

Sustainable pedagogy: a research narrative about performativity, teachers and possibility

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Introduction

In our work as researchers we weigh and sift experiences, make choices regarding what is significant, what is trivial, what to include what to exclude. We do not simply chronicle what happened next, but place the next in meaningful context. By doing so we craft narratives; we write lives (Richardson, 1990, p. 10).

The narrative turn in contemporary qualitative research has led me to present this paper as a research narrative (White, 2006a) rather than in a more conventional 'results' and 'discussion' style in the tradition of empirical social science research. Several years ago I determined that my approach to research was more 'subjective' narrator, than 'objective' recorder (White, 2004; White, 2007) and it is with this in mind that I investigate the links between the ecological and the pedagogical.

This paper begins with a theoretical consideration of sustainability and pedagogy followed by my conceptualisation of 'sustainable pedagogy.' A discussion of performativity is included to support this conceptualisation, but the purpose at the heart of this investigation is to consider how teachers might be supported to develop, articulate and maintain their pedagogy, and further, how they might sustain themselves in the face of increasing performativity. In the later part of the paper, 'sustainable pedagogy' is illustrated with three vignettes of current projects about pedagogy. Firstly, the importance of identity in the development of pedagogy is discussed in relation to a new approach within a pre-service primary education program. Secondly, a bureaucratically inspired 'train-the-trainer' program about pedagogy for experienced teachers is critiqued. And thirdly, a project involving creativity and pedagogy in an inner city primary school is described in relation to this new conceptualisation.

Over the past twelve years, my work with pre-service teachers has compelled me into two major research areas. Firstly, I explored the experiences of teachers in their first year of employment and, in the process, critiqued the portfolio of competency standards established by the Victorian Institute of Teaching for beginning teachers (White, 2004; White & Hay, 2005; White *et al.*, 2005; White, Ferguson, Hay, Moss & Dixon, 2004a). And the second area that captured my attention is the exploration of pedagogy and identity for pre-service education students (McCann, Heywood & White, 2008; Godinho, White, Hay & St Leger, 2007; Heywood, White & McCann, 2007; White, 2006a; Hay & White, 2005; White, Dixon & Smerdon, 2004b). More recently, however, I have begun to question what happens to the confident and articulate graduates who leave the university holding clear views of their own pedagogy and a strong sense of teacher self. I have also become increasingly interested in experienced teacher pedagogy - not only how pedagogy was initially shaped, but how it is developed, questioned and challenged throughout a teaching career (see White & Smerdon, 2008; Burnard & White, 2008).



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Sustainability

The United Nations Decade for Sustainable Development 2005–2014 has a ‘vision for the world where everyone has the opportunity to benefit from education and learn the values, behaviours and lifestyles required for a sustainable future and for positive societal transformation’ (Ministerial Advisory Committee for Educational Renewal [MACER], 2006, p. 21). This is difficult to contest and most teachers would wholeheartedly support it. The devil, as usual, is in the detail. It is *how* teachers should go about this task that is of particular interest to me. Wooltorton’s (2002) zeal in the pursuit of sustainability education goes so far as to recommend ‘that education systems and schools include education for sustainability as their primary purpose’ (p. 3) which would indeed change the purpose of schooling altogether. Tilbury (2004, p. 4) deplors the dreadful state of Australian education in relation to sustainability programs in schools, but fails to notice her complicity in the audit and surveillance culture which might in itself contribute significantly to the problem she describes. For Tilbury, as for many others in bureaucracy, government, universities and private consultancies, it seems that teachers exist to do the bidding of others. In this paper I do not attempt to examine ‘sustainability education’ per se, but link notions of sustainability to pedagogy in order to contribute a new conceptualisation and to transform perceptions of teaching and teachers work. Drawing upon MACER’s (2006) comment above, I am interested in the process whereby teachers articulate and enact their pedagogies and my interest is to explore the potential of this. I question whether visions of ‘positive societal transformation’ are at all possible when teachers are viewed as *program implementers* rather than professionals.

