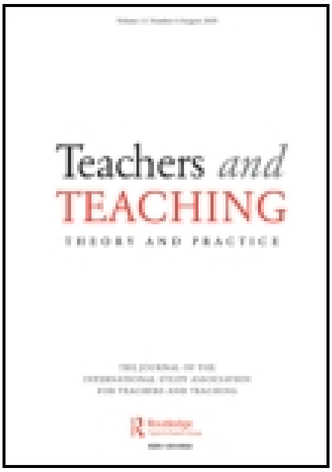
This article was downloaded by: [Monash University Library]
On: 24 June 2014, At: 17:01
Publisher: Routledge
Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954
Registered office: Mortimer House, 37-41 Mortimer Street, London W1T 3JH, UK



Teachers and Teaching: theory and practice
Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:
http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/ctat20

Teacher Theorising, Intellectual Resources and Praxis Intentionality

Phillip Payne [a] & Christopher Hickey [b]
[a] School of Education, La Trobe University
[b] Faculty of Education, Deakin University , Australia

Published online: 28 Jul 2006.

To cite this article: Phillip Payne & Christopher Hickey (1997) Teacher Theorising, Intellectual Resources and Praxis Intentionality, Teachers and Teaching: theory and practice, 3:1, 101-117

To link to this article: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1354060970030107

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Taylor & Francis makes every effort to ensure the accuracy of all the information (the "Content") contained in the publications on our platform. However, Taylor & Francis, our agents, and our licensors make no representations or warranties whatsoever as to the accuracy, completeness, or suitability for any purpose of the Content. Any opinions and views expressed in this publication are the opinions and views of the authors, and are not the views of or endorsed by Taylor & Francis. The accuracy of the Content should not be relied upon and should be independently verified with primary sources of information. Taylor and Francis shall not be liable for any losses, actions, claims, proceedings, demands, costs, expenses, damages, and other liabilities whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with, in relation to or arising out of the use of the Content.

This article may be used for research, teaching, and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, redistribution, reselling, loan, sub-licensing, systematic supply, or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden. Terms & Conditions of access and use can be found at http://www.tandfonline.com/page/terms-and-conditions

Teachers and Teaching: theory and practice, Vol. 3, No. 1, 1997

Teacher Theorising, Intellectual Resources and Praxis Intentionality

PHILLIP PAYNE
School of Education, La Trobe University
CHRISTOPHER HICKEY
Faculty of Education, Deakin University, Australia

ABSTRACT *There is increasing interest among academics about reflection 'in', 'on', and 'about' action in educational practices. There are few empirical findings about the significance* to *teachers of 'intellectual resources'* for *education (Carr, 1995) that are 'socially useful' (Anyon, 1994). A case study is presented of postgraduate teachers' reflexive struggles with a dissatisfying workplace problem. Of particular interest is the development of teachers' thinking about the 'embodied' and 'embedded' (Fay, 1987) nature of personal and collegial involvement in the 'crisis' circumstances of educational change. The case study reveals each teacher's theorising of those circumstances and how they intend to redeem 'locally' and 'particularly' certain elements of the problematic situation. Teachers' praxis intentions are 'voiced' interpretively within Fay's critical but postmodern 'limits' to rationality and change thesis. The case study provides grounds for optimism about the relation of intellectual resources, modes of inquiry in postgraduate studies and socially-useful theory building in education.*

Introduction

> Oh, it's all very well to sit here and talk about all these interesting things but tomorrow I'll be back in school in my classroom leading a totally different life.

'Helen', a primary school teacher with 20 years experience in Victorian (Australia) schools, echoes a sentiment about the relation of theory and practice well known to academics teaching in postgraduate courses. Like many of her peers, Helen perceives a loss of control in her professional work. Various economic and technological imperatives undergirding centralised educational reforms have adversely effected teachers' attempts to influence curriculum directions and 'good' teaching practices. 'Work' is not the assignments and conversations Helen engages in during postgraduate studies. Nor is it the 'private' hopes, expectations and responsibilities she feels for her family, colleagues, and students. Rather, the reality of Helen's professional life is the immediacy of her classroom actions with children and interactions with colleagues that each day, apart from accumulated

1354-0602/97/010101-17 © 1997 Journals Oxford Ltd

experiential wisdom, remain intellectually unsupported. In short, the separation of Helen's professional 'work view' and involvement in postgraduate studies reflect an overwhelming collection of contradictions that demand transformative action.

Wilf Carr (1995a, p. 36) claims that reducing the gap between theory and practice 'for education' is a matter of improving the practical effectiveness of the theories teachers employ in conceptualising their own activities. Accordingly, theory should be an 'intellectual resource' that builds on a teacher's 'extensive theoretical powers'. He adds, however, that if educational theory is to take itself seriously it should provide educational practitioners with 'modes of analysis and inquiry that expose and examine the beliefs and assumptions implicit in the theoretical framework through which practitioners organise their experiences'. Carr is concerned about teacher dependence on 'precedent, habit and tradition' that he believes provide an inadequate justification for the implicit values and assumptions all too often employed by teachers, such as Helen, in their educational practices.

This study of teacher thinking and praxis intentionality responds to Carr's challenge for the provision of intellectual resources that enable 'disciplined and intelligent' critique of educational problems. This report describes and theorises selected teachers' responses to intellectual resources offered in a postgraduate unit for the resolution of practical work-based problems. In this case study we stress that the starting-point for Helen's and others' practical inquiries was a peculiar educational problem 'experienced' by each teacher. Equally deserving of emphasis is the researchers' intention, following Carr, that theories should not be applied or imposed to teachers' educational problems. To be sure, one intellectual resource was selected in advance by the researchers/teachers of 'Curriculum Theory' because of, in our view, its ability to 'sensitise' teachers' selective inquiries into the problem they had identified. Moreover, the selection of Brian Fay's (1987) metatheory of critical social science was based on its conceptual convergence with Carr's (1995a, 1995b) critical concerns about exposing teacher dependence on 'precedent, habit and tradition' and the contingency of agents in democratic education.

