# Dramaturgical Representations of Teaching as Social Drama in Educational Settings: Opening a New Dimension in Positioning Analysis

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Since Davies and Harré first introduced Positioning Theory in the social sciences, in the 1990's, there has been much interest shown in the scalability of the applications from the analysis of the dynamics of person-to-person encounters to the analysis of the discourses by which large-scale social entities position themselves in relation to others; and in the applications that cross the boundaries between different disciplines. What about middle-sized institutions like schools? In this cross-discipline, longitudinal study of a medium-scale social organisation the application of positioning theory is presented in the analysis of the autobiographical narrative accounts of multiple participants in the early socialization of networked technologies in a Melbourne school, in the 1990's. In proposing a dramaturgical representation rendered as a drama-text which highlights the daily activities of teachers, I argue that a new perspective is afforded the researcher/reader: one of transformation of identity and of institutional re-structuring as an 'imagined' drama. I will discuss the key features of the imagined drama: structure; creating and juxtaposing verbatim dialogues; the narrator; and positioning analysis. In this realm of possibility I argue that dramaturgical representations and the re-design of the conventional positioning triad as a positioning pyramid open a new dimension in positioning analysis affording a contribution to Positioning Theory research. While simultaneously

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affording a co-constructed research methodology in which practicing teachers as teacher-researchers and educational researchers are mutually committed to research in improving practice in schools and in teacher research.

Research in education has a long and rich history of using different disciplines such as psychology, sociology, philosophy and history in order to study education. In this study which I conducted in the nineteen-nineties, for instance, teacher practice is viewed as an emergent property of the interplay between structure or culture and agency (Harvey, 2002; Bhaskar, 1989). The narrative or storytelling approach (Polkinghorne, 1995) in the form of autobiographical narratives (Brockmeier, 2000) is used as an alternative to ethnographic techniques (observation, interviews, field notes) in the study of teacher practice (see Linehan & McCarthy, 2001). The structural narrative in school-based studies emerges from researching the perspectives of policymakers and resource providers, such as those contained within the policies of government, private school headmasters, universities, teacher associations and providers of new media. Drawing from discursive psychology it is assumed that the discussion between interlocutors could be explained through action accounts and that the self develops dialogically (Davies & Harré, 1990). The teachers' agentive narratives of interest are presented as dialogical constructs of conversations between the practicing teacher and the educational researcher.

In this paper, I seek to disrupt the conventions governing research in schools, by repositioning the roles of practicing teachers and educational researchers in the conduct of school-based research. Classroom teachers who conduct informal research specific to their own classroom context and practice demonstrate their agency as teacher-researchers. Accordingly, these teacher-researchers are positioned as the lead researcher when collaborating with educational researchers in the conduct of their school-based research projects. Educational researchers are positioned or self-positioned as 'advisors' or 'consultants' rather than 'experts' or 'supervisors'.
In this paper I discuss how the daily lives of teachers can be represented as a social drama in the form of a dramaturgical representation, and how the way rights and

duties are distributed among the people who share the representation, shape identity-formation and influence institutional re-structuring.

## SCHOOLS AS COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE: AN INVITATION TO COLLABORATE

The Director of Computing at Cyber Grammar (pseudonym), an Australian private school in Melbourne, Victoria, invited me to visit the school and discuss the possibility of a review of their Notebook program. The school was seeking academic interest in the form of in-house discussions with an educational researcher.

In June 1996, the Headmaster, the Deputy Headmaster and the Director of Computing discussed with me the school's intention to systematically computerise the whole school within the next three years. We discussed the nature of the review and agreed that the focus should centre on the work and professional practice of teachers. The Deputy Headmaster and the Director of Computing consulted with various members of staff providing me with a list of nine possible participants. I contacted each teacher by email introducing myself, the nature of the research and arranged an appropriate time for an interview, during October-November, 1996. In May 1998, I was invited to present my preliminary findings to the Form 3 (Year 9) staff who were then involved in the implementation stage of the school's networked Notebook program.

This co-constructed study focused on how teachers engage with advanced technologies: as learners, as curriculum developers and as experienced users. As the 'invited' educational researcher I was able to discuss with teachers their views, opinions, beliefs and experiences concerning the transformative pedagogical possibilities, problems and prospects in the use of networked and mobile computing in schools. These perspectival accounts (Martin, 2005) of their agency of change are constructed at the intersection of their purposes in pioneering the pedagogical use of the new media in classrooms with social necessities at that time and place, and as such, is an exploration of the horizons of significance (Taylor, 1992) of the new technologies in their schools. In the following section I will sketch a solution to the problem I encountered when conducting longitudinal studies of institutional transformation involving multiple actors, namely, how are the perspectival accounts of teacher enthusiasts presented as rich dialogue (Geertz, 1973) to be incorporated into a process ontology of teacher agency that includes fine grained practice?

