

Equality and Curriculum in Education

A Collection Of Invited Essays



Rose Dolan (Ed.)
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Chapter 2

Constructing Identities with Young People: Rethinking Educational Practice

A Performance Piece

Grace O’Grady

If you believe in the world you precipitate events, however inconspicuous, that elude control, you engender new space-times, however small their surface or volume. (Deleuze, p.81, 1990)

One of the aims of Irish Education is “to nurture a sense of personal identity...” (*Charting our Education Future*, 1995, p.10). Thomson and Hall (2008) confirm that schools are places where children and teenagers are continually engaged in identity formation, but where formal opportunities to play with and reflect on this subject are not available to them (p.148). Personal and Social Development Programmes are cited as far back as the *Role*¹ document and the *Guidelines*² document as an essential part of guidance provision in second level schools in Ireland. To date, this aspect of guidance has not been developed as a curricular programme. While a focus on identity formation is part of the SPHE curriculum at both Junior and Senior Cycle, this programme and personal development programmes in education generally (Ryan, 1997) are informed by humanistic conceptions of the person and therefore fall prey to much of the critique of, what is referred to in some UK publications as, the ‘therapeutic culture’ of schools (Ecclestone and Hayes, 2009, Furedi, 2004, Craig, 2007); a culture that can remain blind to the constitutive power of discourse.

This paper offers a participants’ perspective on the pedagogical work I carried out as part of a larger CAP (Creative Analytical Practice/Processes) ethnographic study, using arts-based activities to provide a creative space for a group of Irish Senior Cycle students to explore narratives of self/identity (O’ Grady, 2012). I firstly give a brief overview of that work with the young people situating it in the research context. I then present the voices of the students as they dialogue with their teachers at an exhibition of their creative artefacts. In this ‘Performance’ there is an opening up to new discursive school practice so I title it, *Rethinking Educational Practice*’ and close the paper with musings about the age old ‘trickster’, who has been reclaimed as a metaphor of transformation in our classrooms (Conroy & Davis, 2002).

1 Mark Guidance and Counseling Service in Second Level School and the Role of the Guidance Counsellor, (Dublin: Institute of Guidance Counsellors, 1996).

2 Mark Guidelines for the Practice of Guidance and Counseling in Schools, (Dublin: NCGE, 1996).

RESEARCH PROGRAMME IN SCHOOL

As part of the research design of this inquiry, I facilitated two Identity Programmes with a group of ten Fifth Year students and eleven Transition Year students (February-May 2008/February-May 2009). Each programme involved twelve two-hour creative workshops over a semester in two Irish Community Schools. In each case the self-selected students (5 male/5 female in first programme and 5 male/6 female in second programme) were facilitated in an exploration of their identity narratives using arts-based educational activities such as drawing, collage-making and journaling. The young people selected their own media to work with as they creatively constructed portraits of themselves in their world.

While it might loosely be called a personal development programme, the pedagogical space was comprised more accurately of a series of workshops, structured around the production and audiencing of creative images. In their unfolding stories I attempted to make visible some of the ways the young people constructed their identities, the cultural/institutional discourses and dominant discourses of self they drew on, how they were positioned by these stories/ideas/discourses and how they continued to position themselves/others. I also explored with the young people, how these stories both served and limited them, and in some cases began a process of re-storying/re-symbolizing aspects of their identities that they found problematic; finding movement out of fixed/limiting stories of self by creatively puncturing dualistic notions of self.

The purpose of these interweaving pedagogical aims of the research was to ‘make visible’ how identities were constructed in the ‘between-the-two’ narratives (Deleuze & Parnett, 2002, p.13) as both the young people and I moved through the text of the inquiry. In this way the constitutive process of identity construction can be seen as a ‘narrative performance’ (Reissman, 2008, p.102):

To emphasise the performative is not to suggest that identities are inauthentic...but only that identities are situated and accomplished with audience in mind. To put it simply, one can't be a ‘self’ by oneself; rather, identities are constructed in ‘shows’ that persuade. Performances are expressive, they are performances for others. Hence, the response of the audience is implicated in the art of storytelling. (ibid, p.106)

Performativity is the writing and rewriting of meaning that continually disrupts the authority of the text (ibid): In their creations, re-creations and audiencing of images, the students performed multiple narratives of self and in the process began to unsettle fixed limiting identity categories.

