Teachers as bricoleurs: Producing plausible readings of curriculum documents

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ABSTRACT: *This paper describes teachers as bricoleurs who are professionals engaging in rigorous theoretical work as they construct meaningful assemblages of classroom practice. The author uses examples of two teachers taking up critical literacy discourses in their teaching and conversations to explain the construction of the teacher as bricoleur. Drawing on work by Deleuze and Guattari, a rhizotextual analysis of data is undertaken to explain the connections between the disparate discourses used by the two teachers and the documents of the Queensland English Syllabus. This understanding of the professional work of teachers negates assumptions about teachers as atheoretical and blind followers of departmental policies and curriculum directives. The author concludes with a description of one method for giving teachers the time and reflexive space to theoretically engage with issues surrounding their professional practice.*

KEYWORDS: *Bricoleur, rhizotextual analysis, critical literacy, discourse, teacher professionalism, professional practice.*

INTRODUCTION

The current emphasis on an outcomes-based curriculum across Australia has led to the development of complex state-based curriculum documents that attempt to direct teachers' work. Such documents construct teachers as policy-users who compliantly follow instructions and programs laid down by policy developers. In this paper, I argue for a much more complex and agentic reading of teachers' work that constructs teachers as *bricoleurs* who create complex assemblages of practices from diverse sources, including policy documents.

This paper draws on my doctoral research (Honan, 2001), where I conducted a rhizotextual analysis (Alvermann, 2000) to map the paths that two teachers followed within the texts of the P-10 Queensland English Syllabus (Department of Education, Queensland, 1994a). A rhizotextual analysis is based on an understanding of knowledge systems as rhizomes taken from Deleuze and Guattari's philosophical works (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). This analysis mapped the different paths that teachers and educational advisers took through the syllabus as they interacted with these texts.

In this article I focus in particular on the connections and intersections formed between the teachers and the policy texts through the discursive plateau associated with critical literacy as an approach to the teaching of English. This discussion provides an illustration of the ways in which a rhizotextual analysis can produce new ways of thinking about the interactions between teachers and curriculum documents.

TEACHERS AS BRICOLEURS

The position of *bricoleur* is drawn from Levi-Strauss, and Derrida's deconstructive work on this position. According to Derrida:

> The *bricoleur*, says Levi-Strauss, is someone who uses "the means at hand", that is, the instruments he finds at his disposition around him, those which are already there, which had not been especially conceived with an eye to the operation for which they are to be used and to which one tries by trial and error to adapt them, not hesitating to change them whenever it appears necessary, or to try several of them at once, even if their form and their origin are heterogeneous (1978, p. 285).

Michael Huberman has used this description of the *bricoleur* to construct an image of a teacher who is always busy,

> creating or repairing learning activities of different kinds with a distinctive style or signature. He or she adapts on the spot the instructional materials that have been bought, given, or scavenged, as a function of the time of day, the degree of pupil attentiveness, the peculiar skill deficiency emerging in the course of the activity (1993, p. 15).

Huberman's use of the image, however, tends to focus on an instantaneous, "on the spot" tinkering with existing materials. Derrida's description of the work undertaken by the *bricoleur* reveals a much more thoughtful, considered approach; the "trial and error" of adaptation taking considerable time, thought and effort. This adjustment work and construction of a bricolage is much more than simply resisting mandated policies. As Ball says, "the crude and over-used term 'resistance' is a poor substitute here, which allows for both rampant over-claims and dismissive under-claims to be made about the way policy problems are solved in context" (Ball, 1994, p. 20).

Although not named as such, this bricolage work is what is described by Bob Connell when he talks about the intricacies and complexities of teachers' work:

> For all the research and talk about schools, getting people to learn remains something of a mystery. It is certainly an extraordinarily complex business, an interplay of intellectual, emotional, and social processes so intricate that it virtually defies analysis (1985, p. 126).

Annette Patterson refers to this bricolage work as "informed eclecticism" when describing the ways teachers use a combination of the various approaches, or "models" of literacy learning and teaching:

> Many teachers informed themselves about the "models" debate and then mixed and matched from the available approaches, selecting the best of each and combining them in creative and stimulating ways in their classrooms. It is, after all, how teachers usually manage their work in classrooms, through what Mountford (1996) describes as "informed eclecticism" (2000, pp. 267-268).

Both Connell and Patterson are discussing some of the difficulties associated with describing teachers' work as an exact science, and with asking teachers to describe their "knowledge of how to teach" (Connell, 1985, p. 171). Understanding teachers as

bricoleurs helps to make sense of these difficulties rather than viewing them as a problem.