**TOWARDS A PROCESS ONTOLOGY OF TEACHER AGENCY**

**Ethogenics And Positioning Theory**

This study of the daily lives of teachers as they grapple with the pedagogical use of networked and mobile computing, presents an account of the emergence of a digital culture from an ethogenic perspective (Harré & Secord, 1972; Davies, 1982; Harré, 1983) in which social life is composed of two kinds of performance – actual social behaviour and the accounts of social behaviour in which it is explained, criticised and justified. In each case the behaviour is dependent on an individual's stock of social knowledge. This suggests that the best authorities on social action – for example, the pedagogical use of new media - are the teachers themselves, and social researchers should ask them to explain and interpret their behaviour as they would to a colleague in everyday conversation.

In this ethogenic study, since teaching-with-networked-computers was being imaginatively constructed at this time by enthusiasts engaged in it, notionally but not actually free of existing pedagogical structures, the conversational interviews here focused initially on turning the logic of their practice into a theory of practice or a social ontology of practice or teacher agency. Their practices are taken to be the antithesis of theoretical conceptualizations and dichotomous acts, based instead in biographical understandings of pedagogical and institutional change as well as their understanding of the  prospects for and proper pedagogical use of new media. Moreover, through the taking, sharing and juxtaposing of the perspectives of teacher participants I sought to present a site-based process ontological account (Schatzki, 2002, 2003) of this historical period focused on the emergent uses of the new technologies.

The administrative decision to impose networked and mobile computing, and the institutional disruption associated with new complexity, uncertainty, chaos or social entropy across the curriculum, at Cyber Grammar school exposed the structural tension between the social order reproduced in communities of teaching practice and potentially transformed through personal agency and self-improvement (Simmel, 1968). During the cultural-historical episode where the pedagogical use of new media was challenging existing narrative conventions of teacher practice, I sought to understand how communities of practice envisioned themselves within an analogue-digital future. For teachers to understand each other's emerging pedagogical practice they needed to share new storylines which embraced discursive practices concerned with institutional practices, their psychological positioning

(Harré & van Langenhove, 1991, 1999), and societal rhetoric in the local moral order of their school.

The conversational interviews I conducted with teachers framed by the discursive practices of their community, invited reflection and a sharing of perspectives pertaining to teaching as a social act - their transactional doings and sayings with the new technology and who was doing what to whom. From these perspectives of lived and felt experience, within a normative moral order, their accounts permitted the description of social structure and agency. Central to this ethogenic representation is the notion of the individual teacher as a voluntary, conscious initiator of change. The person of the teacher is assumed to be intentionally controlling his or her actions, and is uniquely capable of reflecting on his or her social performances. in monitoring these reflections the teacher is able to provide a commentary on them. In the text of the social-drama, I refer to Positioning Analysis as 'ethogenic interpretation' thereby signalling to the reader the idea that the person of the teacher is conceived as a freely choosing purposeful agent, rather than the mechanistic, or deterministic conception of the teacher which is often the presupposition of much research and theory in studies in education.

**Psychological Positioning: Persons/Conversations Referential Grid**

People, institutions and societies are the social entities that constitute the 'substances' of the standard ontological view of the social world, forming three different levels of social phenomena where "people [are] … treated as complex, causally interacting 'things'; institutions as groupings of people (the personnel or staff); and societies as higher order aggregates of people in groups" (Harré & van Langenhove, 1991, p. 393). When social phenomena are located within the Newtonian-Euclidian space/time grid of the natural world, Harré & van Langenhove argue that the social sciences have tended to look for and treat causes as deterministic in a Humean sense. Arguing for an alternative time/space grid for locating and understanding social phenomena, they proposed the "persons/conversations referential grid" together "with a reassessment of assumptions about the 'substance' of social and psychological realities" (p. 394). The authors explain:

> If social acts, including speech-acts, are taken as the 'matter' of social reality, a new grid can be constructed in which people are seen as locations for social acts. As a 'space', a set of possible and actual locations, the array of persons is not necessarily

Euclidian. The grid of temporal locations, the time-aspect of human life, also changes. The distinction between past, present and future does not go over neatly into psychological time partly because the social and psychological past is not fixed. The social future can influence the social past. The occurrences of acts are the moments of social time. (Harré & van Langenhove, 1991, p. 394)

