The Good Teacher in contemporary times: A Discourse Analytic Approach

Jeanne Edith Shaw

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Frontispiece image: The Young Teacher, by Jean-Baptiste-Siméon Chardin, circa 1736
Abstract

Drawing on Foucauldian discourse theory, in conjunction with data collected from education policy and practice domains, this research project examines currently circulating discourses of the ‘good’ teacher. Embedded in complex truth, power and knowledge dynamics, a Foucauldian discourse analytic approach affords critical attention to how teachers and teaching are characterised in the current conjuncture. The argument is made that discourses and practices of neo-liberalism, including government policies for education, tend to dominate our sense of the ‘good’ teacher today and construct this teacher as needing to be accountable and oriented to outcomes and high-stakes professional work. These discourses and practices are challenged, however, by meanings made about ‘good’ teaching by teachers and students themselves. Using data collected from a study of accomplished teachers (here geography teachers) and unsolicited ‘thank-you’ letters written by students to their cherished teachers, I identify important observations made by them regarding the practices and qualities that make teachers good.

The project does not seek to suggest that good teaching should exist in opposition to dominant discourses (e.g., policy discourses of quality teaching). Rather, it identifies two parallel discourses, namely one of ‘calculation’ and one of ‘care’ that, when taken up concurrently, complicate and thwart aspects of the teacher’s identity. The project posits, therefore, that the dominant discourses should be challenged and modified to better reflect a more complex understanding of the human aspects upon which good teaching and learning rely. Specifically, against the backdrop of political and professional discourses around improving educational outcomes and what constitutes good teaching, we run the risk of failing to take into account contesting discourses of affect, gratitude, relationship, affiliation, affection and connection evident in the views expressed by students. Overall, by emphasising differences between local and general approaches to teaching, it is argued that the dominant discourse on the good teacher can and should be reworked to accommodate additional values and imperatives.

Accordingly, this thesis concludes by holding up to view the importance of the interdiscursivity, or spaces between the two discursive terrains of calculation and care. Optimistically, I argue that it is at this interface of differing constructions of the good teacher that the currently less privileged discourse of care may reclaim some prominence,
particularly when it is championed as working not only against but also within discourses of calculation.
Declaration of Originality

This is to certify that:

1. this thesis comprises only my original work;

2. due acknowledgement has been made in the text to all material used; and

3. the thesis is less than 100,000 words in length, exclusive of tables, figures, bibliographies and appendices.

Signature:
# List of Acronyms

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
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<tr>
<td>ABC</td>
<td>Australian Broadcasting Corporation</td>
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<td>ACARA</td>
<td>Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority</td>
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<td>AITSL</td>
<td>Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership</td>
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<td>ARC</td>
<td>Australian Research Council</td>
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<td>COAG</td>
<td>Council of Australian Governments</td>
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<td>CRT</td>
<td>Casual Relief Teaching</td>
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<td>CSF</td>
<td>Curriculum Standards Framework</td>
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<td>DEEWR</td>
<td>Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations</td>
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<td>MCEECDYA</td>
<td>Ministerial Council on Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs (previously known as the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs, now known as the Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood)</td>
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<tr>
<td>NAPLAN</td>
<td>National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy</td>
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<td>VIT</td>
<td>Victorian Institute of Teaching</td>
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<td>VSTA</td>
<td>Victorian Secondary Teachers Association</td>
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Finally, I acknowledge that the inspiration for my thesis came from the thousands of students I taught during my 25 years in the classroom. One student stands out, however, not because of her remarkable academic achievements, but because of what she wrote to me in a game-changing ‘thank-you’ letter some years ago. Thank you Bessie.
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Chapter 1:
Locating the Problem

‘Blossoming Almond Tree’, 1890, Vincent van Gogh.

1.1 Introduction

What is a good teacher? Who decides? Whose ‘truth claims’ about good teaching prevail? In this thesis I tell a story about the troubling effects of how we currently think the good teacher. Throughout the thesis, I explore the idea of the good teacher, with its attendant notions of good teaching and learning, good pedagogical practice, good educational leadership, good teacher professional development, good teaching environments and so on. Most significantly, in this project, the term good is taken to embrace notions of quality, accomplishment, effectiveness and professional merit, but also includes notions of patience, compassion, fairness, kindness and care.

This is a multifaceted story, told at a time when teachers in schools are part of a profession dominated by policy discourses1 that focus on academic outcomes, judged through standardized testing, and on teacher accountability. Moreover, it is told at a time when policy discourses have begun to dominate discussions in the media, among parents and even within some schools. They have come to be seen as normal.

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This thesis posits that the dominant policy discourse of performativity confound and thwart good teachers who are functioning within the ‘contradictions’ (Sanguinetti, 1999, p.v) of their profession. Arguably these contradictions arise when, on the one hand, neoliberalism produces education policies that are disproportionately focussed on quantitative measures of performance, and, on the other teachers are intuitively aware of less tangible aspects of teaching, namely matters of affect and the importance of meaningful relationships between teacher and student. The latter emphasis is conspicuously side-lined in policy documents.

In the light of these concerns, and influenced by my own teaching experience, my research project sets out to ‘unsettle the authority’ (Triantafillou & Moreira, 2005, p. 87) of the dominant discourse currently seeking to constitute the good teacher. Education policy literature that suggests that education policy discourses have become singularising and reductionist to the exclusion of the intangibles of teaching—for example, the embodied and embedded understandings that form the basis for professional skill and its development (Dall’Alba & Sandberg, 2006, p.383). Through this process, it can be claimed that parts of teaching practice, namely, those which do not pertain directly to measurable student outcomes, slip from view.

At the outset I acknowledge that for centuries governments have fashioned education policies based on a party-political perspective of what is in the community’s educational interests. Such discourses become dominant through the patterning and repeating of ‘general’ (policy) practices which are ‘intolerant’ of differing ‘local’ realities (Singleton and Law, 2012, p.9). Currently, dominant neo-liberal policy discourses are enshrined in policy documents, directives to schools, media releases and in media appearances by politicians. This thesis argues, however, that it is now imperative to at least try to reclaim and inflate, in the public sphere, a focus on the interdiscursivity—the interrelationship—between discourses of measurable outcomes and the relational, less tangible, but vitally important, affective components of good teaching practice. Accordingly, this thesis holds up to view a discursive dissonance between policy and practice discourses around the good teacher. This, in turn, begs the question as to how did this dissonance come about? As a response, consideration is given briefly to the differing ‘logics’ (Mol, 2008) that underpin these disparate discursive practices relating to the good teacher.
Moreover, with the aim of building on the relatively limited literature on teacher identity that specifically contrasts policy and practice (here teacher and student) discourses, this thesis examines a range of discourses on the good teacher, looking at both teacher identities and the discourses that shape them. A conclusion is reached that in order to avoid policy being ‘done to’ teachers rather than ‘done with’ them, a quantum leap now needs to be made in the thinking of policy makers (Hayes, Mills, Christie, & Lingard, 2006, p. 7).

I have chosen to begin this chapter with van Gogh’s optimistic painting of the blossoming almond tree since this research also entails a shift from my own (previously rather exasperated) perceptions of the practice of teaching, into an optimism that good teaching might be discursively transformed. Perhaps we may begin to think good teaching as being a highly complex professional practice, embracing as it does, the nuanced and intermingled components of the general and the local.

1.2 Context of Research Project

The context in which this study is situated is the Australian school sector, which, is subject to fluctuations in the discursive practices that construct teacher identity according to the contextual or historical focus of the times. As such, within the dominant discourses around education, teachers and teaching are not static; rather they alter through time. In this thesis, therefore, discourses around good teaching are explored in the context of the teacher’s present requirement to privilege the rules and practices of the governing institution, namely then the Commonwealth Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR).

Moreover, my interest in the so-called Education Revolution, the cornerstone of education policy in Australia, is necessarily contextualised by the education priorities and policy directions of previous decades. The policy was ‘conceived as a means of lifting Australia’s education standing and developing the nation’s skills base’. In 2008, early in its term of office, the Rudd Government established a new National Curriculum Board and a body called Skills Australia which was set up to ensure that skills training were directed at the needs of industry. In addition, the Government announced 20,000 new training places and opened applications for a $1 billion National Secondary Schools Computer Fund as well as a $2.5 billion Trade Training Centres in Schools program. As
part of the Education Revolution, the Australian State Governments or COAG (Council of Australian Governments), agreed to a comprehensive set of shared outcome targets and reform directions. The rationale behind the promotion of the Education Revolution can be viewed as timely and commendable both in terms of meeting industry demands for enhanced skills and education standards and in terms of increased equity in education opportunities for all students throughout the nation.

Correspondingly, however, the aspirational aspects of the so-called revolution were offset by the daunting practicalities of seeing the vision through, particularly the complex matter of improving education outcomes across the board. Certainly, however, at a time of economic downturn, the initiative termed Building the Education Revolution, was presented by the Government as a positive step since, according to the web-site, Government expenditure of $16.2 billion helped to improve school facilities across by funding around 23,600 different projects for around 9,500 schools.

From the outset, I note that accounts given of the changes in the identity and agency of teachers over time often focus on the level of power, creativity and autonomy a teacher may have in relation to the bureaucracy that oversees the delivery of a curriculum in the school setting. Therefore, I use the notion of teacher accountability specifically as it pertains to matters of perspective, values and beliefs around the function and responsibilities of the good teacher at a particular time and in a particular education setting.

In this sense, teacher evaluation and professional assessment policy is seen to have significant consequences for teachers’ working lives, since the daily practice of teaching is inseparable from the teacher’s individual and collective sense of ‘self’ in relation to policy discourses. It is not the intention of this project, however, to gauge the effect of various changes in policy priorities in education over time. Rather I emphasise, in a broad sense, the fact that attitudes towards the good teacher do shift over time. Thus, in order to understand current discourses around the good teacher in Australia, it is necessary to provide an historical perspective. Unquestionably, throughout the history of teaching and learning, opinions and judgements have been expressed as to what constitutes the good teacher. By examining both the events of recent decades in which discursive practices have varied, and the perspectives of those who experienced and recorded this process, it is
possible to appreciate the stages that have led to the current situation in which education is framed.

Prior to the 1960s, the fundamental characteristic of the traditionalist approach to teaching was to see the teacher as transmitter. That is, in schools generally, pupils were learning ‘whatever they are told to learn just because they are told to learn it’ (Silcock, 1999, p. 78). Subsequently, in the 1960s, a movement began towards the freeing up of the school curriculum and teaching styles and the sponsorship of progressive education. In general terms this approach to education involved open classrooms, a preference for cooperative learning, studies about being part of a society, whole language and experiential education.

The period from the 1960s to the 1980s saw an increase in the number of students staying on at secondary school and a move towards school-based examinations, whereby the use of external assessment was modified by teacher-based school assessment, with much more emphasis on ongoing assessment and moderation of standards by teacher peers in conjunction with external examinations by government authorities. Accordingly, the dismantling or partial dismantling of public examinations systems indicated a newfound trust by authorities in the professionalism of secondary school teachers (Burke and Spaull, 2001, p. 444). Indeed, by the early 1980s, the notion of ‘individuals in context’ had become popular (Seddon, 1995, p. 237). At its most sophisticated, the idea of individuals in context acknowledged teachers as individuals, as active agents, and therefore tended to stress interpretivist notions of teacher education, professional development and school improvement.

In the late 1980s, however, another kind of policy intervention began emerging in Australia, one which focused on the work of teachers as a social process where the key unit of analysis was ‘not the individual but practice’ (Seddon, 1995, p. 237). Seddon describes teachers within this social process as being either consciously or unconsciously, engaged in ‘social and political projects that have effects within and beyond the walls of the classrooms and the lives of individuals’ (1995, p. 237).

By the mid-1990s, a trend towards neo-liberalism, a term for the market-driven approach to economic and social policy, was emerging in education policy. Political practices and policies began using the language of markets, efficiency, consumer choice, transactional
thinking and individual autonomy. As O’Malley (1996, p. 194) notes in relation to risk management, neo-liberalism reinstates, in the free market, the notion of an energetic, enterprising and morally responsible individual and sets it against ‘the collectivization and social dependency said to be inherent in socialized risk-management techniques’.

Arguably this shifting of risk-management from governments and corporations onto individuals extends market logic into the realm of education. Thus, during the latter half of the 1990s, a new conception of teachers and their work was beginning to inform policy interventions. This neo-liberalism in education policy has culminated in a culture in schools of measurement, accountability and transparency and discourses that both disseminate and cultivate these education priorities.

1.3 Rationale for Research Project

In the context of the policy shifts outlined in the previous section, a discourse analytic approach to understanding constructions of the good teacher provides an explanation for the differences I saw as a teacher between what I knew was good teaching and the attempt by the education bureaucracy to impose external measures of good teaching. Thus, during a teaching career spanning a quarter of a century, there was often, for me, a feeling that the authoritative policy mode of formally outlining the roles and impact of teachers did not sit well with the daily concerns and lived experiences of practising teachers.² I do not mean that these contrasting discourses were foreign to each other. Rather, in the daily routine of my classroom teaching, policy matters for me at least, seemed detached, or otherworldly.

Nevertheless, based on the conviction that the work of the teacher in current times needs to be accountable, transparent and subject to market forces, the so-called Education Revolution in Australia has recently powered numerous education reforms. As such, the good teacher is currently being asked to assume a particular shape in keeping with what Biesta (2009, p. 34) refers to as the rise of ‘the measurement culture’. Biesta claims that this culture has had ‘a profound impact on educational practice, from the highest levels of educational policy at the national and supra-national levels down to the practices of local

² I am not addressing here the way teachers’ unions have had some success in galvanising support for industrial action over teachers’ pay and conditions in the previous half century.
schools and teachers’ (p. 36). However, rather than accepting the current singularising policy discourse around the good teacher, Biesta contends that we need to re-engage with what constitutes good education (and, by association, the good teacher) by exploring why we seem to have lost sight of ‘questions about values, purpose and the goodness’ of education (p. 36). Thus, as becomes evident in the concluding chapter of this thesis, Biesta’s scholarly and stimulating capacity to challenge the dominant discourse around measurement—by positioning it as too narrow—provides a platform for the discursive possibilities that I outline.

From a Foucauldian perspective, all discourses are enmeshed in power dynamics such that, like policy discourses, interpersonal interchanges are not outside discourse or power. In this context, this thesis posits that, until we understand fully how those who operate at the local level think about good teaching, an important aspect in our understanding of good education will remain a puzzle. Moreover, this thesis suggests that non-policy discourses around the good teacher—the complex and memorable interchanges that take place at a local level between teacher and student—may provide the balancing and hitherto overlooked perspective for policy.

Certainly, recent education writers indicate that the teacher is critical to successful student learning (Canfield & Hansen, 2002; Esquith, 2007; Hattie, 2009; Hughes, 2007; Kozol, 2007; Metcalfe & Game, 2006). However, by giving purposeful attention to critical, sociological commentators (e.g., Alexander, 2010a, 2010b; Apple, 2004, 2006, 2009, 2010; Ball, 1997, 1999b, 2003; Biesta, 2009; Stronach, 2010; Ravitch, 2010) it is apparent that the dominant policy focus on performance tends to marginalise, in policy terms, the importance of a teacher’s personal interactions with students. Yet it seems that a contrasting discourse, one that emphasises matters of ‘care’ (Palmer, 2008; Rompelman, 2002) is active and working below the policy radar, and that teachers and students, to varying degrees, currently think the good teacher in ways that sit outside the dominant policy discourse.

Accordingly, this thesis makes the case that a discursive dissonance has developed because society persists in thinking good teaching mainly through reference to putatively

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3 I intentionally use the term ‘putative’ (from the Latin putare, to think), meaning assumed, accepted to denote the way concepts are reputed to be true in common parlance.
policy language. In this light, this thesis questions whether the dominant discourse around measurement, outcomes and student results has now become more important, in policy discourses, than a focus on the positive, encouraging and equitable delivery of educational opportunities to students.

Furthermore, the argument is made in this thesis that, on the one hand, it is timely to rethink the good teacher because, without an emphasis on authentic, exemplary and breathed teaching skills and practices that facilitate good student learning (those that can be documented by appreciative students, for example), ‘beliefs that all students can learn’ soon dissolve into little more than rhetoric (Darling-Hammond, 2010, p. 214). A case is made on the other hand, that the difficulty for good teachers is that they are currently obliged to tune into two asymmetrical discourses about good teaching and do them both. Thus, in Australia, the teacher is currently positioned as both a foot soldier in the Australian Government’s Education Revolution and also, quite separately at the local level, as the one-off custodian of the development and care of the individual students whom they teach.

From the literature, the strongest detractors of neo-liberalism in education policy are those who see the limitations of what has been termed by Freire (1970) as ‘banker education’ (as cited in Senge et al., 2007, p. 20) whereby teachers deposit discrete pieces of information into students’ heads. It is also suggested, in terms of teacher and school accountability, that there is folly in believing that meaning resides in a piece of information ‘rather than in the context from which it has been extracted’ (Senge et al., 2007, p. 21). Indeed, it is becoming increasingly apparent that the neo-liberal approach to high-stakes testing has, as Ravitch recently put it, turned our schools into ‘testing factories’ (Ravitch, 2010, p. 1). Accordingly, this thesis examines the key commentaries about the current directions in education (e.g., Au, 2011; Stronach, 2010; Taubman, 2009; Webb, 2009).

Moreover, notwithstanding the work of numerous education writers who explore the social, emotional, moral and spiritual dimensions of teaching,4 it can be argued that, in current times, the active, emotional and embodied engagement of the teacher and the

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4 A comprehensive coverage of these writers is provided in the next chapter of this thesis.
students has been the focus of relatively limited research, in comparison with ‘macro’ research interest in the effects of policy investment in measurement and comparative student academic outcomes (Grek, 2009; Ozga, Dahler-Larsen, Segerholm, & Simola, 2011. As Nash (2000, p. 655) explains, however, through the lens of affect, “the emphasis is on practices\(^5\) that cannot adequately be spoken of, that words cannot capture, that texts cannot convey—on forms of experience and movement that are not only or never cognitive”.