It is the considered, thoughtful, assemblage of various instruments at their disposal that is visible in the work that two teachers, Ann and Louise, do as they attempt to make sense of the syllabus materials. Operating as bricoleurs, they take up various parts of the syllabus texts and adapt them, through blending with existing practices and other texts available to them, to produce meaningful changes to their classroom practices. In this sense, they are doing the "secondary adjustment" work that is described by Stephen Ball (1994) in his discussion of teachers' relationships to policies.

THE RESEARCH CONTEXT

In this paper I will provide an example of the analysis that connected the discourses used within the Queensland English Syllabus texts, by the teachers and departmental advisers in their interviews with me, and by the teachers in their classroom lessons. This example concerns the use of critical literacy discourses. In the syllabus, there is a clear statement that "five curriculum approaches" underpin the model of teaching and learning English used in the texts. These approaches are named as "skills; cultural heritage; growth, developmental, process and whole language; functional linguistic and genre-based; and critical literacy" (Department of Education, Queensland, 1994b, p. 1). The two teachers I interviewed both told me they used critical literacy approaches in their classrooms. I came to understand the connections between these quite disparate uses through undertaking a rhizotextual analysis of the discourses involved.

Deleuze and Guattari developed the understanding of knowledge as rhizomatic to disrupt taken-for-granted understandings in modernist philosophy of knowledge as "linear" and "logical", expressed most commonly in the use of the metaphor of the "tree of knowledge". It can help to understand rhizomatics by applying other horticultural metaphors to this postmodern understanding of knowledge. Many types of grasses, bromeliads, and members of the ginger plant families are rhizomatic: rather than having a linear type root system attached to a central trunk, they have complex networks of root systems. Plants can grow from any point in this network, and each plant is attached to the other through the network.

A rhizotextual analysis involves the exploration of the "middles" of these rhizomes. Deleuze and Guattari (1987, p. 22) refer to the middle as a plateau that is "any multiplicity connected to other multiplicities by superficial underground stems in such a way as to form or extend a rhizome". In thinking about plants as rhizomatic systems then, the middles or plateaus are those plants that grow above the ground, that are connected to each other by the underground root systems.

In the rhizome of the English syllabus texts, such plateaus are formed by various discursive systems, systems that are connected by what I call "provisional linkages". Often, discourse analyses are concerned with the "teasing apart" of discourses, tracing the different appearances of different discourses. A rhizotextual analysis looks instead at the connections between the discourses through a "mapping" of the whole rhizome.

Mapping the rhizome of the Queensland English Syllabus involved searching for the connections, disconnections, the "new articulations" that form the plateaus:

> In drawing maps, the theorist works at the surface, "creating" possible realities by producing new articulations of disparate phenomena and connecting the exteriority of objects to whatever forces or directions seem potentially related to them. As such, maps exceed both individual and collective experiences of what seems "naturally" real (Dimitriades & Kamberelis, 1997, p. 150).

This mapping work does not create a fixed, spatial map, but rather follows the "forces or directions" between and across the linkages that connect each plateau. In the syllabus texts, the five curriculum approaches form the discursive plateaus that provide a multiplicity of lines that can be traced through the rhizome. Each plateau is connected to the other by these lines: they cross over, through, under, and within each other.

In my doctoral thesis, I found that teachers and departmental advisers follow particular lines that connect these discursive plateaus and each of these paths is different. Each reader of the texts of the syllabus takes a particular path, following particular trails that connect different discourses, so they make their own particular, (im)plausible readings of the texts. This understanding of texts as rhizomatic, and of readers following their own "line of flight" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 11), helps make sense of teachers' relationships with policy texts, in that there is no one "correct" reading of a text.

In this paper, I focus on the connections and linkages that form around the critical literacy discursive plateau, within the texts, the talk of the teachers I interviewed, and their classroom lessons. I want to be clear here that I am not setting these two teachers up as opposite to each other; I am not constructing one as good teacher and the other as bad teacher. Rather, I want to show how understanding the bricolage work that teachers do, and understanding texts as rhizomatic, allows me to better understand the plausibility of quite different and disparate readings of the syllabus texts.

