From "Telling" To "Triangle" To "Tentative Truth": How The Use Of The Positioning Theory Triangle Enabled Multiple Layers Of Truth To Become Evident

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Many industries in many countries use performance and development processes as a means to ensure continued professional learning and increasing professional impact. The focus of this study was to build understanding of how teachers in Victoria, Australia, perceived their professional learning within the context of their government-mandated performance and development process. This study provides insight into the application of Positioning Theory (Davies & Harré, 1990; Harré & Van Langenhove, 1991; Redman & Fawns, 2010) through the description of the research process. In particular, the focus of this paper is mapping the progression of analysis using the triangular representation of Positioning Theory (Berman, Langenhove, & Harré, 1998, p. 6), from hearing the teachers' stories, the 'tellings', through the 'triangle' of Positioning theory analysis to understanding their perceptions as 'tentative truths' that they hold and which shape their actions. Exploring the teachers' actions and words in this way enabled the multi-faceted nature of professional learning within the dynamic social environment of a school culture to be described. Individual as well as mutual positions became visible. The teachers' 'truths' regarding their rights and duties within the policy framework and their local school culture became apparent and shaped the agency of the teachers to act in particular ways. Four storylines are described within one episode of

conversation, illustrating how Positioning Theory can aid in understanding the multiple directions of power relationships, and positively inform further actions by teachers, leaders, researchers and policy designers to better support the learning of teachers and, ultimately, their students.

THE STUDY

The origin of this study was the 2014 release of a new format for the performance and development process in Victorian public schools (Department of Education and Early Childhood Development [DEECD], 2014). This new format superseded the 2012 version (DEECD, 2012) that in turn had replaced earlier iterations. Teacher perceptions of the value of these processes in assisting them to change teaching practice and improve student learning was examined in a 2009 study where over 60% of Australian teachers reported that they fulfilled their performance and development plans to comply with administrative requirements and that their plans had little impact on their teaching practice (Jensen, 2010; Jensen & Reichl, 2012; Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development [OECD], 2009). By 2013, the number of Australian teachers reporting that teacher appraisal and feedback systems had little impact on their practice had reduced to 43%, which is the OECD average. However when coupled with a persistent perception that these measures are largely implemented to fulfil administrative requirements (61%), and that a development plan to improve their work was not established effectively (50%), the value of the performance and development process for building professional learning and expertise still appeared ambiguous to teachers in 2013 (OECD, 2014, p. 372). Perhaps this prompted the Victorian government to work further on the process in a bid to establish a mechanism that delivers change for teachers and students.

The new policy of 2014 appeared to differ from its predecessors in significant ways. The research question grew from this observation of a shift in policy framing: Do teachers perceive the 2014 performance and development process as having a positive impact on their professional learning? Three questions guided the research in considering the significantly different elements within the policy: professional learning processes and changes in teacher

practice, the contribution of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (APST), and the professional learning resources provided through the policy.

The research design was based on Positioning Theory, utilising a narrative inquiry methodology (Clandinin & Connelly, 1996; Clandinin & Connelly, 1998). Positioning Theory attends to the individual as participating in the construction of social life "as a narrative, with multiple, contemporaneous, inter-linking story-lines" (Harré, Moghaddam, Cairnie, Rothbart, & Sabat, 2009, p. 8). Positions are taken, attributed or formed according to the individual's perceptions of their rights and duties within the local context (Harré et al., 2009, p. 11). Influences from wider social, historical, cultural and political factors are part of how people both create and make sense of their current positions. The narrative people tell of their lives is their 'sense-making'; how they see where they have agency to act and where they do not, and their understanding of why. Going through a performance and development cycle with teachers, recording their "stories of school, school stories, stories of teachers and teacher stories" with them (Clandinin & Connelly, 1996) and analysing the narratives to find how the policy, the school leaders, their colleagues and the students interacted provides a rich way of "exploring what is possible and what is permitted" (Moghaddam, Harré, & Lee, 2008, p. 13) locally and in the wider context.

