

Editorial

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It is a pleasurable burden to be writing this editorial introduction to the inaugural issue of *English Teaching: Practice and Critique*. The purpose of the journal is to promote theorising about English/literacy that is grounded in a range of contexts: classrooms, schools and wider educational constituencies. The aim of the editorial board is to provide a place where authors from a range of backgrounds can identify matters of common concern and thereby foster professional communities and networks. Where possible, it will encourage comparative approaches to topics and issues.

It is now over a year since the website Critical English Online was launched (<http://www.soe.waikato.ac.nz/english/index2.html>). The site's lofty goals were:

- to support teachers who aspire to be critically reflective practitioners
- to encourage classroom-based research by English/literacy teachers
- to provide a forum for English/literacy teachers to communicate on issues of concern and to network with colleagues who share similar professional interests
- to locate English as a theorised practice with social justice implications on an international stage by incorporating international perspectives and encouraging communication by colleagues beyond national boundaries
- to provide selected links to resources that can help English/literacy teachers to reflect on their practice

The continuing development of the site has been grounded by innumerable conversations, some face to face (at the AERA Conference in New Orleans this year) and most via email. A number of the participants in these conversations are represented in the Table of Contents of this issue. The journal itself is a result of these conversations.

Part of my pleasure, then, is an awareness of the extent to which this issue is the result of an international, collaborative effort. Each contributor was given the brief of writing about English teaching in their own constituency in a way which raised issues they felt were pertinent to colleagues at home and of interest to colleagues overseas. As editors we believed that resonances would be set up between contributions and that the contributions collectively would provide pointers for topics around which future issues of the journal might be based. This first issue, I believe, confirms these hunches.

The scrutiny of any educational system inevitably raises issues about constructions of worthwhile knowledge (content) and how the learning of knowledge so-deemed should be managed (pedagogy). Issues of national curriculum reform are discussed by a number of writers in this issue. In providing an overview of the Australian situation, Wayne Sawyer raises issues related to the uneasy tension between increasingly critical English curriculum formulations and narrowly defined literacy testing

regimes. Writing of the situation in England, Richard Andrews details ways in which curricular reform still operates within a conservative, target-setting and assessment-driven model. Terry Locke makes similar points about the New Zealand situation, when he discusses ways in which assessment reforms, especially when related to high-stakes qualifications reforms, construct their own de facto curriculums. The article on the South African situation, by Hilary Janks and Jeanne Prinsloo, is a reminder of ways in which issues of power (and disempowerment) are implicated in curricular constructions.

As a number of writers in this issue remind us, the knowledge conceptualisations we call curriculums are shaped by powerful discourses which act to inscribe the subjectivities of teachers and students alike. Like all discourses, they reward subscribers and marginalise the non-subscribers. Such points are powerfully made in respect of the South African situation by Hilary Janks and Jeanne Prinsloo. Gail Cawkwell, writing of the New Zealand situation, describes ways in which approaches to reading are shaped by discourses that construct the child in particular ways. Also on the theme of reading, but from a predominantly secondary perspective, Andy Goodwyn (England) examines ways in which pre-service English teaching trainees construct themselves as readers and suggests ways in which these impact on their teaching practices.

Implicit in a number of these articles are issues of professional identity. Brenton Doecke's contribution to this issue is an essay wherein he puts his own professional identity under the spotlight and raises questions about the ways in which past constructions of English teacher identity are being marginalised in Australia by "New Times" rhetoric. He argues for an alternative analysis that focuses on English teaching as an ongoing professional practice that recognises the history and traditions within which that practice is situated. Issues related to professional identity are also raised by Terry Locke (New Zealand), but in this instance, he sees the development of professional identity as constrained by a narrowing of the professional development agenda in the context of State-driven curriculum and assessment reforms.

In what has become a classic treatment of the theme of teaching knowledge, Lee Shulman (1986) set out to explain the disappearance in the late 1980s of subject matter from constructions of teacher effectiveness and to restore what he calls the "missing paradigm" by providing a classification for both the domains and categories of teacher knowledge (content knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, curricular knowledge) and the forms for representing that knowledge (p. 10). An example of the latter he calls "case knowledge".

Case knowledge is knowledge of specific, well-documented, and richly described events. Whereas cases themselves are reports of events or sequences of events, the knowledge they represent is what makes them cases. The cases may be examples of specific instances of practice – detailed descriptions of how an instructional event occurred – complete with particulars of contexts, thoughts, and feelings. On the other hand, they may be exemplars of principles, exemplifying in their detail a more abstract proposition or theoretical claim (p. 11).

What Shulman is writing about here captures something of what the editors of *English Teaching: Practice and Critique* had in mind when they decided to have a journal section on classroom narratives. We are pleased to welcome Melbourne teacher,

Pelissa Tsilimidos, as our first classroom narrator, who reports on her practice as a teacher of film in a boys' school but locates her account in the context of ongoing debates about boys and literacy.

Finally, I would like to foreshadow the following topics as providing a thematic centre for upcoming issues of *English Teaching: Practice and Critique*.

- Professional identity and the beginning teacher
- English teachers in “New Times”
- English teaching in the context of the standards agenda
- Pre-service English teacher education

More specific information on the timing of and submission deadlines for future issues will be posted on the main journal site.

REFERENCE

Shulman, L. (1986). Those who understand: Knowledge growth in teaching. *Educational Researcher*, 15(2), 4-14.