CRITICAL LITERACY

While critical literacy discourses form the linkages between the following examples, I am not concerned here with either defining what critical literacy is, or with making claims about the use of this approach in teaching English in classrooms in Queensland or elsewhere. Rather, my focus is on how these two particular teachers construct very different practices as critical literacy teaching and learning. While these teachers were practising in the 1990s and the syllabus was published in 1994 (and has since been supplanted by a new curriculum), the rhizotextual analysis undertaken here sheds new light on the use of critical literacy in contemporary classrooms.

Critical literacy is still a central part of curriculum theory and pedagogy in Australia, and Australian literacy researchers and policy developers can still claim that this centrality is relatively unique in English speaking countries (see Luke, 2000). But the implementation of this approach has not been without difficulties, and has not been without some rhetoric about teachers' inabilities or unwillingness to engage with aspects of this teaching approach. Peter Freebody and Allan Luke (2003) have argued

that the work of a critical analyst is essential in engagement with literacy practices, but they also argue that there is no one "correct" method for teaching such critical analytical practices.

> One of the strengths of the "four resources model" is that it attempts to recognise and incorporate many of the current and well-developed techniques for training students in becoming literate. It shifts the focus from trying to find the right method to whether the range of practices emphasised in one's reading program are indeed covering and integrating a broad repertoire of textual practices that are required in new economies and cultures (Luke & Freebody, 1999, "No Magic Bullets", ¶3).

I have argued (Honan, 2003a) that the four resources model developed by Freebody and Luke allows teachers to engage in bricolage work as they create their own assemblage of practices that develop all four literacy resources. The analysis that I present here supports this view, as it makes visible the connections between quite disparate practices and critical literacy discourses.

The two teachers, Ann and Louise, both taught Grade 6/7, the last two years of primary school in Queensland. Ann taught in a suburban school in a large regional city, and Louise in a suburban school in the state capital, Brisbane, both in Queensland. The data discussed here is drawn from the transcriptions of video and audio-tapes of their classroom lessons.

ANN'S VERSION OF CRITICAL LITERACY

The first extract is from Ann's classroom where students have spent 30 minutes comparing the characteristics of witches as they are portrayed in a variety of children's books and in factual texts. Here Ann is summing up what they have done.

> Ann: *As you can see it's very easy to take one thing that actually happened, change it and change it and turn it around and everything. How many people do you think, or how many young, or even how many people younger than yourselves, would know about what witches were really like? Do you think a lot of people would know?*
>
> Ss: *10 per cent. No.*
>
> Ann: *Would their idea of a witch be what we just read about or would their idea be what was up here* [points to list of characteristics on blackboard taken from picture books].
>
> Ss: *What was up there.*
>
> Ann: *What was up there, right, so just those children's books that we've read and books, stories or movies all give us this idea up here. And that becomes ingrained. When I think of a witch, this is what I think of first, because I suppose being a teacher I've seen lots of books on it and things like that. And then I think, no, I really know that witches were like this. Okay. Milly?*
>
> Milly: *How come they killed little kids?*
> Ann: *Sorry?*

Milly: *They killed children. It said they killed children and witches.*

Ann: *Killed children?*

S: *No, I think that, just thought, it was their fault because they were in there.*

S: *For being witches.*

Ann: *Often because they were in there.*

S: *No, but um, they killed children for being witches.*

S: *Like, they killed, like, women, old lady, women and children.*

Ann: *Maybe they were relatives of the witches. Maybe they had a mole. Maybe a black cat.*

S: *I reckon it's a pretty crap rule. Just because you had a mole.*

Ann: *There are lots, it's a huge issue and there are lots and lots of people massacred, and it was a very, it was a big thing against women, and I think a lot of women like to look at it today as well and study those sorts of things. The very last sentence says "Form your own opinion as to how much has changed since then." So if you look at the way a young girl dressed or walked or talked, can you think of instances where an opinion is put on somebody just because of the way they dress or they walk or they talk? Okay, if someone came in here, I'll give you an example maybe with a woman. If a woman came in here and she had a very very short skirt on, lots of makeup and fluffy hair, high heels, long legs and slim. Do you think you might form an opinion when you saw them before you actually talked to them? I know I would. I mean I'd probably have to think* [inaudible]

Ss: *Yes.*   [inaudible comments]

Ann: *Suppose someone walked in here with a, say, glasses and a bit fat or didn't have very good dresses. She was wearing something that you thought was really uncool*

Ss: *Nerd*   [inaudible comments]

Ann: *Would you form an opinion as soon as they walked in?*

Ss: *Yes.*

Ann: *So even today the same sorts of things happen. So it's like, just because that person is wearing a particular thing doesn't necessarily mean that's what they're like. Just because a person has a mole, doesn't mean they're a witch.*