At the risk of contradicting Carr and not proceeding immediately to the case study of 'teacher theorising, intellectual resources and praxis intentionality' a brief explanation of Fay's (1987) key principles is required to avoid unnecessary ambiguity and repetition of ideas. Fay's qualifications of 'traditional' assumptions in critical social science raise the significance in educational inquiry, for teachers like Helen, of identifying and examining the 'force' of 'tradition', 'embodiment', and 'embeddedness' on practitioner 'reflexivity', be it their own or that of their colleagues. Fay's emancipatory project, however, 'tempers' the utopian thrust of much critical theorising. Thus, Fay's metatheoretical version of critical social science stresses the objectives for inquiry of 'practicality' and 'non-idealism' alongside the objectives of 'scientific' and 'critical'. The interrelatedness of these objectives for critical inquiry counters the normative and regulative inadequacies Fay alleges of conventional perspectives of critical theory.

Fay (1987) is troubled about the lack of consideration given to local contexts in most versions of critical social science. He argues the need for conceptual coherence between the precepts of a theory and how they inform or are 'taken up' in both metatheoretical development and the exigencies of change in daily life. Fay's examination of 'traditional' approaches to critical theory begins with a critique of their assumptions about what it is to be human. Thus, Fay (1987, p. 42) delineates the 'ontological' conception of human kind or presupposed in critical social science. Subsequently, his criticisms of the plausibility of critical theories rests on an assessment of their practical achievements and consequences for their 'audiences'. He concludes that most critical theory is 'one-sided' in that it erroneously posits individuals as essentially, if not potentially, 'activist'. This activist ontology of rationality and self-determination is manifested in the moral, social and political expectations of unencumbered enlightenment, empowerment, and emancipation. These utopian ideals rest on values committed to unbridled rational self-clarity, collective autonomy, and happiness that equates to freedom.

By recognising that epistemological, therapeutic, ethical, and force constraints 'limit' the critical ontology of 'rationality and change' Fay seeks to 'temper' the hubris of the utopian ideal, but not relinquish the emancipatory imperative. In some respects, therefore, Fay provides a postmodern 'reading' of what a critical social science might engender in its practical inquiries. Hence, the importance of Fay's objectives of practicality and non-idealism in social inquiry and, by implication, in critical educational inquiry. In short, Fay acknowledges that individuals are embodied, embedded, traditional, and historical persons who are 'encumbered' and social life is inescapably 'contingent'. Fay's ontological amendment to current schemes in critical social science unreservedly accepts 'opacity, uncertainty, fragility, and unpredictability in the human enterprise', a conclusion we agree with in our case study discussions about the social utility for teachers of the intellectual resources provided in Curriculum Theory.

In summary, Fay's reconstruction of critical social science identifies two 'schemes', namely a synthesis of 'basic' modern and 'supplementary' postmodern theories. He calls the basic scheme of critical social science an 'ontology of activity' that includes theories (and 10 sub-theories) of false consciousness, crisis, education, and transformative action. His supplementary scheme adds theories (and 10 sub-theories) of the body, tradition, force, and reflexivity. In effect, Fay's two schemes establish metatheoretical criteria for a 'postmodern' version of critical social science. To be sure, Fay acknowledges its incomplete state and need for empirical qualification, a task we undertake here in a limited fashion. However, he concludes that, at the theoretical level, his metatheory is regulatively and normatively more compelling than previous versions of critical social science. On the basis of the case study reported below we tend to agree.

Teacher Theorising and Praxis Intentionality: a case study

'Curriculum Theory' was developed in late 1994. Where possible its planning included those teachers who intended to enrol in the elective subject in the first semester of 1995. Nine practising and experienced teachers, most female, from primary, secondary and tertiary teaching backgrounds, participated in the year-long study. 'Curriculum Theory' presented us with an opportunity to explore how 'personal thinking and theorising' of practicing teachers about 'lived' educational practices and problems might be illuminated by intellectual resources such as Fay's 'limits to rationality and change' thesis. We were conscious also of the assertions about the inadequacies of critical theories to invoke a 'better' and just practice. One research intention was to shed further light on the 'repressive myths' alleged by Ellsworth (1989) and others about the critical discourse of education.

The thinking and theorising of two teachers about workplace problems in enacting curriculum reforms are reported in the form of individual write-ups. The development of the case study is essentially constructivist (Guba, 1990a, 1990b). Primary data were collected from a variety of sources including semi-structured interviews (2), participant observations of class meetings/discussions, and teachers' tutorial and submitted written work.

The interviews were conducted with each teacher during and after the offering of Curriculum Theory. The first interview was conducted after reading and examining Fay's text. It took the form of an open-ended discussion about professional life and career, intrigue and anxiety about Fay's text and postgraduate studies, and any perceived connection between the two. The second interview was completed after the final written task was submitted at the end of the semester-long unit. It focused on teacher's responses to Curriculum Theory and sought to clarify each teacher's praxis intentions with regard to redeeming some aspect of their professional 'crisis' circumstances. Interviews were recorded and transcribed. Teachers' verbal tutorials during the unit were monitored and accompanying written summary sheets were collected and analysed. Written assignments submitted during and at the end of Curriculum Theory were also used for analytical and interpretive purposes. Participant observations were made during and after timetabled class sessions and in numerous informal meetings and conversations. Analysis and interpretation of data triangulated for each write-up was completed independently by each researcher, in the first instance, collectively in the second, and iteratively with the respective teacher in the third instance. Two drafts of this report were circulated to teachers with invitations to each for elaboration.

