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Teacher voice and ownership of curriculum change

DAVID KIRK and DOUNE MACDONALD

We comment critically on the notion that teachers can experience ownership of curriculum change. The evidence base for this commentary is our work on two curriculum development projects in health and physical education between 1993 and 1998. Applying a theoretical framework adapted from Bernstein's writing on the social construction of pedagogic discourse, we contend that the possibilities for teacher ownership of curriculum change are circumscribed by the anchoring of their authority to speak on curriculum matters in the local context of implementation. We argue that this anchoring of teacher voice provides a key to understanding the perennial problem of the transformation of innovative ideas from conception to implementation. We also provide some insights into the extent to which genuine participation by teachers in education reform might be possible, and we conclude with a discussion of the possibilities that exist for partnerships in reforming health and physical education.

Fullan (1999: 66) contended recently that 'we are at the very early stages of appreciating the nature and complexity of educational reform on a large scale'. After three or more decades of reform activity focused on the school curriculum, this appears at first to be an unduly pessimistic statement. Much has been learned from reform projects. However, this learning has most often emerged from the many stories of failure rather than success (House 1974, Macdonald and Walker 1974, Stenhouse 1980, Fullan 1983, Whitty 1985, Ellerton and Clements 1994, Petrie 1995). If Fullan (1999) is correct, what are the challenges of large-scale reform? What support, for instance, is required for teachers to engage in curriculum change and sustain good practice once it is in place? How can good practice be institutionalized so that all children across entire school systems benefit? How can competing and conflicting interests be reconciled in the educational outcomes schools are seeking to achieve?

We suggest these questions lie at the heart of broad curriculum reform in schools and that educators are indeed in the very early stages of understanding their complexity. Practitioner research may be a valuable activity for an individual teacher's professional growth and development

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(Anderson and Herr 1999). It is not clear, however, that pockets of practitioner-researchers, even on a large scale, could bring about uniformity of reform across education systems where there is a remit to provide as an entitlement quality education for all. On the other hand, it is also clear that reforms that seek to by-pass teachers or to be overly prescriptive will not succeed.

In this paper, we draw on data from two recent large-scale curriculum reform projects in the field of Health and Physical Education (HPE) in Australia that involved teachers as partners with other stakeholders. We use Bernstein's (1990) theory of the social construction of pedagogic discourse as a framework that allows us to locate and position teachers in relation to other partners in the process of producing new versions of HPE. We suggest that the teachers' authoritative voice within these projects was located within the local context of implementation of the reforms and was based on their intimate knowledge of their students, their colleagues, their school structures and the resources available to them. It was from this position that teachers made an invaluable contribution to the curriculum reform process. However, this expertise set limits on the majority of teachers' opportunities to be co-producers of the new versions of HPE at the level of national and state documents. In contributing their expertise, teachers were also involved, inevitably, in some degree of transformation of the innovative messages of the reform materials.

As a prelude to making this argument in greater detail, we begin with a short discussion of Bernstein's theory of the construction of pedagogic discourse in relation to teachers' participation within curriculum reform partnerships.

Locating teachers in curriculum reform partnerships: Bernstein on pedagogic discourse

The role of teachers in curriculum reform has been an issue of ongoing interest to curriculum researchers (Connelly and Ben-Peretz 1980, Kirk 1990). A recent genre of curriculum reform involving teachers in collaborative relationships between administrators, curriculum developers, professional associations, researchers, teacher educators and parents has used the language of 'partnership'. Such partnerships, in Fullan's (1999: 61) terms, involve 'across-boundary collaboration'. As an example, Riquarts and Hansen (1998) describe an extensive German curriculum partnership project in which teachers, administrators, researchers and in-service providers sought to reform the science curriculum.

The participation of teachers in curriculum change partnerships is also an established feature of curriculum reform work in Australia. In most Australian states, teachers are involved in the production of new syllabuses and curriculum guides at all stages, as syllabus-writers, as members of advisory committees to the syllabus-writers, and as participants in school-based trials of syllabuses and curriculum materials. In Queensland, this representation of teachers is institutionalized in the Board of Senior

Secondary School Studies and the Queensland School Curriculum Council statutes.

The notion of partnership seems to promise a fusion or integration of 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' strategies for reform in education, bringing together as it does a range of stakeholders who each have an interest in the nature of change in schools. It is immediately obvious that such arrangements for curriculum reform will be complex, given the range of interests, some of them potentially conflicting, that each partner will bring to the process. Potential cultural clashes between partners are highlighted in Petrie's (1995) edited collection of accounts of professional development schools, and demonstrate the importance of being clear about the power relations that will inevitably exist within collaborative processes, and about the possibilities for all parties to contribute appropriately to curriculum reform. Bernstein's (1990) work on the social production of pedagogic discourse provides one approach to understanding the nature and complexity of educational reform and the role teachers in particular might play within it.

