Researching literacies learning in relation to student mobility

Robyn Henderson
robyn.henderson@usq.edu.au
My context

Toowoomba,
Queensland
Overview

• Initial research and some subsequent research projects – beginning with the doctoral journey
• How I came to think about pedagogy
• Researching the links between student mobility and the learning of literacies
• Still puzzling about some issues
Researching student mobility

- Initial interest in farm workers’ children
- Pedagogy
- Research locations: several in Australia, plus overseas (Ireland, Scotland and Illinois)
- Later: the broader issue of mobility and its relationship to literacies learning and schooling more generally
- ‘new’ students
Initial research

• the social and discursive construction of itinerant farm workers’ children as literacy learners
• Unskilled – many from Pacific Islands, Turkey, Vietnam
• north-south migration
• impact on children’s schooling
• often invisible to educators, policy makers etc
• deficit discourses
• challenges for schooling
School, education system, family, community

Context

Interaction

Text
Interviews observations

Explanation
Interpretation
Description

Linguistic + social analysis

(Fairclough, 2001)

- The community
- The families
- The school

- Kalisi
- Personal, family and lifestyle deficits
- Mustafa ... a really good boy
Thinking about pedagogy

- The effect of deficit stories on teachers’ pedagogical considerations
- Stories of blame

- Other stories/discourses ... hope ...

- Other research projects:
  - Scotland, Ireland and Illinois
  - Compensatory programs
Investigating pedagogy

A study I conducted in Australia:
• ‘pedagogy’ not discussed by teachers
• teachers modest about their work, but evidence of considerations in their teaching practices:
  o making students feel comfortable (social)
  o fast decisions to get students started (academic)

New research issues:
• Changes in types of student mobility:
  o technological developments in farming
  o cost of travel
• Changes in thinking about education – parental choice
• Effects of socio-economic factors
• How to investigate pedagogy
• Perhaps use video-stimulated recall
Thinking about pedagogy: A methodological problem?

Questions:
• Was I mistaken?
• Was pedagogy for ‘new’ students a figment of my imagination?
• Was I not being observant enough when collecting classroom data?

Questions about teaching:
• Did teachers focus on the social rather than the academic?
• Had teachers normalised their academic strategies as part of their ‘teaching as usual’ routines?
• Could teachers simply not articulate their pedagogical decision-making?
• Was teachers’ academic work invisible to them, as well as to me?
Another research project

- a school with high student mobility
- recognised as a school that caters for students
- four teachers (from different year levels) willing to be involved – not so keen about the use of video
- six months of observations, 3-4 hours per week

The Year 1 teacher (Mrs Anderson):

Mrs A: I always feel nervous when you’re in my classroom.
Me: Would you prefer that I didn’t observe today? Would you like me to leave and come back another day?
Mrs A: No. I’m getting used to you being here, but I’m certainly not ready to be videoed.

Mrs Anderson’s strategy
Theorising pedagogy from a multiliteracies perspective

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Situated practice</th>
<th>Critical framing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overt instruction</td>
<td>Transformed practice</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(The New London Group, 1996)
School, education system, family, community

Interaction

Text
Interviews
observations

(Fairclough, 2001)