The case study write ups employ a multi-tiered interpretive strategy:

(i) One tier selectively attends to 'authentic' teacher voice, in particular how teachers' workplace problems were represented and selectively illuminated by Fay and other intellectual resources, including class discussions that shared educational problems and connected them to insights into aspects of Fay's metatheory;

(ii) Another tier explores how Fay was selectively used by teachers to specifically diagnose aspects of workplace problems that contributed to their professional 'crises';

(iii) A third tier pre-emptively analyses the social utility of Fay's intellectual

> resource based on the collective retheorising by teachers of their praxis intentionalities.

Thus, the layering of meanings derived for the case study from teacher voice, multi-thematic interpretation and generalisations creates a dialogical retheorising of critical educational praxis (Anyon, 1994; Carr, 1995). The generation of practical meanings for educational theorising is interactive and collaborative in that it accommodates the consensual subjectivities of teachers and researchers. The method of inquiry, interpretative processes including iterative writing of drafts by teachers, and its presentation aim to be both reconstructive and transformative for teacher(s) and researcher(s).

There is a twofold purpose to the way in which findings are presented. In general, we present each teacher's 'critical theory' of a self-selected, practical, educational problem. We reveal the 'tribulations' experienced by teachers in utilising various intellectual resources in diagnosing the educational problem. We highlight how teachers struggled with Fay's ideas in particular. We seek to preserve the authenticity of teacher voice where it best explicates the dissonances of experiental wisdom and various intellectual resources provided in 'Curriculum Theory'.

Rosie

Rosie resigned in disillusionment from the local College of Technical and Further Education in May, 1994. She had worked in this training institution for 8 years. In that time she taught across a wide range of areas and students, including Communication Skills in many different 'trade' courses. Late in 1994 Rosie was involved in implementing an 8-week communication skills course in a Federal government-sponsored Landcare and Environment Action Program (LEAP) training project established for unemployed youth and conducted on behalf of the Building Industries Group Scheme (BIGS). A training co-ordinator from a large metropolitan university served as Rosie's point of contact for implementing the curriculum. Unlike her peers, Rosie's diagnosis of the unsatisfactory curriculum initiative is retrospective because of her own change in employment.

Rosie's 'crisis' was her complicity in enacting with local unemployed youth a curriculum that had been devised abstractly and in isolation from those youth. She was troubled by the curriculum which conveyed a particular globalising expectation of 'work' that had little relevance, she believed, to the lives of those whom she was to 'teach' and, thus, receive the curriculum. Rosie was also troubled by the lack of time provided to her to develop the curriculum and 'get to know the kids beforehand'.

Rosie 'really enjoyed' reading Fay. Despite 'ploughing through' the book she found that it was 'really good'. She found herself saying 'yes, yes, yes' to a lot of what he had to say. Rosie also admitted to being 'confused' in her understandings about Fay's metatheoretical scheme, not because of what Fay had written, but because Kemmis's (1994) deployment of Fay had utilised the basic scheme only in justifying action research as a form of critical social science. Ironically, according to Rosie 'he is guilty of what Fay says critical social science theorists or practitioners or researchers are guilty of'. While Rosie was not sure where it fits in with Fay she gained a great deal from Lindsay Fitzclarence's (Senior Lecturer, Deaking University) workshop on theorising the curriculum of violence which dealt with 'the stuff of emotion and the places in people's lives, the recognition and non-recognition'. Like Fay, but indirectly, Rosie was intrigued by 'that whole question ... of the place of rational thought and the notion that any single individual or group of individuals can move from unknowing about who they are, where they are, and what the influences are, to a place of some of them knowing and understanding all that and, thereby, have actually done something about it'.

Perhaps the most interesting testimony to Rosie's understanding and appreciation of Fay's relevance to 'real life' is seen in the following realisations. In discussing the 'one-sided idealism' which Fay seeks to redress. Rosie comments that despite being 'seduced' by it (unbridled emancipation) 20 years ago 'when I started teaching' (now) 'I wouldn't even be bothered with it'. She adds ' ... you can look at something, you can investigate and think about it but always there is the "but" or the "what if"' '. And further,' ... I never would have associated it with the view of critical social science theory but they ... always seem to be ignorant of, or have not taken into account some of the aspects of human being that I can be critical of, that I have never known how to articulate what those things are, except to sort of jump up and down and say no, no, no you can't do that'. For Rosie, Fay speaks to a 'whole lot of things that have happened previously or I've thought about'. In fact, Fay provided Rosie with a vocabulary that helped her express views that previously had been unarticulated.

Rosie often sought confirmation of her 'personal' understandings or apprehensions about Fay's metatheoretical criteria. In a manner reminiscent of Carol Gilligan's (1983) thesis about women's need for additional information for decision-making about moral dilemmas, Rosie felt Fay needed to say more. For example, in recounting a 'crisis' faced by a teacher whose professional and personal life had become separated by the magnitude and urgency of new professional demands Rosie found herself 'wondering how this fits into Fay's version of demoralisation'. Rosie believed the teacher was 'most articulate' but had become increasingly frustrated with her inability to make a professional difference. Rosie interpreted her colleague's retreat into private life as 'removing herself in commitment and spirit'. After a lengthy discussion her uncertainty about the colleague's 'embodied crisis', two of Fay's metatheoretical criteria, Rosie gave the impression of being satisfied. She remarked, somewhat relieved, 'It's all right, I've got it now. I was focussing on the wrong thing'. This anecdote reflects a tension that we as researchers constantly felt about our own teaching. Rather than be an intellectual resource for teacher theorising as we intended, there was always the risk that theory would usurp or supersede practice as *the* primary source of teacher thinking.