The literature suggests that many prominent education commentators feel that ‘our society’s growing obsession with externals, including relentless and mindless standardised testing is a threat to the heart of authentic learning and living’ (Palmer, 2008, p. ix). Whilst some commentators desire a balanced school orientation that includes a meaningful focus on moral and spiritual dimensions (Crawford & Rossiter, 2006), others are keen to underscore the importance to students of social intelligence whereby a teacher is able to make a special connection through which, as Goleman (2006, p. 283) puts it, the sweet spot for achievement can be created. Moreover, Christensen’s (2008) contrastingly contentious call for ‘disruptive innovation’ in schools challenges schools’ ‘interdependent architectures’ which ‘force them to standardise the way they teach and test’ and asserts that standardisation ‘clashes with the need for customisation [for particular groups of students] in learning’ (p. 10).

Certainly, there is a body of literature on student voice (Flutter, 2007; Groundwater-Smith, 2005; Groundwater-Smith & Mockler, 2003b; Kriewaldt, 2009) in which valuable insights into how students feel about good teachers and good teaching have been analysed and documented. Such previous research is valuable in that it elicits the perspectives of students on matters of concern to them regarding their learning experiences. In this thesis, however, the particular sourcing of student thank-you letters (as well as the specific characteristics of the teacher data) provides a fresh opportunity to analyse student and teacher discourses in juxtaposition to the dominant policy discourse. Such a juxtaposition provides an opening for challenging policy writers’ inclination to focus predominantly on the measurable academic outcomes of students, namely the results of the Programme for

\(^5\) I interpret the term ‘practices’ here not in the sense of professional skills but rather as deeds, acts or gestures that are a feature of a particular classroom environment.
Chapter 1: Locating the Problem

International Student Assessment (PISA) studies and, more broadly, on the Australian National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) data.

In summary, this thesis proposes that the interrogation of current discourses around the good teacher is timely and relevant to policy makers, educational researchers and stakeholders in schools, including school governing bodies, school principals and administrators, teachers, students and parents. The international contribution of the thesis resides in its capacity to challenge aspects of the context of performativity and calculation within which education in a number of countries is set and consider their consequences most particularly for teachers and students.

1.4 The Research Questions and Key Assumptions

The primary aim of this research was to investigate the question of teacher identity in the current times whilst taking into account the Foucauldian idea that individual identity is not self-determining. The key assumption taken into the study concerns the character of the subjective self. This self does not exist because of the free will and autonomy of the individual. Rather, according to Foucauldian theorising, our identity is created through a system of socialisation over which we have relatively little control such that the individual looks out at the world with a vision that tends to reflect the surrounding ideological system (Oliver, 2010, p. 17).

My thesis asks the most basic of questions: How do we, and how ought we, talk (and think) about the good teacher? The primary research questions of the study were: (i) What discourses of the good teacher are circulating in education policy, practice and academic arenas? (ii) With specific attention to constructions of this teacher, what do the measurements and reporting that characterise contemporary education policy in Australia leave out or render invisible? (iii) What might be the consequences of these discourse omissions for teaching and learning, and what can be done to address these concerns?

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6 PISA is an internationally standardised assessment that was jointly developed by participating countries and is administered to 15-year-olds in schools in approximately 60 countries, including Australia. Tests are typically administered to between 4,500 and 10,000 students in each country.

7 In the design of this study, the decision was taken to limit my discourse analysis to that of a selection of politicians, teachers and students. Of related interest would be the discursive practices of parents, school leaders and members of the wider school community.
Chapter 1: Locating the Problem

1.5 Methodology: Structuring the Study

The argument that we live in a constructed world (Hartman, 2006) in which the constructed self, here the good teacher, makes meaning through the act of human exchange and interaction, is based on the Foucauldian premise that we do not discover knowledge but rather construct it collaboratively. Therefore Foucauldian analysis is well suited to helping educators and policy writers understand the discursive processes involved in designating someone as a good teacher. Accordingly, I explore the discursive practices that underpin how good teachers are positioned within education systems in ways that affect the teacher’s power and agency (Pennington, 2011).

Specifically the research methodology is guided by Foucault’s (1972/2002a) proposition that power resides in the dominant discourses of the time. Discourse analysis focuses on the notion that texts are embedded in recurring discursive practices for their production, circulation and reception. As a medium through which power relations produce speaking subjects (e.g., the good teacher), discourse is a formative social practice.

Therefore in this thesis, I trace the subject position or identity of the good teacher as it is constructed in texts and empirical material sourced from policy and practice domains. My study is particularly concerned with the emerging teacher self which is prescribed and categorised in the current neo-liberal emphasis on teacher output, as measured against nationalised testing regimes. As Pennington (2011) points out, when applying Foucauldian discourse theory to a workplace, discursive practices have a potentially dual character, since an understanding of how ‘agents impose disciplinary discursive practices’ (p.4) can also be effective in raising a consciousness of what is potentially more beneficial, discursively, in guiding professional practice.

Empirically, the research involves three purposefully selected sites: (i) samples of government policy material, e.g., major reports, recent media releases, interviews and speeches; (ii) samples of views on teaching as expressed by skilled teachers; and (iii) samples of unsolicited student material (thank-you cards and letters) provided by teachers. In each of the three sets of data, I initially take a range of texts and trace how assumptions are manifested in them and how a particular use of language may make these assumptions appear natural.
Chapter 1: Locating the Problem

In this research project, Sanguinetti’s (1999, 2000, 2005) groundbreaking work on discourse mapping provided methodological procedures through which I could distinguish the dominant education policy discourse—which I interpret as disproportionately concerned with *calculation*—from a juxtaposing discourse of *care*, which intermingles teacher and student perspectives. Moreover, by acknowledging that meanings of good practice are contested (Coffield & Edward, 2009, p. 379), an analysis of the contestation (and the interdiscursivity) between policy and non-policy discourses permits a challenge to education policy discourses (here through the purposeful foregrounding of a discourse of care) around the good teacher.

Based on Sanguinetti’s (1999) model of discourse mapping, my data analysis model allows the inconsistencies, ruptures or rifts between contesting discursive practices to be represented. In brief, this process involved the reading and rereading of collected statements contained within the data to ascertain the frequency or repetition of key phrases or terminology, which, in turn, indicated disparate discourses circulating within specific groups or being taken up by particular individuals. Accordingly, conclusions were drawn about the means through which differing discursive terrains position subjects. Importantly, discourse mapping (and Foucauldian discourse theory at large) allows for a discussion of the consequences or effects of discursive constructions of the good teacher and lends itself to drawing out implications for various education stakeholders including, potentially, education policy writers.

1.6 Situating the Research and the Researcher

Neuman (2006) makes the point that in postmodern research (of which discourse analysis of the kind utilised in this thesis is a part) results are never presented in a ‘detached and neutral way’ (p.104). Moreover, the characteristics of postmodern research are described as follows:

The researcher or author of a report should never be hidden when someone reads it; his or her presence needs to be unambiguously evident in the report…. Its value lies in telling a story that may stimulate experience within the people who read or encounter it. (p. 104)

Thus, in fashioning this thesis, I, along with the others who were involved in the research, actively *make* the outcomes of this research. Indeed, as the author of this thesis, I am not a
detached observer but, in a sense, have participated along with other individuals whose accounts are presented and analysed here. In terms of attempting to adopt a reflexive stance, it is important to note that this project emerged from personal, compelling and first-hand qualms about the way the Australian community currently configures or thinks the good teacher, especially as I observed this phenomenon at the conclusion of my 25-year teaching career. Indeed, the kinds of questions that initially prompted this research project were: Is the way we think the good teacher lacking or indeed plain wrong? Is it critically misrepresented? Might this represent a serious concern for both teachers and students and the profession in general? Is the contemporary teacher indeed defined by the omission of some vital components?

Quite early in my research journey, I was impressed by a remark by Dr Claire Aitchison (currently at the University of Western Sydney) in a discussion on doctoral research, that every thesis is a textual representation of the author’s identity and as such projects a unique ‘writerly’ voice situated in a specific historical, social and disciplinary context (C. Aitchison, personal communication, 4 November, 2010). This led me to contemplate the ways through which my unique ‘writerly’ voice might find expression and what might have influenced my outlook.

Prior to commencing this PhD research I enjoyed my career as a teacher and school administrator, most recently in the role as deputy principal of a Melbourne independent school. Throughout my career, however, I worked in government and non-government schools, coeducational and single sex schools, in regional areas and in city schools. These teaching experiences, in combination, have given me cause and opportunity to reflect upon what it means to teach well.

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8 According to Foucault, the individual identity is not self-determining. The subjective self does not exist because of the free will and autonomy of the individual. Rather, our identity is created through a system of socialisation over which we have relatively little control and the individual looks out at the world with a vision that tends to reflect the surrounding ideological system (Oliver, 2010, p. 17).

9 In Australia, school education comprises three sectors: government-run schools (state schools), non-government or ‘independent’ schools funded substantially by fees paid by parents, and Catholic schools which are run by the Catholic Church and require families to pay fees which are typically less than those of independent schools.
Consequently, throughout this thesis my teacher self surfaces and my biases emerge. It must be noted, however, that I do not believe that effective teaching should exist in opposition to policy discourses. Rather, I assert that these discourses should be challenged and modified to better reflect a more complex understanding of the good teacher and good teaching. Accordingly, in establishing my identity as writer of this thesis, I believe that there are three teacher selves at work here. Firstly, drawing on Ivanic’s (1998) notion that it is helpful to think of voice as social practice, I unavoidably disclose something of my autobiographical self (typified, perhaps, by my enthusiasm for teaching itself and for my beloved students). Secondly, I reveal my discoursal self—my representation of myself as researcher and writer in this text. Thirdly, I ultimately reveal my author self. This is the teacher self who has completed a long PhD research project, who has an authorial presence in the text and who is now poised to discuss a new knowledge pertaining to the consequences of the way we currently think the good teacher.

1.7 Thesis Structure

The following is a brief overview of the thesis Chapters 2-8.

Chapter 2 presents a range of literature, relevant to this study, involving the ways in which the good teacher is discussed. Drawing on a summary of education debates, I discuss thematically the major categories of the good teacher found in the literature including the critical education literature in which there is a predisposition to speak back to neo-liberal education policy. The review points to an opening through which to challenge the singularising tendencies of policy by juxtaposing other more nuanced and complex accounts of the good teacher and good teaching.

Chapter 3 clarifies the appropriateness and usefulness of Foucauldian discourse theorising as a methodological framework for the study. I discuss the development of discourse analysis as an overarching postmodern qualitative research approach. Following this, I outline my sources of data and methods of data collection and analysis, with particular emphasis on Sanguinetti’s (1999) methods for mapping discourses. Later I discuss issues concerning the rigour of the methods used and some ethical considerations attaching to the research. I conclude with an outline of the main methodological limitations.

Chapters 4, 5 and 6 present data on policy constructions of the good teacher, discourses circulating in practising teachers’ constructions of accomplished teaching, and an analysis
of student discourses around the good teacher, respectively. Each chapter gives a different account of how we subjectify teachers discursively.

Chapter 7 creates a connection between the literature reviewed in Chapter 2 and my data analyses in Chapters 4, 5 and 6, to answer the question: What discourses of the good teacher are circulating in education policy, in teaching and learning and amongst academics? As the data are treated in a discrete manner across the previous three chapters, an attempt is made to tease out interdiscursive threads.

This chapter finds that there are indeed two major discourses circulating, which I have chosen to call the discourse of ‘calculation’ and the discourse of ‘care’. The multiplicity of roles or teacher selves invites a discussion about the consequences for both teachers and current perceptions of the teacher’s work. The chapter finds that the tensions and the seeming interdiscursivity between the two pave the way for rethinking the good teacher in the future. These discourses of calculation and care, however, are not regarded as one-dimensional and monolithic. In other words, they are not conceived as alternative binaries. Rather, a case is made that different manifestations of each of these discourses exist.

Chapter 8 explores the possibility of a more nuanced discourse around the good teacher that embraces the calculable and the immeasurable aspects of quality teaching. It reflects upon the particular benefits of a discursive shift to current and future good teachers, and, more importantly, to their students. Consideration is given to the idea that a discursive shift would mean a shift within certain power relations—in this case involving the current neo-liberal education policy, and consequently a shift in certain truth claims which have led to the marginalisation, within policy discourses, of knowledges around teacher care. The chapter concludes with some suggestions for changed discursive practices around the good teacher.
Chapter 2:
Framing the Research Study

‘Library’, 1969, Jacob Lawrence.

The history of educational theory is marked by opposition between the idea that education development is development from within and that it is formation from without; that it is based upon natural endowments and that education is a process of overcoming natural inclination and substituting in its place habits acquired under external pressure (Dewey, 1997, p.19).

2.1 Introduction

I have chosen to begin this chapter with Lawrence’s vibrant and busy painting because I am buoyed by the potential of the literature on the good teacher—both the old and the new—being a dynamic force in education reform. This literature review is situated within the discourses and practices of neo-liberal government policies for education in Australian schools. Linked to the purpose of this study, which is to explore the question of how we think the good teacher in current times, this chapter interrogates the literature for commentary on the ways the good teacher is configured, represented or constituted. Here, drawing on Foucauldian discourse theory, which is explained in full in Chapter 3, I use the term constituted to mean assembled, put together or shaped by what is currently being said (or left unsaid) in the field of education.
I begin the chapter by reviewing key trends in education policy and ideology, namely the dominant neo-liberalism. Three types of research literature are summarised: policy documents, education literature and popular literature.

2.2 Policy Changes in Education in Recent Times

In Australia, the so-called Education Revolution introduced by the Rudd Government in 2007 and continued now under the Gillard Government has seen an escalation in debate about ideological perspectives, philosophies and values. Thus, as Crawford and O’Neill (2010) note, being a teacher during the first decade of the twenty-first century is very different to what it was like during the last decade of the twentieth century. In contrast to the latter, the first decade of the 21st century can be seen as marked by trends towards managerialism through which education policy textually manufactures consent and through which policy texts construct ‘social identity and social actions and power relation with others’ (Mulderrig, 2011, p. 575).

Noting particularly the current trend for neo-liberal governments to use the inclusive ‘we’ in policy texts, Mulderrig (2011, p. 575)—writing in Britain, but on a topic that has relevance for contemporary Australia—claims that ‘the semantics of this pronoun allow a government to elide its own identity with that of the public, and thereby make claims on behalf of the entire nation’. Therefore a case is made for a more subtle form of hegemony in education policy, one that allows education policy to negotiate the future of education on the basis of a different relationship with the wider socio-economic order. As Mulderrig argues, the first decade of the 21st century has established a set of managerial power relations in education that have drawn ‘unsatisfactory lines of individual and collective responsibility’ (2011, p. 575).

2.3 Neo-liberalism in Education

The emergence of neo-liberalism has been characterised by the transformation of the administrative state, namely, a shift from a state that assumes responsibility for the well-being of the individual as well as the economy, to a state that values economic prosperity over individual well-being and has given power to global corporations. Neo-liberal reform is arguably designed to install apparatuses and knowledges through which individuals are configured as the productive entrepreneurs of their lives (Davies & Bansel, 2007). As Davies (2005, p.4) argues, ‘neo-liberal discourse…has its own set of
values that are far from benign’. This is because what is understood as possible and desirable is shaped by ‘the obsessive regulatory practices of government’.

For Fairclough (2003), the practice of articulating a global market as the new global order is partly a language product. That is, it is achieved through the discursive practices of government. Similarly, for Davies and Bansel (2007, p. 253), neo-liberal discourse constitutes a set of relations among government, society and the individual:

This [discursive relationship] impacts not only on the terms [under] which subjects are governed, but also on the terms [under] which they understand and articulate themselves, their lives, their opportunities and desires. At the same time, discourses of commonsense, inevitability and naturalness obscure the ambitions, policies and practices of government through which they both emerge and circulate.

Thus, taking an international view of current neo-liberal education policies, Michael Apple, an esteemed American critical sociologist, has described the significance of such policy changes as a ‘complex and at times contradictory project of conservative modernism [which] has altered the terrain of education’ (Apple, 2009, p. 239). Interestingly, writing in the UK context, Stronach (2010, p. 1) claims that there are now ‘hypernarratives’, loaded with political intent (‘education for the economic, an education that fits the needs of global capitalism, and the “need” for international competitiveness’).

In the Australian context, Lingard (2010, p. 136) claims that:

[T]he global policy convergence in schooling has seen the economisation of schooling policy, the emergence of human capital and productivity rationales as meta-policy in education, and new accountabilities, including high-stakes testing and policy, as numbers, with both global and national features.

Accordingly, my review of the literature attempts to understand and comment upon assertions around the congealed or clotted dominant educational policy discourses made by some education writers.

2.4 Key Categories of ‘Good Teacher’ Research Literature

Drawing on Marcus Weaver-Hightower’s (2003) literature review in his article ‘The Boy Turn’ in Research on Gender and Education, I have sought to include works which typify
a way of thinking, speaking and writing about the good teacher in current times, while conceding that I have not covered all recent works that invoke notions of the good teacher. I have undertaken to represent the selected literatures in Table 2.2 below, accompanied by brief notations concerning their characteristics, points of difference and representative examples.
Table 2.1: Key categories of ‘good teacher’ research literature (adapted from Weaver-Hightower, 2003, p. 474)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Representative Examples</th>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Policy Literature</td>
<td>Declarations of government ‘goals’ for education in Australia. Other policy documents:</td>
<td>Aspirational and goal-oriented</td>
<td>Strong sense of reform and positive action</td>
<td>Prone to economic arguments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>media releases, political speeches and interviews, government websites etc.</td>
<td>Linked to current policy directions</td>
<td>Appeals to nationalism and pride</td>
<td>Prone to political persuasion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Formal and ‘persuasive’ in tone</td>
<td>Responsive to public interest in statistics and data</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education Literature</td>
<td>Academic publications: research papers, journal articles and books with six main</td>
<td>Examines how politicians, academics, schools and society conceive of good</td>
<td>Theorisation of policy using education theory</td>
<td>Less accessible language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>perspectives: (i) Goodness in practice: Biesta 2007a, 2007b, 2007c, 2009</td>
<td>teaching advice and recommendations for policy reform</td>
<td>Responsive to practitioner and public concerns</td>
<td>Rhetorical works, tend to neglect academic side of schooling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(iii) Identity concerns: Day 2004, 2012; Hayes et al., 2006; Shulman, 2005;</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>(iv) Affect in education: Boler, 1999; Rompelman, 2002; Scanlon, 2004; Zembylas, 2005,</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2007a, 2007b; (v) Catering for individual intelligences (Gardner, 1999, 2006)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### Chapter 2: Framing the Research Study

#### Category Representative Examples

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Popular Literature</th>
<th>Books and films viewed by mass audiences both in Australia and internationally: e.g. <em>Dead Poets Society</em>, <em>To Sir with Love</em>, <em>To Be and To Have</em></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

#### Characteristics

| Fictional accounts of teachers’ experiences often in challenging school contexts |

#### Strengths

| Accessible language Widely available |

#### Weaknesses

| Frequently essentialist Prone to sentimentalising Generally either portrays teachers as heroes or satirises their incompetence. |

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### 2.5 Australian Government Policy Literature

The Adelaide Declaration on National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-First Century (1999) and the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians (2008)\(^{10}\) are key policy documents, shaping the direction being taken within Australian schools. This broad policy consensus is then reflected in speeches by politicians, in media releases, in interviews and newspaper articles. These declaration documents are seminal in that they are both representative and aspirational. For example, the Adelaide Declaration on National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-First Century asserts that schooling should develop fully the talents and capacities of all students, that students should have attained high standards of knowledge, gaining skills and understanding through a comprehensive and balanced curriculum, and that schooling should be socially just. Arguably these goals are wide-ranging in their scope and include an ethical component by virtue of the reference to social justice.

