

# **Teachers' Professional Knowledge Bases: Negotiating Pedagogic Identities in New Times.**

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The theoretical models of teachers' knowledge bases, as developed by Shulman (1987) and Turner-Bisset (1997, 1999), do not overtly support Elbaz's (1983), Lampert's (1984) and Nias' (1989) earlier suppositions that a teacher's knowledge of self influences their pedagogic work. A review of the empirical literature produced by Connell (1985), Sikes, Measor and Woods (1985), Weber and Mitchell (1995), Osler (1997), Johnston (1999) and Bullough and Gitlin (2001) gives purchase to the notion that a teacher's position, status and work are not determined by their technical or knowledge competences alone; gender, social class, culture/ethnic identity and dress also help constitute pedagogic identities.

It is thus prudent to explore Bernstein's (1990, 1996) theorisation of pedagogic identities as they are constituted through pedagogic discourse. Bernstein's (1990, 1996) work focuses more exclusively on the forms of discourse that are particular to pedagogic transmission and acquisition, their generating context and processes of change. For example, according to Bernstein (1990), and later reinforced by Semel (1995), discourses external to education, such as historical discourses and discourses of the state, prescribe and proscribe ways of being and seeing that act powerfully to provide the limits within which teachers enact their pedagogic roles. Bernstein (2000) theorised that in current times varying discourses may project one or more of four identities into educational institutions: de-centered therapeutic, de-centred market, retrospective and prospective. Bernstein's (2000) theorisation is useful for its categorization of the identity projections made available, and further to this, how these projections work for and on teachers in new times.

However, in reality, pedagogic identities will never exist in a pure singular form; rather it is possible for all four discourses to be circulating simultaneously within educational institutions. At any one time, different interest groups will be lobbying for one or more of these pedagogic identity projections. This means that teachers' pedagogic identities will always be a site of contestation and conflict as state policies, institutional plans, and consumer forces struggle to establish and maintain their interests. The stakes are high, for the interest group that exercises some power manages to relay their ideological interest to the next generation. The significant point is that teachers are positioned in multiple and often contradictory ways. Of central importance to this paper is that teachers negotiate pedagogic identities within these multiple contradictory discourses. Understandings the ways that teachers may be positioned, and how they counter dominant discourses, are a necessary part of filling an indentified gap in the literature on teachers' professional knowledge bases.

This paper draws on an interview-based study undertaken over an eighteen month period within five Australian offshore teachers who were seconded from their positions with an Australian State educational provider to become guest teachers of English for Indonesian adolescents for approximately ten months. The teachers each provided between eleven and thirty-six significant episodes of data about themselves as offshore teachers. The paper introduces the teachers' accounts of their interactions with Indonesian educators and students.

A detailed analysis revealed that from the guest teachers' perspectives, the central issue of their pedagogic identity was not acknowledging difference, rather, the more difficult issue of what kind of difference was acknowledged, accepted or renegotiated. Their accounts suggest that they could not simply give up any cultural privileges but had to develop and enact strategies that responded to the specificities of their offshore context. Following Bernstein (2000), the dominance of discourses that relied on grand narratives of the past positioned these teachers with recontextualised grand narrative identities. This paper draws on Bernstein's (1996, 2000) sociology of pedagogy to offer a new theorisation of the range of strategies these offshore English language teachers employed as they attempted to counter the dominant grand narrative discourses about readings of white Westerners.

The analysis presented suggests that these guest teachers used three strategies as they struggled over the constitution of their offshore pedagogic identities: establishing a credible and professional teacher identity; positioning themselves as an expert within a limited disciplinary field whilst simultaneously promoting the Indonesian teachers' disciplinary expertise; and negotiating a discursive position outside of hegemonic white Western expatriate identities. In theoretical terms, all three strategies employed common principles. They all sought to weaken the guest teachers' engagement with stereotypes of white English speaking Westerners as superior, and in turn strengthen the bonds with the local communities. In other words, while identities of whiteness, Westernness and native English speaker were still present, their identities were not so fixed or so stable that they could not alter their readings/meanings. There was some space within which the teachers could negotiate. As the data showed, it took some time for these teachers to be cognisant of the processes they needed to undertake to promote de-centred therapeutic identity discourses, that is, discourses based on present resources that individuals could, to a limited degree, control.