The narratives told by four individuals in concert via a focus group interview, and two individuals interviewed separately over a six-month period, demonstrated a complex interplay of factors. Schatzki refers to this "immensely complex overall nexus of practices and arrangements" as "meshes", "nets" and "confederations of nets" (Schatzki, 2003, p. 195). These terms help to convey the manner in which practices, such as the performance and development process, form and change across multiple physical sites and levels of administration, from national and state government ministries, to state education departments, regions and individual schools. When this complexity is then cross-sectioned with the morphing, fluid nature of human employment and interaction, the development of "local moral domains" (Harré et al., 2009, p. 6) that sustain, or offer possibilities to change, 'how things are done around here' becomes an intriguing and important component of understanding.

Understanding what possibilities may exist to strengthen or even alter outcomes, who has potential to do this and how it may be done becomes clearer through the triangular prism of Positioning Theory. What is witnessed within the conversation is a record of thoughts and actions that represent what is currently believed to be true by the speaker(s) or doer(s). "When

we say a belief is true, we justify holding such a belief" (Witkin, 2011, p. 25). These justifications are in the 'telling'.

I moved back and forth from the 'tellings' to analysis using the Positioning theory triangle. I began by seeking the storylines; the threads of connection being made that defined the participant teacher's perception of their rights and duties, and those surrounding them. The storylines, who has or does not have a right or a duty to act, and how they may act, point to the existence of power relationships: locally within the group, within the school and beyond the gate, within the profession and the community. These power relationships may change, or not, over time. Charting the changes, or stability, of people's storylines, of how they tell their story, justifying what they believe to be true, is the point where rights and duties become visible. I have used the term 'tentative truth' to convey the idea that people are acting upon what they believe to be true, and those actions, their position of agency. That it may change, hence my term 'tentative', reflects my view of the participant's 'truth', not theirs. Indeed, they may speak and act in anything but 'tentative' ways! The title of this paper indicated how the research arc traced the participants' 'telling' of their stories, through the positioning theory 'triangle' of speech/acts, storyline and position to the 'tentative truths' being expressed by participants regarding the limits or empowerment they believe they have or are bound by regarding their professional learning and the performance and development process.

Clandinin and Connelly's typology of narratives as 'cover', 'secret' and 'sacred' recognises and aids the process of making visible the nuances in how people tell their stories, sensitive to changes of time and context (Clandinin & Connelly, 1996, p. 25). These terms do not reflect the 'quality' or 'truthfulness' of the stories being told. Rather, the terms point to how widely known, or shared, the story is, who constructed it, who is assumed to be listening, and even, perhaps, who has the right to tell the story. Clandinin and Connelly use these terms to describe the kinds of stories teachers, leaders, school communities, policy-writers, and academics tell: everyone creates "stories to live by". "A concept of 'stories to live by' allows us to speak of the stories that each of us lives out and tells of who we are, and are becoming" (Clandinin, 2013, p. 53). 'Cover stories' are stories told to the outside that shape and fit the individual or school experience with the assumed story of the school. 'Sacred stories' are primarily those driven by theory: of policy, of codified practices designed for particular purposes or ends. 'Secret stories' are personal stories of practice and experience, that may have at their heart a tension expressed with prevailing sacred or cover stories (Clandinin & Connelly, 1996, p. 25). Exploring this complexity with participants through the process of

narrative inquiry enabled discussion of the individual's agency, or a group's agency, in achieving agreement on and progress toward, what is valued.

This paper presents the analysis of one episode of conversation. The term 'storyline' is used to describe the 'threads' along which the participant's story runs, and which may be marked by a repeated phrase that almost has the character of a refrain. The storylines are visible in episodes of conversation, and may be individual or joint. As time goes by, and the research continues, connections between topics or themes emerge, conflicts or tensions are explored, resolved or develop, and these can then be identified by the researcher and participants as a narrative. This can then be referred to, clarified, engaged with and perhaps may even become a vehicle for participants to use in determining the choices available or creatively approached. The narratives contain many storylines.