Bernstein on the construction of pedagogic discourse

Bernstein (1990) has produced a model of the relationships between meaning-making processes at a range of levels within educational systems and the actual communicative processes that take place within and between sites of the production of meaning. The model allows these processes to be analysed and described in substantive and specific detail. His choice of the term *discourse* provides an indication of the enduring focus of his research on communication, or what he calls *educational transmissions*.

Bernstein describes pedagogic discourse as a 'principle' or 'rule' that brings a range of discourses into conjunction with each other in educational settings. Pedagogic discourse involves the construction of 'instructional discourse' out of the conjunction and reworking of a number of other discourses that form what he calls 'regulative discourse'.

The term *instructional discourse* refers to a pedagogic form of knowledge, such as school HPE. The instructional discourse of HPE takes specific and substantive forms depending on the settings in which it is instantiated, and is concerned primarily with making sense of the transmission and acquisition of knowledge in the health and physical domains. *Regulative discourse* consists of more general knowledge in the public domain that is not pedagogic in form, but provides the raw materials for the construction of instructional discourse.

Bernstein's favoured descriptor is that instructional discourse is *embedded* in regulative discourse, suggesting an organic relationship that involves inextricable connection, constant change and mutual—although not necessarily even—adaptation. The relationship between the instructional and regulative discourses can be understood through examining the construction of discourses across contexts or fields (see figure 1). Bernstein sees the primary context as the place in which the 'unthinkable' becomes reality and where new knowledge is created in relevant disciplines such as

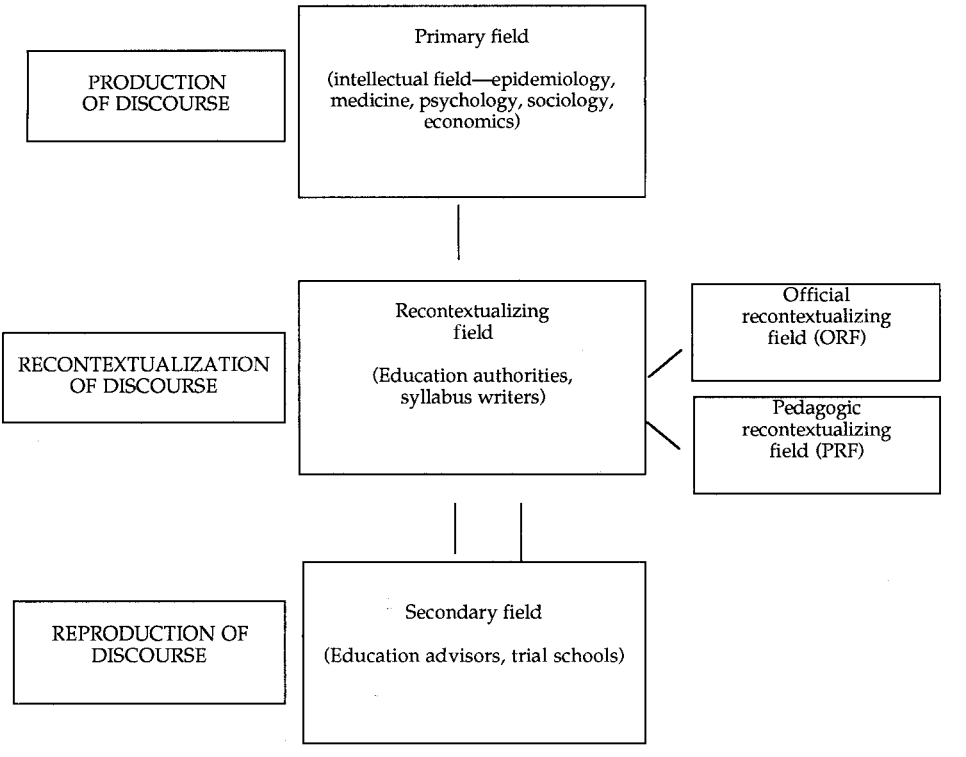

Figure 1. Bernstein's construction of discourses across fields (after Glaby 2000).

medicine, human movement studies, or sociology. Much of this work is done in universities and other research agencies and may be sponsored by governments or by corporations. The secondary context is centrally concerned with the reproduction of these new ideas now that they are 'thinkable', and this work takes place mainly in educational institutions such as schools. The *recontextualizing context* is concerned primarily with the mediation of discursive resources between the primary and secondary contexts. Specialized agencies such as state departments of education, universities, and other non-education agencies that have a stake in educational processes do much of this work.

