coherent participants in jointly produced storylines' (Davies &

Harré, 1999 Davies, B. and Harré, R. 1999. "Positioning and personhood". In *Positioning theory*, Edited by: Harré, R. and van Langenhove, L. 32–52. London: Blackwell. , p. 37). Further, through the intrinsic social force of conversing, people position others and themselves and in so doing produce themselves and others as 'social beings' (Bamberg, 1997 Bamberg, M. 1997. Positioning between structure and performance. *Journal of Narrative and Life History*, 7: 335–342. , p. 336); that is, through ever-shifting patterns of understanding within the conversational narrative changes in understanding of others and oneself occur.

Adopting this perspective brings the discussion to a particular point: the need to define the mechanisms by which interactional episodes might be considered. It is here that positioning theory, I contend, offers a new perspective on the relationship between policy and practice. Indeed, I believe that the formulation of policy as positioning as a progression from policy as discourse, offers new mechanisms by which the nature of professional activity might be construed, not as a *response* to policy imperatives but rather as the means by which policy itself is continually formed and re-formed through moment-by-moment discursive practices. Put another way: the formation of policy at the professional level is not a 'moment' but rather a series of 'moments' that evolve to authenticate activity.

It is through this continual creation of policy as a discursive practice that pedagogic positions can be articulated and understood. It is necessary here, however, to sound a note of caution: in identifying pedagogic positions, we must be careful not to assume that these are fixed. Rather, what *policy as position* seeks to do is present a lens through which we might begin to examine the interplay of storylines, positions and speech acts. This 'positioning triad' is mutually determining (van Langenhove & Harré, 1999 Harré, R. and van Langenhove, L. 1999. "The dynamics of social episodes". In *Positioning theory*, Edited by: Harré, R. and van Langenhove, L. 1–13. London: Blackwell.): as storylines unfold, individuals position themselves and others through the discursive activity (Ritchie & Rigano, 2001 Ritchie, S.M. and Rigano, D.L. 2001. Researcher–participant positioning in classroom research. *Qualitative Studies in Education*, 14: 741–756. , p. 742). What is of note here, though, are the multifarious ways in which the narratives played out can be and are interpreted by the participants therein. More importantly, it is possible for individuals to hold contradictory positions in different situations; indeed, it is also the case that within one unfolding narrative situation, the positions held by an individual may well conflict.

Policy as position

Traditionally, positioning theory has been used as a means to analyse the interplay between actors in narrative episodes; the ways in which individuals and groups align themselves whilst engaging in talk has been the focus for much of the work. Using positioning theory to consider wider aspects such as professional reflection or policy analysis has occurred but not to any great extent. However, it is my belief that the theory has much to offer in such arenas, particularly with regard to policy.

Phillips et al. (2002, p. 243), using positioning theory in the context of professional education for midwifery, note how language is a 'public institution' and that 'as a consequence [it] is the foundation upon which social structures and agencies are developed and understood locally'. Starting with the earlier premise of policy as social construction created and manifest through the processes of problematisation and argumentation, the role for language is foregrounded. Certainly the illocutionary force presented by policy pronouncements, that is to say, the effects achieved as policy 'says something', has been well documented elsewhere: as to how policy makes individuals feel, in relation to practice, values, etc., has been the subject of much research activity. Similarly, the effects achieved by policy 'saying something', the perlocutionary effects of language, have also received considerable scrutiny. Implicit within such investigations, though, is the idea of policy as discourse outlined above. Such research takes as its starting point the policy as pre-eminent: policy, although identified as social construction, is located and action is deemed *in relation* to this. Whilst this might permit policy analysis, for example, in the areas previously outlined, such methods do not address the possibility that policy does not, in action, have one form. Put another way, policy as discourse, whilst acknowledging the contingency of that uttered through imperative or in relation to itself, still adopts the line that policy is created and thus 'exists'. Indeed, Phillips et al. adopt this stance themselves when describing the work of student nurses:

students work in close collaboration with midwives (as their preceptors) to learn about practice within the context of legislative requirements (Nurses Board of Victoria) and *the policies and procedures* related to organisations in which students are inducted into midwifery practice. (2002, p. 243, emphasis added)

The acceptance here is that legislation creates the framework within which local policies operate: national requirements are mediated into the local space and it is within this frame that personal identity is constructed. Whilst this presents an interesting perspective on the formation of professional identity and is one that might offer much to the educational community more broadly, it does not address the issue at the heart of this paper, namely the idea that policy is subject

to a continuous cycle of formation and re-formation through professional and practical activity.