The research was conducted over six months in a suburban primary school in accordance with the ethics requirements of the University of Melbourne and the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development of the Government of Victoria (DEECD). Pseudonyms are used throughout this paper.

There are some limitations on the wider usefulness of the overall findings of this research. These stem from the small number of teacher participants, and those whose voices were excluded from the research. In particular, the leaders of the school were not part of the research, nor were the writers of the performance and development policy or the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers. It is not possible to draw conclusions about the experiences of the broader population of Victorian teachers and the enactment of the performance and development policy and process in other schools from this study. In terms of the purpose of this paper in demonstrating how Positioning Theory can be used to analyse a passage of conversation, the varieties of positioning {Harré, 1991 #524} have not been explored, which could be argued is a limitation on the analysis. I decided that in this case, to foreground the narrative and its combined storylines, drawing on salient features of the participants' dialogue to explain my analysis, enabled the focus of the paper to remain clear. In other work, the varieties of positioning could be foregrounded and explored in full.

WHAT WERE THE TEACHERS SAYING AND DOING? THE TELLING.

Five narratives were identified. One of these, "We're all in this together", is the subject of this paper. That large narrative traced the threads of individual storylines and the positions

participants enunciated through their storylines across six months. This excerpt is from the focus group interview, which began the research project, and forms the earliest part of the narrative that continues well beyond the scope of this paper. We meet the participants; Mark, Jess, Linda and Sue as they are recounting the process they took within their school to develop an understanding of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership [AITSL], 2011) which had been referenced in their Performance and Review Guidelines for the first time. Sue and Linda had both been teaching more than 18 years in a number of schools, whilst Mark had taught for six years at the current school. Jess had taught for five years in two schools.

Mark recounted how the Principal had introduced the new Australian Professional Standards for Teachers [APST] to the staff:

> Mark: **We did**, we did, didn't we? (looking to L and S) 'cause she (Principal) said, "What does that mean?" and we kind of listed (…) (L; yeah we did/ S: we did). I think, **you know**, the experts (…) need to be looking at other people's reports and all that type of stuff.
>
> Linda: Yes, refereeing them.
>
> Mark: Yes. So (…) what we thought that standard meant for us.
>
> R: In your practice? (M: yeah) In your school? (M: yeah)
>
> Sue: **But personally** I don't even like the terms.
>
> R: Which ones?
>
> Sue: Well I think there's no 'expert'. No one's an 'expert' (M; yeah) So I think everyone's always learning (L; yeah) so **I don't feel comfortable** with the terminology.
>
> R: Ok well that's a good point. (L; yeah)
>
> Sue: **To be honest**
>
> R: That's ok. That's what I want to …
>
> Mark: It's changed now hasn't it? [*The Standards were examined and labels clarified*]
>
> Sue: **But** even those terminologies, the words, you think…(Linda: Proficient, yeah)
>
> Sue: Yeah, you think if everyone's sort of going to be on an equ/ … it's nice to think that everyone, if they're working as a team, you know that there is going to be people who are going to have probably a few more years out in the system, but I think if there are people, it doesn't matter how many years they've been out there are some that are, err (indicates with her hands to her left)(L; yeah, that's right, so…) are capable (L;

yeah, you're saying…) So it doesn't matter (using her hands to indicate balance going up and down on each side) if someone does "this label" (quotes indicated with hands) or "that label", so **I'm sort of** seeing them as- **I don't really**, **I suppose**, agree with the "labelling" ... **as such**.

R: So...you're being given a label? As to your capacity? Is that what you're getting at Sue?

Sue: I understand that there's, **you know**, **they're fitting you** into a criteria (vertical hand slices) and **they're saying**, **you know**, if you've got/achieved these standards you **sort of fit** into this category? But I think there's...**you know**, people can fit into/across a range (R; yeah, mmm). That's **just my personal opinion**. (…)

Mark: (towards Sue) Did you say it, like it was building on top of each other? That you'd noticed?   [*Further clarification through looking at the Standards*]

Mark: It's like you said you don't like the term before, it was expert.