According to Harré & van Langenhove (1991, p. 394) the social realm is "composed of three basic processes: conversations, institutional practices and the use of societal rhetorics". They argue "within conversations that the social world is created". That is, "Within conversations, social acts and societal icons are generated and reproduced" (p. 394). Furthermore, "Within the persons/conversations grid, positioning can be understood as the discursive construction of personal stories that make a person's actions intelligible and relatively determinate as social acts and within which the members of the conversation have specific locations" (p. 395). These conversations have a tri-polar structure, Figure 1: consisting of "positions, story-lines and relatively determinate speech-acts" (p. 396).
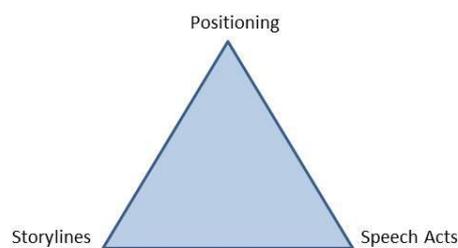


Figure 1. The Conventional Positioning Triad

Positioning theory is concerned with three fundamental interconnected aspects of interpersonal encounters:

1. Rights and duties are distributed among people in changing patterns as they engage in performing particular kinds of actions.

2. These patterns are themselves the product of higher-order acts of positioning through which rights and duties to ascribe or resist positioning are distributed.

3. Such actions are the meaningful components of story-lines. Any encounter might develop along more than one story-line, and support more than one story-line evolving simultaneously.

The meanings of people's actions are social acts. The illocutionary force of any human action, if it has one as interpreted by the local community, determines its place in a story-line and is mutually thereby determined. Any action might carry one or more such meaning. (Harré, Moghaddam, Cairnie, Rothbart, & Sabat, 2009, pp. 6-7)

What makes the interpretation of teacher conversations meaningful to the reader? Are you just making it up as the researcher? Positioning research is concerned with the distribution of rights and duties. The positioning theory analyst uses the mutually determinate triad in interpreting conversations. The analyst attends to the Positioning – the speaker's social psychological location in the story; the Storyline – the content - what they are saying; and Speech Acts (illocutionary force) – the social strategy - why are they telling this story? What they are actually saying is what needs to be attended to.

The interpretation of teacher conversations is not just the researcher's view (belief, opinion, bias) "but an act of positioning because what is at issue is the scope of rights and duties in the situation and how they are to be distributed" (Harré et al., 2009, p.16). "The significance of the conversation between [teachers] is only revealed when it is seen in positioning theory terms: that is, as a redistribution of the scope and content of the rights and duties that have come to be the working frame" (p. 17) for the teachers exploration of the potential structural and agential use of networked and mobile computing while subject to the normative constraints and permissions of the local moral order.

Positioning as a discursive practice always takes place within the context of a specific moral order of speaking. "In any discursive practice, positioning constitutes the initiator and the others in certain ways, and at the same time it is a resource through which all persons involved can negotiate new positions" (Harré & van Langenhove, 1999, p. 22). It can be performative, accountive, moral, personal, tacit and intentional. It can be deliberate, inadvertent, presumptive, or taken for granted. It can be deliberate self-positioning, forced

self- positioning, deliberate positioning of others, and forced positioning of others. (Harré & van Langenhove, 1999; Harré et al., 2009) As the nature of these distinctions are merely analytic it is likely that whenever positioning occurs, several forms of positioning may be expected to be occurring simultaneously.


# CONSTRUCTING DRAMATURGICAL ACCOUNTS AROUND NEW TECHNOLOGIES: DRAMATIC STRUCTURE AND VERBATIM DIALECTICAL THEATRE


## Teaching As A Social Psychological Drama

Why a dramaturgical representation? I felt that the conventional conversation 'turn-taking' style transcript format (see Linehan & McCarthy, 2001) while affording a controlled analytical space, lacked a sense of the dynamic interaction between teachers or failed to engender a sense of the structure of feeling (Williams, 1977) of the researched moment, or explicitly facilitate the reader's entry into conversations or the tracking of complex, multiple contemporaneous storylines. I felt that what is missing is the dramatizing of the conversational interviews in which the relationship between positioning, storylines and illocutionary force is needed to represent the social dynamic of social orders. For this purpose, I have constructed the dramaturgical account in the style of "a closet drama" which is a drama suited primarily for reading rather than production. In this paper I will refer to the closet drama as imagined drama.