Interestingly, the Australian Ministerial Council on Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs (MCEECDYA) developed a ‘Four Year Plan’ (2009–2012) to accompany the Melbourne Declaration. Their plan, as presented on the MCEECDYA website, outlines the key strategies and initiatives Australian governments

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\(^{10}\) On 5 December 2008, State, Territory and Commonwealth Ministers of Education meeting as the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs—the earlier incarnation of MCEECDYA, now the Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood (SCSEEC)—released the ‘Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians’ which sets the direction for Australian schooling for the next 10 years. The goals were developed by Education Ministers, in collaboration with the Catholic and independent school sectors, following public consultation on the draft declaration. The ‘Melbourne Declaration’ supersedes ‘The Adelaide Declaration’ released in 1999.
will undertake in order to support the achievement of the educational goals for young Australians: developing stronger partnerships, supporting quality teaching and school leadership, strengthening early childhood education, enhancing middle-years development, supporting senior years of schooling and youth transitions, and promoting world-class curriculum and assessment.

The preambles of both declarations indicate the thinking of the Australian governments at the time. For example, the Adelaide Declaration states that Australia’s future ‘depends upon each citizen having the necessary knowledge, understanding, skills and values for a productive and rewarding life in an educated, just and open society’ and that ‘high quality’ schooling is central to achieving this vision (p.1). Through an emphasis on ‘explicit and defensible standards that guide improvement in students’ levels of educational achievement’, the writers of the Adelaide Declaration claim that the effectiveness, efficiency and equity of schooling can be measured and evaluated (p.1). The following excerpt gives an indication of the discourses taken up by these policy writers:

Governments set the public policies that foster the pursuit of excellence, enable a diverse range of educational choices and aspirations, safeguard the entitlement of all young people to high quality schooling, promote the economic use of public resources, and uphold the contribution of schooling to a socially cohesive and culturally rich society…These national goals provide a basis for investment in schooling to enable all young people to engage effectively with an increasingly complex world. (p.1)

The stated goals of the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians are that Australian schooling should promote ‘equity and excellence’ (p. 7) such that all young Australians become ‘successful learners’ (p. 8), ‘confident and creative individuals’ (p. 8) and ‘active and informed citizens’ (p. 8). On this point, it is interesting to note the tension between ‘promoting equity and excellence’ and the shifts that have occurred as part of the current Labor Government’s implementation of their Education Revolution, specifically the introduction of NAPLAN testing and the My School website. A detailed analysis of the particular discourses taken up in these policy directives is provided in Chapter 4.
Chapter 2: Framing the Research Study

The preamble of the Melbourne Declaration claims that ‘Australia’s capacity to provide a high quality of life for all will depend on the ability to compete in the global economy on knowledge and innovation’ (p. 4). Specifically, it states that,

Globalisation and technological change are placing greater demands on education and skill development in Australia and the nature of jobs available to young Australians is changing faster than ever. Skilled jobs now dominate jobs growth and people with university or vocational education and training qualifications fare much better in the employment market than early school leavers. To maximise their opportunities for healthy, productive and rewarding futures, Australia’s young people must be encouraged not only to complete secondary education, but also to proceed into further training or education. (p.1)

Acknowledging that, for practical reasons, only small sections of these documents are provided here, the meanings made by these aspirational texts largely pertain to Australia’s role in the global economy and the importance of education in relation to skill acquisition, jobs, training and the employment market.

I conclude this section of the review by noting that within the policy material there is typically a strong sense of reform and aspiration for positive action. The ideas put forward often appeal to nationalism and pride in government achievements. This policy material purports to be responsive to public interest and frequently uses statistical data to mount an argument. It is prone to economistic arguments and appears intent upon political persuasion.

2.6 Education Literature

In contrast to the policy literature, the education literature takes a scholarly approach to the examination of the good teacher. Typically it provides a broad-ranging understanding of policy and education theory, and is often responsive to practitioner and public concerns. This literature can also inform and provide advice and recommendations for policy reform.

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11 These quotations and the more substantial excerpt are taken from pages 4 - 8 of the electronic print-out of the Melbourne Declaration (2008).
There is a considerable diversity in approaches taken by education researchers. Given the purposes of this study, I have chosen to focus generally on scholars from a critical tradition. In this respect, I draw on scholars such as Apple (2004, 2006, 2009, 2010) and Ball (1990, 1997, 1999a, 1999b, 2003, 2008, 2012a, 2012b), whose main areas of interest are in education policy analysis. In declaring their critical approach, such writers provide empirical evidence to deliberately challenge prevailing power relations. By making this choice, I have not focused on other traditions of scholarship, such as those of a more positivist persuasion (Berliner, 2002; Borko & Livingston, 1990; Hattie, 2009).

There has been some effort made within the educational literature to account for and explore the moral and spiritual dimensions of teaching (Crawford & Rossiter, 2006; Goleman, 2006; Senge et al., 2007). The importance of meeting the diversity of human needs with high levels of student engagement and positive relationships (McBurney-Fry, 2002; Maslow, 1968; Schlechty, 2001) has been well documented, as has managing student behaviour (Groundwater-Smith, Mitchell, & Mockler, 2007) and higher order thinking (Ivie, 1998; Kincheloe, Steinberg & Tippens, 1992). That is to say, scholarly accounts of good teaching have been diverse in approach. This study is situated largely within recent social theory and thus this review gives primary attention to research evidence which is philosophically and socially framed and informed.

### 2.6.1 Goodness in Practice

The education literature includes works whose focus provides a philosophical perspective on how society is affected by understandings of professional practice and, most especially, by notions of the ‘good’ in practice. As Santoro, (2011, para 2) explains:

> The moral rewards of teaching are activated when educators feel that they are doing what is right in terms of one’s students, the teaching profession, and themselves. The moral rewards … encompass the moral and ethical dimensions of teaching. The ethical dimension involves teachers pursuing the good life in their professional and personal endeavors.

I introduce Mol’s (2008) notion of goodness in practice here in order to foreground Gert Biesta’s (2009) challenging philosophical insistence that we ought now ‘reconnect with the question of purpose in education’, particularly given a recent tendency to focus discussions about education ‘almost exclusively on the measurement and comparison of
educational outcomes’ (p. 33). For present purposes, what is important is Biesta’s challenge to the very way the new language of learning has made it more difficult to ask questions about the content, purpose and direction of education (p. 39).

Taking a philosophical perspective on education in the current times, Biesta suggests:

What is disappearing from the horizon…is a recognition that it also matters what pupils and students learn and what they learn it for—that it matters, for example what kinds of citizens they are supposed to become and what kind of democracy this is supposed to bring about…and that, for this reason, education can and in a certain sense even ought to be difficult and challenging rather than… just (depicted as) a smooth process which aims to meet the supposed ‘need’ of the learner.

Moreover, without explicitly stating a particular view about the ‘aims and ends of education’, Biesta (2009) advocates that society must now tackle the broad questions as to what constitutes good education (read good teaching) head on, otherwise ‘we run the risk that statistics and league tables will make these decisions for us’ (p. 44). Interestingly, Biesta claims that what should be central to education considerations is the meaning of ‘good’ education rather than a concern for ‘effective’ education or for learning as such. Other research of a philosophical nature from within the field of education includes that of Higgins (2011) and Pring (2001). Like Biesta, Higgins and Pring provide an ontological basis for examining the categories of literature that follow. That is to say, by providing a brief philosophical overview of these philosophical writers in the context of current Australian education priorities, I have introduced an important perspective on how the good teacher might be otherwise considered.

2.7 Policy Concerns

This section of the literature review provides other perceptions of the assumptions that underpin, for example, the Four Year Plan adopted by the Australian governments mentioned above. Given its extraordinary scope and detailed commentary on educational matters, I have chosen to focus on a study of the effectiveness of similar policies in
England, contained in the Cambridge Primary School Review,\textsuperscript{12} entitled \textit{Children, their World, their Education}.\textsuperscript{13}

This Review was conducted over four years by Cambridge University with funding from private sources. It provides a critique of two decades of government-led reform and was undertaken under the leadership of Professor Robin Alexander, who is currently Emeritus Professor of Education at the University of Warwick in the UK. The report, published in 2010, looked at a wide range of issues affecting primary school education, including teachers, their expertise, assessment and high-stakes testing. The Review provides a useful reference for my research into the good teacher in contemporary times since Alexander’s team of 70 researchers evidently processed an exhaustive array of national and international evidence for its inquiry.

Specifically, the Review offers a perspective on teacher ‘expertise’ which reflects recognition of the central importance of the affective components of teaching. (Alexander, 2010a, p. 414). The Review notes that ‘professional expertise is dynamic, experiential and changing rather than static’ (p.430) and it challenges the validity of the government’s standards in the UK as being ‘context neutral, whereas research stresses the power of context’ (p. 430).

Indeed, in the final report and recommendations, the Review addresses what it terms ‘the discourses of power’ in some detail. In particular, it emphasises ‘that:

\begin{quote}
Discourse is ‘situated’…. Teachers invoke a highly particular world which is bounded for most of the time by the culture, routines and challenges— always immediate, often intense and demanding—of the schools in which they work. This inevitably and necessarily, is very different from the world of the researcher who is interested in uncovering patterns, similarities and differences, both within and across schools and among populations of teachers and children, and in devising or adapting theories to make sense of what he or she finds. (p. 21)
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{12} For the purposes of this thesis I have taken the decision that, although the entire focus of this Review is primary education, and notwithstanding the particular considerations of secondary education, it can be assumed that much of the findings of the Review can be extended to schools in general.

\textsuperscript{13} As far as I am aware there is no comparable, privately-funded document specifically relating to the Australian context.
Interestingly, Alexander has subsequently commented more candidly on the UK government’s determination to measure output which constrains the scope of teacher’s influence on student learning. He has claimed that teachers experienced a documentation deluge and what he termed ring-fenced professional development programs, and that the argument that performance standards for teachers are helpful runs counter to reality.

Furthermore, Alexander suggests, in the context of policy textually manufacturing consent, that current UK government policies assume that what the Government has prioritised is what the public actually wants and represents. Thus, Alexander claims there are currently three negative discourses prevalent in government education discourses, namely the discourse of ‘dichotomy’, the discourse of ‘derision’ and the discourse of ‘myth’. It is claimed in addition that policy discourses in general—here I include those identified by Alexander—are powerful because, as Mulderrig (2011, p. 575) suggests, they allow the discourse of consent to appear to speak on behalf of all citizens.

Moreover, Alexander (2010a) suggests that there has been a ‘homeliness and improvisatory quality’ to what is taught in schools, a deficiency that occurs when teaching is characterised by a limited understanding of how students learn (p. 413).

To teach well surely dictates an understanding of how the learner comes to know, in order that the key pedagogical notion of ‘scaffolding’ can be realised and new knowledge can be more speedily and securely assimilated to what the pupil already knows. (p. 413)

Challenging the presumption that government ‘support’ will advance this aim, the Review notes that forcing teachers to operate within set strategies can depress standards because teacher talent is suppressed. It is conceded that a framework for educational reform is acceptable, but not at the expense of diminishing the best teachers. Moreover, according to the Review, no single assessment procedure, including statutory assessment,

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14 These comments were made as part of the Miegunyah Distinguished Visiting Fellowship Program 2010 Public lecture, Wednesday 10 March 2010, ‘The Perils of policy: Success, amnesia and collateral damage in systemic educational reform’.

15 This is explained by Alexander as a simple choice between standpoints that are presumed to be mutually exclusive, e.g., ‘process versus content’, ‘management versus leadership’, ‘teaching versus learning’. (These comments were also made as part of the Miegunyah Distinguished Visiting Fellowship Program 2010 Public lecture, Wednesday 10 March 2010, ‘The Perils of policy: Success, amnesia and collateral damage in systemic educational reform’).
should be expected to perform both formative and summative functions. Furthermore, the assessment for learning ‘should not be coupled with assessment for accountability’ (Alexander, p. 498). Arguably, Australia’s current approach, centred around standardised testing, conflicts with the Review’s finding.

A more intense and acerbic critique of the global discourses that both policy and research typically present is provided by Ian Stronach, Professor of Education at Manchester Metropolitan University. Stronach asserts that the inflated hyper-narratives originating from fake economic footings are insane and dangerous. Indeed, Stronach’s (2010) book is entitled, *Globalizing education, educating the local: How method made us mad* (emphasis added). Stronach, Corbin, McNamara, Stark and Warneet (2002) claimed some years earlier that the teacher is located in ‘a complicated nexus between policy, ideology and practice’ such that politically a move is now required towards ‘a more nuanced account of professional identities, stressing the local, situated and indeterminable nature of professional practice, and the inescapable dimensions of trust, diversity and creativity’ (Stronach et al., 2002, p. 109).

Indeed, Stronach’s (2010, p.1) castigating of the mania around the ‘globalising nature of education in the postmodern’ indicates the necessity for ‘a relocated education and educational research to break away from the global discourses that both policy and research conventionally put forward’. Stronach claims that we should seek to educate the local and offer more transformative narratives (p. 1).

Thus, since this thesis interrogates the current configuring of the good teacher, it is interesting to note that Stronach (2010) refers to ‘shards of self-accounting’ and ‘mini-narratives of identification’ which are unstable, shifting, sometimes contradictory or expressed as conflicts, and which, in fact, ‘belie the professional as type’ (p.75). He lists mini-narratives in the following way: teacher as recollected pupil, teacher as pressured individual, the subject specialist, the person/teacher that I am, the socialised apprentice, the coerced innovator, the convinced professional, professional critic, sceptical pragmatist, etc. (Stronach, 2010, p. 75). It is suggested that ultimately, despite the task of the teacher professional being an ambiguous one, it is nevertheless beneficial to focus attention on the ‘local articulation of the role’, rather than becoming caught up in the dilemmas posed in trying to reconcile tensions between ‘accountability, trust, risk and professional excellence’ (p. 72).
As already mentioned, Michael Apple is an important US figure in critical education theory, one who approaches his education research from the perspective that his commentary is an ethical and political act. As such, Apple is conscious of those who are marginalised in society and who do not always have the benefits of a more privileged group. Specifically, Apple has articulated the disquiet felt by many educators (whom he refers to as critical scholars or activists in education) who, in the face of neo-liberalism, have amplified the moral core of a teacher’s role so that they may engage in ‘the crucial debates about the means and ends of our educational institutions, about their connections to larger institutions and power relations, and what our responses to these relations should be’ (Apple, 2009, p. 239). Apple observes that the movements surrounding conservative modernisation may be wrong, not right, and that they may, in fact, ‘stifle or trivialize’ (p. 250) a vision of democracy that is based on the common good.

Furthermore, it is helpful here to mention the work of fellow American, Diane Ravitch, whose recent academic focus has been on the impact of socio-economic problems on the quality of teaching and learning in US public schools. In 2010 Ravitch published a book entitled *The Death and Life of the Great American School System*, with the subtitle ‘How Testing and Choice are Undermining Education’. In acknowledging that she had formerly worked to implement the Bush administration’s ‘No Child Left Behind’ reform agenda, Ravitch now asserts that the current evidence about these reforms has changed her former views. Indeed she now states that the previous strategies of market reform and high-stakes testing are not only mistaken but are corrupting educational values. Ravitch remembers her own inspiring Literature teacher, Mrs Ratcliff, and wonders whether in the current times a teacher like Mrs Ratcliff would be ‘stifled, not only by the data mania of her supervisors, but by the jargon…and the hostility to her manner of teaching that now prevails in our schools’ (Ravitch, 2010, p. 194).

### 2.8 Teacher ‘Identity’/Subjectivity’ Concerns

Of relevance, also, in education writing is the concept of teacher identity. In chapter 3 consideration is given, from the methodological perspective chosen for this thesis, to the distinction between the terms ‘identity’ and ‘subjectivity’ as they relate to the way teachers see or ‘produce’ themselves discursively themselves. As I will discuss in chapter 3, the term subjectivity, that is to say how ‘subjects’ are formed, signals not only to
individual idiosyncrasies but to ‘the range of influences, practices, experiences that combine’ McLeod & Yates, 2006, p.38) to produce the contemporary teacher.

In this section of the thesis, however, I review the literature in which teacher identity refers to the ways in which the teacher sees his or her role in society and also how that particular identity or ‘self’ is perceived by students in a specific education setting. Needless to say, it is taken that these perceptions are discursively shaped and socially constructed. In drawing attention to teacher identity, I acknowledge a key assumption underpinning my study, namely that the reform process in education, in particular the so-called Education Revolution in Australia, is changing or shifting the identity of teachers in Australian schools.