Foremost in Rosie's mind was working through questions about Fay's use of 'false consciousness', 'reflexivity', and 'tradition'. She found herself visiting the

Achilles heel of critical theory by asking of herself questions about whose consciousness is right, correct or superior, what is real and not real, and how do we know? These sorts of tribulations led Rosie to ponder two points of view. She was no longer sure 'that I understand what it (false consciousness) is' given a true consciousness, for one might be false for another. Rosie's tribulations on the latter point were exacerbated when she 'enlarged' (Benhabib, 1991) her thinking by taking the reciprocal perspective of 'somebody else viewing me as having a false consciousness about certain things'.

Not coincidentally, Fay's addition of theories of tradition and reflexivity created numerous issues Rosie sought to clarify. After being 'buggered' for the past 12 months at the TAFE Rosie was genuinely perplexed by 'what you can get rid of and what you have to have and what you can live with'. She was concerned with the pejorative aura surrounding her classmates' using of the term tradition despite Fay's 'wonderful version'. Their use of tradition had a 'negative vibe' of which Rosie believed 'there's lots of ways that can be explained or defined ... in a very negative ... or very positive sense'. In reflexive defence of tradition Rosie concluded, 'I don't know how you could work out at a particular time what you could get rid of as a tradition'. Nor was she able to resolve with 'how you make a judgement now about some aspect of traditions in terms of a group or a whole culture that you can legitimately aim to get rid of and what you can't afford to'.

Rosie's 'crisis' lead her to be intellectually preoccupied with the relation, or lack of, between reflexivity at local and remote levels. Her concerns can be fed back into her tribulations about the rightness or wrongness of consciousness at different levels of understanding and influence. Notably, Rosie was anxious with the 'big story' of institutional reflexivity about the curriculum initiative and its concept of work which was imposed on 'the context of the kids'. For Rosie 'a local story that you have worked out based on your own experience in conjunction with other staff members was highly desirable'. Fay's raising of the ante of the need for local and particular reflexivities was not lost from Rosie's deliberation that 'there's a real quadruplicate reality' operating within her attempts to diagnose the problem of curriculum enactment. Rosie was acutely aware of the 'curriculum as received' by the students in the program. Their reflexivity could be traced to a diverse number of 'needs' which, irrespective of the level of control on the curriculum she might have asserted, may or may not have been legitimate. These multiple realities included her assertion that some kids entered the program only for the money it provided. A second reality she considered is that some of the kids entered the program for the 'physical' thing only, having no wish to develop communication skills for whatever type of work interested them.

But at a 'deeper' level of local and particular reflexivity Rosie surmised, as a consequence of reading Willis' (1977) study of working-class kids 'learning to labour', that her kids 'had a perception of working in a trade, plumbers or builders or whatever and I don't know whether they actually believed that doing a course like this could help them'. Rosie concluded that 'they were in the language of, I can't really say this because I have not lived a tradey sort of life, if you know what I mean, but they seem to be in the life of that ... plumber or a builder'.

Rosie's 'theory' of the troubling curriculum initiative denounced the treatment of learners as 'things to be moved around, picked up, put down, and measured'. The process of the curriculum initiative was 'cobbled together top-down' and 'detached'. It was not an integrated and interconnected system of policy guidelines, proposals, planning, collaboration, and consultation. Thus, it created discrete and disconnected procedures in teaching and learning. It also ignored the local circumstances and social backgrounds of the students because it generalised nationally about unemployed groups. In short, the curriculum initiative served 'no clearly defined purpose to the unemployed participants in language and values and terms that they understand'. It imposed 'a national and global concept of work' which Rosie felt perpetuated a false consciousness in that the program 'reified' an abstracted conception of 'youth at risk', and teachers as global instruments.

Her critical commitment to redeeming the 'problems' focused on the need for future programs to be integrated, collaborative, and consultative. Rosie wished to pursue a 'wholeness or connectedness and integration of people, knowledge, and project thrust'. She wanted to encourage greater flexibility and 'room to move' at points of access and contact so that 'local needs and requirements may be more easily met'. The social and personal backgrounds of students would need to be taken into account. Earnest consideration would need to be given to how 'new' material could be introduced in relation to the old 'values' held by students about working life. Subsequently, Rosie's thesis is examining unemployed youths' views about how 'work' and 'risk' are being globally constructed for them by the curriculum enactment of another LEAP project.

Helen

'Helen's' early concern about the 'Curriculum Theory' was mentioned earlier. Her self-appointed task was to diagnose the immediate impacts of the introduction of the National Curriculum, and its Victorian State derivative the 'Curriculum Standards Frameworks' (CSF), on the professional interactions and relationships of her colleagues. Helen was genuinely concerned that the progressive integration of the CSF would be disempowering for teachers and that professional relationships would suffer. Anxious about the professional pressures her colleagues were already under, Helen believed the CSF reform demanded 'a lot of extra work that they can't really handle'. In her early attempts to diagnose the consequences of the introduction of the CSF Helen could, in many ways, be seen to embody Fay's representation of the limits of critical theorising. Due to the pressure and commitment of her work in the school she was constantly battling to 'find the time' to read and interpret Fay.