The concept of sustainability in relation to pedagogy is complex and interesting, and a range of interpretations might prove fruitful. One way of viewing sustainability is the notion of supporting or bearing weight. In this way, pedagogy might be considered the vital component in teaching, or perhaps the metaphors of ‘cornerstone,’ ‘load bearing wall’ or ‘linchpin’ might be useful. Another view of sustainability is in the sense of sustenance that provides strength, encouragement, support and nourishment. If teachers are to sustain themselves over time and uphold up their ideals and heart-felt beliefs, the idea of community is suggested as a way of doing this. So does pedagogy require community nurturing? A further interpretation of sustainability involves the notion of *enduring commitment* or bearing up against adversity, which lends itself well to consideration of pedagogy – particularly in relation to performativity - or bureaucratic imposition - a concept I will address shortly. One *sustains* an injury in sport or defeat in battle and in music, to *sustain* a note is to continue the sound for as long as possible. Sustainability is therefore a rich concept that affords multiple perspectives, and allows for further consideration of pedagogy.

Performativity and education

Education is – will we ever learn? – no mechanical affair, and yet, astonishingly, much of the field and the public still seems to proceed upon the assumption that if we only make the appropriate adjustments – in the curriculum, teaching, learning, administration... “standards” – then those test scores will soar’ (Pinar, 2001, pp. 13-14, cited in Reeder, 2005, p. 247).

Before attention is turned to ‘sustainable pedagogy,’ a brief consideration of performativity is required. While performativity is used in science and technology studies as well as economic sociology, there are three major strands of performativity that are of particular interest to me.



Firstly, Judith Butler (1997; 2000) a significant scholar who has published widely in a range of critical and theoretical fields uses *performativity* and draws on speech act theory and the linguistic work of J. L. Austin (1962) to analyse gender development and political speech. To some extent, I am interested in the power of 'speech acts' to bring identity to the fore. My interest in the 'performative,' however, mostly draws on the work of Lyotard (1984), but before giving this attention, I turn briefly to the interpretation related to the arts. A general use of 'performativity' is related to a performance (Moore, 2004, p. 104) where for example, a play or piece of music is publicly shown and shared. Drawing on Conquergood's (1998) work, Denzin distinguishes between performativity as the 'doing' and performance as the 'done' (Denzin, 2003, p. 4). Performativity, in this sense precedes performance and involves 'participatory, kinaesthetic, embodied, enactive and experiential modes of learning' (Donelan, 2006). My interest in this sense of performativity is the development of teacher pedagogy, rather than the teaching act itself.

Lyotard (1984), the French philosopher, uses 'performativity' to represent political and bureaucratic mechanisms of control. I have argued that Australian school systems are increasingly subjected to performative requirements through political control and bureaucratic imperative (White, 2004; White *et al.*, 2004a) and that this performative backdrop to contemporary Australian education warrants some consideration. Performativity in this sense is captured by what Judyth Sachs (2005) calls an 'audit society' where:

Surveillance and inspection go hand in hand. Regulation, enforcement and sanctions are required to ensure its compliance. Of its professionals it requires self-ordering, based not on individual or moral judgement, but rather upon meeting externally applied edicts and commands' (p. 2).

The Australian education context is influenced by policy and practice from the United Kingdom and the United States where levels of government control have increased significantly over the past decade (Tickle, 2000; Cochrane-Smith, 2001; Sachs, 2003; Trotman, 2005). Together with their departments and instrumentalities, Australian Ministers of Education have also formalised 'evidence-based' values through the implementation of competence standards in teacher education and the use of funding to ensure compliance. By way of example, a recent newspaper article commenting on political intervention in the teaching of history and reminded us that:

While the Howard government has meddled with state school business before Brendan Nelson made raising the flag and new school report formats a condition of Federal government funding - it has not previously gone so far as to interfere with school curriculum (Koutsoukis, 2006, p. 13).