CONNECTION BETWEEN AGENCY AND DESIRE IN THE YOUNG PEOPLE'S TALK

The focus of this paper is on how the young people in the second school perceived what had happened in the workshops. In this context it is worth noting the connection between agency and desire in their talk. The dialogues and creative work produced in the workshops and one-to-one follow-up conversations, made visible their interpretations of themselves as people who can make choices and act upon those choices. Poststructuralist thinking, which provided the conceptual and methodological frame for this study, views these beliefs as based on a humanist definition of oneself as having desires or wants that stem from and signal who one really is (Davies, 1993). That those desires might be discursively constructed was difficult for many of the young people to incorporate into their interpretive frameworks. For Butler (2004) the desiring subject does not exist prior to its subjection to power. Processes of desire are implicated in the very formation of the subject:

Power that at first appears as external, pressed upon the subject, pressing the subject into subordination, assumes a psychic form that constitutes the subject's self-identity (p.3).

When the students' awareness was raised about the hegemonic/cultural/institutional discourses/categories in which they were positioned i.e. male/female, heterosexual love, black/white, personhood etc., their positioning in a humanist discourse continued to jar with this newly acquired knowledge: "...this is what I want, it is who I am". This provided, as in my own journey, multiple asignifying ruptures in the telling of their stories, thereby constructing themselves as multi-voiced and contradictory.

PREPARATION AND RATIONALE FOR THE MOUNTING OF THE VISUAL ART

COLLECTION

At the end of the programme in the second school, the young people were invited to display their collective art pieces in a location of their choice, providing space for textual responses. They chose the floor of the room in which we worked to 'mount' their visual art exhibition, their rationale being that it was disrupting the notion of 'Exhibition as usual':

You expect to look horizontally at the wall when you go to an art gallery, it would be cool to surprise people, like, make them think (Finn).

Also, they saw it as being appropriate because it was less permanent this way, reflecting the temporary constellations of self/identity, dependent on audience:

'If we *fixed* [emphasised] the work on a display panel or wall we wouldn't be able to...erm... change it after that. You know like, I mightn't want *everybody* [emphasised] to see it this way. Like, I wouldn't want Mooney [name of teacher] to see that bit [pointing to a girl in bikini on the right corner of his collage]' (Eoghan)

Some of the group expressed slight ‘inhibition’ at the idea of displaying their work, believing that their teachers would recognise the creators. I suggested that they only include that which they felt comfortable including. At many times throughout the workshops we played with the meanings of words in an effort to make visible their discursive power. One of the girls (Susan) loved this exercise and so at the final stage in the group, was quite adept at deconstruction:

Susan: ‘Inhibit...emm...exhibit, in/exhibit.’

Grace: ‘Is there inhibition in every exhibition?’

Susan: ‘I think every artist is inhibited. I think we all are inhibited so do we need to exhibit that?’

To which Finn responded: ‘Wish I thought of that. Let’s call it Exhibition/Inhibition!’

The final title was agreed: Creative Identities Ex/In/hibition (Transition Year)

Finn: ‘That will be the first question from everybody, ‘wat’s dat?’”

The young people suggested many times during the workshops that the type of creative discursive space made available to them during this inquiry should be part of the Transition Year Curriculum. Hence, the school principal, three class tutors and the Transition Year co-ordinator were invited to the Ex/In/hibition because of their perceived power and influence on the Transition Year Programme. Below I present vignettes of dialogue that took place at the Ex/In/hibition. The voices of the young people and their teachers in this performance piece create tiny openings for new possibilities in terms of student/teacher subject positions and school discursive practices. In the flow of conversation at the showing of their work, the palimpsest of interlapping, often conflicting discourses between newly acquired and older ideas in the young people’s talk was visible. At times it seemed to me that they appropriated my voice, using similar terms and vocabulary. The new audience which brought with it the institutional gaze, may account for this – the belief that there was a ‘correct language’ to use in order to present the work properly.