In this excerpt Ann is using critical literacy discourses in her discussion about the construction of normative images of certain people and characters. The ideas from picture books are "ingrained", an opinion "is put on somebody", and what has actually happened can be changed, ("change it and change it and turn it around"). Ann neatly links the construction of images of witches with daily life by asking students to consider their reaction to stereotypical images of women. Ann also avoids the

construction of an expert/beginner binary by referring to her own reactions to normative images, ("when I think of a witch, this is what I think of first"; "do you think you might form an opinion…I know I would"). By acknowledging the power that popular texts have over her own opinions, Ann avoids trampling on students' own pleasures and experiences.

The students' own opinions seem to be valued in this lesson, even when they are expressed inappropriately ("I reckon it's a pretty crap rule"). When a student asks what seems to be an inappropriate question ("how come they killed little kids?"), Ann does not ignore the question but searches for the intended meaning. The other students help her to realise that the question concerns "they" as the witch hunters, rather than "they" as the witches. When Ann calls on a student, ("Millie?"), this is not a call to answer a question, but a call for the student to express her opinion.

LOUISE'S VERSION OF CRITICAL LITERACY

Louise is teaching her students to write a letter of complaint to the local city council, complaining about the traffic using the local roundabout. Here students are "analysing" examples of persuasive texts through answering questions set out on a worksheet. The heading is "analysing texts" and there are three sub-headings: Cultural Context; Social Context; and Text. In the following extract from the lesson, Louise and her students are answering one of the questions listed under "text": "What language has been chosen to make meaning?" Louise selects an "easy" aspect of the language choices made within the text under analysis – the "modality".

Louise: We've also got to have a look at the participants and the processes and the modality. Let's do an easy one really quickly 'cause we're going to have to finish then, we'll keep coming back to this. Have a think about the modality. What is the modality in this exposition? Linda?

Linda: High

Louise: High, OK, let's find the words you go through with your partner and find the words that you think are high modality. [Students working in pairs – whispering- "should", "no should"]

Louise: Right, got most of them, Peter what's the first one that you have?

Peter: "Immediately?

Louise: "Immediately"? Yep, so that means they're going to do it straightaway, yep. What's another one that's also in that sentence? Linda?

Linda: "Should."

Louise: "Should". They should do it immediately
.
Boy: It needs to be spotless sort of…

Louise: OK, so it could be that it kept, it should, should, that it should be kept impeccable – if we had a "should" in there, they could have added that in there, couldn't they?

Girl: It has, the council should…

Louise: Oh, OK, yes, it does, but down in this one here, oh, OK, it does, yep, so the council should see, so what did we say…that "should" would be the actual modality?

Girl: [inaudible]

Louise: Yep, and the last, there's one more I think…
Student: "Wish"?

Louise: "Wish", OK, what do they do in those, in the, um, exposition, what do those…that modality do, what are the words doing? [Pause] Tania?

Tania: Persuading.

Louise: They're persuading, aren't they? Yep, they are making sure…so if we had changed that….Remember we changed the ones when we did it through our…um… persuasive speech, some of us did not have high modality when we first wrote our draft for our persuasive speech, so we went through them and checked them. If we changed this to a lower modality, would…would you really be listening to what they're trying to say?

Students: No.

Louise: Would you be taking much notice of them?

Students: No / Yes.

Louise: No, so they are…they're words that are going to persuade you. Those high modality words are ones that are saying. "You should do this." If it just said, "Oh, you may like to go and do it, or it might be nice…"[quiet giggles from students] …if you do it," you're not going to listen to it as…as much as if they're saying you should do it. You feel a bit guilty about it, don't you, and that's what they're trying to do in this letter. They're trying to get the Brisbane City Council to feel guilty about what they're doing. So they're trying to persuade them.

In this extract, both Louise and her students display for me their knowledge of certain aspects of functional grammar. Louise knows that her students have a good knowledge of choices made related to modality, so she makes sure that her students can display that knowledge for me. She not only picks out modality to focus on because it is "easy", but also because she knows that the students will get this part of the grammar right for the camera's and researcher's gaze.

The students in Louise's class comply with her to produce this performance of their knowledge. There is very little disruption to the classroom observed during this lesson, as the students go about their daily business of maintaining order (Davies & Hunt, 2000). Together, the students and Louise work to display for me their

competence – competence as students and teachers, and also competence in the knowledge of functional grammar and genres.