The construction of the instructional discourse of HPE takes place primarily within Bernstein's recontextualizing field. This process takes the form of syllabus- and textbook-writing and policy making. When programmes are implemented in schools, that is, within Bernstein's secondary context of reproduction, they reproduce those aspects of regulative discourse that were selected and organized by agents in the recontextualizing field.

This location by Bernstein of the instructional discourse/regulative discourse interface within the recontextualizing field is, therefore, of fundamental importance to our understanding of the nature of curriculum reform, because it is here that agents have the capacity to construct a field of

school knowledge. If teachers are to be partners in the reform process and to have ownership of reforms, it may be important that they have opportunities to be agents within the recontextualizing field, involved in the production of instructional discourse, as well as agents in the secondary field charged with receiving and delivering instructional discourse. Both Australian projects sought to involve teachers as partners in reforming HPE. However, as we will outline in the next section, powerful institutional forces, as well as the structure of the projects themselves, *prevented* teachers working as recontextualizing agents.

The HPE projects

In 1989, the Australian federal government assembled Education Ministers from the States and Territories to develop a national curriculum for schools. The Hobart Declaration that resulted from this meeting identified eight Key Learning Areas (KLAs) that were to form the basis of the curriculum during the compulsory years of schooling. 'Statements' and 'Profiles' were developed for each KLA. Statements were intended to provide a framework for curriculum development in education systems and schools. Profiles were intended to provide a common language across school systems for reporting student achievement by describing learning outcomes at a number of levels. It is important to note that the Statement and Profile heralded the introduction of outcomes into Australian education policy and the integration of what were a number of isolated school subjects (e.g. Physical Education (PE), Health Education, Home Economics) into a more cohesive learning area structure (see table 1).

The Australian Education Council's Curriculum and Assessment Committee (CURASS) developed a Statement and a Profile for HPE on behalf of the federal government (Australian Education Council 1994a, b). Deakin University was contracted by CURASS to prepare the Statement, and the Queensland Education Department won the contract to prepare the Profile. Both documents were completed in 1993 and referred to the States and Territories, and published in their final form in 1994.

A key feature of the implementation of the Statements and Profiles across the KLAs was the marriage of curriculum development and assessment practices with the professional development of teachers. The National

Table 1. Organizing strands for HPE documents.

National HPE Profile (Australian Education Council 1994b)	Queensland HPE Syllabus (Queensland School Curriculum Council 1999)
Human development	Promoting the health of individuals and communities
Human movement	Developing concepts and skills for physical activity
Physical activity and the community	Enhancing personal development
People and food	
Health of individuals and populations	
Safety	
Human relations	

Professional Development Programme (NPDP) provided funding to a consortium of partners from the States of Victoria and Queensland to conduct three major interlocking projects in 1994, 1995 and 1996 (Boustead *et al.* 1995, Macdonald *et al.* 1995). These were:

- reviewing curriculum in HPE: a model for professional development using the HPE Statement and Profile (funded in 1994–1996);
- subject discipline renewal project (funded in 1994–1995); and
- work samples project (funded in 1995–1996).

In Victoria, the state government used the NPDP project to assist in the development of a Curriculum and Standards Framework based on the national documents. This meant that, in HPE at least, the Victorian state-level developments were co-extensive with the work of the NPDP project. In Queensland, the development of a state-level syllabus based on the national documents was undertaken in 1997 and 1998 (Queensland School Curriculum Council 1999).[1] Both projects were centred on the national Statement and Profile for HPE. Both projects involved some of the same personnel.

Of particular relevance to this paper are the facts that both projects involved partnerships between various groups of stakeholders, and that these partnerships included teachers and schools. In the NPDP project, schools in Victoria and Queensland volunteered to develop school programmes based on the Statement and Profile. In the project managed by the QSCCO, schools volunteered to trial a prototype syllabus based on the national documents. In both cases, these groups of teachers were invited to contribute to the curriculum development process. In the NPDP project, this contribution took the form of exploring the usability of the Statement and Profile to develop school programmes and reporting processes across HPE. Outcomes included examples of best practice in the form of work samples (Curriculum Corporation 1997), and a set of modules for teacher professional development and knowledge renewal (Victorian Board of Studies/Queensland Education Department 1996). In the Queensland Syllabus project, teachers had a remit to reshape the syllabus on the basis of their work in their schools. The main avenue for this was through their contribution to the Syllabus-in-Development Evaluators' reports, direct feedback to syllabus writers who made occasional visits to the trial schools, and representation on a Syllabus-in-Development Advisory Committee.