In constructing the text of the imagined drama I drew on the staging of social acts (Goffman, 1959), the techniques of dramatic structure (Burke, 1969), the documentary style of verbatim theatre (Wilkinson, 2008), to capture and make use of the precise words spoken by the teachers in the accounts, and the dialectical staging and performing approach of Brecht (1964), to confront a social determinist view of school reform with the perspective of personal agency. In making the assumption, like Goffman, that social acts are staged, and that 'theatre' and 'drama' are metaphors for social life, then a dramaturgical account represents a site specific interpretation of the social dynamic of the act of teaching embedded in the local culture. A dramaturgical account rendered as a drama-text highlights the daily activities of teachers, such that a new perspective is afforded the reader: one of transformation of identity and of institutional re-structuring.

Wilkinson (2008) recognizes that both performance ethnography and narrative inquiry rely on narrative for meaning. "Meanings are made through stories told in specific environments, meanings that may then resonate to create broader social understandings and add to the body of experiential knowledge" (p. 10). It is this commonality which suggests the use of 'verbatim theatre' as a complimentary vehicle for the presentation of participant's perspectival data when rendered as dialogue constitutive of the daily actions, interactions and transactions of teachers reproducing and transforming their community of practice and of their identity re-formation or agentry.

The text of the imagined drama emerged from the voice-recordings of conversational interviews, which were rendered as teachers' autobiographical narrativized accounts of their experience in the use of new media, when transcribed as text and reinterpreted as dialogue. I sought to recast in narrative form attributable to Bakhtin (Sullivan & McCarthy, 2004) a rendering of the agents' lives in a rich polyphonic dialogue that reveals both the moral dilemmas and teachers mental lives in the space of reason in their reasoning about the moral dilemmas about redefining "good teaching".

**Researching Social Orders In Schools: Teaching Presented As Social Drama**

The extracts which follow are taken from Roe (2015), my doctoral study which involved conversational interviews of teachers pioneering the use of new media over a three year period. The extracts from the transformational account below are from one Chapter titled *A Private School on A Mission*, presented as a two-act (16 scene), dialectical drama, emerged from the verbatim recollections of the lived experience of eight participating teachers, provides a dramaturgical frame for presenting and analysing verbatim dialogues.

*Extract 1a*

## A Private School on a Mission

In 1996, the innovative-decision by the Headmaster of Cyber Grammar (pseudonym), a small private school, supported by the Board of Governors required all Year Nine students to use Notebook computers in 1998. Teachers who were expected to teach Year Nine in 1998 were asked to plan the technology-enhanced year nine syllabus, and, as all staff needed access to computers the Headmaster (im)posed the mandatory

technology professional development contract. In exchange for a Notebook computer, each member of staff would undertake 40 hours of computer-based professional development. What moved Cyber Grammar School towards the greater application of technology in their curriculum - that is in the cultural work of teachers? How is the school's corporate identity maintained? "Who" we are, where we are coming from, where we are going towards?" Cyber Grammar School's corporate identity is the background of values, beliefs and norms against which its community of teachers, parents and students tastes and desires and opinions and aspirations make sense. The transformational account of *A Private School on a Mission*, presented here as a two-act dialectical drama, emerged from the verbatim recollections of the lived experience of Kim, Jessie, Sandy, Pat, Sam, Dale, Shannon and Devon (pseudonyms), which were collected during the 1997 school year.

*Extract 1b*

## A Private School on a Mission

### Act One - The Actors as Role-bearers and Position-takers

| Scene One: | Kim | Director of Computing |
|---|---|---|
| Scene Two: | Jessie | Chair of the Curriculum Technologies Forum |
| Scene Three: | Sandy | Director of Curriculum |
| Scene Four: | Pat | Newly Appointed Deputy Headmaster |
| Scene Five: | Dale | Subject Coordinator |
| Scene Six: | Sam | Secondary Teacher |
| Scene Seven: | Shannon | Primary Teacher |
| Scene Eight: | Devon | Primary Teacher |

### Act Two - The Actors in Conversation

| Scene One: | "But They'll Spend 40 Hours" |
|---|---|
| Scene Two: | "So I Was Talking To People Below 10 Hours" |
| Scene Three: | "This Is What I Want But I Don't Know How To Achieve It" |
| Scene Four: | "It's The Way Of The Future" |

                              END




In the above extracts, A Private School on a Mission – a Drama in Two Acts, signals to the reader a frame change: from the research frame to the dramaturgical frame. The reader is not privy to the actual day-to-day interpersonal encounters during the cultural-historical episode where the pedagogical use of new media was challenging existing narrative conventions of teacher practice. The reader, entering the imagined drama is positioned as an actor in the dramaturgical account, moving between social episodes in which he or she is able to construct a narrative of the unfolding social psychological drama. A drama in which the actors are sharing new storylines which embrace discursive practices concerned with institutional practices, their psychological positioning, and societal rhetoric in the local moral order of their school.