This reminded me of the feeling of unease I had when I first read Davies’ *Shards of Glass* (1993), because of the persistent use of research terms that were being used in the conversation with very small children and their appropriation of these terms. However, being aware of the constitutive power of language to create new realities, meanings, identities, I sit with the discomfort and allow the conversation to flow; rupturing and connecting with other voices. Also noteworthy in the dialogue below is the way in which this new discursive context allowed for increasing contributions from the girls. The conditions of possibility were ripe for the performance of ‘good student’. The audience always shapes what can be said, and how.

Although the conversation between the teachers and students was recorded, I was aware that the noise level in the room would make the transcription process very difficult so I also jotted notes during and immediately after the exhibition, and later invited all participants who wished, to help with the editing process. Six students spent an hour working with me on the first draft a day later, and the final draft a week later, during double P.E classes. Changes were

made to some original utterances/words as a collective effort to ‘tidy up’ the final ‘presentation’, while retaining the rhizomatic flow of the conversations. The occasional bracketed comments on the right of the text document my own response to what is being said or serve to extend the story being told. The vignettes below are not a pure representation of an outside reality but a new construction, a performance that frames reality. The dialogue is a jointly constructed between-the-two activity which seems to me to achieve at least three things:

1. In the presentation of their work to an audience of school managers, we glimpse a situated, contingent and partial knowledge of the young people’s understanding/ experience of what happened during the research programme and conversations.
2. The dialogue provides another context for the discursive construction of identities; at times reconstituting ‘school as usual’ discourse and its subject positions of teacher/ student; at times puncturing this discourse and re-arranging power relations.
3. We see possible lines of flight out of limiting notions of pedagogical/curricular practice.

THE PERFORMANCE



Ex/In/hibition of creative artwork

After the initial greetings and chat, the teachers, led by the principal, begin to move around the display with an air of curiosity and awkwardness.

Introducing the Territory

Principal (male): How interesting...so this is what you have been doing all these weeks.

Finn: These are our drawings, Sir, collages and masks. We used art material to tell different stories of our lives.

Susan: The idea was to explore our identities. Identities change depending on the situation so we had a chance to create ourselves in different scenarios type thing.

Principal: I see. It makes a very colourful display. Yes, the masks are very interesting.

Mandy: They were fun to do coz you had the face there already.

Finn: But we all had different ideas about how the mask could be used to tell the story of the self and identity.

Principal: Oh, I see...because you all have different stories to tell about your lives.

Finn: Yes that and also we all have different ways of conceptualising the self. When we did the masks we were really conscious of how we understood identity... Like we just take our identities for granted and the workshops were about helping us to see what we take for granted and questioning it.

Making visible inherited discourse of self/identity



Inside of Mandy's Mask



Outside of Claire's Mask

Mandy: Like some of us coloured the outside and inside, the outside being what we show to the public and the inside the hidden side, like you can see here [picking up her own and Claire's masks]. And then some just coloured the outside, which emphasised the way they viewed the self, like, as not having a hidden side.

Principal: I suppose most of us think of ourselves as having an inner and outer self, no?

Susan: Yes we do think of ourselves like that and most of us did the masks like that, but there's other ways of looking at the self as well. That's a concept of the self that we just automatically have because it is the one that is in our culture and we just accept it as if it was real.

Finn: Like you could say it's just a way of talking about the self. Like what we say has an impact on who we are... Like if we say we have an inner self then we think maybe that is the true part of me, like my deep side. So then we might categorise people as deep and shallow and that kind of thing or real or false. Like it has an effect on how we behave. Like we end up categorising people as stupid and bright, all that kind of stuff.

[When I consider the length of time it took me to de/essentialise our inherited humanistic /psychodynamic discourse of self/identity and become aware of the power of this discourse in creating subject positions, I marvel when hearing Finn's response above.]

Pedagogical/curricular discourses under scrutiny

Principal: Very interesting. Maybe I should have come to a few of your classes. [He moves over towards John who, with Kenneth, has now joined the others around the display]

John: Well they weren't really like classes.