For human and social theorists, the notion of self, the subject and subjectivity has been the focus of an extensive critique (Bernstein, 1996; Du Gay, 1996; Giddens, 1991; Mansfield, 2000; Rose, 1990; Young, 2009). The production and governance of subjectivity is embedded in policy reform agendas of contemporary education. Thus, education commentators (e.g., Chappell & Johnson, 2003) see identity and the identity-making of educational practitioners in their being asked to do things differently in the workplace and implement working practices in line with emerging policy changes and policy directives. Indeed, there has been a great deal written about individual identity over the years and how it impacts and plays out in people’s professional and daily lives (see, for example, McLeod and Yates, 2006).

Moreover, Hayes et al. (2006) claim that there is a strong sociological argument for foregrounding teacher identity and that it is now imperative to hold the good teacher up to view by ‘engag[ing] policy makers in debates about classroom practice, so that learning in its fullest meaning is given a central place in the educational policy landscape from which it is often absent’ (p. 6). It is argued that in order for the pervasive pedagogies of our times to be productive, teachers and their practices should be at the centre of educational policy (p. 6). In this context Hayes et al. see that, in order to avoid policy being ‘done to’ teachers rather than ‘done with’ them, a quantum leap now needs to be made in the thinking of policy makers:

Top-down imposed change works with a different logic of practice from that of classroom teaching, and pedagogical considerations are all too often absent. We
suggest that more trust of teachers and more support for schools are needed in contemporary educational policy so as to constitute schools as reflective and inclusive communities of practice. (Hayes et al., p. 7)

Moreover, implicit in the conclusions reached by Hayes et al. (2006) is the idea that policy makers involved in the regulation of pedagogies who express a desire for the achievement of outcomes ‘most often articulated in statements about the purposes of schooling’ apparently do not have a fully formed view of teacher identity. Paradoxically, ‘the practices [policy makers] encourage often work against the achievement of high-level intellectual outcomes for all’ (p. 7).

In addition, the work of Ritchhart, Palmer, Church and Tishman (2006) suggests that there are dimensions to the good teacher’s identity that link ‘the cultural forces involved in learning’ with the thinking ‘modelled’ by a classroom teacher and in classroom routines (p. 1). The notion of a shifting discourse regarding the actions of a good teacher is explored in the reference Ritchhart et al. make to the language used in the classroom and the opportunities that are created by the teacher to form a ‘thinking’ environment. Thus, through the epistemic messages embedded in the routines, both students and teachers come to view and approach thinking and learning differently as a result of using these routines (p. 41).

Shulman (2005, p. 52) enriches notions of the identity of the good teacher by constructing teachers as specialists who exhibit ‘signature pedagogies’ in their profession, claiming that people intuitively know what signature pedagogies are. He argues that such pedagogical signatures illustrate ‘the personality, disposition and cultures’ (p. 53) of particular educational fields. Analysing the ways in which pedagogies operate at all levels of education, Shulman finds that:

Professional education is not education for understanding alone; it is preparation for accomplished and responsible actors in the service of others. It is preparation for ‘good work’. (p. 53)

Shulman (2005) explains that we must view a signature pedagogy as three-dimensional:

It has a surface structure which consists of concrete, operational acts of teaching and learning, of showing and demonstrating, of questioning and answering, of interacting
and withholding, of approaching and withdrawing. Any signature pedagogy also has a deep structure, a set of assumptions about how best to impart a certain body of knowledge and know-how. And it has an implicit structure, a moral dimension that comprises a set of beliefs about professional attitudes, values, and dispositions. (p. 57)

Further, Shulman (2005, p. 57) asserts that signature pedagogy in education is formed by pedagogies of uncertainty:

They render classroom settings unpredictable and surprising, raising the stakes for both students and instructors. Interestingly, learning to deal with uncertainty in the classroom models one of the most crucial aspects of professionalism, namely, the ability to make judgements under uncertainty…

Teachers must manage levels of anxiety so that teaching produces learning rather than paralysing the participants with terror. When the emotional content of learning is well sustained, we have a real possibility of pedagogies of formation—experiences of teaching and learning that can influence the values, dispositions, and characters of those who learn. And when these experiences are interactive rather than individual, when they embody the pervasive culture of learning within the field, they offer even more opportunity for character formation (p. 58).

A Hong Kong Polytechnic University study carried out by Kember, Kwan, and Ledesma (2001) is worth noting. It constructs the teacher’s identity with respect to the transmissive and/or facilitative roles of the tertiary teachers in their dealings with students. Through an analysis of the views and the actual strategies used by the university lecturers, Kember et al. found that the lecturers discursively position themselves as either transmissive or facilitative. Further they found that:

Cross-tabulation of the teaching conceptions of the individual lecturers...showed that those holding a transmissive conception tended to cater for the weakness of their students. Those perceiving teaching as facilitating learning were more likely to try to remediate the weaknesses of their students. (p. 393)
Although this study was undertaken in the context of a university setting outside Australia,\textsuperscript{16} there is a subtle but important conclusion that two main discursive practices construct the good teacher. Indeed, the impact of these contrasting discourses led Kember et al. (2001, p. 404) to recommend discourses of facilitation over discourses of transmission:

> It could be argued that quality mechanisms should act to ensure that lecturers do at least try to configure their teaching to the characteristics of their students. Using the same teaching approach irrespective of the nature of the students surely cannot be seen as good practice... A further position is that teaching should strive to remediate students’ weaknesses.

Other scholars have focused on the fact that teaching involves a great deal of emotional work, and that the current neo-liberal discursive practices put recognition of such work at systemic risk (Connell, 2009; Hebson, Ernshaw & Marchinson, 2007). As Connell (2009, p. 221) explains:

> Even the single-teacher classroom is part of a structured institution, the school, and the teacher is part of a local staff. School and staff are parts of larger institutional systems and workforces. The familiar ‘outcomes’ of education are strongly defined by this structured environment, including the very measures of student performance used to assess individual teachers. Standardised tests of educational achievement are, to a striking degree, artefacts of an institutional system set up to create competition and difference.

Correspondingly, in my description of discourses of calculation, I see the boundaries being drawn between them and discourses of care by what Ball (2003) identifies as instrumentalism. The key discursive patterns concern performance (performativity), outputs/outcomes and accountability. Ball (1999b, p. 189) states:

> In relation to the economy, education is expected to provide particular and general skills required by capital and to graduate students who are ‘fit for work’ in a whole

\textsuperscript{16}Anecdotally, I am aware that the ethos in many Asian education institutions is very much focused on academic outcomes and students would prefer not to be given choices but wish instead to be given a single ‘correct’ answer.
variety of ways… Performativity plays a particular role in reorientating education, educational institutions and students to the competitive needs of the economy.

Moreover, a salient case in point, pertaining to the discursive subjugation of certain knowledges, is provided by Fowler and Lee (2007). Their study investigated the ways in which the production of formal and public discourses can make a casualty of ‘informal knowledges that come directly from…experience and cultural transmission in local settings and everyday living’ (p. 185). Although Fowler and Lee are not investigating teaching and learning in schools, they nevertheless problematise the current tendency to privilege ‘evidence-based’ scientific knowledge, by highlighting the consequential effects of ‘discrediting embodied, informal and culturally located ways of knowing and learning’ (p. 181). Their investigation of how a young woman, Sophie (a midwife and specialist lactation consultant), learns about breastfeeding her first baby, juxtaposes what Fowler and Lee refer to as (i) knowledge about breastfeeding and (ii) learning to breastfeed. According to the study, initially Sophie was confident in her knowledge about breastfeeding:

[B]oth the scientific and natural discourses of breastfeeding appear to have provided ‘regimes of truth’ (Foucault, 1980) that do not encourage questioning of her knowledge or expression of uncertainty due to lack of direct experience of breastfeeding. (Fowler & Lee, 2007, p. 186)

As time goes by, Sophie’s experience causes her to ‘shift to a new position of knowing’ and, as Fowler and Lee explain, a ‘more complex framework for making meaning is constructed, which is a blend of existing professional knowledge and newly gained somatic knowing-through-experience’ (Fowler & Lee, 2007, p. 188).

I refer to this study here as it provides an illustration of the tension between differing kinds of ‘knowing’. As several concerned commentators (for example, Alexander, 2010a; Biesta, 2009; Connell, 2009; Ritchhart et al., 2006; Robinson, 2009) note, the gap has widened too far between ‘professional knowledge’ and the knowledge gained through ‘lived’ experience—for students, the lived interaction in the classroom with the teacher.

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17 Fowler and Lee later refer to the ‘pain and distress that [Sophie] experiences either in labour or in her early breastfeeding attempts’ (p. 188).
A further aspect of the teacher’s lived experience, which assists in the understanding of the construction of the good teacher, has to do with the identification of the importance of kindness in the learning process. Clegg and Rowland (2010) make the point that kindness (not to be confused with ‘emotion’ or ‘due care’) is located philosophically in ‘personal values and with a concern for lay normativity’ (p. 719). In keeping with what some of the student letters demonstrate, Clegg and Rowland suggest that kindness in teaching is commonplace, yet ‘unremarked’, and furthermore, that giving attention to matters such as kindness can be seen as subversive of neo-liberal values.

Thus, despite the widespread identification of kindness by students in their descriptions of good teachers, the concept of kindness is ‘singularly silent’ in accounts of teacher excellence in the wider public discourse around good teaching (Clegg & Rowland, 2010 p. 720). Interestingly, Clegg and Rowland (2010) do not see the concept of kindness in teaching as a new way of theorising about teaching, rather they see it as elucidating a quality that is already there in good teaching, but which is unremarked and ‘under threat in contemporary conditions’ (p. 720).

2.8 Concerning Matters of Affect

There are numerous educational writers whose main focus is on affect in education. Some see affect as an integral component of the educative process (Boler, 1999; Rompelman, 2002), while others explore a more transcendent connection between teacher and student (Liston & Garrison, 2004; Palmer, 1993, 2008).

Informed by the issue of social injustice throughout the world, Megan Boler’s *Feeling Power: emotions and education* (1999) explores the concept of resisting education. By drawing attention to feminist theories of emotion and histories of resisting emotions—anger, fear, passion, rigidity—a case is made that the social control of emotions is a reality which has a significant impact on many aspects of teaching and learning in current times. Building on Ann Ferguson’s (1982) work on feminist teaching, Boler asserts that it is unhelpful to separate public and private notions of the capitalist production process and argues that, beyond the domestic setting, affective education and therefore the ‘production’ of people’ (1999, p. 15) occurs where the public production of objects and ideas takes place. Therefore, Boler (1999, p. 15) states that in schools ‘affective production’ occurs even in the most sterile and rational classrooms. Given this, it follows
that the ‘social control of emotions is a central and unexplored aspect of education in relation to hegemony’ (1999, p. xvii).

A case is made that good teachers must pay attention to inscribed habits of emotional inattention through what Boler calls ‘a pedagogy of discomfort’, which ‘engages critical inquiry regarding the emotional investments that shape both educators’ and students’ attachments to particular worldviews’ (1999, p. 119). She claims that good teachers can become aware of, and interested in, ‘the space of dynamic interaction that exceeds our words and thoughts in educational encounters’ where we can ‘open ways of understanding that do not rely only on words’. She concludes that compassion is ‘one bridge between those suffering a pedagogy of discomfort and those who have invited new ways of being fully alive into a world replete with imperfections’ (1999, p. 131).

Albrecht-Crane and Slack (2007, p. 99) articulate the case for multiplicity in the analysis of what goes on in the classroom:

The social space of the classroom is a rich and complex arena in which much more happens than is generally acknowledged. What happens in the classroom, its ‘thisness’ often exceeds what is perceived as the task at hand and engulfs teachers and students in spaces of ‘affect’ in ways that matter in the politics of everyday life... ‘moments of energetic and resonant connection’—indicating that something significant is at work.

Thus, as Dall’Alba and Sandberg (2006) point out, skilful performance (good teaching) involves ‘skilful know-how’. Arguably this refers to the more intuitive aspects of a teacher’s work, where on-the-spot decisions are made in relation to the actual, changing (possibly unforeseen) circumstances of a particular classroom.

In addition, looking through the lens of the inner teacher, Diamond, cited in Diamond and Mullen (1999, p. 9), asserts that there appears to be a longing for teachers to find their true voice and be awakened to ‘the ongoing creation of different worlds of self, research and classroom’. Diamond asserts that schooling and teacher education need to be ‘reconstructed as revolving not around the authority of politicians and educational researchers but around that of teachers and their students’ (Diamond & Mullen, 1999, p. xiii). Moreover, according to Diamond, what needs to be held up to view in teacher education are the teachers’ ‘understanding(s) of the universe’ and ‘the interpretive
choices they make in locating themselves within that universe’ (Diamond & Mullen, 1999, p. 9).

Correspondingly, with a focus on professional education programs, Dall’Alba (2009, p. 34) asserts that when a professional education program focuses on the acquisition and application of knowledge and skills, it falls short of facilitating an inclusive understanding of the good teacher’s role since the ‘integration into a professional way of being’ is not considered. Indeed, in focusing on epistemology, ontology is overlooked (Dall’Alba, 2009, p. 34).

[W]hen we concentrate our attention on epistemology—or what students know and can do—we fail to facilitate and support much transformation. A focus on epistemology occurs at the expense of ontological considerations relating to who students are becoming. (Dall’Alba, 2009, p. 34)

Distinctions have also been made between successful teaching and quality teaching. As Fenstermacher and Richardson (2005, p. 187) have pointed out, it is important to see that quality teaching is a combination of the worthiness of the activity (good teaching) and the realisation of intended outcomes (successful teaching). In addition, the importance of the invisible as distinct from the easily measurable is increasingly the subject of some areas of academic research (Stronach, 2010; Taubman, 2009).

I turn now to the work of Michalinos Zembylas whose book, Five Pedagogies, a Thousand Possibilities (2007a, p. 13), argues that teachers ‘need to see students with loving eyes that invite a loving response rather than seeing them with the objectifying gaze of a self-sufficient subject examining, subordinating’. Indeed, Zembylas argues that in considering good teaching, ‘the politicisation of emotions in education is not only inevitable but also desirable’ (2007a, p. xiii). Moreover, he puts the case that it is not acceptable to ‘seek indiscriminately to silence emotion in the name of “emotional intelligence”’, which arguably ‘de-politicises’ it, but rather we should turn our attention to the ‘extremely valuable aspects of emotion in education’ (2007a, p. xiii).

Zembylas argues that beyond what he calls ‘specific advice and practical pedagogical tools’, it is essential to explore what makes possible the development of ‘pedagogies of critical hope and how educators are estranged from them—through disabling the power of affect from both their imaginations and their everyday practices’ (2007a, p. xiii). Broadly
speaking, pedagogy may be defined as the relational encounter among individuals through which unpredictable possibilities of communication and action are created. Pedagogy, then, is a site of intersubjective encounters that entail transformative possibilities (Zembylas, 2007a, p. xiii).

Moreover, Zembylas (2007a, p. 2) provides an explanation of what he terms ‘intersubjective encounters that entail transformative possibilities’ through which he challenges educators to embrace ‘inspiring ways of approaching unknowability’. Indeed, Zembylas claims that the accessibility of knowledge of the ‘Other’ in the relationship between student and teacher is best seen in the context of an inherent ‘paradoxical interaction between knowing and unknowing, learning and ignorance’ (p. 2). Thus, seemingly running contrary to much in mainstream educational policy which is based on the management principles of efficiency, standards and quality control, Zembylas argues that a pedagogy of unknowing as a response is neither anti-pedagogical nor anti-intellectual. On the contrary, Zembylas (2007a, p. 16) notes that a pedagogy of unknowing marks a readiness to listen and pay attention, an invitation to hear others and oneself, and a positive valuing of the Other.\(^{18}\)

There are also scholars (for example, Flutter, 2007; Groundwater-Smith, 2005; Groundwater-Smith and Mockler, 2003b; Kriewaldt, 2009; Scanlon, 2004) who explore teacher practice from the perspective of students, who are, according to Scanlon (2004, p. 93), the most neglected in education research. Student voice provides, from a deeply personal perspective, valuable insights into how students feel about good teachers and good teaching, which seems to be one step removed from the pastoral structures within a school. Thus it can be argued that it is the student voice which identifies what ‘in the lived world of their learning experiences, constitutes quality teaching and the concomitant standards which constitute such teaching’ (Scanlon, 2004, p. 93).

In addition, a recent study by Kriewaldt (2009) considers the question of what enhances student learning from an analysis of students’ views about teaching and learning. Kriewaldt points out that the ‘voices of students can make a significant contribution to understanding what constitutes accomplished teaching’ (p. 1), while Groundwater-Smith

\(^{18}\) I return to a discussion of the Other in Chapter 7.
(2005) has used a qualitative approach to canvas the perspectives of students. In Scanlon’s (2004, p. 93) view, however, overall very little scholarly research has been done into the learner’s framework. She highlights the fact that the ongoing interest in teacher professional standards is approached largely from the viewpoint of ‘contextual frameworks’, and that it is important to acknowledge that students are ‘the major stakeholders in quality teaching’ (2004, p. 94).

Regarding whether or not teaching is essentially a rational set of processes, Day (2004, 2012) argues that, ‘teaching and learning at its best is not…an entirely rational set of processes. High quality input does not always result in high-quality output. Good teaching can never be reduced to technique or competence’ (2004, p. 15). Day provides a comprehensive rationale of what he terms, ‘factors that help or hinder effective teaching and learning’. Not least among these are the family histories and circumstances of the parents and the students, the leadership and learning culture of the school, and the effects of government policies (2004, p. 15).

Day’s (2004) work in probing the essence of the moral purposes of care and courage, as they are manifested in the good teacher, provides a helpful insight in its awareness of the limitations of current empirical research into pupil perspectives of teachers in England (p. 40). Citing the research of Rudduck, Chaplain, and Wallace, Day (2004) provides an interesting viewpoint of a teacher’s guiding values as he or she interacts with students:

1. Respect for pupils as individuals
2. Fairness to all pupils
3. Autonomy
4. Intellectual challenge
5. Social support
6. ‘Security’ leading to students’ self-esteem

Day’s qualification of this summation speaks to a kind of yearning for something deeper, perhaps something less tangible: ‘Yet missing from this summary is the way teachers’ passion for their work can affect the students’ (2004, p. 40). Interestingly, Day (p. 40) offers a few memories from accounts taken from other scholars’ work (Cotton, 1998;
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White, 2000), where students recall their attachment to a particular teacher. A sense of the complexity of the capacities of such teachers is captured in the following recollections:

She [the teacher] had an ability to make us all feel important. I thought she was my friend; everyone in the class did too. I hated history but I liked her, and so I paid particular attention…[Teacher’s name] was my best teacher because he believed in me … By believing in me he taught me to believe in myself (Day, 2004, p. 41).