*Extract 2*


## A Private School on a Mission


### Act One - The Actors as Role-bearers and Position-takers


**Narrator:** Pat, the Deputy Headmaster welcomes you as you enter the foyer of Cyber Grammar School, and offers to take you to the staff lounge. Upon entering the lounge, you are introduced to a group of teachers seated in a circle, who were chatting among themselves. The staff in turn, introduces themselves: beginning with their role and then talking about the issues that were important to them in their quest to use or persuade others to use new media in their pedagogical practice.

### Act One Scene One - Kim - Director of Computing


**Kim:**   I'm the Director of Computing. The Systems Manager with overall

responsibility for the administration of the senior and junior campus network. From my perspective as the Director of Computing I'm happy with our progress in implementing the school's Notebook program. For me, it has been a combination of circumstances. The right staff. The right time. The Head. The previous Deputy with the vision. The turnaround. The Board of Governors. To me, it has been putting the Notebook in the hands of staff. Not simply to say, 'You can buy one if you want', but actually to say to staff, 'Here it is, and, this is the PD expectation'. It really has worked extremely well. But then again I am biased. […]

**Positioning Statement**

Kim is positioned as the technology trouble-shooter for both the leadership
        team and the staff.

### Act One Scene Two - Jessie - Chair of the Technologies Forum

**Jessie:** I'm the Chair of the Curriculum Technologies Forum. I developed the Notebook Implementation Policy. I also take multimedia training for staff and parents. I'm also a Geography and History teacher. I have been here for two and a half years. I was at … Quantum [pseudonym] College for eight and a half years before that. … And it would be - perhaps four or five years ago - a Year Seven team teaching project evolved involving a fairly low-level IT program. The school resourced Year Seven with class sets of Notebooks. Basically, they identified staff who were already actively using computers to teach a period a week. These teachers were also asked to help other staff develop skills and to develop programs for use in the curriculum.
I was one of those people. And shortly after that Internet dial-up accounts were organised. … They sent me to a course out at La Trobe University on using the Internet. At the time the Web was still something that many people had not heard of. 'Wow! Gee, pictures and colours and all that.' Not all the multimedia stuff that there is now of course. … That is where I started. […]

**Positioning Statement**

Jessie is a technology-aware, self-taught user, who is positioned as a facilitator.

In this extract, the actor's discursive constructions of personal stories as role-bearers and position-takers in revealing the assignment of rights and duties make their actions intelligible and relatively determinate as social acts and in which the members of the conversation including the reader have specific locations, for instance, in the local moral order of their school. The narrator's/researcher's intentional Positioning Statement tentatively suggests a possible location, which may be contested, challenged, accepted or rejected by the actor or other members of the conversation.

As actor's actions become the meaningful components of storylines, the reader may anticipate the possibility of any encounter developing along more than one storyline, and be capable of supporting more than one storyline evolving simultaneously.

The Narrator. In the imagined drama the storylines of teacher's positioning and repositioning are rendered as co-constructed dramaturgical accounts as verbatim drama in which the researcher is represented as the narrator. Acting as guide the narrator 'prepositions' the experienced reader for entry into each scene so as to easily understand the nature of the conversation that is taking place.

The Reader. It is assumed the reader will actively construct a narrative of the drama from his or her perspective. In the course of this construction uncertainty and ambiguity may emerge concerning the narrator's 'Ethogenic Interpretation' of the positioning and repositioning of the actors, who are treated as more than characters, but less than types in the institutional histories, and the researcher's selection and juxtapositioning of the dialogue. The reader (practitioner, scholar) should have the impression that the actors including the narrator are talking to him or her, that he or she is also a participant in the social drama capable of reflective and reflexive action, and is not merely a passive disinterested reader.


*Extract 3*


**A Private School on a Mission**


Act Two - The Actors in Conversation

**Act Two Scene One - "But They'll All Spend 40 Hours"**

**Narrator**     The following exchange between Kim, Dale, Sandy, and Pat takes place in Sandy's (Director of Curriculum) office after reflecting on the question: Does your rhetoric match your practice?