Mandy: They were workshops.

John: We drew ourselves and then we talked about the drawings and masks and stuff and then we had all kinds of conversations like about not being one of the crowd and being different and kind of having an ethnic background. [Interesting that he steers clear of masculinity]

Mandy: And gender, like what it's like to be a boy and girl, kind of youth culture.

Kenneth: It was completely different to regular class. Like we had a lot of time to think about things about our life. And if you didn't get it finished, you did it again the next week. No pressure like and you could just sit and listen to your iPod if you were finished before the others or you could move around and work on something else.

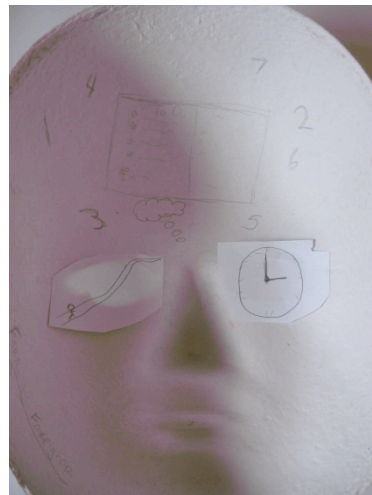
[Find myself blushing at this. Under the institutional gaze, it might it be seen as 'wasting time?']

Principal: So you found it relevant to your life. Sounds a bit like what you might do in Religion or SPHE class.

Kenneth: Yeah, a bit. But...kind of, no right or wrong. Like just drawing and talking.

John: Well, there was a smaller group and we had lots of time to do it like, we weren't rushed.

Principal: I see. [Picking up Susan's mask].



Front and back of mask

This one has an interesting back. Is that a clock?

Susan: I drew that to indicate the pressure I feel regarding time and all that needs to be done within such a short period, so it is something that is at the back of my head all the time. But it's also visible in front.

Principal: That makes sense, but I would have thought in Transition Year you wouldn't be feeling such pressure.

Susan: Well, we're coming to the end of Transition Year and Fifth Year isn't far off.

Y.Head (male): And it's back in the straitjacket again.

Susan: Yeah.

Finn: I'd say we have the straitjacket on already.

Knowledge of discursive construction of hegemonic masculinity

Y. Head: What were you saying Mandy about gender? The collages here are very definitely identifiable as male and female students' work. [He picks up Kenneth's collage].



Kenneth's Collage

Kenneth: It's just Formula One racing in the centre and other cars around. Like lots of the lads have football and cars as well. Yeah, they're fairly the same.

Conor: And music like Oasis and The Who. John put Owen Wilson (American Actor) there coz he thinks he looks like him.



John's Collage

Y.Head: What does it say there? [Reading the caption under the image of Owen Wilson] '... the nose of a man who's split a few pints.'

Tutor 1 (female): Mmm...not surprised. Lads your age.

Oisin: Well we looked at how we're kind of influenced by the type of guys that are in the media, like footballers, celebrities, singers and stuff. Like you get a lot of kudos from being like the macho guy...

[Masculinity as predatory was epitomised through the purchase of consumer goods (i.e. football boots and cars) and the consumption of media images.]

Tutor 1: Like it's fine to drink yourself senseless.

Finn: It's in the culture like, the story of being male, like all of this [Pointing to the collages]. If you go outside this there's consequences, like you get slagged, poof, all that stuff.

[The boys scrupulously monitored and policed their sexuality in terms of proscribing the limits of desirable, normative, heterosexual masculinities.]

Y. Head: Whose is this one? [Picking up Finn's collage]. It's a bit different.



Finn's Collage

Finn: I don't mind saying that's mine. I just wanted to be a bit artsy...let the imagination flow sort of thing. Kind of a circle in the middle and question mark underneath. Question everything but have a good time. Keep an open mind.

Y.Head: So did you get slagged?

Finn: Not this time.

Knowledge of discursive construction of hegemonic femininity

Tutor 2 (female): The girls' work is my type of thing. I love all that stuff [Looking at the collages].