What matters is that they have a passion for their subject and a way of motivating you. Some teachers have the ability to motivate people, to know just how far they can push it, how provoking they can be to make you this close to giving up, but then you decide: ‘I’m going to show this teacher’ (Day, 2004, p. 42).

Teachers who just burn for their subject are the best. There are some who are boring and kind of, ‘I am here today, I get my pay, and you are still sitting there trying to learn… I do not care.’ Those are the worst (Day, 2004, p. 42).

Day (2004, p. 59) also cites research (Apple & Beane, 1995; Sachs, 2003) that attempts to catalogue the ideal traits of good teachers. Of relevance to my research is that such research speaks to a configuring of the good teacher beyond that which is found in policy texts. Thus, with particular reference to Sachs’ notion of the ‘activist profession’, Day (2004, p. 60) notes that, despite its critical and reformatory agenda,

It is essentially one of hope in the triumph of democratic discourse and faith in the individual and collective capacity of teachers and schools to be creative, communicative, critically appreciative, values-led, ethically centered, socially aware and inquiry oriented.

Passionate teachers are aware of the challenge of the broader social contexts in which they teach, have a clear sense of identity and believe that they can make a difference to the learning and achievement of all their pupils. They care deeply about them. They like them … They are aware of the role played by emotion in classroom learning and teaching. (Day, 2004, p. 2)

Providing an opportunity to explore the notions contained in this project more widely, Day (2004, p. 13) argues that passion is essential in teaching because it relates to teacher
effectiveness and the confronting nature of external imperatives that lead to contradictory demands. Day explains:

On the one hand, there is a growing recognition of the importance to the economy, to lifelong education, and to society, of teamwork and co-operation, tolerance and mutual understanding. On the other, there is an increase in alienation of students from formal schooling, increased emphasis on competition and material values, and growing inequities, deepening social differences and a breakdown in social cohesion.

Day (2004, p. 13) stresses the crucial response to this dilemma by illuminating the sobering directive of Hargreaves and Fullan (1998): ‘It is important to remember that it is teachers who must bear major responsibility for managing these demands. They are our last hope for rebuilding a sense of community’. Indeed, Day, (2004, p. 14) maintains a cautionary tone when underscoring the potential damage of the current regime to teachers themselves:

Its broader bureaucratic, managerialistic implementation has exhausted many teachers so that they have lost that passion with which they first entered the profession. The space formerly available for spontaneity, creativity and attending to unanticipated learning needs of children and young people has contracted as teachers struggle to attain government targets for achievement and fulfil associated bureaucratic demands …

Having a good idea about what to do in the classroom is only the beginning of the work of teaching. It is the translation of passion into action that embodies and integrates the personal and the professional, the mind and the emotion that will make a difference in pupils’ learning lives.

2.9 Psychological Literature

The role of the good teacher has also certainly been informed, in recent times, by psychological literature. For example, Rompelman (2002) recognises the limitations of educational reform that is only externally driven. In introducing her book, *Affective Teaching* (2002), Rompelman draws attention to the awareness teachers must bring to the ways in which teaching has a sociological dimension since there is always a need to disseminate knowledge within an inclusive and respectful framework, by ‘modelling
appropriate social skills as we teach’ (p. v). Here it is claimed that, while teachers naturally need knowledge, they also most critically need techniques and strategies in the affective domain.

Rompelman (2002) presents an examination of the subtle ways in which students infer that learning is somewhat related to aspects of the affective domain. She argues that since an understanding of students’ needs enhances the learning process and the relevance of the lesson content to students’ lives, affective teachers focus on these issues when preparing to teach. Indeed, affective teachers strive to seek ‘an optimal change in perception’, which stimulates students in their learning and allows them to express ‘how they feel about (involvement in) certain activities’ (p. 1), thus completing ‘the final loop’ of the learning process since the students’ thinking and acting are influenced by their attitudes or feelings (p. 2).

In addition, with reference to the inclusion by Krathwohl, Bloom and Masia (1964) of the affective domain in their taxonomy, Rompelman (2002) notes that there are many teachers who believe that, when considering the goals of the two domains, the cognitive and the affective, both should be equally emphasised in teaching practice. Rompelman’s (2002, p. 3) commentary on the taxonomy is expressed as ‘stages of cognition [that] are enhanced with simultaneous reference to the affective domain; cognitive lessons become more relevant when attention is given to feelings attached to learning activities’.

Moreover, Rompelman (2002, p. 27) reports on the work of a US educational program called Teacher Expectations and Student Achievement (TESA) which she notes encourages interactions that are purported to be both ‘supportive and motivating in regard to relationships with students’. The 15 affective techniques are identified because: 1) they are operationally defined; 2) they are observed in typical classrooms; and 3) they have been measured in classrooms. These interactions are divided into three strands: response opportunities, feedback and personal regard. Each of the interactions is important in its own right and each interaction has a strong research framework: Equitable Distribution of Response Opportunity, Individual Helping, Latency-wait Time, Delving, Higher Level Questioning, Affirm/Correct, Praise of Learning Performance, Reasons for Praise, Listening, Accepting Feelings, Proximity (nearness to students), Courtesy, Personal Interest and Compliments, Touching (carefully clarified), Desisting (non-verbal behavioural management, e.g., ‘the look’).
In addition to the literature which deals with policy, identity and affect, there is a category of literature concerned with catering for individual differences and has the individual student’s cognitive and psychological responses at its centre. Two of the most notable bodies of work in this category are the writings of Howard Gardner and Martin Seligman. In Gardner’s famous (1999) identification of the ‘multiple intelligences (MI)’ of students, the challenge was presented to teachers to attend to all intelligences, not just the linguistic and logical-mathematical that have been their traditional concern (p. 8). As Kornhaber (2001, p. 276) has noted, it involves educators opting ‘for depth over breadth’. Understanding entails taking knowledge gained in one setting and using it in another and thus ‘students must have extended opportunities to work on a topic’ (p. 276). Gardner’s interest in deep understanding, performance, exploration and creativity are not easily accommodated within an orientation toward the delivery of a detailed curriculum planned outside of the immediate educational context. ‘An “MI setting” can be undone if the curriculum is too rigid or if there is but a single form of assessment’ (Gardner, 1999, p. 147).

In addition, the work of psychologist Martin Seligman (for example 1995, 2011), which is situated in the Positive Psychology field, has successfully highlighted another powerful aspect of the good teacher: the need to engender optimism and to avoid what Seligman (2011, p. 176) terms ‘learned helplessness’. It is not surprising that much of the work on social and emotional learning has also embraced the notion of the teacher’s explanatory style, which produces either a pessimistic or optimistic impact on students, and the ways in which personal interactions with teachers are enormously influential (Seligman, 1995, p. 105).

Furthermore, in his 2011 book, *Flourish*, Seligman advocates the teaching of well-being in schools, to offset ‘the current flood of depression and the nominal increase in happiness over the last two generations’ (2011, p. 80). In addition, he asserts (2011, p. 80) that greater well-being enhances learning, and that a positive mood produces broader attention, more creative thinking, and more holistic thinking.

### 2.10 Popular Literature

Popular interest in the good teacher has long fascinated the community, both through novels and film. What popular literature tends to tell us about ‘good teaching’ is that
context is diverse and that the individual teacher is often at odds with the challenges and diversities of a particular context and is often obliged to cope, often creatively, in response to systemic challenges.

In popular fictitious accounts of teachers’ experiences, challenging school contexts are often depicted in which teachers tend to emerge either as heroes, or conversely, as incompetent caricatures. With regard to the latter, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation’s satirical program on teaching, *Summer Heights High*, features the appalling ‘Mr G’, a character who seems to speak to a non-existent ideal teacher, one who might have brought a more intelligent and sensitive professionalism to the school setting.

Heroic images of a very good teacher are represented in *To Sir with Love*, for example, where a teacher’s perseverance and care is able to take uncouth young women ‘from crayons to perfume’. In *Dead Poets Society* the heroics of Mr Keating in evoking a mood of *carpe diem* inspire students to stand on the tables at the end of the film, as an expression of their coming of age and in defiance of traditional school authority. And perhaps offering a more realistic and complicated scenario, in the poignant film *To Be and To Have* Mr Lopez exhibits such dedication, kindness and generosity of spirit to the children that it is impossible to separate the love of the teacher from the encouraging educational outcomes for the students.

As McCulloch (2009) has observed, films about teachers can reflect the ideals and practices of teacher professionalism in unique ways. Indeed, such popular literature can underscore a continuity or renewal of established traditions and reveal elements of ‘the moral universe’ in which these fictitious characters work (p. 409). Moore (2004) suggests that there are two popular versions of the good teacher represented in popular film, namely, that of the charismatic teacher as ‘carer/nurturer’ and as the saviour (p. 56). With regard to the latter, Moore points out that in films such as *To Sir with Love* troubled students are portrayed as responding to what Boler (1999) terms a pedagogy of love. Moore also highlights the ways heroic teachers in popular film can be seen as outsiders with unconventional teaching methods.

Referring to *Dead Poets Society*, Moore (2004, p. 65) notes that Mr Keating’s individualistic teaching style supports a pedagogic agenda aimed essentially at the fulfilment of the individual student. Interestingly, Moore observes that from a practical
viewpoint such representations of the charismatic subject with its over-reliance on personality and its frequent under-reliance on technique can be dangerous as a model of good teaching. Conversely, however, Moore (p. 68) also argues that the charismatic subject offers important checks and balances to other dominant discourses ‘related to technicism, mechanism and performativity that currently threaten to colonise teaching philosophy and practice’.

2.11 Conclusion

This literature review was undertaken in order to provide an intellectual context for my study, to identify other people working in the same field, to examine other approaches to the topic and to identify openings in the literature. As this review demonstrates, much has been written on the different perspectives on the good teacher reflected in policy documents, in education writing, particularly sociological commentaries, and in popular literature. Indeed, the literature review has revealed considerable contestation around the validity of various constructions of the good teacher. Specifically, the review demonstrates that the current policy literature, with its strong emphasis on performance, internationalism and productivity, has generated correspondingly robust education literature, most particularly of a critical sociological bent, which in turn indicates that we may need to think the good teacher otherwise.

In this regard, discourse theory has emerged as a means of understanding the ways in which individuals and groups are constituted. Thus, from the basis of this review, I am now able to introduce and defend the methodology chosen for this project, discourse analysis theory. Indeed, it is through this analytic framework that I begin to build a case for a more nuanced policy discourse, one which transforms current concerns for student outcomes and performance by purposely incorporating notions of the good teacher that focus on relationships and affect.
Chapter 3: Theorising the Study

Foucault calls not for the liberation of the subject but for the production of alternative individuals. By seeking to be affected by passions, the subject creates the conditions of possibility that allow it to actively participate in transforming itself. (Zembylas, 2007a, p. 46)

3.1 Introduction

I have chosen to begin this chapter with an image of Kenneth Branagh from the 1996 film of Shakespeare’s play Hamlet. The mirror implies the possibility of multiple truths and resonates with the famous lines from the play ‘there’s nothing right or wrong but thinking makes it so’. Viewing the current education landscape through a critical sociological lens, this project seeks to understand one of the most pressing issues in education, namely, how the good teacher is currently constituted or thought. Assuming there are norms which reflect a dominant exercise of power by government in constructing and shaping notions of the good teacher, the project set out to investigate systems of dominance and dependency, as well as contesting areas of autonomy that reduce the scope of domination. Fittingly, Foucauldian discourse theory was chosen to frame my approach to the study, based on the notion that discourse is a constitutive form of

\[\text{(Foucault, 1978)}\]

Needless to say, however, Shakespeare’s work is set within a philosophy of consciousness which Foucauldian theory challenges head-on.
knowledge. Moreover, discourse as it relates to schools (social institutions) can be seen as manifested through language (itself a social boundary) defining what can be said about a specific topic.

By way of presenting the theoretical approach for this study, I explain the appropriateness and usefulness of Foucauldian discourse theorising through a discussion of the development of discourse analysis as an overarching qualitative research approach. Following this, I outline my sources of data and methods of data collection and analysis, with particular emphasis on Sanguinetti’s (1999) methods for ‘mapping’ discourses. Later I discuss issues concerning the rigour of the methods used and some ethical considerations attaching to the research. I conclude with an outline of some methodological limitations.

3.2 Epistemological Considerations and Discourse Theory

Epistemological considerations are concerned with knowledge-making, and the criteria (justification, validity and verification) that allow distinctions to be made between knowledge claims. Qualitative research is essentially based on the notion that meaning is socially constructed by individuals in terms of their interaction with the world (Guba & Lincoln, 2005) in contexts that are not static (Yates, 2004). As Wetherell, Taylor and Yates (2001) claim, discourse analysis should be seen in the context of research in the social sciences generally, whereby qualitative approaches typically involve some intensive and interpretive analysis of text. As such, discourse analysis is seen as emerging from ‘the changes in conceptualizations of communication, culture, language use and function, and the relationship between representation and reality’ (Wetherell et al., 2011, p. i). In this regard, discourse analysis, as part of the field of qualitative research, involves knowledge-making which emerges through holding up to view a series of tensions, contradictions and hesitations that work back and forth between and among ‘the broad, doubting post-modern sensibility’ in the context of an increasingly conservative neo-liberal environment (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 27). Indeed, poststructuralist discourse theory examines how writing, texts and discourses are constitutive phenomena, forming the identities and practices of human subjects.
3.3 Development of Discourse Theory

Noting how the recent developments in philosophy, sociology, social psychology and communications theory have opened up a strong focus on the ‘ubiquity and importance of language in social science’ and that much social research is connected to ‘how people use language—sometimes how language uses people—in particular situations’ (Alvesson & Karraman, 2000, p. 1126), it is not difficult to argue that the emergent interest in the significance of language has contributed to a focus on discourses.

Taking an essentially linguistic approach to discourse analysis, some researchers focus on the knowledge we have about language, knowledge based on people’s ‘memories of things they have said, heard, seen, or written before, to do things in the world’ (Johnstone, 2008, p. 3). Brown and Yule (1986, p. 16) note that the linguistic approach to discourse examines the ways humans use language to communicate and how ‘addressers construct linguistic messages for addressees and how addressees work on linguistic messages in order to interpret them’ (p. ix). However, as Gillen (2005) notes, discourse analysis departs from the traditional linguistics paradigm since it accepts as data any language as it occurs and usually considers longer texts than the sentence, which is often the unit of analysis in a linguistics setting. Halliday (1973, 1975), for example, sees language as an interrelated network of systems for making meaning.

Proponents of critical discourse analysis (CDA), such as Fairclough and Wodak (1997), are concerned to open up the complexity of public discourses. As Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999) argue, rethinking aspects of discourse analysis, in current times, can contribute to an awareness of what is, how it has come to be, and what it might become, on the basis of which people may be able to make and remake their lives. Alternatively, discursive psychology is a form of discourse analysis that focuses on psychological themes. It looks at how matters of psychology are managed in talk and text and the way psychology categories are used in discourse (Edwards & Potter, 1992).

In contrast to the philosophical stance of Foucault, Gee’s (2001) provides a helpful methodological approach by exploring the notion of teacher identity as a lens through which to engage in education research. Gee
Chapter 3: Theorising the Study

(2001, p. 99) explains that the concept of identity in today’s fast-changing and interconnected global world is such that:

[T]he ‘kind of person’ one is recognised as ‘being’, at a given time and place, can change from moment to moment in the interaction, can change from context to context, and, of course, can be ambiguous and unstable.

Gee (2001, p.100) argues that there are four interrelated ways to view identity: N-Identities, the nature perspective; I-Identities, the institutional perspective; D-Identities, the discursive perspective; and A-Identities, the affinity perspective. In providing this summary, I wish to emphasise Foucault’s focus on ‘subjectivity’ rather than identity. I take this distinction to indicate that Foucault is more fluid and less certain or static in his understanding of how people are constituted and, in turn, constitute discourses.

I do not suggest that this project adopts Gee’s view of identity as analogous to the Foucauldian methodological approach on which this thesis rests. Rather I mention, along with the various researchers mentioned in Table 3.1, Gee’s sociolinquistic approach to discourse analysis, in order to provide an overview of the development of discourse theory through which Foucauldian discourse theory can be situated.

Foucauldian discourse theory suggests a resistance to knowability of the ‘outcome’ of particular discursive practices. Accordingly, it seems that Foucault invites an awareness of contesting and competing discourses that alter inevitably and continuously (over the span of an episteme). As Zembylas (2007a, p. 46) suggests:

Foucault calls not for the liberation of the subject but for the production of alternative individuals. By seeking to be affected by passions, the subject creates the conditions of possibility that allow it to actively participate in transforming itself.

In addition, the work of Rizvi and Lingard (2010), whose discourse analytic perspective highlights the connection between ideology and power relations, has sought to identify and disrupt the dominant discourses. I have therefore adapted for my policy data analysis reference questions posed by Rizvi and Lingard, namely: Who has advocated and promoted the policy and why? Where are the advocates located (inside/outside the state bureaucracy and policy processes, inside and outside the nation)? How have competing
interests been negotiated in relation to the policy agenda and in relation to the production of the specific policy text?

Table 3.1 presents a summary of the ‘types’ of discourse analysis on offer over recent decades, and includes references to representative research and what might be seen as the leading theoretical idea for each.

