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Problematised history pedagogy as narrative research: Self-fashioning, dismantled voices and reimaginings in history education

Unpublished Ph.D thesis, Faculty of Education, The University of Waikato.

Philippa Hunter

The University of Waikato

A growing disturbance with history's identity in the New Zealand schooling curriculum disrupted my educational socialisation (curriculum, professional, academic) and inheritance of educational policy decisions. In turn, this disturbance shaped a critical stance in my research and practitioner work. Accordingly, problematised history pedagogy (PHP) emerged as the phenomenon and method of my doctoral study and was activated as a counterpoint to my experiences of normalised discourses of history curriculum and pedagogy. The PHP as narrative research was situated in my history curriculum programme in a postgraduate year of secondary teacher education. The research aimed to engage my history class (research participants as preservice teachers) in pedagogy that involved critique of and reflection on the things we do as history teachers in the secondary curriculum. The PHP was nested within my historicising and theorising of educational experience. Conceptualised as a reciprocal research process, the PHP involved the participants and me in theorising pedagogies, fashioning pedagogic identities, and engaging critically with curriculum conceptions of history. The PHP sought to reimagine history curriculum and pedagogy and identify pedagogic spaces of possibility.

The narrative research was layered as a bricolage of storying that reflected the interdisciplinary nature of my educational socialisation. Experiences as a teacher educator, curriculum and assessment developer and researcher meant many voices, discourses and theories were woven into the narrative. This complex conceptual work focused on understandings of narrative; policy, curriculum and pedagogy; critical pedagogy; history; history education; and notions of space. The narrative research was constructed in three parts. Firstly, my narrative selves and shifts to a critical pedagogy stance were historicised and theorised through an autobiographical approach. An original dimension of this storying has been the use of vignettes that illuminate the convergence of educational experience, theorising and reimaginings as an aesthetic and critical narrative device. The second part of the research narrative arrives at the point of praxis whereby experience and theory came together to activate the PHP. The PHP was placed in the context of the national history curriculum, a review of history education



literature, and situated in my teacher education work. The PHP has been represented as a system of meaning through its distinctive research processes of phenomenological inquiry, genealogical disclosure, and discursive self-fashioning. An original form of analysis was conceptualised to deconstruct the participants' history thinking and their experiences of the cultural politics of the history curriculum. This was conceptualised as a dismantling analysis (DA). The third part of the narrative recounts the history class's year of reflexive engagement with PHP. Participants' pedagogic identities, historical thinking and critique of history curriculum and pedagogy as PHP 'cases' in secondary classrooms were dismantled and discussed.

Emergent PHP findings of the participants' thinking as beginning history teachers include such features as discourses of embodiment (fears, failure and fraud) prior to practicum; uncertainties about historical knowledge that includes doubt and discomfort about dealing with 'difficult' knowledge; disillusionment with familiar historical narratives; scant exposure to Aotearoa New Zealand histories and limited engagement with historical research methods in school and university study; observations of uncritical teacher modelling of history pedagogy; questioning of a strong masculine focus in historical contexts and a recurrent theme of history as violent; history practicum experienced through the dominant orientation of history as inquiry. These findings illustrate the public, accountable and discursive production of the national history curriculum. Reimagined history curricula are glimpsed in the participants' seeking of counter-orientations of history's purpose and desired history pedagogy as inclusive and democratic, as social reconstruction, and as an evolving critical project. A reflective critique of the narrative research brings the writing to a close.