Sue: It's the term, (M: yeah) because I don't think anyone is. It's **just my personal opinion.**

R: The label of the whole level? (S: Yeah, yeah (nodding))

Mark: Yeah, so it's good that in that sense because (L: It's changed), it's a little bit, and then it's just going to constantly grow and grow and grow.

R: I wonder too, is it ummm...is it that you've sort of got this page of things (spreading the APST on table and gesturing with hands to each page) and that is 'proficient' and then that is 'lead' or 'highly accomplished' whereas you're saying you can be 'here' on this bit (hand hovering over a point on the APST page) and 'here' on this bit...?

Linda: Here on that bit- Yeah (nodding and looking at S)(J also nodding). Is that what you're saying? (to S) (S nodding and smiling) Yeah, yeah.

Sue: Yes, that is what I'm trying to get at.

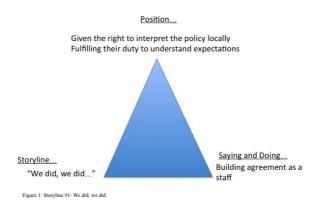(Focus Group Interview, transcript pp. 7-9)

STORYLINES AND POSITIONS: MOVING AROUND THE TRIANGLES

There is a great deal happening in this excerpt. The participants are recounting their recent activity as a school staff (building of understanding of a new policy) as well as building understanding of each other whilst the interview is in progress. In addition, through Sue's words and the responses of Mark and Linda, we can see storylines about professional learning

within the collegiate culture of the school. Through discussing four storylines within this excerpt, the agency of the teachers, and what builds it or impinges upon it from their perspectives, becomes clearer. This analysis will also show how these four storylines come together within the narrative I termed "We're all in this together".

Storyline 1: "We did, we did"

With initiation by the Principal, teachers engaged with the APST, working with colleagues to list practices that would demonstrate evidence of a particular standard and what it "meant for us". Mark had previously described this period as "deconstructing", "interpreting" or "deciphering" the Standards. Mark's gaze invited Linda, Jess and Sue to join, who affirmed and amplified his recount, pinpointing practices they currently engaged in that would be acceptable markers for meeting or fulfilling the Standards. Essentially they had corporately engaged in a process of auditing their local practices against the broad statements describing each Standard for each category of teacher. They were delineating and reaching agreement on the duties expected of them, and ensuring that they agreed their local understanding was fulfilling the national expectations. The Principal had given them the right to do this. There was clear agreement in the manner of the telling that this was what had occurred. Mark's "We did, we did, didn't we?" connects and names their joint remembering of the process as one "we did" together. This triangular analysis represents the agency given to the teachers by their principal to be confident in identifying and knowing their duties, as described in a previously unfamiliar set of Standards. There appears to be mutual agreement on these positions. In Clandinin and Connelly's terms, this is a 'cover story'; an agreed capturing of the experience of making sense of a new policy in their school, how it was done and what was permitted (Clandinin & Connelly, 1996).
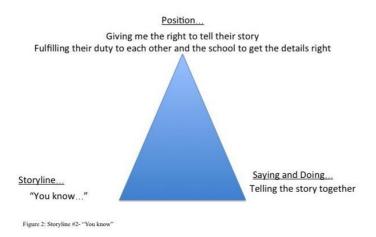

Position...
Given the right to interpret the policy locally
Fulfilling their duty to understand expectations

Storyline...
"We did, we did..."

Saying and Doing...
Building agreement as a staff

Figure 1: Storyline #1- We did, we did

Storyline Two: "You know"

Shifting focus slightly, we can see further dimensions to the joint position of Storyline 1. Whilst that storyline arises from the actions of the Principal and staff in the past, and the understanding they built together, Storyline 2 stems from the manner in which the story is told to me, the researcher. Mark included pauses for the other teachers to support or refute his recollections, to make corrections if they wished. In the manner of the telling, Mark did not rush, and immediately prior to the excerpt included above, Linda, Sue and Mark had equally shared the description of various activities the staff as a whole had undertaken. There were many nods, glances, and 'yeah' comments between the participants as they shared the telling of their school story.