Nevertheless, Helen was eager to develop her thinking about how individual teachers within her school department were interpreting the CSF. Comfortable with Fay's 'basic scheme', Helen identified aspects of a collegial 'crisis' and 'false consciousness' implicated in the CSF implementation. Crisis, for Helen, was revealed in the way the CSF was 'dictating and constraining what teachers understand to be good teaching'. She believed there was heavy politicising of education in which quality provision was to be evaluated through instrumental and economic criteria. She was particularly frustrated that this shift in grass roots accountability to abstract, centrally-devised curriculum imperatives was not being resisted more resolutely by teachers in her school. She felt they had a choice of either developing new pedagogical practices or 'dressing up old ones to fit the CSF's new language'.

Helen believed teachers have a professional and moral duty to debate educational issues such as the changing nature of what constitutes good instructional practices. She believed teacher responsibility included informing the wider community of appropriate and inappropriate educational practices and trends. Yet, within her department, Helen was confronted with different degrees of compliance by her colleagues to the educational and political imperatives she was worried about. She believed staff involvement in curriculum development deteriorated as did the nature of professional interactions and relationships. Yet, for a considerable time the primary source of Helen's anxiety was the system itself.

Although Helen's diagnosis focused on her colleagues' interpretations of the curriculum document she often reverted to the concern that its initial construction was a highly political process. Her initial attempts to explain the local nature of the crisis were frustrating for her. She became increasingly aware that her own 'rational self-clarity' was not likely to influence government policy or significantly modify other teachers views about good teaching. Indeed, Helen recognised that her own lack of time, employment obligations and promotional opportunities were, as they were for other teachers, all factors that impinged to restrict and subvert teacher dissonance. By relying on Fay's basic scheme Helen felt overwhelmingly powerless to intervene in the professional tensions her diagnosis was revealing. Helen identified many of the 'disempowering' frustrations that Ellsworth (1989) acknowledges in seeking to rationally translate critical ideals into empowering practices. By her own admission Helen felt that her 'incomplete understanding of Fay' gave her little new insight into how she might resolve and/or redeem the professional crisis she had identified.

While identifying 'as a matter of urgency' the need for teachers to reclaim the educational agenda and propagate definitions of quality educational provision Helen, largely as a result of class discussions about Fay, became increasingly conscious of the limiting features cutting across any collegial will to interact professionally and reach some agreement on important issues. Helen began to interpret her colleagues' intransigencies as more than the consequence of highly-deterministic centralised control of the curriculum. In particular, Helen drew on Fay's amendments to the basic scheme to recognise that her colleagues were embedded in certain beliefs about pedagogical conventions. In short, Helen more clearly discerned the strict structures and associated expectations within her school that acted as something akin to a 'regime of truth'. For example, despite her strong sense of personal agency and blame on 'the system' Helen recognised that many of her colleagues, unlike herself, were imbued with a 'traditional sense of hierarchy'. She believed 'a less senior person has obligations to the more senior' which helped explain complicity to the accountability measures being introduced and reluctance to revision a notion of good instructional practice which might be contrary to that implied by the CSF. In discussing why she would implement the CSF despite her dissatisfaction Helen revealed her own embeddedness as part of 'a moral responsibility' as an employee of the Directorate of School Education 'and if I don't want to I should get out'.

By focusing on the limits to the emancipatory ideal and rational self-clarity, as presented by Fay, Helen's transition to recognising the partial, local, and reflexive nature of human action was both illuminating and empowering. At this level of curriculum diagnosis Helen is currently planning to initiate her critical intervention. Helen recognises that some of the teachers in her Department are relatively new to the school and are therefore under greater pressure to accommodate official directives. She notes: 'furthermore, the constantly changing current social context in which these individuals now work does not readily enable them to adopt commonly agreed beliefs and practices, which may in other circumstances arise out of a more ongoing shared historical tradition'. To this end Helen acknowledges that collective autonomy, where the group come together to determine a common good 'is just not realistic at this stage'. Faced with the possibility of threats to the security of their jobs in the event of dissonance Helen believes teachers are justified in 'doing the right thing by adopting the CSF'.

Despite Helen's appreciation of the difficulties in subverting dominant curriculum imperatives she remains optimistic that there still exists considerable space for teachers to control their professional lives. Helen believes that as long as teachers continue to critique their practice and acknowledge the political nature of education they will be able to dilute the impact of non-educational agendas. Concerned that individualism and meritocracy are becoming prevalent in education, Helen calls on teachers to 'use their professional knowledge and critical voice to prevent this from happening'. Despite all of the pressures that act to restrict teachers from assuming control of their educational practices Helen revealed that teachers still control the most important dimension of curriculum, its enactment with children. Although teachers' critical thoughts 'can not be expressed in any forum where they would appear to be in conflict with the school's vision' Helen believed that teachers can always find ways to be true to their own educational ideals in the classroom. Helen believes that teachers simply have to make sure they are 'seen to be doing the right thing by adopting the CSF'. In reality, she claims, they can continue to draw on their professional beliefs and experiences to provide children with 'quality education'. Thus, in many senses Helen is committed to a form of moral resistance upon which some collegiality might be restored. Her plan is to work with one or two other teachers she believes share her version of moral resistance or who have the potential too.

Helen's intellectual struggles, in view of her initial despondency about the separation of studies and real work, marked a defining moment for her own self-realisation. She constantly hinted at a lack of confidence in the type of intellectual and written work presumed in 'Curriculum Theory'. Her perseverance with creating her own nexus of practice and theory ultimately created a strong sense of satisfaction and professional purpose.