VERSIONS OF CRITICAL LITERACY

How are these two lessons seen as using critical literacy approaches when they would seem to be so different? Ann's lesson is overtly using the discourses and approaches associated with critical literacy, but Louise's lesson seems to be focusing on one aspect of functional grammar. Ann's lesson could be read as an exemplary critical literacy lesson. The topic of witches, the exploration of the construction of witches in popular texts, and the encouragement of students' abilities to see alternative points of view are all aspects of the lesson that assist students in learning how to be critical analysts (Freebody & Luke, 2003).

Initial readings of Louise's lesson, on the other hand, could focus on the teaching of functional grammar. My understanding of the connections between this lesson, the syllabus texts, and Louise's talk about her use of critical literacy approaches grew from my analysis of the rhizomatic connections, the provisional linkages, between various discursive plateaus. Rather than looking at the differences between the discursive systems surrounding functional grammar and critical literacy, I examined how they connected with each other. These connections were reaffirmed by Louise's own talk about the links between these two different approaches to teaching English. While both Ann and Louise can be seen to be working as bricoleurs in these lessons, Louise's bricolage is specifically concerned with making these connections between functional grammar and critical literacy.

LOUISE AS BRICOLEUR

Critical literacy and functional grammar are inextricably linked for Louise, as she says during an interview:

> Louise: And I suppose also interweaving the critical literacy within the functional grammar, which I don't really, I wouldn't say that I've done terribly well.
>
> E: Does that match with your own theoretical approach?
>
> Louise: I suppose I tend to go between the functional linguistic genre and the critical literacy with my kids, and especially with the types of genres that I've been working with, and also the sexual harassment. The topics that I've been working with really work well with critical literacy.

Louise believes that she can "interweave" the two approaches, but with some reservations. She has not "done this terribly well", and only particular genres and topics "work well with critical literacy". Despite such reservations, Louise positions herself as a *bricoleur* here, who can use aspects of both approaches together to produce meaningful classroom practice. As bricoleur, Louise can see links between the two approaches, and these links help her to make sense of the ways in which she "interweaves" the two. These links are the "provisional linkages" that connect the

different discursive systems that appear as plateaus within the rhizome of the syllabus texts.

One of these provisional linkages that connect different discourses about the teaching of literacy is that related to literacy as a technique of power. Louise uses this provisional linkage to make sense of her understanding of the two approaches of critical literacy and functional grammar. Both these approaches are based on a shared understanding of the "power" of literacy practices:

> Louise: to be able to analyse what they're seeing, and also not just take it at face value. So looking at the critical literacy part of it. Seeing also the power that it has over them. And what to do with it, not just to take it, and say,"Oh, okay, well, this is fine. This is what this ad's telling me, all this". But actually analyse that ad.

Vicki Carrington (2001, p. 265) argues that all pedagogical approaches and theories of literacy are "infused with presuppositions regarding the inherent power of literacy". As an expert in functional grammar and genre-based approaches, Louise sees this power as part of the text itself, so it is the *ad* that is "telling" her students something. As an expert in critical literacy, she sees power in the ability to look below the surface, to "not just take it at face value". In both discursive systems the way to access this power is through "analysis". In the Queensland English Syllabus, such analysis is undertaken via the application of rigidly constructed rules associated with systemic functional linguistics. My reading of Louise's use of the word "analysis" is affirmed by the next part of the interview where I ask her to explicitly link functional grammar with the understanding of power she has just explained:

> E: So how does the functional linguistic approach fit in with what you were just saying?

> Louise: … but I do believe that the kids need to see that, the way that they would structure a text is going to affect, whether it is persuasive or not, or whether it is um, functional, I suppose. Whether it gets it, gets across the message.

So, to Louise, there is a link between the "structure" of a text and the power that text has "over" her students. The only way that she can see her students gaining an understanding of the "power" of texts is through an analysis of the structures.

This reading, or what Spivak (1996) would call (mis)reading, could lead to an attack on Louise's lack of knowledge, and an attempt by me to play the "expert" who knows better than the "teacher" or "research subject" I am investigating. I recoil from such an attack, however. What I want to do is to try to make sense of the ways in which teachers, like Louise, use the syllabus texts, and how this use intersects with their classroom practices. In this case, as *bricoleur*, Louise makes use of both her expertness in the syllabus texts, and her expert knowledge of critical literacy, to provide a meaningful bricolage of classroom practices that make use of the shared discursive elements of both approaches.