In terms of Bernstein's framework, the Queensland Syllabus project provided the clearest view of the positions of teachers and other agents within particular fields. The QSCCO employed a team of curriculum writers to prepare the prototype syllabus and other support materials. Five of the writers were seconded for the duration of the project from their schools. A sixth writer was a senior teacher who also had extensive experience of curriculum development with the state's senior school agency. The writers were key agents within the recontextualizing field, along with their line managers in the QSCCO, an Advisory Committee with representation from a range of stakeholders including teacher representatives, and the Evaluation team. The trial teachers' remit was to

translate the syllabus into units of work which were to be taught, monitored and assessed.

Within the NPDP project, these positions were not quite so clearly defined. The HPE Statement and Profile were provided to the project team as finished products. At the same time, several of the Statement and Profile writers were members of the NPDP project team. In Victoria, these writers took on the role of adapting the Profile to suit the specification for the Curriculum Standards Framework. In this sense, they were agents in the recontextualizing field. There were no writers in Queensland because the development of the state-level syllabus came later. However, in Victoria and Queensland, university researchers and subject-matter experts, government education administrators, and representatives from the Catholic and private school systems were members of the consortium managing the project, and so occupied the recontextualizing field.

Within the NPDP project, a teacher inquiry model, informed by the 'Deakin model' of action research (Kemmis and McTaggart 1991, Tinning *et al.* 1996), was used as the basis for teachers' participation in the project. Teachers were to conduct action research as a basis for their implementation of the Statement and Profile in their schools. This process simultaneously constituted their professional development experience. To support this process, there were five teacher workshops in 1994 and 1995, and many smaller-scale 'school cluster' meetings serviced by School Liaison Officers from the project. The workshops and cluster meetings were intended to provide teachers with opportunities to share their work with other teachers and project partners and, in so doing, to shape the implementation of the Statement and Profile.

Where teachers are positioned within the curriculum reform process lies at the heart of the issues of teachers' ownership of curriculum innovations, possibilities for integration of top-down and bottom-up strategies, and the appropriate relationships between partners in large-scale curriculum reform. However, as we will demonstrate in the next section, the potential for teachers simultaneously to be agents in the recontextualizing and secondary fields was not realized. Our argument is based upon data collected in the form of interviews, document analyses and field observations over the duration of the two projects. Interviews were conducted with the project administrators, document writers, trial teachers, and other key stakeholders during and upon completion of the projects. Documents collected included drafts of education policies, curriculum documents, media releases, school programmes and teaching resources. Field observations were made by project evaluators and research assistants during project meetings, teacher workshops/conferences, and trial school visits.

Teachers' participation in HPE curriculum reform

We suggest that possibilities for teachers to be producers of instructional discourse as agents within the recontextualizing field are delimited by powerful institutional forces in educational systems. The authoritative position from which teachers speak to and about the instructional discourse

of HPE is from their *local* contexts of implementation. In other words, because of the nature of their work within the secondary field and the way their entry into the recontextualizing field is delimited, teachers' contributions to the production of instructional discourse tend not to take the form primarily of subject-matter expertise, or even expertise in methods of delivery of subject matter. Rather, their expertise is rooted in their local conditions, of their school, facilities, programmes, classes, politics, and so on. It is their immersion in the local context of implementation from which they derive their *authoritative* voice. Elsewhere, Spillane (1999: 159) has referred to the import of 'teachers' zones of enactment' as the 'space in which they make sense of, and operationalize for their own practice, the ideas advanced by reformers'.

The location of teacher expertise in the local context of implementation set limits on teachers' opportunities to be producers of the instructional discourse of HPE at the Statement and Profile and Syllabus levels. As a result of this, this location circumscribed the extent to which they could own the curriculum reforms. As we will show in the sections that follow, the acts of making sense of the materials and of the version of 'Health and Physical Education' they made possible, and of moving beyond the materials to apply the reforms to their own local contexts, inevitably involved some degree of transformation of the innovations embedded in the materials. It was the teachers' sphere of authority and their intimate knowledge of the local context of implementation that delimited their production, ownership and transformation of the reforms.