Teacher Thinking as Contextualising Theory: reframing critical educational inquiry

What will not be discussed is the postmodern:modern debate in ethics, politics, and so on and how it has been engaged in educational theory. Elements of those debates, however, are exemplified in the case study. We conclude Fay's metatheory is a useful intellectual resource amenable to the socially-useful need for teacher theory building about particular educational problems. Rosie and Helen drew significantly but differentially from Fay's theories of embodiment, tradition, historicity, and embeddedness. These theories appear to have provided teachers with rich insights into the nature of the dissatisfactions they experienced. Rosie and Helen's ability to make sense of their own complicity, and that of their colleagues, in the problems of curriculum reform and enactment was enhanced. We also conclude, in general, that the struggle between experiential wisdom and professional embodiment on one hand and, on the other, the intellectual resource of 'new knowledge' (Giddens, 1984, p. 341) provided by Fay and others was often intense, frustrating, empowering and transformative. We are unable to report here about how the consequences of teachers' 'thinking' and 'theorising' translated into practical actions.

Given the importance attached by Rosie and Helen to notions of embodiment, embeddedness and the 'hold' of tradition on their own and colleague's reflexivity the reasons underlying Fay's ontological revisions are worth developing. Our particular concern is to highlight why Fay amends the 'basic scheme' of critical social science. Rather than blandly regurgitate Fay's project we contextualise it with observations emerging from the 'voices' reported above.

Fay claims to uncover the fundamental assumptions, or ontological precepts, of a range of critical theories commonly associated with critical social science. In doing so Fay identifies the human limitations associated with the 'theoretical' uptake of those critical theories by those whom they purport to serve. Hence, Fay's reconstructed critical social science includes objectives that stress, regulatively and normatively, practicality and non-idealism. To invoke Carr (1995a) once again, as teachers/researchers/participants 'for' socially useful theory we were particularly interested in how teachers/students would 'take up' Fay's metatheoretical project given 'their' educational problems and 'our' research agenda. Thus the intensity of the intellectual struggle reported in each write-up provides an appropriate focus for the concluding part of this inquiry.

In describing the basic scheme assumed of critical social science Fay utilises the darkness and lightness metaphor of Plato's cave to explain the 'self-estrangement' and 'activist' logics so important to the enlightenment, empowerment and emancipatory aspirations of traditional modern thought. The practical expectation of these metaphors is to use education as a catalytic means through which individuals and collectivities can rationally understand and transform the oppressive features and ideological nature of their qualitative existence. In many respects, the initial encounters of Rosie and Helen with Fay and others reflects a struggle of professional embodiment to shake off the chains that respectively shackled them to a particular, albeit disillusioning, position. Or, having broken some shackles, the case study suggests how each found herself stumbling around the shadowy cave, often bumping into other collegial 'prisoners'.

One common theme in our findings is the frustration, bordering on demoralisation, teachers felt about the intransigence of colleagues or authorities in understanding the troubling curriculum issue and acting deliberatively on it. Crucial to Rosie and Helen's assessment of the 'irrationality' of colleagues was the 'hold' of the 'known' and a 'given way'. In other words, most of Rosie's and Helen's colleagues were comfortable with, or accepting of, the cave in all its gloom. Each felt the full weight of the restrictive chain that linked them physically and intellectually with others. This hold was exemplified in the resolute maintenance by colleagues of institutionally conventional and traditional views about curriculum delivery or teaching practice. Yet, at the same time, the dissonance created in 'Curriculum Theory' was exacerbated by the sense of loyalty each teacher felt was owed to their professional colleagues. Evident to us in our research 'role' were teachers' self-imposed resistances to revealing too much about certain colleagues and the school in which they worked. This impasse was never satisfactorily resolved beyond referring to certain colleagues or authorities in oblique but obvious ways. Clearly, the intellectual dilemmas emerging from the revelations about professional embodiment and institutional embeddedness raise a number of questions for further research about teacher loyalties, self and social disclosure through the 'licensing of voice', and researcher ethics about revealing teacher thinking and theorising.

Central to Fay's reflexive account of the critical social sciences in his recognition of what people are in relation to what they might become. Teachers, for example, have professional aspirations of which the educative well-being of children is often the highest priority. There is for teachers, then, a double edge to Fay's recognition. In the early stages of Curriculum Theory each teacher exuded a strong sense of agency in promoting the 'best' for their students, often revealed in frustration with a lack of change or their ability to promote it. Despite Fay's attempts to temper the rationality of individual and collective change, his warnings about notions of practicality, non-idealism, and the importance of local and particular circumstance in change seemed lost to their motivations for the 'best'. Those of a critical persuasion with a principled position might feel relieved by the persistence of the emancipatory counterpoint to its postmodern deconstruction. Helen, in particular, maintained her rage against the system and the demoralisation she and her colleagues experienced as a consequence of it. Her refocusing on more tangible and concrete opportunities for promoting change resulted primarily from discussions about the idea of 'local' with her peers in class meetings, rather than what Fay had to say. Rosie, amongst other things, was deeply concerned about the instrumental and financial imperatives of abstract and globally-driven curriculum documents. Not only did they impose a bureaucratic notion of 'work' and 'employability' on her and her unemployed students but they also created superficial and non-relevant reasons why youth should participate in such a program. Rosie was considerably troubled about the penetration of global imperatives into local settings. Subsequently, she sought out other intellectual resources that spoke to her personal predicaments and professional anxieties about the disembedding mechanisms of expert reflexivity in high modernity (Giddens, 1990, 1991, 1994) and the abstracted commodification of intellectual exchange in postmodern society (Sharp, 1985, 1992, 1993).

Our findings also reveal an increasing sense of the separation of teachers' personal and professional lives and subsequent attempts to reclaim some unity. Rosie and Helen, as frustrated as they were, maintained a stoic attitude to redeeming the inadequacies they diagnosed. At an intellectual level, given the moral predicaments exposed by her reflexive inquiries. Rosie took considerable heart and delight in obtaining and mulling over MacIntyre's (1984) notion of a 'narrative concept of selfhood'. Both Rosie and Helen displayed a remarkable amount of resilience in the face of the professional dilemmas they faced. While not wishing to downplay these personal qualities we believe the spontaneous provision of intellectual resources like Giddens and MacIntyre contributed to certain self-understandings which supported these dispositions.