**Table 3.1: Types of Discourse Analysis (adapted from Johnstone, 2008)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Analytic Approaches</th>
<th>Representative Research</th>
<th>Controlling Theoretical Idea</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Critical discourse analysis  | Fairclough and Wodak (1997); Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999). | Concern to open up complexity of public discourses  
Texts embedded in social practice through which ideology is circulated and reproduced.  
Suited to the study of texts and transcripts. |
| ‘Genealogical’ discourse analysis | Foucault (2002a).                     | Discourses cannot be analysed in isolation because they are practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak. |
Notion of double voiced, double languaged texts. |
| Conversation analysis (CA).  | Sacks (1992); Ten Have (1999).            | Rejects the notion that we need to understand the context before we approach texts. Here, context and discourse are mutually constitutive. |
Language as an interrelated network of systems for making meaning. |
| Sociolinguistics.            | Gee (2001).                              | Individuals are part of discourse communities where meaning is socially constructed: the notion of ‘big D’ discourses, whereas ‘little d’ discourses refer to language-in-use. |

### 3.4 Foucauldian Discourse Theory

Although Foucault does not specifically address the notion of the good teacher, other than obliquely through his references to schools and prisons as institutions (1977), I contend that Foucault’s philosophical perspective—particularly that which explores the nexus between power and knowledge—has been highly influential amongst scholars and activists in various fields over the past several decades (Feder, 2011, p. 57). Accordingly, my research deploys Foucauldian concepts to help clarify and deepen an understanding of
how we think the good teacher. Indeed, Foucault has sensitised us to the possibilities of seeing power in new ways, ways which are very suggestive with respect to developing new discourses around the good teacher.

Drawing on the idea that Foucault’s inquiring stance is an inversion of traditional interpretive questions about the nature of power and where power comes from (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012, p. 56), I investigate, throughout my data analysis chapters, traditional questions about power and their quest for stable definitions, ontological essences and foundational origins. For the purposes of this project, I give preference to a Foucauldian viewpoint by investigating the productive effects of power as it circulates ‘through the practices of people in their daily lives’ (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012, p. 56). To use Jackson and Mazzei’s phrase, I am interested in analysing data where power ‘[is] kept on the move’, in my case, amongst education policy makers, teachers and students.

My analysis of data on the good teacher is informed by the particular kind of knowledge that has no clear source, but is illuminated by a genealogical analysis—‘an examination of the historical conditions of possibility—describing the accidents of history that result in particular consolidations of what counts as truth or knowledge’ (Feder, 2011, p. 55). Feder (2011) further explains Foucault’s particular kind of knowledge in the following passage:

It is not the knowledge that is decreed by some authoritative body ‘from on high’, but is more precisely described in the passive voice: it is the kind of knowledge that is ‘recognized as true’, ‘known to be the case’. For Foucault, this knowledge can only exist with the support of arrangements of power, arrangements that likewise have no clear origin, no person or body who can be said to ‘have’ it. (p. 56)

In this sense, Foucauldian discourse theory, with its notion of linkages between power and knowledge, invites a close reading of the ways in which even struggles with and against power—here teacher and student resistance to policy, for example—denote a vehicle of power. Indeed, power operates from and through such struggles (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012, p. 56). Since I am not concerned to merely describe the intrinsic meanings of practices attributed to policy makers, teachers and students, my project is founded on the ways in which the ‘intentions of the subject are implicated in a power/knowledge reading’. Thus:
Analysis in a power/knowledge reading does not uncover hidden meaning because cultural and material practices are already interpretations. A power/knowledge reading involves *interpretations of interpretations*, which are found in the significance of cultural practices. (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012, p. 56)

I make this point here since, in my data analysis, I emphasise how discourses around the good teacher—from all three data sets—are indeed interpretations of what is already an interpretation of what constitutes good teaching. As Foley (2007, p. 56) suggests, using the Foucauldian model—part of the post-structuralist predisposition to understand reality as it is ‘real-ised’ through discourse—allows the researcher a certain freedom to focus on issues such as the discursive rules of what can and cannot be thought, and more particularly, on who has the power to pronounce on any given phenomenon, including what is considered good teaching. It is pertinent, then, to consider some of the fundamental elements which comprise Foucauldian discourse theory, namely his genealogical approach, the notion of the interconnectedness between discourse, power and knowledge, and the processes of normalisation and the ways through which we are all subjectified.

### 3.5 Foucault and Discourse

The concept of discourse was first explored in Foucault’s *The Order of Things* (1970/2002b), but was later expanded in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1972/2002a), where discourses were defined as practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak. These objects include human subjects such as teachers and learners, who are formed through discourses of policy and pedagogy, amongst others. For example, I report later in this thesis on how current policy discourse on education is frequently interspersed with references to student outcomes and the need for transparency and accountability in the public reporting and comparison of academic achievement across different school settings nationally. In this way, the teacher is formed by the dominant policy discourse, as a person who is responsible for, and should be held to account for, measurable academic test results produced by students.

Foucault introduces the terms discursive formation and discursive practice and argues that there are epistemes in history—periods of history organised around, and explicable in terms of, specific worldviews. Epistemes speak themselves through the production of
discursive formations or orders of discourse (1970/2002b, p. 56). Discursive formations are the principles on which an episteme is organised. They make speech possible, produce objects of knowledge and, indeed, organise ideas or concepts. As Danaher, Schirato and Webb (2000, p. 23) note, the combination of disciplines, commentary and authors constitutes a kind of machine that, in turn, produces the so-called ‘truth’ of a particular topic. Specifically, Foucault used the concept of discursive formation in relation to his analysis of large bodies of knowledge, such as political economy and natural history.

As his theories pertain to the human sciences, Foucault (1970/2002b, p. 383), in *The Order of Things*, claims that man (sic) has functions and needs, that he sees opening up a space whose moveable coordinates meet in him; in a general fashion, his corporeal existence interlaces him through and through with the rest of the living world...in which he himself is defined as an intermediary stage [and] appears in his existence immediately interwoven with others.

The significant Foucauldian concept here is that each of us is a product of the social milieu in which we find ourselves; we cannot think of ourselves, our human bodies—our corporeal existence—as separate from our social situation. Downing (2008, p. 49) notes that Foucault spells out a method of archaeological reading based on sensitivity to both the microcosm and the macrocosm of the relationship between the statement and the discursive formation. As such, a discursive formation is defined as the regularities that produce such (policy) discourses as (in my project) accountability, outcomes, targets, measures and metrics. One such regularity in the work reported here is neo-liberal educational reform. Foucauldian discourse theory allows for a close-up study of neo-liberal educational reform as a discursive formation that shapes or constitutes discourses of the good teacher and good teaching in current times.

By way of illustration, I make reference here to Sanguinetti’s (1999) success in drawing on Foucault’s characterisation of the formation and transformation of clusters of discourses. Sanguinetti particularly highlights the way in which her research participants struggled ‘within (and against) hegemonic, performative discourses’, where the term performative implies neo-liberal agendas. The framework she developed was effective in
analysing and describing discourses structuring the study’s texts and ‘mapping’ (or ‘charting’) the dynamics of change, contestation and transformation reflected in them (1999, p. 93).

Essentially, Sanguinetti’s development of a web chart provides a visual representation of how recurring discursive themes, patterns (or families) of discourse can be collapsed into two main orders of discourse. Thus, Sanguinetti’s model, discussed later in this chapter, has been useful in the design of the methods employed in my study, particularly the description of how she used a web chart as a reference point for studying the interdiscursivities across discourses, as they appeared in the detail of the texts, and how she used this guide for her subsequent theoretical commentary.

### 3.6 Foucault and Genealogy

According to Foucault, the term ‘archaeology’ refers to the ways in which one episteme can, over time, replace another. Genealogy refers to the factors that contribute to the ways in which the change and evolution of ideas occur. For Foucault, discourses have force and are productive; in this sense, they produce the good teacher and different discourses produce different versions of this teacher. Thus, what Foucault’s genealogy offers us—as part of a methodology for examining the interconnection of discourse, power and knowledge—is an interpretive framework through which to undertake discourse analysis, and an opening through which we can read discourses in a specific context (here the teacher in contemporary times). In referring to ‘power’, the term is seen through the Foucauldian lens where power is *relational* and has to do with concepts of authority, freedom, subjection and resistance.

Genealogy allows for historical change through various epistemes, but it is not bothered with finding a specific truth to history. Instead, genealogy is interested in history as a will to power. Significantly, as Veyne (2010, p. 116) observes, Foucault’s genealogical history exposed ‘the arbitrary nature of all institutions and the gratuitous nature of all certainties’. Indeed, Foucault’s genealogical approach to discourse allows for the possibility of contesting discourses on good teaching, evident at a particular time, to be pointers indicating how society might desire another way of considering the good teacher.

To paraphrase Cheek (2005, p. 305), Foucauldian theory provides a framework for challenging, interrupting and interrogating aspects of reality that are so central or
entrenched in our understandings of what is normal that we come to take them for
granted. Thus, in keeping with Foley’s (2007, p. 72) research approach, my research
focuses on what Foucault terms the rules of formation for discourses which, importantly,
depend on external conditions.

Foucault’s theorising about genealogy also suggests that tracing the different ways that
the good teacher is configured at various times is, at the same time, understanding the
discourses which do this configuring. Such an investigation also leads to an examination
of the effects of these discourses and discursive formations on teaching and on teacher
subjectivities. In this regard, Wetherell, Taylor and Yates (2001, p. 274) make the
following observation:

Discourses are historically variable ways of speaking, writing and talking about, as
well as practices around, an issue. They have outcomes/identifiable effects that
specify what is morally, socially and legally un/acceptable at any given moment in a
culture.

3.7 Power / Knowledge

In introducing the Foucauldian nexus between power/knowledge and the self, I draw on
Veyne’s (2010) observation about what he terms the somewhat obsequious use of
knowledge by those in political power. Drawing on the discourse theories of Foucault,
Veyne reminds us of Foucault’s instruction to deconstruct text in order to show the power
underlying our knowledge and language (Vincent, 1995, p. 186). In this light, the current
dominant education discourses, most particularly discourses that dominate education
policy, can be seen to construct a particular version of our understanding of the good
teacher. As stated earlier, discourses are productive, defining as they do the ‘truth’ at
particular moments in time. Thus, in outlining her approach to research, Sanguinetti
(1999, p. 236) observes that:

Knowledge, meaning, political and social values, and notions of ‘self’ are all
constituted in discourse. Discourses reflect social and political contestation and we

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20 The Foucauldian concepts of subjectivity and subjectification will be considered in Chapter 7.
(who are the subjects of discourse) live out this contestation constantly, in the
everyday language we use, the choices we make and the politics we enact.

Also pertinent to my research is the notion that, for Foucault, discourses are not
necessarily all powerful but can be seen as fluid and opportunistic, drawing on and
interacting with ‘Othered’ discourses (for example, in the case of my research, discourses
around good teaching and the good teacher that accent non-rational aspects of teacher
subjectivity). Accordingly, in the concluding chapters of this thesis, consideration is
given to the relevance and potential standing of other (less dominant and currently
subjugated) discourses in future education policy reform. Ball (1990, p. 3) comments that
discourse ‘lies between the level of pure atemporal linguistic structure (langue) and the
level of the surface speaking (parole): It expresses the historical specificity of what is said
and what remains unsaid’. However, to use Foucault’s (1972/2002a, p. 54) terminology,
discourses are composed of signs, but what they do is ‘more than [simply] use these signs
to designate things’. Significantly, it is this that renders discourses ‘irreducible to
…language and to speech’ and, in Foucault’s reckoning, it is this ‘movement’ that we
must reveal and describe.

Indeed, power, for Foucault, is constituted through discourse. That is to say, since
discourses specify what is and what is not—what is and what is not taken for granted—at
a particular time, they have authority and validity to various degrees. For example, in his
historical studies of asylums, governments, prisons and schools, (e.g., 1977, 1970/2002b,
2010) Foucault focused on how historical configurations of discourse constructed new
kinds of human subjects. These discourses, Foucault argues, work in the local situations
of social institutions in ways that cannot be explained by reference to any individual’s or
group’s role, intent or motivations. Indeed, poststructuralist theory, of which Foucault’s
ideias are a part, questions whether there are elemental human subjects, individual agents
and social realities independent of their dynamic historical construction in social and
cultural discourses. As Law (1986, p. 14) puts it, Foucault’s emphasis, not on ideology
but ‘the body’, attempts to turn general questions of ideology and subjects into the
specific question of ‘how are we humans made in our culture?’.

Furthermore, according to Law (1986, p. 11), when considering the relationship between
structure and belief—that is, the relationship between social structures and what is known
to be true—the implication of Foucault’s notion of pouvoir/savour (power/knowledge) is that

Foucault leaves no room for a structure/ideology division. His attitude towards ideology is cautious in part because it implies a contrast with truth which is misleading—truths, he hypothesizes, are systems of ‘ordered procedures’ for producing, distributing and operating statements which stand in circular, indeed inseparable, relationships with systems of power.

Moreover, in Foucault’s repudiation of ideology the claim is made that it is power relations and not ideology which need to be understood. Thus Barrett (1991, p. 125) refers to Foucault’s stated belief that the problem (of the concept of ideology)

do not consist in drawing the line between that in a discourse which falls under the category of scientificity or truth, and that which comes under some other category, but in seeing historically how effects of truth are produced within discourses which in themselves are neither true nor false.

In this light, Gordon (1980, p. 543) notes that Foucault does not limit his interest in discourse to the way in which discourse is concerned with truth; rather, his interest in discourse lies in determining the ‘mechanisms of power, the effects of truth…the rules of power and the powers of the true discourses’. Gordon draws attention to Foucault’s interest in investigating the type of power that is most likely to produce discourses of truth in contemporary society, which, in turn, can have powerful effects. It is my claim that, in the analysis of the policy material collected as data for this thesis, the disciplinary power exhibited by the current Australian Government through its policies and the mechanism of policy dissemination in the community should be interrogated, particularly in relation to the effects of this power, for example, the normalisation of particular notions of the good teacher, here one who complies with assessment and reporting regimes such as NAPLAN.

I use the term disciplinary power (in contrast with what Foucault calls sovereign power, which operates through specific, visible agents such as a sovereign or supreme ruler) to describe policy discourses since it speaks to the ways in which dominant discourses can pull other contesting discourses into line, thus coralling alternative perspectives. This occurs both through the tightly prescribed confines of policy messages on song, and the
omission of any distracting points of view. In this sense the disciplinary power of policy is seen as a watchdog of what can be said in the public arena and what cannot. In *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (1977, p. 210), Foucault refers to the ‘visible and unverifiable’ power represented by Bentham’s Panopticon, an apparatus in which each prisoner is aware of ‘the tall outline of the central tower’ which is designed such that he ‘must never know whether he is being looked at…but he must be sure that he may always be so’.

### 3.8 Foucault and Subjectivity

As mentioned previously, this project privileges, in its analysis of empirical data, Foucault’s notion of subjectivity. Importantly, subjectivity is a term that is derived from poststructuralist theory; whereas the term ‘identity’ is commonly used in the (developmental and social) psychological literature. In this regard, McLeod & Yates (2006) offer a useful distinction. By noting that ‘identities’ are produced in an ongoing process, mediated by multiple historical and contemporary emphasis is placed on the way embodied identities are shaped in a complex, contradictory, discursive, and social context (McLeod & Yates, 2006, p.31). In contrast, an investigation of subjectivity requires consideration of the questions, ‘what keeps patterns of old inequalities recreating themselves in new contexts’ and therefore what ‘kind of thing’ is subjectivity and how is it formed? How does it develop and how might it change? (McLeod & Yates, 2006, p.37)

In fact, as I have already implied, my understanding of the Foucauldian term subjectivity has been informed by its contrast with the concept of identity. Given this preference, it is important to clear some further ground around the latter term. Drawing on Gewirtz and Cribb (2008, p. 40), I recognise certainly, that the term identity ought not to be thought of as simply the account we give of ourselves. Rather it is, more importantly, about who we think we are and who we want to be. This interpretation allows us to note that our identity is drawn from those discursive representations that are available to us, including discourses that position us in particular ways, for example, as a gifted student or a conscientious teacher.

Furthermore, noting that Walkerdine, Lucey and Melody (2001) observe that identity is sometimes shored up by placing boundaries and exclusions around particular constructions of identity, I also highlight Gewirtz and Cribb’s (2008) reminder that
whoever we think we are, we are inevitably separating ourselves off from what and who we are not (p. 40). Moreover, there is a collective aspect to identities such that the answer to the question ‘who do I think I am?’ may often point to some group with whom we are identified, who share a set of beliefs, values and commitments, and in some cases, a corresponding set of attitudes and dispositions (Gewirtz and Cribb, p. 41).

In their work on how young people understand themselves and their times (p. 39), McLeod and Yates produced a longitudinal study of teenagers that focuses on an internalised identity formation. Notwithstanding the difference in focus between their study and mine, the distinction made between the terms identity and subjectivity is pertinent, particularly in that suggest that identities are not simple, since they are constructed and formed in complex and diverse ways:

The primary terms with which young people represent…their identities are significant to our account. But our use of the term ‘subjectivity’ signals that those identities are not simple, given, presumed essences that naturally unfold, but rather are produced in an ongoing process, mediated by multiple historical and contemporary factors including social, schooling, and psycho-dynamic relations.

Through this distinction I am able to suggest the more nuanced and appropriate aspects of the term subjectivity as it relates to my own study of how the externalities—here the dominant policy discourses, for example—produce particular discourse effects (on subjects) and how we are, as a result, subjectified.

Furthermore, according to McLeod and Yates (2006, p. 31) the construction of identity arguments, namely, where discourse is seen to be virtually synonymous with identity, such that a person can be seen as a cipher of discourse, a one-dimensional figure on whom social messages are writ, can (re)produce the ‘blindspots’ of socialisation theory. Consequently, McLeod and Yates raise the more penetrating question in terms of my project: How do discourses turn into subjectivity? Their central question is not simply one of generalised identity construction, but instead one of how the social is mediated and encountered subjectively (p.31).

Thus, I argue that the concept of subjectivity allows for an analysis of data on the good teacher as a figure caught up in competing discursive fields. In my view, therefore, a useful understanding of the good teacher can emerge from highlighting the actual ways
that discourses—for example discourses of accountability and outcomes—can turn into subjectivity. In this way, the good teacher cannot be seen as a stable subject but rather, to use Jackson & Mazzei’s (2012, p. 64) terminology, as one who is offered a range of conflicting subject positions and thereby is converted to ‘something else’.