Teachers' authority to speak and the local context of implementation

'Children in Year 1 are going to be taught about health policies, media influence and sexual identity!' This incredulous comment from a primary school generalist teacher participating in the Queensland Syllabus project would appear at first sight to be concerned with subject matter. However, further consideration shows that it is a comment on the appropriateness of specific content for the children she teaches in the infant school. Such statements, rooted in the teachers' intimate knowledge of the local context of implementation, featured significantly in teachers' commentaries on the Statement and Profile and the Queensland Syllabus. Three particular dimensions of the local context of implementation were prominent in relation to teachers' authority to speak. The first dimension was the teachers' knowledge of their students. A second dimension was the resources available to teachers. A third dimension was the practicalities of teachers' work, including issues of power and politics within schools as institutional forms.

The first issue was the teachers' knowledge of the children they worked with, their needs and their capabilities. A secondary school head of department for HPE in the Queensland NPDP project said he told his teachers to:

> Just go with what you think is ideal, what you would like to teach, what you think these children need (NPDP, secondary HPE).

A secondary school PE teacher in the Victorian NPDP project commented in similar fashion:

> I'm just a bit concerned about the suitability of Level 6 (in the Curriculum and Standards Framework/Profile) to year 9 students. I think they can possibly handle it; I've yet really to find that out.

The ways in which teachers approached the curriculum documents and their specific uses of these documents were very much determined by their knowledge of their students. This is clearly evidenced in the comment of a teacher working in a distance education context:

> A lot of our students come in and they're not here for the whole journey. They might be with us only for year 8, might join us in mid-year 9, and in the case of some of our students, a lot of displaced youths will join us. And I think any person dealing with those types of learners here, if we send them out a complete programme of learning, they never take it on board. It's too big, it's too late, it's not interesting for them. So a lot of us I would say, certainly in phys. ed., are working towards modularizing so that I can actually say to a student who's joining us that these are the modules on offer and let them select, so they can show interest. Otherwise they just don't work (NPDP, Distance Education teacher).

One teacher whose school was in a low-income suburb of Brisbane and served a large population of children from minority ethnic groups could predict that the Statement and Profile would present her students with particular challenges:

> I'm happy with the levels. But I just think in schools like this school when you have so many low-level students it's very, very hard for them to reach the standard of being able to critically analyse things. So I guess it's how those documents are actually used or how we are able to use those documents in our schools that's the problem (NPDP, secondary Home Economics).

A second dimension of the local context of implementation prominent in teachers' talk was the resources available to implement the reforms. One teacher involved in the NPDP project in Queensland commented:

> Given available time, surely schools should determine what gets priority and what the kids need in that school rather than having it imposed upon them (Distance Education teacher).

For heads of departments and subject leaders on the NPDP project, the human resources available to them among their staff was a matter of considerable significance in relation to the implementation of new programmes. One head of department commented, 'We're using the expertise that we have and we're building on that' (NPDP, secondary HPE). Another noted that 'There's a vast range of abilities and expertise like on any staff and it's a matter of utilizing people's abilities to the best and getting that team work going' (NPDP, secondary HPE).

Further, as the teachers had invested human and material resources in their school's current programmes, many were keen to 'adapt what we've

got in the school so we don't have to make major changes ... to fit the Syllabus' (QSCCO, secondary HPE).

A third dimension of the local context of implementation that featured prominently as an authoritative aspect of teachers' talk was the obdurate practical realities of their work exemplified by a head of department's question, 'How can we make this work in our structures?' (QSCCO). In particular, teachers recognized the factors limiting what might be possible given their internal school structures and large numbers of children in their classes. Teachers in secondary schools noted the constraints of available time to devote to the project and structures of school timetables that undermined KLA studies across traditional subject boundaries. One head of department commented:

> all the trial has done is give me a headache because I don't have the time to do it properly. Being senior schooling Head ... I'm lucky to be here half the time. I leave worksheets and the kids don't understand them (QSCCO, Home Economics).

Primary school specialist teachers in Queensland noted that, in the eyes of their employers and their classroom teaching colleagues, it was the specialists' task to address only one strand of the syllabus (i.e. developing movement concepts and motor skills), thereby providing students one physical activity lesson per week, while the classroom teachers enjoyed their 'non-contact time'. Further, in the physical activity lessons, the specialists' 'role' included preparing students for the rigid sequence of competitive sporting events throughout the school year.