Mandy: Yeah, most of us used images from girls' magazines to tell our stories.

Tutor 2: Is that what you were doing, telling your stories with the images?

Mandy: Yeah, like we really got into it. I loved doing the collages and we had great fun doing them together. Then after, Grace asked us what the images were saying and like where did we hear the story.

Mary: Like we realise that we hear the story all around us like from our friends and family and definitely the media. This one is mine and it shows how the story affects me - bombarded with images, putting me in a spin. Then we looked at how the story serves us and how it limits us and we wrote that down in our journals. It just makes you think.



Mary's Collage

Tutor 2: Do you have your journal? I would love to know how the story limits you?

Mary: That's private Miss. [Risking the disapproval of teacher and her positioning as 'good student'].

Tutor 2: Oh of course, I see. I didn't mean you in particular Mary. But...

Mandy: Well, it puts pressure on you to look like the others and if you don't sometimes, you feel excluded. It's fine until you do something different and then you realise that you kind of have to toe the line. Like girls will always look at how other girls look.

[While there was increasing awareness by the girls of their positioning in the male gaze -subjecting their bodies to rigorous surveillance and discipline in order to achieve correct female form (Davies, 1993) - this knowledge continued to jar with an essentialist notion of femininity]

Abject Categories

Mary: And also like if you think there is an ideal way to look, you might look down on people who don't look like that.

Susan: Then you've got the superior/inferior thing going. Like colonised minds always comparing everything. Like my collage was different, like all my stuff was different to the others but I am different, like that's just me. I'm not inferior or superior.

Tutor 2: And it changes, doesn't it? Like historically, people with a disability would be treated with scorn and now they can have a full life, with assistance.

Susan: Yeah, like time and place have a big affect on identities and different cultures and backgrounds. We looked at how we are living in an individualistic culture and how that has an effect on us, like how we think.

John: Like anything that is outside of what everybody else does is kind of pushed outside, like in our minds too.

Susan: And maybe disabled people are still looked at as inferior.

The Transformative power of Creative Dialogue

Tutor 3 (female Art teacher): Did you enjoy doing the creative artwork?

Claire: Yeah, like that was the best bit for me.

Tanya: Me too.

Claire: Like you draw yourself first and then you kind of start asking questions about what you drew. And if you go back to your drawing later you can see other things like that you didn't notice first or didn't talk about.

Tutor 3: That is what you might call creative process or art in the making.

Tanya: Yeah, it was like the end result wasn't important. It was about finding out about ourselves. Like sometimes someone else said something about your portrait and then you'd kind of think yeah that's kind of interesting and it would make you think of something else.

Tutor 3: You mean interpreting it.

Claire: ...Yeah, and sometimes like you can just pretend that the images are doing something, or you can change them. It's just kind of fun as well.

Tutor 3: And all this was about looking at your identity?

Claire: Yeah.

Tanya: Like everything we did was a portrait of us. So it was like talking with ourselves and then changing it if we wanted. Like who we are doesn't stay the same.

Claire: Or like sometimes you just spoke about the images differently and then you felt different.

Making visible difference and the desire to belong

Y.Head: You were saying about ethnic background.

John: Well, we spoke about a girl from Africa who didn't colour herself in brown. Like she didn't want to be different.

Kenneth: Like you couldn't believe that she was from Uganda because all her stuff looked like the other girls'.

Mary: We didn't know why she didn't colour herself brown but like the purpose of the discussion wasn't ...was to get us to think about being white.

John: Like Irish people are white mainly so you don't think about it until like you're with people who aren't white.

Mary: It's hard to hide your colour, like if you're...not white, so it makes you different straight away.

Kenneth: And like you just want to blend in, like especially at our age.

Mary: ...To belong.

John: Like you want to but sometimes you don't, and that goes for everybody not just coloured people.

Y.Head: Everybody wants to belong but we want to be individuals as well.

John: Yeah.

Mary: That's the tough bit.

Y.Head: Did you talk about how schools might foster a sense of belonging?

Chorus: Not really.

School Structures and Practices

Susan: We talked about like how the school has a certain way of operating that segregates people depending on like intelligence or even whether you're a boy or girl and stuff.