While I take up the discussion of professionalism shortly, it is relevant to note the comment made by Hoyle and John (1995) about professionals:

It is essential to effective practice that they should be sufficiently free from bureaucratic and political constraint to act on judgements made in the best interests (as they see them) of the clients (in Furlong, Barton, Miles, Whiting & Whitty, 2000, p. 5).

The pervasive education discourse in Australia, led by politicians and education bureaucrats, has focused on a perceived need for accountability, testing, benchmarks, standards, increased

rhetoric about teacher professionalism and compliance (White, 2004). The ‘No Child Left Behind’ Act (United States Congress, 2001) has been harshly criticised (Mathis, 2003; Meier, Kohn, Darling, Hammond, Sizer & Woods, 2004) while performativity in the U.K., particularly the introduction of ‘competence standards’ have long been discredited by education academics (Furlong & Maynard, 1995; Furlong *et al.*, 2000; Tickle, 2000). Pinar (2004, p. 25) warns of the effect of this discourse on teachers:

If we employ, for instance, that bureaucratic language in which teaching becomes not an occasion for creativity and dissent and, above all, individuality, but rather, the “implementation” of others’ “objectives,” the process of education is mutilated.

Echoing Pinar’s concerns, Andy Hargreaves and his colleagues have suggested that the outcomes and standards movement in education would eventually lead to teacher shortages as well as with a loss of creativity in the classroom (Hargreaves, Earl, Moore & Manning, 2001). Woods and Jeffrey support this view and comment that the wider educational context in the United Kingdom ‘suppresses the creativity of the teaching profession’ (1996, cited in Craft, 2001, p. 10) whereas in the United States teacher creativity and autonomy is undermined (Orek, 2004, p. 57) by ‘performative’ or external control, surveillance and measurement of the work of teachers.

Lyotard’s use of *performativity* in this context is therefore a helpful one, but the three quite different aspects of ‘performativity’ considered above provide interesting possibilities for consideration of teacher pedagogy.

Sustainable pedagogy

In this section, I report on implied discussions of pedagogy evident in sustainability education. This is followed by an exploration of existing uses of the term ‘sustainable pedagogy.’ Subsequently a brief discussion about a general understanding of pedagogy is provided and followed by a new conceptualisation of sustainable pedagogy.

Wooltorton (2002) argues that teacher education holds the key for sustainable education and exhorts the bureaucracy to consider the complexities involved:

Education for sustainability is underpinned by radically different ways of comprehending learning, teaching and human interaction with the environment and each other to that understood by the ‘business as usual’ society in which we live. Education for sustainability requires teachers who are prepared for transformative education with the accompanying personal transformation required...’(p. 26-27).

Mette de Visser and her Danish colleagues (2002) have considered pedagogy for sustainability (p. 25) as forward looking learning structures and approaches in contrast to the traditional ‘factory model’ Roe draws attention to:

In Australia, during the late nineteenth century, the factory was the ‘blueprint’ or organising principle...[for] schools which became sites of public instruction and mass-education. And as such, “They processed pupils in batches, segregated them into age-graded cohorts called classes or standards, taught them a standardized course or curriculum, and did this through teacher-centred methods of lecturing, recitation, question-and-answer and seatwork. (Hargreaves 1994, p. 27, cited in Roe, 2007, p. 3)

While the term ‘eco-pedagogy’ has been in general use since the UNESCO and Paolo Freire Institute sponsored meeting in Brazil in 1999 (Antunes & Gardotti, 2005), the term ‘sustainable pedagogy’ has been used in several different contexts. It is often implied in the context of architecture, engineering and design. For example, Fleming (2002) describes an elaborate game as a teaching strategy based on the television series *Survivor* designed to raise awareness of sustainability design issues for architecture students (p. 146). Similarly, Steinemann (2003) describes a problem-based learning project involving engineering students improving their campus environment to develop student ability to analyse sustainability. Owens (2004) writes about the sustainable pedagogy within the context of community connectedness and the teaching of writing, and draws links with critical pedagogy, while Brooke Hessler and Rupiper Taggart (2006) see sustainable pedagogy as a process of establishing and maintaining communities of writers within the academic context. While the University of Southern Queensland [USQ] uses ‘sustainable pedagogy’ to describe teaching excellence in awards criteria for university lecturers: ‘teaching excellence is defined as demonstrating a high capacity to create innovative and sustainable pedagogy relevant to the context/s within which the teaching occurs (USQ, 2007). These examples bear some relation to my use of the term, however the individual teacher here is only considered in relation to teaching strategies. Within an education context, pedagogy is more than strategy, as the discussion below illustrates.