The practicality issue came sharply into focus for teachers in the Victorian NPDP project, where assessment and reporting had become a key concern owing to the requirements of the state-level Curriculum and Standards Framework. Thus, one secondary HPE teacher voiced a common and widespread concern when she asked: 'And how can you accurately record observations of 26 children after every lesson? It's just not on'. Generalist teachers in primary schools expressed a similar view. The following statement provides a flavour of the complex environments in which teachers were attempting to introduce new assessment practices:

> It's probably finding out about children is the hardest one, if you're trying to assess where they're at with a particular skill. I know that during the session on Monday I took a few children off by myself to assess their levels in skipping ability or marching ability but you only get through a few. And if you're the person running the whole activity, your attention is often diverted away from your task to keep a general eye on what the parents are doing (NPDP, primary generalist).

Learners' needs and abilities, teachers' skills and motivation and the obdurate, practical features of classroom life are very real and significant considerations when teachers attempt to introduce reforms into their classrooms. The physical environment in terms of facilities and equipment was a further local consideration that teachers raised in relation to their interpretations of the new curriculum materials. It was in relation to these

dimensions of the local context of implementation that teachers could speak with authority. This was acknowledged by a QSCCO administrator:

> Very few teachers will actually run with the materials as they are published. Most teachers like to put their own stamp on it. They have other resources that they turn to; they have particular approaches that they use.

This authority is rooted in what Geertz (1983: 57–58) called 'experience-near' the life-world of schools and expressed by a QSCCO administrator as a 'reality check'.

> I guess teachers provide the conduit between what we think is really appropriate in terms of the curriculum and what they believe is appropriate in terms of their day-to-day interactions with students, so you've got an important reality check that the teachers provide.

It is on issues relating to the local context of implementation which teachers' authority to speak can only, with considerable difficulty, be challenged by agents who work primarily in the recontextualizing field. In the words of a senior administrator in the QSCCO:

> I'd suggest it's more at the trial school level that the teachers make a real difference. . . . More often than not you'll get a project team members coming back from a visit to a trial school . . . where they've been given a fairly direct and sobering message. At that point in time . . . the teachers' voice is very loud and certainly is heard.

Another QSCCO administrator gave an example of such an impact:

> One of the messages coming back from schools has been a fairly strong identification of the strands with traditional [subject] components of HPE. What started as a more ideal, idealistic view of the [writing] team to blur those edges, has become harder. The teachers . . . have won the day in terms of the identification of particular strands and particular types of content.

Intimate knowledge of the local context of implementation was the primary form of expertise teachers brought to the reform process in both projects.

Positionality and interpretation of materials

The teachers' readings of the materials in relation to their local contexts of implementation represented an important moment in the transformation of the reforms embedded in the Statement and Profile and in the Queensland Syllabus. There was one other dimension to this process that occurred *prior* to teachers locating the materials within the local context of implementation, and this was the moment when teachers first encountered the materials and attempted to make sense of them.

In both the NPDP projects and the Queensland Syllabus project, teachers were formally introduced to the reform materials through workshops. Teachers' *positionality* played a significant part in their interpretations during these first encounters with the materials and their attempts to understand what they required of them. One aspect of positionality was

each teacher's personal discursive history, or their accumulated professional and personal experiences. Another aspect of positionality was each teacher's professional identity and, particularly in the secondary school, their subject allegiances (Macdonald and Glover 1997). Positionality shaped their initial and ongoing understanding of what the new form of HPE was, and what it required of them. In coming to make sense of the materials, teachers inevitably engaged in processes of translation and transformation. As Fullan (1999: 67) notes:

> Just as we have concluded that students have to construct their own meaning for learning to occur, people in all local situations must also construct their own change meaning as they go about reform.

Some traces of evidence for the two aspects of positionality can be found in teachers' discussions of the reform materials in each project. Within the Queensland Syllabus project, identity and subject allegiance were prominent. This prominence was due to the way in which knowledge had been reconfigured in the new HPE KLA. For example, teachers in PE and Home Economics were for the first time required to consider each other's responsibilities (Macdonald and Glover 1997):

> If we stay as subject areas [within the KLA] we would have to clearly define I think who was doing what and if areas were crossed. For example, if I was teaching units that only covered certain outcomes and not others, I would have to make sure they were picked up by PE or someone else. ... The way I read the Syllabus, I can't just do this once then give them [i.e. the students] a result. I have to do it a number of times in different contexts using different activities to assess them, and then judge them overall on where they are on each level (QSCCO, Home Economics).