Finn: Like there's a big debate about whether there should be streaming or not.

Principal: If there wasn't streaming, you'd soon know about it.

Finn: Yeah, but like we really don't know much about intelligence. Like we stream people because we think they are this way or that way but maybe they just don't fit into the school system, like as it is now.

Principal: When you have a school to run and a Leaving Cert. to get through every year, you do what is the best for the students and their parents. Streaming is another issue. Do you think your parents would have appreciated if you were in with a mixed ability class Finn?

Finn: Yeah, it's tough running a school Sir. But something to consider all the same.

Susan: Like it was still good that the timetable could be changed to fit in this (the research programme).

Principal: There is some flexibility in Transition Year and it's good to make links with the college. The majority of you go to (naming the university).

Susan: [Persisting] I think it's good that we get to do this kind of stuff, like becoming aware how we are influenced by our families, school and kind of culture in general.

Finn: And a lot of it we take for granted, like it's invisible to us.

Principal: Well maybe we can make some links with the university and see what comes of it... What's over here?

And there...

And on...

LINES OF FLIGHT: RETHINKING EDUCATIONAL PRACTICE

Moving through the electronic folds of his book, *betwixt & between: The Liminal Imagination, Education and Democracy* (Conroy, 2004) and a co-written paper 'Transgression, Transformation and Enlightenment...' (Conroy & Davis, 2002), the figure of the age old 'Trickster' jumped out at me. This rupturing rhizomatic shoot provides a brief line of flight in re-thinking educational practice alongside the voices of the young people and their teachers in the previous performance – closing the paper with further openings and connections. Conroy refers to the Trickster as 'a liminal figure' which has been called on through the ages to 'combat hubris and recuperate that which is playful and surprising about our being' (2004, p.10). Inhabiting the borderlands 'between different worlds or different conceptions of the world...his function is to mock and challenge the 'forces of the status quo' (2002, p.256). In underscoring, as a metaphor, 'relativising, transformative and corrosive energies,' 'it might be argued that the Trickster is an ironic harbinger of the postmodern turn' (ibid, p.267).). As both a traditional figure and a quintessentially poststructuralist figure, s/he punctures the way we dualistically construct our world, occupying a liminal space between ancient/new, critical/creative, playful/serious, subversive/responsible, and on.

How my young participant researchers would have had a ball with this figure. How well it would have served us in terms of the primary aims of the programme – to make visible the taken-for-granted, dominant institutional/cultural stories that constitute us and how we

categorise ourselves and others based on the hidden assumptions in these storylines. We spoke quite often about the ‘messer’ in class and how ‘the conditions of possibility’ (Davies & Gannon, 2006) within the context of the classroom were never in question; how the ‘messer’ is essentialised and pathologised and positioned outside the fold. The ‘messer’ as Trickster would have politicised the position and metamorphosed him/her into an anarchic, subversive, deadly serious/responsible player. It would have invested the ‘messer’ position with a playful intelligence (unsettling the status quo) that a ‘Trickster teacher’ would welcome and nurture. In the classroom, the teacher as Trickster opens up new ways of seeing old problems:

The Trickster is a learning and teaching style...where every text is opened to the unsettling influences and counter-readings of pleasure, joy, sexuality, ethnicity, embodiment and laughter; where new readings and innovative methodologies are sought at the edges of texts, where readers connect with [the subject] in unexpected ways. (Conroy, 2002, p.269)

To conceive of this metaphor as redefining the pedagogical practices of the classroom is extremely exciting: opening up the discursive spaces of the curriculum ‘*to the energies of transformation, play, difference and paradox*’ (Conroy, 2002, p.260); to that for which I have been underscoring in my work with the young people in this study.

Finn: ... we really don’t know much about intelligence. Like we stream people because we think they are this way or that way but maybe they just don’t fit into the school system, like as it is now.