TEACHERS' WORK

My rhizotextual analysis was informed by the subject positions made available to teachers within a wide variety of discursive systems. These subject positions intersect, and converge with, the positions made available to teachers within the syllabus texts. The teachers that I interviewed make use of the intersections and connections between this wide variety of subject positions to constitute themselves as agentic beings who have some control over their working lives. Part of this constituting work is made visible through my understanding of teachers as *bricoleurs*, who gather an assemblage of practices, ideas, and theories, to create meaningful classroom practices.

How then does this understanding of teachers as bricoleurs make sense today when teachers are governed by a variety of regulatory mechanisms that are designed to limit their professionalism and creativity? Schools and classrooms are flooded, on a daily basis, with an array of packages and materials that are designed to remove the responsibility for teaching decisions from teachers themselves. These materials attempt to describe teaching as a series of technical steps that can be followed in a linear fashion in order to reach some perceived desirable outcome. My understanding of teachers as bricoleurs negates the value and worth of such packages. Teaching is a complex and theoretically demanding and challenging task. Each teacher assembles for herself a complex array of practices, ideas and theories that are then assembled into meaningful classroom practices.

This reading of teachers' work explains a great deal about the common-sense notions about teachers' relationships with policy texts and curriculum documents. Usually teachers' resistance to the introduction of new directions is explained through folkloric tales about teachers' reluctance to change, their refusals to engage with new theoretical perspectives, or their inabilities to "correctly" read or use the mandated texts. These myths underpin much of the informal discussion that goes on between departmental advisers, policy developers and academic proponents of new curricula. Such myths also underpin the development of curricula that include "reductionistic technical standards" (Kincheloe, 2003, p. 9).

One example of this type of curriculum is the Early Years Literacy Program (EYLP) in Victoria (Victorian Department of Education, 1997) which consists of materials that not only govern the curriculum (the what to teach) but also the pedagogy (how to teach) and organisation (when to teach) of early years classrooms. The introduction of this program at a time when a conservative state government notoriously blocked teachers' attempts to critique the education department, and the program's mandated links to funding, contributed to a shared understanding that teachers were being reconstituted as blind followers who mindlessly followed the prescribed measures. But actually visiting early years classrooms, and listening to and reading pre-service education students' accounts of teachers' work in early years classrooms, at least now in 2003, six years after the introduction of the EYLP, a different construction of teachers is revealed. That construction is remarkably similar to that which I have described in this paper, of teachers as bricoleurs, who are able to engage reflexively and theoretically with the EYLP, and take from it what suits them, their classrooms and their particular groups of students.

This bricolage work cannot be learned through sets of steps or rules. Rather, what is needed is a widespread acceptance of the complexity of the bricoleur's work, and the provision of opportunities, including time and space, for teachers to develop meaningful assemblages from a wide variety of sources. This would entail making available to teachers an overview of current theoretical work, in both pedagogy and curriculum areas, that they could then use to inform the development of meaningful classroom practices. Such overviews could be made available through diverse formats, including the provision of mentoring, personal interactions between teachers as professional colleagues, as well as through the provision of opportunities for teachers to be involved in postgraduate and collaborative research.

TEACHERS AS RESEARCHERS

One example of such collaborative research was undertaken by myself and a group of teachers in 2002 (Honan, 2003a, 2003b). In this project I worked with teachers as co-researchers to move beyond the action research models developed in the 1980s (see for example, Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988). The methodology used attempted to put into practice the theoretical frameworks related to the construction of teachers as reflective researchers (Goodson, 1995; Kincheloe, 2003; Lankshear & Knobel, 2004). Calls for critical research that involves teachers as agentic and active participants in qualitative inquiries into their own practices recognize the complex nature of teachers' work and assumes that this work is based on the intertwining of theory and practice into praxis (Butt et al, 1992; Goodson, 1995; Kincheloe, 2003; Lankshear & Knobel, 2004/forthcoming; Zeichner, 1994). Research that provides insights into such praxis actively contributes to the reconstruction of "teaching as intellectual work" (Smyth, 2001, p. 197).

Such research also contributes to the development of new relationships between members of faculties of education and the teaching profession, as it shifts the emphasis away from the construction of academics as "experts" towards collegial, ethical and agentic collaborations between different groups of educators. This type of research is welcomed by teachers, as it acknowledges their own deeply held beliefs about the complex and challenging nature of their work. As one teacher who was involved in the 2002 project said in relation to the notion of teachers as bricoleurs: "I think that's definitely where we're at, and I think that's what teachers are all about and that's what makes teaching exciting."

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