This alternative perspective assumes that 'officially sanctioned' pedagogic realities are so oriented not through the weight they carry as a result of political pronouncement but through actions at the level of individual discursive events. It assumes not only that the illocutionary force and perlocutionary effect of language and the relative positions adopted by individuals occur within the storyline of policy text but that agents therein themselves identify storylines which, in turn, reposition language and the individual/group. The identification, for example, as part of a professional dialogue of a particular process for lesson construction involves first-order positioning: 'the way persons locate themselves and others within an essentially moral space by using several categories and storylines' (van Langenhove & Harré, 1999 Harré, R. and van Langenhove, L. 1999. "The dynamics of social episodes". In *Positioning theory*, Edited by: Harré, R. and van Langenhove, L. 1–13. London: Blackwell. , p. 20). Through this, participants use particular ways to 'read' and 'respond' to 'pronouncements'; clearly, though, deliberation can stop at such first-order positioning. Of note here is the way in which such first-order positioning adopts a particular storyline replete with language effects and positions.

What I am arguing for here is an appreciation, not of how discursive moments create space by which policy can be 'understood', but rather how conversation and professional activity themselves *form* policy. I am arguing that the very discursive practices undertaken in an attempt to 'understand' policy mandate are the very acts which confer upon policy its tangible form. What this signals, then, is a continual cycle of formation and re-formation. Rather than discourses existing as means by which policy is formed and the opportunities to speak offered to agents can be understood, policy as position specifically denies the 'moment' of policy formation as distinct from the professional space. Put another way, it is, in effect, the moment-by-moment happenings within the professional arena that create policy form within the frames of appropriate discourse; policy attains form as a product of professional performance, its substance is inextricably tied to the discursive moments that take place within the professional arena.

Pedagogy as ritual and pedagogy as mindfulness

I stated above that first-order positioning offers agents a particular storyline with which to interact. In such situations, and considering pedagogy, certain principles will be noted as policy is formed. Clearly, and at some point, an adopted storyline becomes the basis upon which further thought and action ensue; the perlocutionary effects of this positioning denote the performative

aspects of positioning theory. What is challenged is the idea that policy *engenders* positions; rather it is the *formation* of policy through the discursive moment that *legitimises* action. Activities become legitimised not through the adoption of certain positions within discourses as offered by an *interpretation* of policy; actions become legitimised through the policy form, created within wider discourses *through* the moment-by-moment conversations that provide recognisable social, cultural, historical, economic and political possibilities. What we see therefore is not the *mediation* of policy into the local space but rather the *formation* of policy at the local level.

Following this, policy as positioning has implications for professional practice. Specifically, two alternative lines become possible. First-order positioning occurs when certain categories and storylines are adopted so locating individuals and others. When such positioning happens, one of two things can occur: either the position can be accepted and adopted, or it can be challenged (van Langenhove & Harré, 1999 Harré, R. and van Langenhove, L. 1999. "The dynamics of social episodes". In *Positioning theory*, Edited by: Harré, R. and van Langenhove, L. 1–13. London: Blackwell.). When one considers the potential closing down of the storyline and associated positions through the adoption of first-order positions, it is possible to understand how moment-by-moment discussions constrain thought and subsequent action. Here is demonstrated the nature of ritual, that is to say, first-order positioning becomes custom and practice. The adoption of certain positions and hence the creation of policy through the discursive moment, when unchallenged, may well lead to the privileging of certain actions over others. Such a position, that is, the adoption of a first-order position, I will deem ritualistic. In the realm of pedagogy we can, then, define pedagogy as ritual thus: the unchallenged formation of pedagogic policy. As example is the term 'best practice' used to describe a position of ultimate veracity and worth. The reification of actions within such a position legitimised through the connotations assigned by the linguistic device 'best' specify that to be emulated. The effect of first-order positioning may well be deemed as unproblematic, especially when subsequent discursive moments lead to the adoption of the pedagogic specificities as custom and practice within a professional field. However, it is surely propitious for educational personnel, in the very least, to ask questions about certain assumed realities.