The Trickster figure is traditionally opposed to the assault on our modern imaginative lives of an over-dependence on an “arithmetic calculus as the primary mythic, and therefore heuristic, device of our culture” (Conroy, 2002, p.256). When we talk, often in a corporate way, about ‘re-culturing’ schools and the teaching profession and developing ‘moving’ and ‘learning enriched’ schools (Fullan, 2007, 4th Edition), we need to be making space for a political/creative pedagogy in the classroom and opening up complex social configurations through which energy flows (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987).

Principal: When you have a school to run and a Leaving Cert. to get through every year, you do what is the best for the students and their parents. Streaming is another issue. Do you think your parents would have appreciated if you were in with a mixed ability class Finn?

The constriction in the voice of the principal is his positioning in a discourse that views the fundamental role of schooling as filling students with a knowledge that is necessary to compete nationally and internationally in today’s rapidly changing world (Apple, 2009, xi). However, in viewing this knowledge as neutral, the discourse misses the intricate link between knowledge and the operation of power. Questions of whose knowledge, who chooses, how this is justified – “these are constitutive issues, not ‘add-ons’” (ibid). Also, this discourse and most of our models of education tend to ratify social inequalities (Apple, 2001). Much of this has to do with the relations between schooling and the economy, with gender, class and race, intelligence, the politics of popular culture and so on. School space, as a result, is shaped

through commodified gendered, sexualised, class and ability norms and idealisations (discourses), which striate the space (Ringrose, 2010).

Susan: We talked about like how the school has a certain way of operating that segregates people depending on like intelligence or even whether you're a boy or girl and stuff.

An opening, in our schools/classrooms, to the 'other', the 'foreigner', the 'misfit' – marginalised voices within/out – seems to me to be predicated on the introduction of a pedagogy that invites student and teacher to critically scrutinise the givens of the subject, subjectivity, knowledge production and the operation of power. This need not be confined/compartmentalised into discrete subject areas like SPHE (Social, Personal and Health Education), English, Religious Studies, CSPE (Civic, Social, and Political Education) but capillaried across the entire curriculum in terms of how and what is taught/learnt. Aronowitz and Giroux's idea of 'border pedagogy' in *Postmodern Education...*(1991) fits with what I'm saying:

Border pedagogy offers the opportunity for students to engage the multiple references that constitute different cultural code, experiences, and languages. This means educating students to read these codes, including the ones they use to construct their own narratives...(p.118-119)

AND SO...

*Towards Learning: An overview of Senior Cycle Education*³ is a work that presents an overview of senior cycle education in Ireland. The changes envisaged leave an opening for the critical self/reflexive work I have been espousing in this study. One of the key skills being promoted in this new vision, is precisely critical and creative thinking: "In engaging with this key skill, learners reflect critically on the forms of thinking and values that shape their own perceptions, opinions and knowledge" (p.21). A stated aim of assessment is "to ensure that, where possible, the examination/s in a subject area are a more valid reflection of the teaching and learning approaches recommended in the syllabus" (p.28). This is where the learning moves or stalls it seems to me and is predicated on how we answer the following questions: How are we going to credit critical, reflexive practice across all subjects? Are teachers sufficiently resourced and supported to embody and promote this form of teaching and learning? Are they attuned to recognising the power of discourse in constructing knowledge and in creating subject positions? Who is writing the syllabus and making the recommendations? Are we continuing to maintain, in our schools, the hegemonic voices of humanism/developmentalism (without making them visible), constructing as they do essentialist notions of identity and developmental stages, relegating to the margins all that does not fit in? Humanism is, after all, 'our mother tongue' (St. Pierre, 1997, p.406): '*a power takeover by a dominant language within a political multiplicity*' (Deleuze & Guattari, 2004b, p.8). So

³ Mark See website www.ncca.ie for full text.

changes will be slow but must happen if we hope to promote an education that attempts to make visible the constitutive power of discourse in constructing us and our world.

In terms of the critical/creative skills envisaged and arising out of the partial, contingent insights of this inquiry, it is important that we build capacity in the teaching profession and work towards developing appropriate assessment instruments (across the curriculum) that can 'map' the multiple, open-ended, always connecting/rupturing narrative of any subject/ivity.

Still rummaging round in our school-bags... (John Moriarty, 2001, p.599)

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