According to Foucault, who and what the self is understood to be, and how the self interacts with others, is historical. It is produced as a result of a web of discourses, institutions and power relations, and constantly changes in response to changing circumstances. Drawing on Zembylas’s (2007a, p. 29) analysis of Foucauldian discourse theorising, subjectivity is ‘produced, negotiated, and reshaped through discursive practices’ and, as such, the self is ‘continuously constituted, never completed, never fully coherent, never completely centred securely in experience’. For the purposes of my research project, Foucault’s notion of the individual (here the good teacher) is theoretically significant particularly, in the way Foucault in *Discipline and Punish* (1977) suggests that discrete individuality does not exist because every individual is an ‘effect’ of power which in turn has the potential to subdue or crush individuality.

Thus, individual subjectivity is understood not as the possession of the conscious self, but as something which is distributed or dispersed, an effect of power (and other) relations, and inevitably embedded in them. Indeed, my study is guided by the concept of subjectivity (rather than identity) since the guiding question of the study carries the notion of a plurality of discourses, all of which have the potential to subjectify the individual in particular ways.

Sanguinetti’s (1999) research demonstrates how discourse theory provides a useful resource for coming to terms with the realities of our institutional and professional lives. Thus, the case study from which the notion of discourse mapping, described in the latter part of this chapter, was taken, was ‘an explicit attempt to facilitate more complex and historically informed understandings…of the discourses which construct our working environments and which constitute us personally, professionally and politically (Sanguinetti, 1999, p. 233).

### 3.9 Foucault’s Concept of Normalising

At the core of my choosing Foucauldian discourse theory as a guiding conceptual framework for my study is the claim that policy discourses seek to normalise particular
understandings of the good teacher. By this I mean that the discourses circulating in a particular time and place strive to dictate what is to be seen (and spoken about) as normal, logical, acceptable or true. Arguably, it is now normal to think education priorities in terms of improved (measurable) student outcomes. Indeed, as an attempt to challenge the notion of normalising in education settings, Graham and Slee (2008, p. 281) discuss the illusory interiority at the heart of normalising processes (here as they pertain to student inclusion in education reform) within education systems. It is claimed that ‘even those at the centre are shaped through subjectification and positioned; their tenuous presence held in check by normative prescriptions of what is right or what is normal’ (p.281).

Indeed the process of normalising is seen as creating a ‘universalised space free from interrogation, a ghostly centre which eludes critical analysis and thus recognition of the power relations embodied within notions of normalcy’ (Graham & Slee, 2008, p. 287). Thus, of relevance to my project is the question of the degree to which the current configuration of the good teacher is a product of normalising practices. Therefore, from a discourse analytic perspective, it is possible to examine the validity and actual substance of the central power, in this case the education policy material, which, as much of the sociological education literature points out, dominates in the configuring of the good teacher in current times.

3.10 Matching Lens to Method

According to Guba and Lincoln (1994, p. 105), the choice of research methodology for a study is concerned with much more than the methods used. Indeed, they suggest that questions of method are secondary to questions of paradigms, which are defined as ‘the basic belief system or worldwide view that guides the investigator, not only in the choices of methods but in ontologically and epistemologically fundamental ways’. Basically, it is suggested (p. 107) that there are three questions which can serve as a focus around which a paradigm can be considered: the ontological question (what is there that can be known about?), the epistemological question (can the would-be knower, or researcher, given his or her relationship with what would be known, actually find out what can be known?), and the methodological question (how can the inquirer, or would-be knower, go about finding out whatever he or she believes can be known?).
If, as Foucault suggests, the production of knowledge is always bound up with historically specific regimes of power and, therefore, every society produces its own truths which have a normalising and regulatory effect, then it follows that our thinking about the good teacher is bound up in the politically driven policy discourses, which potentially strongly shape both policy and teaching practice. In my discussion of the concepts of Foucauldian discourse theory above, reference was made to the notion of dominant discourses overshadowing less dominant discourses. This notion provides the basis for an investigation of both the dominant discourse around the good teacher and whether the dominant discourse is overshadowing other valid discourses of good teaching.

According to Foucault, however, power relationships can be resisted, which means that we can oppose the subject positions that discourses and material practices attempt to impose on us (Dimitriadis & Kamberelis, 2006, p. 115). In this way, Foucauldian theory opens up the prospect of new discourses on the good teacher, as regimes of power and subject positions change. Foucault points, however, to the way institutions (including schools) in the (post) modern age, have depersonalised many of their activities whilst concomitantly focusing upon the observation of individuals, such that, as Oliver (2010, p. xi) notes, ‘each of us is never certain whether or not we are being watched by the authorities’. It is against this cautionary backdrop, and noting the new national testing and public reporting regimes in Australia, that consideration can be given to the education policy directions currently being enacted by the Australian Government and, most importantly the consequential subjectification of the good teacher that may result.

Thus, in undertaking the empirical component of the project, I was concerned to identify the discursive practices in government policies and, in so doing, determine how these practices establish the norms by which some things are said about good teaching and some things are left unsaid. I was then concerned to compare these norms with the norms implied in the voices of other stakeholders, namely teachers and students. Assuming there are norms which reflect a dominant exercise of power by government, the project considers how these norms may subjectify the public’s notion of the good teacher, as well as the notions of the good teacher that exist in the minds of teachers and students.

Foucauldian discourse theory, in looking at the interconnectivities between power, knowledge and discourses, highlights the way a dominant discourse becomes self-
perpetuating or productive. I have drawn on the theoretical framework of Foucauldian discourse theory in my investigation of the good teacher in order to see whether there is a tendency in the dominant education discourse for it to perpetuate itself, and for subjectification of teachers to occur through, perhaps, repeated reference to certain themes and threads (e.g., aspects of neo-liberal education reform).

My choice of Foucauldian discourse theory, then, was made on three grounds. First, it allows me to interrogate what seems normal in terms of the current configurations of the good teacher. It was crucial for this project that I have a theoretical lens that allows for an exploration of how notions of the good teacher are socially/discursively constructed. That is to say, Foucauldian theorising allows me to investigate how policy discourses (arguably as the dominant discourse) around the good teacher and good teaching construct a version of normality. Second, Foucauldian theory allows for an investigation into what Foucault calls ‘subjugated knowledge’, a concept central to Foucauldian theory. Clearly it follows that dominance and subjugation go hand in hand and that, rather than accept discourse dominance as an inevitable aspect of neo-liberal education policy, it is possible to investigate what it is that is being subjugated, why this subjugation may be occurring and with what consequences. Third, within the notion of contestability of dominant discourses by less dominant discourses, there is scope to interrogate just how different the less dominant discourses might be from the dominant discourses and the extent to which they might be brought closer together in the future. It follows then that these dominant policy discourses and practices might be challenged, not only by academics but also by meanings made about good teaching by teachers and students. It is my contention, as this chapter seeks to show, that Foucauldian discourse theorising potentially provides a useful lens through which to view the relatively invisible literature on the good teacher and good teaching emanating from other(ed) sources (teachers and students).

Given the attractions of Foucauldian discourse theory as a framework for my project, I also acknowledge some of the limitations inherent in its guiding concepts and theories. From a theoretical perspective, Foucauldian notions of genealogy and subjectification and the interconnectedness of discourse, power and truth can ultimately suggest that since human agency is at best limited, any benefit to society from research is unlikely and recommendations for future directions are problematic. Whilst I acknowledge this as a
limitation, I argue that Foucauldian discourse theory affords an important understanding of how we think the way we do about the good teacher. Moreover, Foucault himself implies the restorative benefit of probing below the surface of social strata in order to appreciate its ‘stirring’. That is to say, in the interconnectedness of discourse, power and knowledge at a particular point in history, there is, as well, movement and fluidity.

In attempting to uncover the deepest strata of Western culture, I am restoring to our silent and apparently immobile soil its rifts, its instability, its flaws; and it is the same ground that is once more stirring under our feet. (Foucault, 1970/2002b, p. xxvi)

3.11 Sources of Data

3.11.1 Policy texts

Attentive to Bowen’s (2009) commentary on analysing documents, my selection of policy documents was not concerned with how many documents should be examined but, rather, with the quality and range of the documents and the evidence they contain. The range of documents chosen for analysis afforded the opportunity to hold one policy point of view against another (e.g., positions held in key government reports that set agendas for the long-term are juxtaposed with positions put in media releases which, while agenda-setting, are more everyday and short term) in order to ensure the triangulation in the readings made. As Neuman (2006, p. 149) explains, ‘looking at something from multiple points of view improves accuracy’ in terms of the findings made in relation to research data analysis. Moreover, since I am engaged in qualitative research, it is appropriate that I seek to answer questions such as What is X? (here the good teacher) and, How does X vary in different circumstances, and Why? rather than How many Xs are there? which tends to be the domain of quantitative research (Pope & Maysa, 1995, p. 44). When put this way, the value adding of qualitative research can be seen to lie in the why. In the case of my research study, it is possible to not only identify contrasting ways of configuring the good teacher, but also to interrogate how configurations of the good teacher vary in different circumstances and why.

The data from this body of material comprised an Australian Government ‘Declaration’ on educational goals, two media releases from the Australian Government, two policy speeches from the former Federal Minister for Education (Julia Gillard), an article written
by the current Federal Minister for Education (Mr Peter Garrett) and a transcript of a radio interview, broadcast by the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, between the current Prime Minister, Ms Julia Gillard and a well-known Australian Broadcasting Corporation presenter.

My policy data includes contrasting accounts of policy given by politicians through speeches and media interviews. For example, the speech with which the then Education Minister, Ms Julia Gillard, addressed a forum assembled by the Independent Education Union was made for an audience well versed in policy and thus contains well-formed policy arguments. Alternatively, the media releases are typically more brisk in format, being intended, presumably, to be picked up and used at once by the media. In addition, the interview and newspaper article included in the data set are arguably less formal, and attempt to convey the policy message to the community whilst at the same time attempting to deflect opposition criticism. Thus, through the selection of policy texts, I am able to identify, where appropriate, how the messages were modified depending on the audience or readership. Indeed, the deliberate triangulation of policy texts has allowed me to articulate varying discursive effects which, in turn, fortifies the credibility and trustworthiness of the project’s approach to data analysis.

Accordingly, I now turn my attention to an important and contrasting source of policy data, the Australian Government’s My School website and the publication of NAPLAN results on this website. According to the Chair of the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA), Professor Barry McGaw, whose comments feature on the website’s introductory pages, the Australian Government My School website22 is an information service with two main purposes. First, it provides parents and students with ‘information on each school’ and, second, ‘comparisons of their students’ performances in literacy and numeracy with those of students in other schools, most importantly those in schools that serve similar students’. The website goes on to explain

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21 The National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) is an annual assessment for students in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9. It is an everyday part of the school calendar and has been since 2008. NAPLAN tests skills that are essential for every child to progress through school and life, such as reading, writing, spelling and numeracy. The assessments are undertaken nationwide, every year, in the second week in May. NAPLAN is made up of tests in the four areas (or ‘domains’) of: Reading, Writing, Language Conventions (spelling, grammar and punctuation) and Numeracy.

that higher student performances ‘can stimulate others to lift expectations of what they and their students can achieve’.

Indeed, much of the policy data collected from media releases, speeches, interviews, etc. can be seen as a response to recent Australian Government policy around the NAPLAN national testing regime and the content of the *My School* website. The multiple policy data sources, i.e., the media releases, speeches, television and radio interviews given by politicians, newspaper articles, an analysis of NAPLAN data and the *My School* website, afford analysis from more than one vantage point. Methodologically, they go some way towards strengthening the credibility of the claims made and ensuring robust results. As Somekh and Lewin (2005, p. 349) explain in their glossary of research methods terminology, sound research methods include collecting data on a particular issue from at least three different perspectives (triangulation), so that they can be cross-validated. Alternatively, it is suggested that three or more different kinds of data can be used ‘to shed light on each other’.

### 3.12 ‘Accomplished Geography Teachers’ Study

In addition to the policy material, data were also sought which would give a practitioner perspective. Rather than initiate a new teacher study, which would, of necessity, be of lesser scope and magnitude, I chose to use part of a data set gathered for a much larger research project, the Australian Research Council (ARC) Linkage study ‘Strengthening Standards of Teaching through Linking Standards and Teacher Learning: The Development of Professional Standards for Teaching School Geography’ conducted by Mulcahy, Kriewaldt and Clarke (2007-2010) over the course of my candidature at the University of Melbourne. As Chief Investigator on this project, as well as my thesis supervisor, Dr Dianne Mulcahy proposed that I access these data (or part thereof, as explained below) as they were directly in line with my research purposes and intent.

Initially, the rationale for including data on teachers (here school geography teachers) concerned the valuable opportunity to analyse what practising teachers actually regard as accomplished teaching. That is to say, from a Foucauldian discourse perspective, this was a chance to explore the discursive construction of good teaching (here, accomplished teaching) by teachers with a reputation for teaching accomplishment as well as the discursive framing of the good teacher.
In addition, the chance to analyse some of the ARC project data was appealing since the study design involved a focus on future professional standards for geography teachers in Australia. Arguably, as evidence of the move towards the current neo-liberal regime, it can be noted that over the past 20 years, both at system and school levels, there has been an evolution in requiring teachers to maintain and improve teaching standards. This has taken the form of mandatory professional development and teacher assessments. This process has occurred against the backdrop of an attempt by regulatory bodies, such as the Victorian Institute of Teaching, VIT, Teaching Australia, 23 and, more recently, the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL), to produce defined standards of competence and/or accomplishment for teachers at varying stages of their careers. 24

Thus, the discipline and key subject domain of geography was chosen by the research team for the purpose of collecting data and providing an understanding of accomplishment in the teaching of geography, as understood by the practitioners. From there, as the project website ‘geogstandards’25 explains, ‘the attributes of accomplished geography teachers could be identified and formalised in a set of standards for the purposes of teacher professional development’.

The following is a brief explanatory excerpt from the geogstandards website:

The Australian Research Council, in conjunction with the Australian Geography Teachers’ Association, the Geography Teachers’ Association of Victoria and the Victorian Institute of Teaching, funded this research project. Throughout 2007-2009, the research team videotaped accomplished geography teachers at work in government and non-government schools in Victoria, New South Wales and South

23 The Victorian Institute of Teaching is a statutory authority for the regulation of the teaching profession in Victoria. The Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL), which superseded Teaching Australia, provides national leadership for the Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments in promoting excellence in the profession of teaching and school leadership.

24 These new Standards have been informed by an analysis and review of the standards in use by teacher registration authorities, employers and professional associations. The development process drew on national agreements, extensive research and expert knowledge, as well as an examination of the use of standards to inform professional development and provide an objective basis for assessing professional practice. The Standards describe what is required of teachers at four levels of professional expertise—Graduate, Proficient, Highly Accomplished and Lead Teacher—across three domains: Professional Knowledge, Professional Practice and Professional Engagement.

Australia. Each of ten geography teachers, with a reputation for accomplished practice, was filmed across two lessons and pre-lesson and post-lesson interviews with each teacher were also conducted. Altogether, eleven case studies (22 lessons altogether) were conducted in eight schools (government and non-government; metropolitan and non-metropolitan) in three major Australian states.

In the analysis of the ARC data I viewed and analysed according to Foucauldian theory the pre- and post-lesson interviews and the videoed lessons of eight teachers, here given pseudonyms: Katrina, Steve, Rachel, Jason, Chris, Ron, Allen and Ben (details of these teacher’s discursive practices are represented in Figure 5.1). It was my judgement that the eight teachers chosen provide rich data for analysis. Following this discourse analysis of the videoed material (of both interviews and lessons) of these eight accomplished teachers chosen for the ARC study, I analysed practising geography teachers’ responses to a particular question from the ARC project: What counts as accomplished teaching in this sample? This question asks the participating teachers to identify characteristics of the accomplished teacher as they are represented in the video recordings. In my view, the nature of this question was sufficiently probing and complex as to draw the attention of the participating teacher to a consideration of the discursive representation of good teaching and the good teacher, at least at an implicit level. Thus the question is sympathetic to my interest in subjectivity, which I discussed in detail above in this chapter.

Ultimately, 64 of these responses were used as data for my research, a detailed analysis of which is provided in Chapter 5. Further to providing teacher views of accomplished or good teaching (as mentioned above, I use the terms interchangeably) which provided the data for a discursive analyses, the ARC project allowed for an exploration of the constitutive role of teaching standards in the production of the practice and identity of the accomplished teacher. As such, I anticipated the potential of these data to yield expanded understandings, to use Foucauldian terminology, of the subjectivity of the good teacher. Indeed, the idea of tracing discourses of good or accomplished teaching through a data set, other than a policy data set, meant that triangulation could be achieved, given also the data collected from students.
3.13 The Writing and Receiving of ‘Thank-you’ Cards and Letters

Further to the data collected from the geography teachers as described above, there was a second cohort of teachers who provided teacher data for my study. In the process which I shall now describe, a group of teacher participants were asked to provide photocopies of unsolicited letters of appreciation written to them by students (78 cards and letters in total), noting that identification of student, teacher and setting was not required. These participants were 25 accomplished teachers from ten education settings, comprising (i) a government secondary (co-educational) school in metropolitan Melbourne, (ii) a government middle school (co-educational) in metropolitan Melbourne, (iii) a government primary school in metropolitan Melbourne, (iv) an independent secondary school (co-educational) in inner metropolitan Melbourne, (v) an independent middle school (co-educational) in inner metropolitan Melbourne, (vi) an independent junior school (co-educational) in inner metropolitan Melbourne, (vii) an independent secondary (single-sex: boys) in inner metropolitan Melbourne, (viii) an independent secondary school (co-educational) in a regional city in the State of Victoria, (ix) an independent middle school (co-educational) in a regional city in the State of Victoria, and (x) an independent junior school (co-educational) in a regional city in the State of Victoria.

Table 3.2 provides information on the demographics of the participating teachers, namely, the gender, age, school type (government/independent, secondary/ middle/primary, co-educational/single sex, metropolitan/regional) and their different curriculum/program areas, e.g., subject teachers, specialist teachers, pastoral teachers.