Of greater concern, however, are those moments when first-order positioning occurs so as to prevent alternative storylines from being considered and alternative illocutionary forces from taking shape. This scenario I will deem malignant ritual. It must be stated that whilst such occurrences may well happen at the local level, for example as played out through the actions of a particularly despotic head, in the wider realms of professional activity within democratic states, malignant ritual may also occur; consider the ways in which certain

lesson constructions, certainly in England, are often lauded as that to be emulated.

What this presents is a particular way of describing pedagogic policy. Such a perspective illuminates the powerful use of language to note and limit alternative storylines from taking shape. However, rather than these occurring as a result of positioning within policy, policy as positioning as applied to an understanding of pedagogy realises the creation of the policy form as occurring in the positioning conversation. It may also happen, however, that a first-order positioning is rejected or challenged. Such second-order positioning poses questions, perhaps in an attempt to offer an alternative, or to dismiss an idea or even to disrupt a conversation. Whatever the reason, it is clear that alternate storylines enter the fray. Similarly, second-order positions can be so challenged and so on. In such situations, the limits of professional activity, in this case pedagogy, are removed; it is not that local mediation realises and uses a wider set of available discourses, rather it is that the formation of policy does not occur as one moment, rather policy emerges as a process of dialogue and debate. Such situations I deem pedagogy as mindfulness. The use of alternative storylines and awareness of the illocutionary force and perlocutionary effects of language delimits pedagogic activity. Such an example would be found in the language of 'good practice' for the relative signifier 'good' acknowledges the contingency of that uttered; 'good' cannot exist without reference to previous discussions that identify 'non-good'. However, caution must be noted: the simple identification of 'good' is not enough. What must occur are second- and third-order positioning (and so on) that seek to challenge and hold up for scrutiny first-order positions. Although the language used is important, in itself it is not enough.

Conclusion

What I have attempted to do in this paper is sketch out a form of policy consideration that complements the use of discourse as the location for an understanding of policy creation and implementation. Specifically, I have noted how, whilst the policy text may well be created through the processes of problematisation and argumentation, it is not enough to assume that the pronouncements are then mediated into professional space. Whilst I acknowledged that the discourses that guide and bind thought and action do play a role in the formulation of the policy text and policy as discourse, my concern is in the relationship between policy and practice, that which occurs at the micro level. Specifically, I have proposed that in order to understand how professional selves are identified and realised requires consideration at the level of the discursive; it is in professional conversations and activities that policy is formed. My proposal is that the view that policy is interpreted and mediated into

the local space is insufficient. Rather I have proposed that discussions, at the local level, themselves form policy; that is to say, policy is an interpsychological formulation that occurs during episodic positioning attempts at the professional level. By using positioning theory, I have attempted to show that the interrelation of storyline, position and language through the realisation of positional order is that which forms policy imperatives. Put simply, I am arguing *for* a view that pedagogic policy is *formed* through positional agreement. For example, I have tried to illuminate the different ways in which articulated positions and associated actions might be accepted and adopted, or challenged and scrutinised; pedagogy as ritual and pedagogy as mindfulness, respectively.

This work should be seen as a complement to the macro-level analysis implicit within the idea of policy as discourse. I stated at the outset that to produce one definitive view is probably unhelpful. Assuming, as I do, that policies are processes as well as outcomes (Ball, 2006 Ball, S.J. 2006. *Education policy and social class: The selected works of Stephen J. Ball*, London: Routledge.) requires a mechanism by which we might begin to scrutinise the place for the local in forming policy. What I have attempted to do here is sketch out a theoretical underpinning for the production of pedagogic policy that implicitly considers the micro-level context: *policy as positioning*.

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