Gray, Cowey and Axford (2003) also use ‘sustainable pedagogy’ about a study of indigenous Australian students’ literacy development, and draw upon pedagogical theory. They also suggest that pedagogy as more than strategy and comment that: ‘The strong link that has been established between pedagogic theory and classroom practice has been critical to the success of the project’ (p. 5). They claim success of their work in terms of measurable student learning outcomes, but all power and professionalism resides with the university researchers. The teachers involved in this project have been relegated to the role of mere implementers of programs and recipients of ‘professional development.’ In terms of performativity, this study upholds bureaucratic values and the use of language in this study is illuminating. Words such as ‘effective,’ ‘outcomes’ and ‘standards’ point to key researcher values.

Anderson (2005) suggests that ‘pedagogy’ has many different meanings:

Pedagogy determines how teachers think and act. Pedagogy affects students’ lives and expectations. Pedagogy is the framework for discussions about teaching and the process by which we do our jobs as teachers. Pedagogy is a body of knowledge that defines us as professionals. Pedagogy is a belief that all children can learn and that it is the duty of the adult to participate in that growth and development. Pedagogy is a definition of culture and a means to transmit that culture to the next generation (p. 53).

In developing a plausible account of sustainable pedagogy, I firstly propose that pedagogy involves three key elements. The first of these requires an examination of one’s identity and personal biography together with some awareness of subjectivity, or who one becomes in relation to others. The second element is the articulation of beliefs and values about teaching and the development of a coherent professional philosophy. The third element in this account of pedagogy is the classroom practice itself, which is necessarily consistent with the first two elements. While teaching strategy forms part of this, it is greater than that and involves relationships with students and establishment of classroom culture. In this element, teachers enact and embody their philosophy and retain identity. *Sustainable* pedagogy adds an

additional fourth element to this understanding of pedagogy and is a means by which the teacher is able to maintain the self and retain professionalism. It involves the connection and relationships with other professionals and is as subtle and as subject to problems as any ecosystem.

In previous theoretical work about pedagogy I have used the term ‘performance pedagogy’ (White, 2006a) in relation to pre-service education students to mean the establishment of a learning culture where five key elements are present:

1. Creativity derived from risk-taking and daring (see Nickerson, 1999);
2. Support and encouragement for students, especially when working in unfamiliar (and possibly terrifying) ways;
3. Collaboration and collegiality in dealing with challenges, negotiating and solving problems;
4. Encouragement and inclusion of innovative thinking and ideas (including the personal and the political);
5. Exploration of ideas and learning *through* the creation of performance rather than learning *about* ideas through discussion and reading only (see Gardner 1993).

This conceptualization of sustainable pedagogy is broader than pre-service teaching context, and applies also to experienced teachers. Drawing on these points above, however, I forward the suggestion that sustainable pedagogy is also about the establishment of collaborative learning cultures that encourage risk-taking, where the personal and the political are included as well as development of creativity and expression in addition to the central elements of identity, values and beliefs and classroom practice.

Project narratives

In order to illustrate the possibilities of ‘sustainable pedagogy,’ as a useful conceptualisation, three brief narratives are created below. These are distilled from field notes, data and conference presentations and draw upon contemporary ethnographic processes. Two of the projects discussed are not yet completed, so this section is something of a progress report and a tentative exploration of what sustainable pedagogy might mean for practice.