**Kim** (Director of Computing)**:**     Except for the Headmaster, all staff at Cyber Grammar School are expected to undertake 40 hours computer-based professional development.

**Pat** (recently appointed Deputy Headmaster):     The Junior School teachers are also involved in this program. They have also been provided with Notebooks. … Each of the teachers in the Junior School is expected to be included in the 40 hour PD program.

**Dale** (Subject Coordinator):  It was interesting the way … the technology initiative came about. … It was announced by the Headmaster that we had made a deal with NEC (Australia). And people said, 'Oh! That's good. That helps us'. I think that was the first announcement. The second announcement that you will all be given a Notebook. … People were quite excited about that offer. […]

**Kim:**  Sandy … is the keeper of the hours. The record-keeping process is an honour based system, where teachers complete a written proforma indicating the particular activity attended or presented and the number of hours they want credited.

**Sandy** (laughter, looking through a folder):  There is an interesting document if I can find it. … The Headmaster has made the policy clear from the end of last September, 1996. … Here it is.

… (reading from the document):

> I am pleased by the amount of in-service that staff have undertaken. A few staff seemed to have lagged behind in this vital area. I want to make it clear that the deal was that the school would provide computers for every member of staff free of cost. In return every member of staff would undertake 40 hours of computer professional development, each year. … There is no future for

teachers who are not totally computer literate. Next year all curricula in Form Three [Year Nine] will be taught with the aid of Notebooks. … The degree of computer awareness on the part of individual members of staff cannot be taken into account when allocating classes at Form Three level. Those who cannot swim will simply sink. If there are any staff who are not coming to terms with this issue they must realise that they are making themselves redundant […]

**Kim:** In some ways this requirement of the 40 hours really put a bomb under those people who were reluctant or apprehensive or who were down right terrified of having to use a computer.

**Sandy:** I think in retrospect it was probably an unwise a thing to expect to be so precise. But I think it arose from the fact that the Headmaster had to sell that to the Council, the cost of providing Notebooks. And I think it was a good thing to say - 'But they will all spend 40 hours in their own time.' That doesn't seem a lot, when you say it quickly last January. […]

**Sandy:** I have been extremely flexible about how I interpret hours. And it has not been a rigid thing. Someone says, 'I went off to a STAV meeting at Swinburne and we looked at Biology. And in the course of that we had about two hours on a computer'. I will credit two hours. That's fine. … I get little notes saying, 'I sat with Stan last night for an hour and he helped me set up my marks book in Excel'. It doesn't have to be formal PD. But they need to let me know, if they want the figure recorded. … I try to be generous with the allocation of hours. The point is not to trip people up. It is to encourage them. I suppose each time I put it on the board I might get two people saying, 'Hey! I think you missed out a piece from here'. It is more likely that once I have put the information on the board, people say, 'Oh! I forgot to tell you. Can you put it down for me now'? 'Sure. Just write it down on a piece of paper and give it to me.' […]

**Ethogenic Interpretation**

Mandates create conditions of compliance and/or resistance. Under mandatory conditions, personal action is interpreted within the local moral order as either compliant or resistive. 'Attendance' signals 'compliance' while 'non-attendance' infers 'resistance'. Where mandates require monitoring, non-compliance raises the spectre of sanctions. Resistance is a complex psychological phenomenon constitutive of teacher reasoning and reflexive action. Intentional action guided by the local moral order is more complex than knowing what one should or should not do. What I may do - what I have permission to do - is not the same as what I can do - what I am able (physically, psychologically, emotionally) to do. While the storyline justifying the mandate is couched in terms of a plausible rationale, reasons for non-compliance (ideological, personal/family) are considered problematic by managers as they have the potential to challenge the local moral order, and therefore, are less likely to meet with approval. However, managers who exercise discretion in the interpretation of what constitutes 'compliance' create 'new' rules for fulfilling the spirit of the mandate.

In this extract, as the storylines unfold in the social episode, *"But They'll All Spend 40 Hours"* higher-order acts of positioning through which rights and duties to ascribe or resist positioning are revealed. The conversation regarding "40 hours" has many storylines each requiring a different pattern of the distribution of rights and duties. As Act Two unfolds through each of the other seven social episodes the changing institutional orders of practice and honour are brought into focus.

By moving from the dramaturgical frame back to the researcher frame, the Positioning Analysis of interpersonal encounters can be interpreted in terms of a transformational narrative. The everyday conversations of teachers can be described as a "strip" of life from a stream of ongoing activity that was unfolding within a larger interactive episode (Goffman, 1986). The larger episode, "maintaining social orders" (during the introduction of Notebook computers across the curriculum), created a frame within which a number of other activities would be interpreted. At the centre of this episode was the changing relationship between the Schools' Board of Governors, the teachers and the school community, the School and Vendors of computer technology.