Crossing existing subject boundaries was a feature built in to the new KLA. This feature challenged teachers to do more than communicate with each other. It also exposed different ways of looking at issues:

> The socio-cultural perspective is important. It creates a bigger and better understanding of health, exercise, participation and identity issues. We are trying to emphasize it more in PE units. Home Economics appears to have that understanding. It's a big shift for traditional PE 'jocks' (QSCCO, HPE).

> I think Home Economics and PE can pick up on the same thing and teach [it] two different ways. That's not a problem, but it is a problem when it comes to assessment (QSCCO, Home Economics).

These readings of the reform materials from different subject positions produced challenges to teachers' professional identities. There was also a considerable range of issues highlighted by teachers in expressing their understanding of the new KLA. These differences provide some clues to the multifarious experiences that teachers bring to this process of making sense of the new HPE. For instance, one secondary teacher stated that the Statement and Profile provided her with a new perspective on teaching health:

> Some of those outcomes and the pointers that were underneath the outcomes gave you a different view. There was one there about ... women's health in

> society, and it just gave you a different perspective to look at. Instead of just looking at balanced diets for adolescence and carrying that on a little bit further, it sort of gave you a different perspective to come into it. 'Well, let's look at women's health in society and how that is being affected by the media' (NPDP, HPE).

Another Queensland teacher found the Statement and Profile challenging because they provided teachers with a means of looking at their field differently, which was an important part of teachers' professional development:

> They are very good documents in terms of how clearly the learning area is set out on paper, which is good for once. It challenges people to look at, 'Oh, should I be doing this or this is what I should be doing?' It's a challenging document that way for professionally developing people (NPDP, HPE).

The workshops that introduced the material to teachers were viewed as an essential means of providing teachers with the 'right' messages about the KLA:

> The Profile was fine and that was the working document. The Statement was hard to digest with strands and bands and so on. One simple thing I think would be to have a different colour for each of the documents because very quickly you can then identify what's what. I think originally just giving the documents or the books to teachers is very difficult. They have to be talked about and walked through. ... If you give it to them just to read without doing it in a workshop situation, I don't think it'll come across, but when there's someone who's been through it before and then can lead them through, I don't think there's any problem (NPDP, Home Economics).

However, the workshops could not ensure uniformity of understanding, even when they were designed with this aim in mind:

> I think there was a bit of a misunderstanding at our meeting. Some people thought that to do that outcome at that level they had to do all of those pointers. And that was it; they didn't understand that even though it said it, that was an 'example'. ... I thought it was self-explanatory but obviously some people didn't ... they said 'How can you fit all this in?' (NPDP, Home Economics).

Amongst the primary generalist teachers, the experience aspect of positionality was clearly evident in their interpretations of the Queensland Syllabus. One common theme among these teachers was their relative lack of expertise and experience in PE, a matter that has been widely reported in the subject's research literature:

> I don't know how you link in that second strand [Human Movement] and we are all guessing ... but you almost start thinking, 'Yeah, you could make a link if you twist it here and there', put a square peg in a round hole. But it doesn't work that way. We are not really skilled in the PE area (QSCCO, primary generalist).

On the same theme, another teacher pointed out that the Queensland Syllabus asked too much of generalist teachers who lacked the experience to make the links across the curriculum that the syllabus required:

> [The syllabus is] not concise. I remain worried about the whole document being verbose and a bit pompous when reality suggests links and connectedness to other KLAs. ... Is it too late for reality? If HPE is one and a half hours [per week] plus sport, it is precious to assume teachers will isolate time and planning and resources at the level presumed by the HPE document. It will receive minimal attention if English/Maths is a guide. And I've been in a position to assimilate and absorb the language and philosophy for several years as an Education Adviser, where most classroom teachers have not (QSCCO, primary generalist).

Teachers' positionality and their interpretations of the materials resulted in a *reconstruction* of the instructional discourse of HPE. Data suggest how time was used, the traditional bundling of subject matter, the interpretation of outcomes, and the resources and traditions of the schools varied across school contexts. Positionality was shaped by teachers' discursive histories, in these projects in terms of their experience and self-perceptions of their expertise and, in the secondary school setting in particular, by their subject allegiances. Making sense of the new instructional discourse and then moving beyond the texts to locate the innovate ideas within their local context of implementation together constituted an inevitable transformation of the instructional discourse of HPE.

Conclusion

Drawing on evidence from two curriculum reform projects in Australia, we have argued that the majority of teachers did not operate as agents in the recontextualizing field, even though the potential to do so was present in each project. We suggested that teachers' authoritative voice, as partners in curriculum reform, derived from their intimate knowledge of their local contexts of implementation, in particular from their knowledge of their students, available resources, and the obdurate practicalities of their work. This finding is consistent with Spillane's (1999) conclusion that effective 'zones of enactment' support teachers in terms of social and professional networks, material trials and deliberation, and material resources.