1. Pre-service identity-pedagogy project

Early in 2007 my colleague, Peta Heywood, and I developed an assignment for our newly enrolled pre-service primary education students that has yielded more than our expectations for sustainable pedagogy with a particular focus on the ‘Identity and Subjectivity’ and ‘Professional Community’ elements. We each drew on our previous work in other courses and at other universities that focused on biography as part of the process of ‘becoming’ a teacher (Britzman, 2003). We justified the project in terms of our understanding of pedagogy and the need to articulate identity as a first step in the development of pedagogy. We asked all 240 students to each make a ten-minute presentation during their first semester of study that revealed their identity and to consider what life experiences have shaped them and brought them to teaching. Further, we invited them to bring creativity to their presentations and gave permission for them to sing, dance, paint, use photographs, make a website or whatever else they chose to do, as long as the audience – the rest of the class of 40 students – was engaged. As our students are postgraduate, most have varied career trajectories as well as school experiences to draw upon for this task. Individual students held the power over how much,

and what aspects, they would reveal of themselves and what form they would choose. Assessment criteria were published and class time was provided for the presentations.

We discussed how in previous programs with similar assignments, students tended to see their lecturer as the audience for their work, rather than their colleagues. We now suggest that this shift in focus – in having the classes as audience for the presentation, rather than just the lecturer - has had significant consequences in terms of development of professional community. The extent to which each of the six groups of forty students have become close-knit and self-contained communities is a surprising by-product of the assignment. When we recently visited our students while they were on placement in schools, many reported on the commitment they feel towards their classmates and the extent to which they have come to rely on each other for support and sustenance *as a result of the powerful assignment* in first semester. This establishment of a community of learners (Wenger, 1998) connects with ontology, or the basic human need to feel a sense of belonging. By inviting the students to share their vulnerable selves, key elements of pedagogy have begun to develop. They learnt by *belonging* to a professional community, and by revealing their identity, and in the process developing an awareness of subjectivity.

This brief narrative goes some way to illustrate the potential of the sustainable pedagogy conceptualisation. In a quite different way, the second episode is a critique of a recent education system that epitomises performativity. Here, the inherent values and questionable professional learning processes values expose the PoLT initiative as particularly flawed.

2. Bureaucratic pedagogy

In Victoria a bureaucratically inspired program of ‘instruction’ about teacher pedagogy has been systematically introduced to Victorian teachers during the period 2005-2007. This Victorian Department of Education initiative is called ‘Principles of Learning and Teaching’ (PoLT). The aim of PoLT, according to the bureaucrats within the Victorian Department of Education who wrote it, was to encourage Victorian teachers to discuss pedagogy. My aim in this section is to draw attention to the discussion of performativity in the first part of this paper, in order to illustrate that PoLT is the antithesis of sustainable pedagogy.

Firstly, the implementation of the PoLT program is via the train-the-trainer model, which is widely used in the health field to ‘train’ workers and semi-professionals into new procedures and approaches. This is highly problematic if teaching is accepted as a profession. The use of the term ‘training’ rather than ‘learning’ also sheds light on this approach to teachers. Senge *et al.* (1999), clarify this distinction:

The word ‘training’ originally meant ‘directing the course of the plant’: to be trained is to be controlled. But the word ‘learning’ derives from the Indo-European *leis*, a noun meaning ‘track’ or ‘furrow’. To ‘learn’ means to enhance capacity through experience gained... Learning always occurs over time and in ‘real life’ contexts... this type of learning may be difficult to control, but it generates knowledge that lasts: enhanced capacity for effective action in settings that matter to the learner... Training, by contrast, is typically episodic and detached (p. 24).

To control teachers by training them in how they should be teaching, rather than supporting their learning is exemplified by the metaphor of the ‘blueprint’, which is the overarching organiser of the Victorian Department of Education’s reform agenda, in which PoLT is situated. A blueprint is a plan – someone else’s plan – that is to be followed. An architect draws up the detailed plan, while the workers – the builders, plumbers, tilers, etc., enact or

implement the plan. Unlike the Tasmanian experience of extensive consultation about Essential Learnings, in Victoria, a different, more contemptuous view of teachers appears to have taken hold. Ensuring that programs and the values of bureaucrats are adopted in a ‘top down’ way is reminiscent of the ‘teacher proofing’ movement in the US in the 1960s. The Early Years Literacy program is perhaps the worst example of this cultural value in Victoria. The debt that education in Victoria owes to Hill and Crevola (1999) for this attitude is significant. This seemingly entrenched attitude towards teachers leads to questions about underlying assumptions of PoLT and the reform agenda of the DE&T articulated in its Blueprint. Firstly, are teachers professionals? Or are they paraprofessionals who need to be trained in procedures and approaches?