Nevertheless, teachers' attempts to reconcile their professional, postgraduate and private 'lives' caused us, as researchers, to ponder to what extent we were subconsciously 'imposing' theory on practice, thus fostering certain 'repressive' myths in the manner alleged by Elizabeth Ellsworth (1989) and Patty Lather (1991). Or, in the light of Fay, were we reproducing the normative and regulative lack he concludes of much critical theory? In this instance, the licensing and privileging of subjectivity in teachers' reflexive theorising seems unable to shed itself of either the rational or the ethical aspirations of the critical project. Teacher frustrations with not 'fully' understanding Fay were a constant feature of early class discussions. Despite our invitation to grapple only with the major ideas, teachers invariably wanted to be in rational command of the entire range of Fay's concepts and theories. Phone calls to the researchers' homes demanding explanations of certain ideas were not uncommon. Few in the class had been 'initiated' into the language of critical discourse of education, a role we had consciously avoided, let alone demanding a complete grasp of Fay's revisioning of metatheory. Ironically, the greater the acceptance of Fay's limits of rationality thesis the more, it seemed, teachers pursued rational self-clarity. However, contrary to our assumptions, the relative inaccessibility of his language might have hindered interpretation of practical educational problems. Paradoxically at times, not being fully rational about Fay seemed to militate against teachers' confidences to foster change. At risk here was the perception of students that theory must first be understood then applied to practice, a point criticised by Carr (1995a), and which we had consciously set out to invert. As 'Curriculum Theory' progressed these concerns dissipated. Nevertheless, there was a persistent researcher 'tension' of teachers selectively utilising theory as a sensitising intellectual resource for developing a praxis intentionality and their perception that theory should correctly explain and accurately predict and determine practice.

In summary, the fact that Rosie and Helen incorporated Fay's explanations of embodiment, tradition, historicity, and embeddedness into their respective praxis intentionalities raises numerous questions for us, as researchers, as to how they will proceed. For example, all accounts to limit the claims of rationality and reason are, ironically, rational and reasonable. Now, however, they are tempered with teachers' acknowledgments of the hypothetical nature of their praxis intentionalities. Each teacher concedes the partial nature of their praxis intentions and is more open to the 'contingency' of the collegial context they seek to change. More specifically, Fay's raising of the significance of embodiment and embeddedness begs the question of whether or not these 'sites' of explanation and 'ways of knowing' can be made more visible to those who consciously and unconsciously have 'hampered' change. Numerous other questions emerge from examining the intellectual usefulness of Fay's metatheory. Fay's utility must translate to social utility, practically and non-ideally, if the intellectual resources provided by 'Curriculum Theory' are to be of any 'real' value beyond the immediate therapeutic and diagnostic support to teacher thinking provided by a postgraduate qualification. The findings about teacher theorising, intellectual resources and praxical intentionality are heuristic to ongoing inquiry into modes and consequences of praxis in the 'real' setting.

Theorising Praxis Intentionally

Worth reiterating at this point is Fay's (1987) and Carr's (1995b) recognition of the encumbered and contingent nature of human experience. This recognition should not necessarily be viewed as a compromise of critical aspirations but, more appropriately, as providing theoretical realisation that critical interests must ultimately, but not non-problematically, be adopted and implemented by historical beings in complex settings. To be sure, of concern to Fay is the utility, or plausibility, of utopian-inspired theoretical schemes whose expectations have historically been thwarted or failed. Carr (1995b) has shifted to a view that Deweyan experimental inquiries are required in the wake of the deconstruction by postmodernity of many of the assumptions held to by critical theoreticians. Fay and Carr support the critical (in a paradigmatic sense) view that humans possess the power of reason, but their respective revisions invite due recognition to be given to the limits of any rational reconstruction of personal, social and educational life.

As encumbered persons who are embodied, embedded, traditional, and historical there are important research implications for inquiry into praxis intentions and practical consequences of deliberated actions. We are intrigued by the question raised by Fay and evidenced in our findings about the contributions of embodiment and embeddedness to teacher reflexivity. Giddens's (1979, 1984) differentiation of modes of consciousness is suggestive of another intellectual resource from which our collective theorising about teacher thinking and its relations to actions might proceed. Of particular interest is his notion of 'practical consciousness'. Practical consciousness is a mode of culturally embodied and embedded being that, according to Giddens, allows us to routinely 'get along' each day. It is 'beneath' what he refers to as 'discursive consciousness'—that is, the ability to express our behaviours verbally and literally in intelligible ways. Practical consciousness includes those mundane tacit, habitual, and routinised actions. According to Giddens, practical consciousness is largely (re)constitutive of the 'conventions' actors continually draw upon, knowingly and unknowingly, in reconstituting certain social interactions, conditions and arrangements such as the institutional inertia and collegial 'resistance' to change that many change agents find debilitating. For example, Rosie identified numerous unstated practices that legitimised and reified what she believed to be an inappropriate curriculum intervention. These 'rules' conspired to constrain her both programatically and pedagogically. The relational impasse militating against pedagogical changes in Helen's department is indicative of the reproduction of settled modes of behaviour and intellectual/professional position taking of her colleagues.