The strategy used in the NPDP projects *potentially* blurred the positioning of teachers between the secondary field, where they are receivers and reproducers of curriculum, and the recontextualizing field, where they are collaborators with other partners in the production of new, school-based instructional discourses based on the Statement and Profile. In the Queensland Syllabus project, this potential also existed because the writing team consisted of seconded teachers, teachers were represented on an Advisory Committee, and teachers' experiences were relayed to the QSCCO and its writers through the Evaluators. However, in contrast to the NPDP project that sought to include teachers as co-developers of curriculum through a teacher-inquiry approach, the QSCCO more explicitly and tightly positioned teachers as receivers and deliverers of the curriculum, and the specialist writers and their line managers as the producers of instructional discourse. Yet, from this position, other partners in the reform process could only, with difficulty, challenge this expertise.

This understanding of teachers' positioning in the reform process is significant for a number of reasons. It suggests that most teachers who are involved in curriculum projects such as this will be agents in the secondary field of reproduction. Most will not contribute in any substantial way to the construction of the instructional discourse. In these projects, specialist curriculum writers, their line managers and other stakeholders including curriculum researchers, undertook this task. This is consistent with Smyth and Shacklock's (1998) argument that teachers' work is being increasingly shaped by a number of competing forces. These include the recentralizing of educational policy and power in tension with a rhetoric that suggests teachers are being given more autonomy and decision making at the school level through extended partnerships and networking. However, it is argued by Smyth and Shacklock (1998), and borne out in our data, that the decentralized trends and so-called partnerships reflect 'pseudo-participation and quasi-democracy' (p. 23). Therefore, at the level of constructing the curriculum specification, whether it be in the form of a Statement and Profile, a Syllabus, or some other curriculum document, most teachers *cannot* own this process and the resultant product. In this important respect, what is thinkable as HPE has already been decided for teachers.

However, teachers did make an important and invaluable contribution to the reform process through their adaptation of the materials to fit their local contexts of implementation. In the processes of making sense of the new instructional discourse and in locating their understanding of HPE within their schools, in relation to their students, resources and work conditions, the teachers were inevitably involved in transforming and reconstructing the innovative idea embedded in the materials. Clearly, the teachers' activity in the secondary field was no straightforward process of reproduction of the instructional discourse. In a significant sense, there was a further process of recontextualization taking place within the secondary field.

The extent to which teachers' appropriation of the instructional discourse can generate new and better practices in their schools is dependent on a range of contingencies that we know from these and other projects' impact on implementation (Fullan 1999). The extent to which educational administrators are able to maintain the 'fidelity' of the instructional discourse is dependent on the capacity within their education systems to mandate practices and to hold teachers and schools accountable for those practices. It seems that, even within partnership-based approaches to curriculum reform, we are confronted again with choices between degrees of bottom-up and top-down control.

Or is there another possibility? What might the consequences be for generating and then sustaining good practice if teachers were involved as partners, not only in the reform projects that produce new instructional discourse, but also in the maintenance of mandates during implementation? This scenario would involve recognizing the strengths and limitations of existing systems of education. Currently, as we have contended in this paper, teachers' authoritative voice is rooted in the local context of implementation. Transformation of reforms is inevitable, but often for sensible and appropriate reasons. If teachers' expertise in this area could be

applied to the maintenance of practice beyond reform projects, so that teachers regularly review peers' practices in partnership with educational administrators, bottom-up and top-down distinctions may be in some respects dissolved.

Such possibilities of peer review are already in operation in Australia (Macdonald and Brooker 1997), but their practice has yet to become widespread. We suggest that forming partnerships for the duration of curriculum reform projects is of vital importance. At the same time, we must recognize the institutional forces positioning teachers and other agents within the secondary and recontextualizing fields, respectively. It is important to build on the strengths of these positions and to recognize the appropriate contributions different stakeholders are best placed to make. But, perhaps, these partnerships need to be extended beyond brief reform projects to become a ubiquitous feature of the systematic renewal of curriculum. In such a context, there may be genuine possibilities for dissolving bottom-up and top-down approaches to curriculum reform.

Note

1. This project was carried out by the Queensland Schools Curriculum Council Office (QSCCO), and so was organized differently from the NPDP projects. There was, nevertheless, considerable continuity between the projects.

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