*Extract 4*

## A Private School on a Mission

The Headmaster, the executive officer of the corporate entity known as Cyber Grammar School is positioned, by both the project managers and the managed, as a "Headmaster with a vision, who can see more clearly than most other Headmasters … in seeing where the school might be in five years' time" (Sandy). On returning from "one of his study tours" … "he came back to school saying, 'We have to get the Internet. It is the way of the future'. And this was before anyone else was talking about it." (Jessie). Not having the technical knowledge to lead by example, the Headmaster was positioned as a leader who can determine the 'enabling conditions' for social action in negotiating with the Board of Governors and requiring of staff "total commitment" to the professional development plan" … and "use of computers in the curriculum" (Jessie). In his 'Notes to Staff' the Headmaster restructured the moral order saying "There is no future for teachers who are not totally computer literate". The Headmaster reorganized duties and responsibilities as individual choice, as the natural order of things."
[…]

## CONCLUSION

**Positioning Theory And Contemporary Issues In Education**

**A Co-constructed Research Methodology**

The moral dilemma posed by scholarship and school practices, in which educational researchers are positioned as formal researchers and practicing teachers as informal researchers can be understood as an act of positioning denying practicing teachers the possibility of "having a footing" in the discourse of educational change. An alternative storyline in which classroom teachers identifying as teacher-researchers collaborate with educational researchers on school-based research projects is proposed. This will require attention to the way rights, duties and responsibilities are distributed among the school-based

teacher-researchers who are comfortable with students, colleagues and the culture of the school and the guest educational researchers who can support teacher engagement with research and research literacy. (For instance, in conversations the teachers were talking with me directly – verbatim - what their life was like at that moment, as equal partners in the conversation.)

The research project should be meaningful to both parties. Teacher-researchers should be able to recognize themselves (and their students) in the action. Educational researchers should be able to interpret teachers' discursive and non-discursive practices towards an understanding of social orders in educational settings. In this realm of possibility I argue that dramaturgical representations open a new dimension in positioning analysis affording a co-constructed research methodology in which teachers as school-based teacher-researchers and educational researchers are mutually committed to research in improving practice in both directions: in schools and in teacher research.

## Positioning Theory and Contemporary Issues in Education

### Repositioning Teacher Agency in the Discourse of Educational Change

Teachers as school-based teacher-researchers

Positioning

a = author
n = narrator

a  n

Educational Researchers

Storylines    Speech Acts
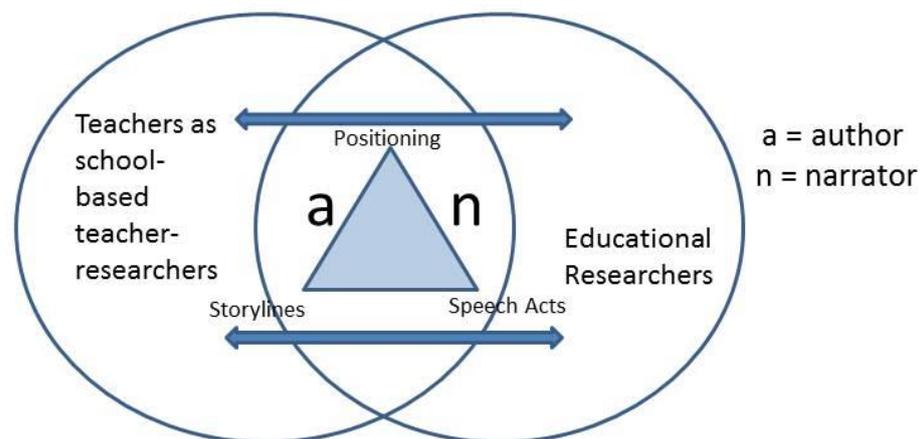
Figure 2. A co-constructed research methodology in which teachers and educational-researchers are mutually committed to research in improving practise in both directions in schools and in teacher–research

**Transformational Narratives**

Positioning theory is a tool for understanding the psychological processes that underlie complex social events. Positioning theory is used for understanding the psychology of interpersonal encounters, through explicit attention to the role of rights and duties in the management of action. Positioning is something which happens in the course of an interaction; as such it is a discursive process. Within conversations teachers are or claim to be positioned in certain ways, which endows them with the right and or the duty to assign or ascribe positions.