Judyth Sachs (2003) comments that, ‘The idea of professionals and professionalism has such common currency in everyday language that the explanatory power of these concepts is becoming meaningless ... we are left asking what relevance does the concept have for teachers individually and collectively?’ (p. 1) She also differentiates between ‘old’ notions of professionalism and ‘new’ ones, particularly in relation to teaching (2003).

Furlong *et al.* (2000) comment that ‘Despite the widespread use of the term, the concept of a professional remains deeply contested in our society’ (p. 4) and draw attention to Hoyle and John’s (1995) suggestion that what it means to be a professional focuses around three central issues – knowledge, autonomy and responsibility (p. 4). As mentioned earlier in this paper, they suggest that: ‘judgement is more important than routine’ for professionals who ‘should be sufficiently free from bureaucratic and political constraint to act on judgements made in the best interests (as they see them) of the clients’ (cited in Furlong *et al.*, 2000, p. 5). Commenting on this, Furlong *et al.* say:

Of critical importance here is the suggestion that professionals make judgements on behalf of clients *as they see them*. It is for the professional to interpret those interests. To draw a distinction ... [professionals] do not act as an ‘agent’ of someone else (for example the government); they act as a ‘principal’ making their own judgements (Furlong *et al.*, 2000, p. 5).

My interest lies in how PoLT and the reform agenda in which it sits reflect these notions of professionalism? How is teacher knowledge and pedagogy respected and included? How is this concordant with the use of ‘training’ and ‘instruction manual’ values? Are teachers accorded the respect of autonomy and responsibility? Or are they expected to act without individual agency to implement the government’s programs?

Secondly, PoLT is not located within the international literature of pedagogy or teacher learning and references to ‘research’ are unsubstantiated and vague. The teacher manuals and tools for assessing teacher pedagogy are problematic in terms of teacher autonomy, agency and voice. The use of a number of ‘surveys’ and reliance on ‘data’ indicate that it resides in a post-positivist paradigm. However basic validity and reliability issues of the kind normally addressed in any ‘Introduction to Research Methods’ course have not been met. I forward the view that this represents an attempt to ‘pull the wool over the eyes’ of teachers, by creating an illusion of an ‘evidence –base’ through a seemingly scientific approach. For a more detailed discussion of this issue see White, Williams & Scholtz (2006).

The idea of pedagogy is complex and is not easily defined, but Anderson (2005) suggests it has something to do with both the ‘art’ and ‘science’ of teaching, learning and the profession. When pedagogy is considered in these terms, the PoLT seems narrowly conceived and reductionist. The attempt to package pedagogy and ‘train’ teachers into adopting a state

sanctioned version, as seen in the PoLT program, indicates that either the complexities involved in pedagogy have not been understood, or they have been denied. PoLT is a simplistic and traditional version of pedagogy. At best it might support a little more group work and inclusion. At worst, rather than transforming education through critical pedagogy, teachers will be limited to maintaining the status quo of an already outdated, classed approach to schooling (Teese, 2000). As Reeder (2005) suggests:

Our best efforts for change are often complicated by our own beliefs and ideas about schooling and perhaps an inability to see beyond traditional ideas about pedagogy and education. Envisioning alternatives for education calls on our ability to question critically not only our own educational experiences but also to question current education practices, constraints, and limitations, and our own ideas about curriculum and learning (p. 247).