What, then, is the significance to teacher thinking about praxis of Fay's meta-theoretical additions of theories of embodiment, tradition, force, and reflexivity? Fay argues that personal actions and social interactions are not reflexively transparent. Indeed, uncertainty, confusion, disagreement and social, historical, and institutional dependency must be anticipated in thinking about change. Helen, for example, in her praxis intentionality acknowledged the importance of colleagues' various 'interests'. She shared their concern about the potential backlash associated with any dissonance she might create in getting what she believed was reasonable. Yet she remains confident that she can instigate a form of practical resistance through which she and her colleagues can redeem a moral commitment to good teaching practices. Without preempting any subsequent research findings about the consequences of Rosie and Helen's respective praxis intentions, Fay would argue that there are numerous active and residual 'holds' of the past which demand consideration. These might include inherited 'school' knowledge and conventions, patterns of staff communication and interaction, stability of classroom layouts and resources, and various expectations of students and parents. Helen is now cognisant of some of these forces. And surely there are various complex institutional and professional demands in current educational reforms that globally defy rational understanding and explanation at the level of agency.

Fay's value as an intellectual resource for teacher thinking about praxis appears to lie in his explanations about the contingent nature of individuals' and groups' aspirations on one hand and, on the other, how they are circumscribed by existing social arrangements and expectations vested in certain historical conditions. While this realisation might not be new it goes against the grain of temporariness and immediacy that teachers, in this instance, 'feel' as 'experience' of a 'crisis' in the absence of other practical, conceptual, and intellectual resources. Many teachers are deeply committed, as Carr (1995a) rightly acknowledges. Rosie's deep concern about the global colonisation of the local, via curriculum 'for' unemployed youth, most strikingly supports this assessment.

On the basis of this limited study, we believe that teachers can be assisted to develop critical accounts of postmodern professional life. The sensitive provision of sensitising intellectual resources does enable teachers to reflexively struggle, in their own local theorising, with some of the social, political, or cultural problematics in which educational problems are manifested. For Fay (1987, p. 214) a complete social theory needs to acknowledge the 'unpredictable, fragile, and limited character of human enterprises' which rest largely in making some (limited) sense of those historical, social, and institutional structures in which, for example, curriculum or policy is produced, interpreted, enacted and evaluated.

Among the problems grappled with here and thought to restrict the enactment and/or proliferation of a critical theory of education is the concern that enlightenment is not necessarily the only forerunner to emancipation. Critics of the emancipatory ideal reject as critical utopia the belief that rational self-clarity is a symbiotic pre-condition for change. Critics such as Carr, Anyon and Ellsworth are acutely aware of the shortcomings of translating educational theory into practice. It is our contention that the amendments Fay offers do provide a means through which the ideals of unbridled emancipation can be tempered but maintained. The challenge to us as researchers and theorists operating decontextually with teachers in postgraduate courses is to find appropriate curriculum and pedagogical ways in which theory and class meetings, as sensitising intellectual resources only, can be selectively *appropriated,* as opposed to applied or imposed, by those teachers whose thinking and practices theory purports to serve. In conclusion, Carr (1995a) appropriately warns that 'the gaps between theory and practice which everyone deplores are actually endemic to the view that educational theory can be produced from within theoretical and practical contexts different from the theoretical and practical context within which it is supposed to apply'.

Correspondence: Dr Phillip Payne, Senior Lecturer in Education Studies, School of Education, La Trobe University, PO Box 199, Bendigo, Victoria 3552, Australia.

References

ANYON, J. (1994) The retreat of marxism and socialist feminism: postmodern and poststructural theories in education, *Curriculum Inquiry,* 24, pp. 115–133.

BENHABIB, S. (1992) *Situating the Self: gender, community, and postmodernism in contemporary ethics* (New York, Routledge).

CARR, W. (1995a) *For Education: towards critical educational inquiry* (Buckingham, Open University Press).

CARR, W. (1995b) Education and democracy: confronting the postmodernist challenge. *Journal of Philosophy of Education,* 29, pp. 75–91.

ELLSWORTH, E. (1989) Why doesn't this feel empowering? Working through the repressive myths of critical pedagogy, *Harvard Educational Review,* 59, pp. 297–324.

FAY, B. (1987) *Critical Social Science: liberation and its limits* (London, Polity Press).

GIDDENS, A. (1979) *Central problems in Social Theory* (London, Macmillan).

GIDDENS, A. (1984) *The Constitution of Society: outline of the theory of structuration* (Cambridge, Polity Press).

GIDDENS, A. (1990) *The Consequences of Modernity* (Cambridge, Polity Press).

GIDDENS, A. (1991) *Modernity and Self-Identity: self and society in the late modern age* (Cambridge, Polity Press).

GIDDENS, A. (1994) *Beyond Left and Right: the future of radical politics* (Cambridge, Polity Press).

GILLIGAN, C. (1983) *In a Different Voice: psychological theory and women's development* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press).

GUBA, E. (Ed.) (1990a) *The Paradigm Dialog* (Newbury Park, Sage).

GUBA, E. (1990b) Subjectivity and objectivity, in: E. EISNER & A. PESHKIN (Eds) *Qualitative Inquiry in Education* (New York, Teachers College Press).

KEMMIS, S. (1994) *Critical Social Science and a Critical Science of Education*. Paper delivered, La Trobe University, Bendigo.

LATHER, P. (1991) *Feminist Research in Education; within/against* (Geelong, Deakin University Press).

MACINTYRE, (1984) *After Virtue. A study in moral theory*, 2nd ed. (Notre Dame, University of Notre Dame Press).

SHARP, G. (1985) Constitutive abstraction and social practice, *Arena*, 70, pp. 48–82.

SHARP, G. (1992) Intellectual interchange and social practice, *Arena*, 99/100, pp. 188–216.

SHARP, G. (1993) Extended forms of the social: technological mediation and self-formation, *Arena Journal*, 1, pp. 221–237.

WILLIS, P. (1977) *Learning to Labour* (Farnborough, Saxon House).