The use of the phrase "you know" by Mark included me as well as his colleagues. I am a teacher, which Mark knew, although I am not a member of staff at their school and they had no prior knowledge of me. He implied through this phrase that I would 'know', or understand what he was talking about, despite not being present at their staff meetings, and that further elaboration by him or even perhaps by the other teachers, should not perhaps be necessary. I am included as one who knows. I have a duty to inquire as completely as possible to ensure that I do indeed 'know' the details of what is being referred to, that the assumption rests on actual understanding of the participants' story and not my own 'filling the gaps' from the knowledge Mark assumes I have in common with him and the other participants (Redman & Fawns, 2010, pp. 172-174). This storyline rests on the decisions of the participants to agree to participate in the first place and the beliefs they hold about what ends this project may accomplish. This storyline points to the intersection of their rights and duties with my own as researcher.

Later in the excerpt, Sue also uses "you know" directly to me. Sue and Mark address me as an 'insider'. This indicates acceptance, and implies my duty to tell their story faithfully. It also gives me the right to tell their story, which they as a group are trying to convey as faithfully as possible. They are telling the story, constructing it together, to fulfil their duty to the school, their leaders and colleagues who are not present.

Figure 2: Storyline #2- "You know"

Storyline Three; "Everyone's Always Learning- No-one's An Expert"

Sue diverged from the joint position recounting their learning to make comment on the APST. Whilst this comment forms part of another narrative regarding the APST, "Don't box me in", her comment also contributes to the "We're all in this together" narrative.
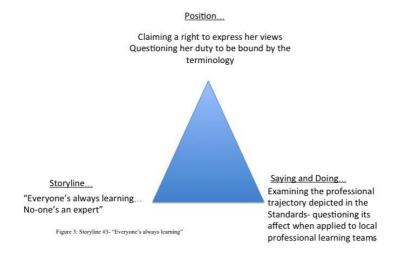
Sue is "not comfortable" with the terminology. She indicates her awareness that her view may well be different from the views of others or the wider administration with "but". This "but" also brings a break to the storyline of agreement on the history of how they have together come to understand the meaning of the new teaching standards. Sue is entering new moral territory by engaging with the content of the standards, and in particular, the terms used to denote different levels of teacher expertise. Later in the excerpt she elaborates on the possible meaning and purpose "they" have in constructing a performance review process that she perceives as "labelling" teachers.

Her concern stems from her perception that this may interfere with the professional learning processes that occur "if you're working as a team". The remark she cuts off "if everyone's sort of going to be on an equ/" which we can assume to be "equal basis", points to Sue's belief that "everyone's always learning", labels of 'expert' or 'proficient' notwithstanding. She is concerned that the agency to work together, to learn from each other regardless of technical levels of expertise, will be compromised. This underlines her value of being all in this profession, learning together. It is also evidenced by her willingness to speak up and pursue her right to clarify her thinking within the interview with her colleagues, and also with me as the researcher recording teacher perceptions of the standards and process.

We could sense that Sue was not content that she had clearly pinned down her objection to the standards. The focus on the labelling of teachers, "the terminologies" had led us down a path to understanding her objection to the 'sacred story' of the APST were connected to the

possible effects on groups of teachers to learn from each other, regardless of hierarchy. I wondered aloud whether she saw this effect arising from limitations teachers might impute or assign, as to their capacity. This gave Sue the opportunity to clarify that she acknowledged the right of the education department, the author of the performance and development process, to "fit" you into a criteria, or "sort of fit" you into a category. She then went on to refine her objection to one relating to her beliefs about learning and professional expertise: "people can fit into/across a range".