This discussion of PoLT is included in order to consider sustainable pedagogy from a different perspective. The two are in stark contrast to each other. In PoLT, as in the use of competency standards, the individual teacher and her/his beliefs are not relevant. Classroom context and professional community is not of interest either, except as ‘data collection sites.’ The focus of PoLT is at the level of strategy, which would be related to sustainable pedagogy’s element of ‘classroom practice.’ A pronounced difference between PoLT and Sustainable Pedagogy worth considering here is that within the PoLT approach to pedagogy, the strategies stand alone. In sustainable pedagogy, strategies are contextualised in terms of identity, philosophy, and overall classroom culture as well as within professional community. In PoLT they are an ‘end’ in themselves, while in sustainability, teaching strategies are ‘a means to an end.’ The strategies so important in PoLT represent a ‘blueprint’ of what bureaucrats think good teacher pedagogy encompasses, but in light of sustainable pedagogy, it can be seen to fall short on many levels.

3. Pedagogy and creativity: the primary school project

The third episode focuses on a three-year funded project (2006 – 2008) at an inner city primary school. The purpose of describing the design of this project is to point to its potential as a way of illustrating sustainable pedagogy. This project (White & Smerdon, 2008; YeHong & White 2008 forthcoming; White, 2006b) focuses on the articulation of teacher pedagogy and development of professional community by enhancing the use of creativity and ICT by teachers, in the hope that this will translate into greater encouragement of creativity in classroom practice. While the ICT element needs little explanation, development of creativity in Australian education appears limited (see Burnard & White, 2008). Drawing on Craft’s description of creativity as ‘an essential life skill’ that ‘needs to be fostered by the education system’ (2001, pp. 137) the aim of this project is to enhance pedagogy in order to strengthen community and experimentation. Risk-taking is seen as an important element in creativity (Nickerson, 1999, p. 494) and learning, and teachers in this project are willing to experiment.

Thirty teachers are being supported to develop collaborative action research, but what is unique about this project is the performance element involved. Drawing on both performance ethnography (Denzin, 2003) and autoethnography (Ellis & Bochner, 2000), the teachers have to date worked through three of the seven phases of the project which are:

1. Write an individual account of pedagogy.
2. Create and present a photographic essay, supported by music, that best articulates the shared pedagogy of the junior, middle or senior school teams.



3. Create and present a short film or animation that demonstrates the pedagogy of two school teams.
4. As a professional community, explore a range of performance art forms in order to enhance confidence in creativity.
5. Create a performance script that articulates teacher pedagogy.
6. Develop and rehearse the performance
7. Public performance.

With support of a colleague from the Victorian Arts Centre, the teachers are currently working on the fourth phase by taking not inconsiderable risks and engaging with unfamiliar ways of expression and exploration of performance. As Nickerson (1999) suggests, creativity is often defined in terms of results and products (p. 392). However, in Denzin's (2003) use of 'performative,' it is in the *process* of collaboratively experimenting and developing performance that the value lies, rather than the *product* or culminating performance itself, where it is expected that teacher learning may occur.

In 'sustainable pedagogy' terms, the design of this, as yet unfinished, project gives cause for hope. At centre stage is creativity, an area that receives scant attention within Australian education. The shared purpose of the project is to develop professional community through individual and collective expression of pedagogy. Teacher identity, school context and classroom practice are all included and respected, and teachers are challenged to work outside areas in which they are comfortable, but supported to do so.

Conclusion

This mostly theoretical paper explores an emerging conceptualisation of 'sustainable pedagogy.' The development of this concept has drawn upon sustainability education, three interpretations of performativity as well as key concepts of professionalism and creativity. Sustainable pedagogy involves not only acknowledgement of self and subjectivity, but professional philosophy and classroom practice that keeps fidelity with philosophy and identity. Importantly, sustainable pedagogy also involves building and sustaining professional community. Through its inception, I have tried to demonstrate that teachers' work requires nourishment and strength and that sustainable pedagogy affords a richer and more complex understanding of teacher identity and professionalism, and that creativity might provide a suitable antidote to the performativity (in the Lyotard sense) that unfortunately currently forms much of the broader educational landscape within Australia.

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