It follows that there are higher and higher order positioning. The social realm of teachers and educational researchers is composed of three basic processes: conversations, institutional practices and the use of societal rhetorics.

*Conversations*. In simple classroom  or staffroom interpersonal encounters Positioning theory (via the positioning triad) is used for the analysis of conversations in which acts of positioning and repositioning  contribute to people's personal sense of identity formation, and their sense of 'who I am' in this particular place, at this particular time and in this particular context.

*Institutional practices*. How is positioning theory to be used in the analysis of the conversations of multiple actors engaged over time in restructuring school practices?

In this study teachers as members of different discursive circles had attended conferences, visited other schools, participated in the discussions of their subject/professional associations, talked socially with friends who worked in other schools, contributed to technology-based industry projects, and so on. What is important in the discourse is the social construction by teachers of a possible future and their place and the place of students within it. Normative discourses in which teachers were engaged, I argue after Elder-Vass (2010), are causal in the realist social construction of the analogue-digital future. These projects or events when talked about, elaborated, challenged or ignored in normative discursive circles, afforded moral contexts of intentional action in schools when analysed in the actors' autobiographical accounts (in the imagined drama).

*Societal rhetorics*. How is positioning theory to be used in the analysis of discourses by which schools position themselves in relation to others in the education market?

In the private school the Headmaster's 1991-92 North American study tour of businesses connected to the Internet afforded a possibility of deliberate/forced repositioning of the school in a new educational market. One in which the Headmaster believed that the school community ought to take on the new technology ahead of the field. To the members of the Board of Governors and Parent community the Headmaster positioned himself as a progressive leader and decisive decision-maker; to the members of staff he positioned himself as the gatekeeper: maintaining social control while enabling technological and pedagogical change.

**Dramaturgical Account And The Positioning Pyramid**

At the centre of the proposed collaborative research methodology (Figure 2) is positioning theory and the co-constructed dramaturgical account of school practices. For simple interpersonal encounters the conventional positioning triad (Figure 3a) is used in making the scenes/social episodes determinate. However, the complexity involved in researching how social orders of teaching are maintained and transformed during periods of educational disruption required a re-design of the conventional positioning triad (Figure 3b).

# Transformational Narratives
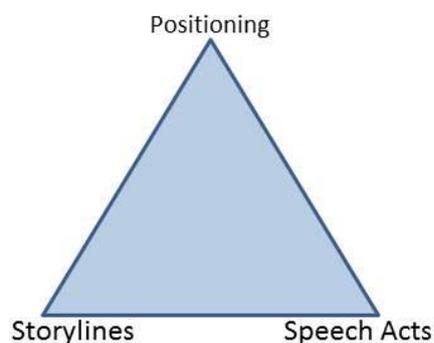


Figure 3a. The conventional positioning triad making scenes/social episodes mutually determinate
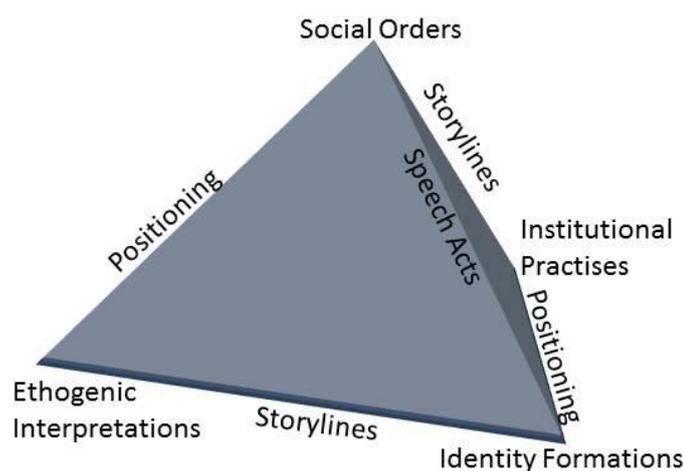
Figure 3b. The positioning pyramid. Transformational narratives in acts and scenes in researching social orders

On the sides of each face of the equilateral pyramid are the familiar triad elements: Positioning, Storylines and Speech Acts. The vertices of the base triangle are Ethogenic Interpretation, Identity Formation and Institutional Practices. Social Orders is the apex of the positioning pyramid. Researchers/Positioning Theory Analysts can scale their study from interpersonal encounters, through institutional practices to social orders. The transformational narratives form the acts and scenes of dramaturgical accounts, repositioning teachers in the dialogue of educational change.

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