At this point the proverbial penny dropped: Sue was rejecting the terminology used to label a professional trajectory. She believed that if everyone was always learning, then the role described by the terminology 'expert' made no sense to her as she saw it as a term that represented completion, not continuous learning. Further, if the processes of the performance and development review were aimed at applying the standards in a lock-step fashion, then it would cut across her beliefs as to how a culture of professional learning teams best flourishes.

This storyline is labelled with Sue's words "Everyone's always learning: No-one's an expert" as by the end of the conversational episode it appeared true of everyone! And through this, she questioned her duty to be bound by a policy structure that she suspected would undermine collegiate learning. Perhaps actually clarifying and understanding her own objection gave her the possibility of a new right, locally at least, to argue for an open-ended application of the standards in the performance and development review process.

Position...

Claiming a right to express her views
Questioning her duty to be bound by the terminology

Storyline...

"Everyone's always learning...
No-one's an expert"

Saying and Doing...

Examining the professional trajectory depicted in the Standards- questioning its affect when applied to local professional learning teams

Figure 3: Storyline #3- "Everyone's always learning"

Storyline Four: "Is that what you're saying?"

This storyline stems from the same section of conversation. However, rather than focus on the substance of Sue's position, we shall examine the moves made by the participants in relation to Sue.

Sue is willing to express her view with her peers, respectfully flagging it as her own view by using the phrase "But personally". She is digressing from the previously agreed telling about the school process with a negative objection to an aspect of the standards and the performance and review process. Sue is running a risk. This is underscored as she twice flags her comments as "just my personal opinion". Using the qualifiers "I don't really, I suppose, agree with the labels as such", indicates Sue is respectful in her positioning of the listeners. Whilst diffident perhaps in expressing her opinion, she does so, trusting that they will hear her and be interested in engaging with her objection. The risk is of course, that they may not. These phrases indicate a 'secret story': one which diverges from the 'cover story' of the school, and the 'sacred story' of the state education department which has designed the review process of performance and development to ensure professional learning occurs. Mark responds with a new offering that results in everyone referring to the standards to remind us of how they were organised.

Mark and Linda affirm Sue by continuing to engage with what they perceive as the substance of her objections. Mark then suggests, "Yeah, so it's good that in that sense because (L: It's changed), it's a little bit, and then it's just going to constantly grow and grow and grow." Mark referred back to their joint staff interpretation of the APST: how it provided for expansion no matter what level of expertise is attained, even 'expert' has multiple growth points. He is expressing a different position with regard to the APST from Sue. He believes it depicts professional learning that is predicated on the assumption of continuous growth; this holds no tension for Mark between his professional duty to learn and grow and the 'sacred story' of the policy. Linda's comment that "it's changed" refers to the label 'expert': it is not part of the APST but an earlier form of local Victorian teacher standards used prior to the adoption of the Australian Standards. Mark and Linda are both attempting to understand Sue, and to re-position her by picking up on her objection to the term 'expert', by checking the terminology, and showing her that there is room to "grow and grow and grow" within the new standards. They both want to understand Sue's thinking, and help her by re-positioning her objections. If what Sue was expressing were 'true', then everyone would need to consider

afresh his or her rights and duties within a framework of policy that was flawed as a learning structure.

Linda picked up on my question regarding Sue's uncertainty: was it the wholesale 'fitting you in' process that did not match Sue's belief in the nature of professional learning, that you can be "here on this bit" of the standards, and "here on that bit". Linda looked intently at Sue and repeated the phrase, asking Sue directly if that was what she was saying. Linda affirmed the meaning herself with several 'yeahs' and nodded slowly, as does Jess, who has been following the whole conversation intently without comment. Sue visibly relaxed, smiled and nodded at everyone, relieved that she has finally nailed her position. "Yes, that is what I'm trying to get at".

The attempt to clarify and understand Sue's position was made by her colleagues and demonstrated their persistence in upholding the right of a colleague to be understood, and their own duty to understand. That is why this storyline is part of the narrative; "We're all in this together". Sue trusted her colleagues with her secret story, her right to speak "personal opinions". And she was not disappointed.

Position...
Sue claimed a right to express her views
Linda and Mark meeting duty to understand
their colleague

Storyline...
"Is that what you're saying?"

Saying and Doing...
Questioning, referring to documents, continuing to suggest meanings

Figure 4: Storyline #4- "Is that what you're saying?"

AGENCY WITHIN "TENTATIVE TRUTHS"

As Bartlett demonstrated, multiple positions can be seen at once with regard to different levels, or directions, of discourse (Bartlett, 2008). Through using Clandinin and Connelly's 'secret', 'cover' and 'sacred' labels, I have sought to explore the directions of the storylines. As Harré reminds us: "It's all discursive! However, rights and duties to make use of certain discursive practices is a key issue- who has the power" (Belli, Aceros, & Harré, 2015, p. 24).

The positions held by Mark, Sue and Linda, whilst divergent, offer insight into the culture of the school. The "We did, we did, didn't we?" storyline, a constructed cover story, is a joint

re-telling of how the leaders enabled engagement and learning of a significant component in the new process presents an agreed position accepting the value of the leaders' choices. This is a storyline of enacted agency in a historic sense within the school, empowered by the leaders. It is also an act of agency in the telling, as these participants volunteered and took on the duty to tell their story, individually and as a group for the school.

The "You know" storyline is one that positioned me, the researcher, as well as being an act of positioning from the speaker to the other participants. Of the four storylines presented, it is one that does not easily match Clandinin and Connelly's typology. It is perhaps an implied 'secret story' in that I am positioned to be within the story, as a fellow teacher with all the tacit understanding of 'how things are' in our profession, and given rights to tell it. It is also a storyline of agreement between the participants that they have fulfilled their perceived duty to represent the actions of their leaders and colleagues accurately. It is I who is given agency through this storyline.

Through the substance of the "Everyone's always learning; no-one's an expert" storyline another line of agency can be detected. Sue struggled to define her point of disagreement with the policy. It was clear that she believed it had the potential to cut across a central tenet of her 'truth' about how learning takes place in life, not just the profession. Her 'secret story' of beliefs about a central 'sacred story' of the education department had implications for how the participant teachers might act, if her 'truths' were 'true' for them also. The issue of agency here belongs in the future, for the teachers and leaders to negotiate in enacting the policy and creating their school culture. It also reaches more widely to the policy-designers. Sue's storyline asks the question; does this review process, through applying labels and levels, enhance the learning environment and empower learning relationships for teachers?

Storyline 4, "Is that what you're saying?" traced the manner of the interactions as Sue sought to express her point of conflict with the policy. Whilst Sue was trying to pinpoint her 'tentative truth' regarding her perceptions of the impact of the policy, her colleagues demonstrated a care and respect for one another as colleagues with differing views. Sue was enabled by the questions and actions of the group to articulate her concerns. Once they were on the table, new possibilities for action became open. This became apparent later in the study, but that is beyond the scope of this paper!

The four storylines are presented below, layered on top of each other to convey the single episode of conversation in which they are embedded. They 'point' in different directions because they point to different dimensions of power relationships that affect or are affected by

the agency of the teachers. These 'power-lines' resurfaced in other narratives in the research, painting a rich picture of the complexity of the "meshes", "nets" and "confederations of nets" (Schatzki, 2003) that human relationships forge, personally and professionally. Positioning Theory offers a tool that has the strength to represent this social action, giving opportunity to reflect on options made visible, and turn creative energy toward the places where we have agency to act.
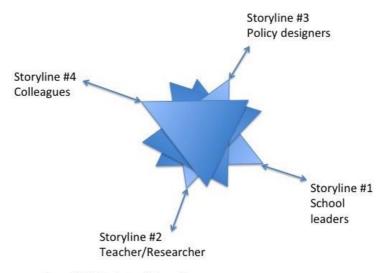

Figure 5: Multiple truths to multiple powerlines

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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