**Table 3.2: Demographics of teachers who contributed thank-you cards and letters**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age*</th>
<th>School type</th>
<th>Main subject(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-PT</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>50-55</td>
<td>Independent, secondary (co-ed), regional</td>
<td>Pastoral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-MB</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>30-35</td>
<td>Independent, secondary, single-sex: girls, inner metro</td>
<td>Sport</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-JJ</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>35-40</td>
<td>Government, secondary, co-ed, metro</td>
<td>English/Literature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-CB</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>30-35</td>
<td>Independent, secondary, co-ed, outer metro</td>
<td>Business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-AC</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>55-60</td>
<td>Independent, secondary, co-ed, outer metro</td>
<td>English/Literature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-BC</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>25-30</td>
<td>Independent, secondary, co-ed, outer metro</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-MH</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>40-45</td>
<td>Government, secondary, co-ed, metro</td>
<td>Mathematics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8-JF</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>55-60</td>
<td>Independent, secondary, co-ed, outer metro</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9-LM</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>55-60</td>
<td>Independent, secondary, co-ed, inner metro</td>
<td>ESL</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Specifically, the gathering of this data was founded on the following rationale: Rather than approach individual teachers myself, and risk personal favouritism or bias in the teacher selection process, I initially contacted principals from a broad range of schools, approximately 30 in total, from primary, secondary, independent and government sectors and metropolitan and regional areas. In Australia, an independent (or private) school is a school that is independent in its finances and governance and is not reliant on national or local government for financing its operations. That is, it does not rely on taxpayer contributions. Instead it is funded by a combination of tuition charges and gifts, but may also receive some government funds. Government (or state) schools are run by the respective state government. They offer free education; however, many schools ask parents to pay a voluntary contribution fee.

Initially contact was made by telephone or by email to outline the research study and invite individual schools to take part. It was explained to the principal that, for the purposes of my research, it was required that participating teachers had at least five years of experience. My choice of schools was informed by an aspiration to achieve a
representative sample (albeit very small) of the teacher population across the state of Victoria. In the event, the majority of schools willing to participate were from the non-government sector. Although I approached several government schools, the uptake from the non-government sector seemed to indicate the appeal of the school’s good teachers being featured in a University of Melbourne research study. Conversely, I sensed that some of the government schools felt that what I was proposing presented yet another demand on staff at the school.

As Neuman (2006) points out, researchers typically first select a social group or site for study (here a balanced range of government and non-government schools) and then, hopefully, gain access to the setting they wish to investigate. However, given the focus on people in the design of this part of my study, I was encouraged by Somekh’s (2005) description of the complexity within the relationship between researcher and participants such that ‘power differentials are never entirely within the researcher’s control and can never be exercised’ and, indeed, that this in turn has ‘an impact on the quality and reliability of the data that can be collected’ (p. 4). Nevertheless, I believe the responses from the nine school groupings that participated have provided a strong indication of the kinds of letters written by students to valued teachers.

Once agreement had been reached that his or her school would participate, the principal made the research study known to staff, typically through email, and asked for his or her selected teachers to take part. Once teachers had responded positively to the invitation, I arranged to meet with them one-on-one, at a mutually convenient location. At this time, I provided the teachers with the Plain Language Statement and Consent Form, which stipulated that participants were willing to provide copies of their cards and/or letters for the purpose of me furthering understanding of the good teacher. Samples of these forms are included in Appendices 1 and 2.

Importantly, in discussing the project with participating teachers, consideration was given to ethical issues, namely, the original intention of the cards and letters. That is, when students sat down to write a note of appreciation to a valued teacher they did not anticipate these personal words being used as part of an education research project.

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26 In most of the non-government schools that participated the primary and secondary schools are located on separate parts of the school campus and are therefore treated as separate ‘schools’. Similarly, I have created a separate school category for very young children in grades 1-4.
However, the teachers who chose to participate understood that the project was for research purposes only and that the confidentiality of the data would be secured through the removal of any identifying contextual information. A profile of these students is summarised in Table 3.3.

Table 3.3: Demographics of students who wrote the thank-you cards and letters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Stage of education</th>
<th>School type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Anna</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>Government, secondary, co-ed, metro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Eliza</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>Government, secondary, co-ed, metro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Steph</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>Government, secondary, co-ed, metro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Emily</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>Government, middle, co-ed, metro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Hayley</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>Government, middle, co-ed, metro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Jamma</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>Government, primary, co-ed, metro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Kevin</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>Government, secondary, co-ed, metro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Nik</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>Government, secondary, co-ed, metro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Dave</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>Government, secondary, co-ed, metro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Fumz</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>Government, middle, co-ed, metro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 William</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>Government, primary, co-ed, metro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Bailey</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>Government primary, co-ed, metro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 Emma</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>Independent, secondary, co-ed, inner metro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 Suminto</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>Independent, secondary, co-ed, inner metro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 Andhy</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>Independent, secondary, co-ed, inner metro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 Georgia</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>Independent, middle, co-ed, inner metro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 Sara</td>
<td>Female</td>
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<td>Independent, middle, co-ed, inner metro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 Belle</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>Independent, middle, co-ed, inner metro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 Emmaline</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>Independent, primary, co-ed, inner metro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 Lucy</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>Independent, primary, co-ed, inner metro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 Bess</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Former student</td>
<td>Independent, secondary, single-sex, inner metro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 Joan</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Former student</td>
<td>Independent, secondary, co-ed, inner metro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23 Alex</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>Independent, secondary, co-ed, inner metro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 Harry</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>Independent, secondary, co-ed, inner metro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 Rufus</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>Independent, secondary, co-ed, inner metro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 Christian</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>Independent, middle, co-ed, inner metro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27 Arthur</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>Independent, middle, co-ed, inner metro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28 Mick</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>Independent, middle, co-ed, inner metro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29 Harry</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>Independent, primary, co-ed, inner metro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 Marcus</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>Independent, primary, co-ed, inner metro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 Matt</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>Independent, primary, co-ed, inner metro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32 Milly</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>Independent, secondary, co-ed, regional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33 Jess</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>Independent, secondary, co-ed, regional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34 Disco</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>Independent, secondary, co-ed, regional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35 Lizzie</td>
<td>Female</td>
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<tr>
<td>36 Sam</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>37 George</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>Independent, secondary, single-sex, metro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38 Peter</td>
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<tr>
<td>39 Woody</td>
<td>Male</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>40 Esther</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>Independent, secondary, co-ed, outer metro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41 Tara</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>Independent, middle, co-ed, outer metro</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 3: Theorising the Study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Stage of education</th>
<th>School type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>42 Miranda</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>Independent, middle, co-ed, outer metro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43 Leon</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>Independent, secondary, co-ed, outer metro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44 Cam</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>Independent, secondary, co-ed, outer metro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45 Richy</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>Independent, middle, co-ed, outer metro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46 Tom</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>Independent, middle, co-ed, outer metro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47 Sophie &amp; Ellie</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>Independent, primary, co-ed, outer metro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49 Abigail</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>Independent, primary, co-ed, outer metro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50 Luke</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>*Secondary</td>
<td>Independent, secondary, single-sex, metro</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Former Student

Subsequent to my receiving the cards and letters from teachers, I provided each teacher participant with the opportunity to reflect on what their cards and letters meant to them, and how these communications from students informed notions of (their own) good teaching, in relation to their own teaching experience and in relation to current educational policy. Hence, as a part of the data collected for my study, I included the reflections of the teachers who offered for my research their thank-you cards and letters from students. Each of the teachers who responded (10 in total) provided information pertaining to their years of teaching experience (3-25 years), year levels of students taught (ranging from Year 5 to Year 12), gender (eight females and two males) and age group (approximately 30 to 60 years).

Having described the three data sites from which data were drawn for this study, I present, in Table 3.3, a summary of the data sites. This, in turn, represents a data analysis framework for my study.
Table 3.4: Framework of study formed of multiple data sites (adapted from Bowen 2009, p. 36)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project data site</th>
<th>Project sample</th>
<th>Characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Policy Discourses</td>
<td>Commonwealth and Victorian Government Educational Documents, Media Releases, Interviews and Speeches (2000–2010)</td>
<td>Rhetoric and political persuasion designed to set and advance policy agendas and commonly enhance the standing of a political party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Discourses</td>
<td>A) Data from ARC Linkage Study: Standards for Teaching School geography: (i) Pre- and post-interviews of accomplished teachers whose lessons were videoed (nine pre- and nine post-interviews from eight teachers) (ii) Content of the videoed lessons (nine lessons in total) (iii) Video viewing and online responses: ‘What counts as accomplished geography teaching in this sample?’ (64 responses altogether) B) Reflections from 10 teachers on the meaning and significance of student letters</td>
<td>Professional, (specialist), reflections on, and identification of, accomplishment, including enactments of notions of best practice as depicted in video recordings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Discourses</td>
<td>Thank-you cards &amp; letters (650 in total) from teachers at nine schools (25 teachers altogether)</td>
<td>Personal expressions of appreciation of teachers Informal student commentary on characteristics of the good teacher (or the good in teaching)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.14 Document Analysis and Discourse ‘Mapping’

I now provide a discussion of my approach to the analysis of data collected for this study. Clearly, the policy texts, the ARC geography teacher data, teacher reflections and the student letters (regardless of their informal and personal nature) are all documents. Bowen (2009, p. 38) notes that document analysis entails finding, selecting, appraising and synthesising data contained in documents, but that the researcher is expected to demonstrate objectivity and sensitivity in response to the material presented. Although

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27 Some teachers gave me cards signed with messages from many students (e.g., a whole class) and this considerably inflated the total number of messages that comprises the student data. In Chapter 6, I limit my analysis to 50 of the more substantial letters.
my focus is on discourses and not documentary material per se, I mention this observation here as a guide to the approach taken in this study, namely, an approach of objectivity but also of sensitivity to the nuances and complexity of the discourses examined.

Arguably, in the case of my triangulated, three-part data set, it is challenging to identify the external conditions for the formation of discourses. On the one hand, issues such as accountability, transparency, performance and outcomes are clearly discernible as themes in the policy material but, on the other hand, with regard to the teacher and student data sets, the external conditions are less clear-cut. These conditions need to be inferred from the meanings made in this material. In keeping with the analytic approaches touched on below, Foucauldian discourse theory and methods of discourse mapping well support this inferential work.

The interpretation of qualitative data in general, and discourse analysis in particular, is often problematic on many levels. Some scholars have documented successful models. For example, in 2009 LeGreco and Tracy produced an article entitled ‘Discourse Tracing as Qualitative Practice’, in which the term tracing ‘draws from contributions made by ethnographers, discourse critics, case studies scholars, and process tracers’. This analysis explores ‘the formation, interpretation and appropriation of discursive practices’ and, in doing so, ‘provides a language for studying social processes, including the facilitation of change and the institution of new routines’ (p. 1516).

LeGreco and Tracy (2009) state that discourse tracing is concerned with how the production of a text is shaped, reproduced and reshaped by social practices, in order to offer a more transparent and explicit way of moving through qualitative data, especially data that focuses on discourse (p. 1520). In addition, Saukko’s (2000) quilting is described as being ‘sensitive to the texture and nuance of patches’ (different accounts) and by sticking them together the discursive practices which distinguish them become evident (p. 299).

Although Sanguinetti, to whom I referred above in this chapter, was studying teachers engaged in the field of adult literacy and basic education in difficult times, her research is highly relevant to my project in that her investigation involved commenting on research participants and their reflexivity (in the context of action research). In her explanation of
her development of discourse mapping, Sanguinetti (1999, p. 92) shows that the focus of discursive engagement required her to find a method with which to explore this engagement as reflected in teachers’ textual self-representations.

3.14.1 Stages of Discourse Analysis

Despite the difficulties in dealing with highly diverse discourse data sets as described above, I adopted a process of interrogation of the data according to the following stages. This process was adapted from Sanguinetti’s (1999) mapping model. Thus, my method involves multiple data sets, for which I provide a separate analysis and then, taking into account important interdiscursivities, I attempt to amalgamate or juxtapose specific analytic aspects.

The Issue of Terminology

To paraphrase Sanguinetti’s approach to discourse analysis (2000, p. 235), my thesis set out to explore discursive positioning, subjectivity and power in the empirical data so as to facilitate a deeper understanding of the good teacher in the current times. In *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1972/2002a), Foucault ascribes meaning to the terms statement (microcosm) and discursive formation (macrocosm), and also references a system of dispersion, which in turn is governed by four sets of rules of formation: objects, enunciative modalities, strategies and concepts. In terms of my research, the leading analytic approach is aligned with Foucault’s ‘enunciative modalities’ (1972/2002a, p. 55), a term that highlights the notion that the individual does not possess or make discursive meaning; rather, as Downing (2008, p. 48) observes, discursive formations ‘create subject positions that can—and must—be occupied by speaking individuals’.

In the case of the student data, however, I found it especially important to avoid misunderstanding and prolixity around Foucauldian terminology. Hence I consistently use the term ‘discursive elements’, which I identified in a ‘text’ (the actual substance of letters produced by students) and then use the term ‘discourses’ in a way that aligns with Sanguinetti’s (2000, p. 239) notion of significant clusters of discourses.

Thus, with regard to the analysis of student thank-you letters, the use of the term ‘discursive elements’ is a way of fine-tuning the identification of miscellaneous themes which students touch upon in their often free-flowing and unstructured tributes to their esteemed teachers. In other words, relative to the policy (and to a degree the teacher)
discourses, the student data was found to be wide-ranging—and even, at times, paradoxical and disjointed—regarding the ideas addressed. Consequently, in opting to use the term discursive elements in the student data to describe the traces (of discursive practices) anywhere in the texts, of concepts seemingly associated in the students’ minds with good teaching (which might variously include themes, value statements, anecdotes, metaphors, arguments and peculiar ‘vocabulary’ items), some consistency is achieved.

**Stage 1: Identifying ‘discursive formations’ in each set of data**

By looking at each statement or remark (in each of the data sets), following Sanguinetti (1999), I was able to ask myself whether some theme could be detected in what was being said. In Foucauldian terms, I looked for the discursive formation associated with meanings made in the data, specifically, what was given priority in each statement. Given the diverse sites of the data collection, I made an initial judgement to identify meanings that repeat or occur regularly and indicate a discursive formation at work. In so doing, I looked for statements making identifiable references to what counts as good teaching and learning, i.e., what is given priority or is being valued.

Although I have based my analysis on Sanguinetti’s discourse analytic techniques, I found that Gee (2005) provides a helpful approach for interrogating texts which he defines as ‘ways with words, deeds and interactions, thoughts and feelings [that] allow us to enact and recognize different socially situated identities’ (p. 34). Gee also distinguishes between capital ‘D’ Discourses, ‘acting-interacting-thinking-valuing-talking-(sometimes writing-reading) in the appropriate way…at appropriate times in appropriate places’ and little ‘d’ discourses which mean, according to Gee (2005, p. 26) ‘languages-in-use’ or ‘stretches of language (like conversations or stories)’. Thus, despite the radically different sourcing of the three data sets, ranging from policy rhetoric to informal student commentaries, the methodology chosen for this project allows for the same questions to be asked of each data set. This is discussed below through my reference to Stage 1 of Sanguinetti’s mapping process.

Next, in trying to sort this material into a manageable form from which analysis might be made, it was necessary to reduce the material somehow. My decision making in this process was informed, to a degree, by Miles and Huberman’s (1994) notion of enumeration. These authors make the argument that data reduction is a form of analysis that sharpens, sorts, focuses and discards or organises data in such a way that final
conclusions can be drawn and verified (p. 11). Since it is acknowledged that data reduction does not mean quantification, I took into consideration both the frequency with which the word was used, and whether a simple concept was expressed by one speaker using many words.

In the case of the policy data I looked for regularised terms or statements making identifiable reference to aspects of government responsibility or sets of power relations (in regard, for example, to attributing, government bodies, etc.). Such statements included references to the need for transparency in documenting data on teacher accountability (to parents or government), pertaining to student performance and outcomes, teacher responsibility and compliance. In the case of the teacher data, I looked for comments around teacher expertise and capabilities, classroom practices and resourcefulness, disposition and commitment. In the case of the student data, I looked for statements making identifiable references to the value placed on good interpersonal relationships. These included identifiable references to the notable character traits of teachers, excellent pedagogical skills (leading to optimised learning achievements) and a capacity to engender student self-confidence and trust between teacher and student.

**Stage 2: Identifying interrelationships (interdiscursivities)**

In the analysis of my three data sets, the second stage concerned the exploration of the interdiscursivity that results from the interplay of the various contesting discourses. The term interdiscursivity relates to the ways in which discourses draw on previous discourses through the appropriation of other texts. In analysing the discourse of students writing to their teachers, for example, it was appropriate to identify inter-textual traces of other discourses. That is to say, throughout a discourse of gratitude felt towards her teacher, a student might also take up a discursive practice around performance and achievement or the pedagogical skills of the teacher.

Thus, it was found that student letters to valued teachers, written at the end of the year, contained clearly identifiable discursive items such as ‘thanks’ (appreciation for progress, good results, good explanations given and so on) but also items (meanings) from which discourses needed to be inferred. Thus, meanings were made referencing love, compassion, attachment, dependency, long-term influence and delight, indicating what I later came to call a discourse of care. Similarly, in the policy and teacher data sets, strong sets of interrelationships, associated with the context from which the data emerged, soon
became discernible. The discourses of teacher quality and teacher accomplishment were evident here. These are discussed in detail in my analyses chapters (Chapters 4, 5 and 6), that is, chapters on policy discourses, teacher discourses and student discourses around the good teacher.

**Stage 3: Identification of differing ‘all-encompassing values’**

At the conclusion of each analysis chapter I present an overview of the key discursive themes identified in each data set. Through this process, it was my intention to distil data into a manageable form, which would allow me to provide an answer to the question ‘What discourses of the good teacher are circulating in education policy and in practice arenas?’

**Stage 4: Interrogating points of disjuncture**

This stage facilitates an answer to the second, third and fourth of my research questions, pertaining to what policy discourses might leave out or render invisible and what might be the consequences of these discoursal omissions. This involved an exploration of the three data sets in terms of which voices are privileged or silenced in a particular text and in terms of the discursive gaps and inconsistencies, in order to understand something of the discursive politics playing out in and across discursive terrains.

**3.15 Questions of Methodological Rigour and Ethical Considerations**

I have sought to quality assure this study in three main ways: firstly, in my choice of multiple empirical sites, sites which are also directly connected to the debates in the literature, for example, questions about current education policy and the teacher’s role in the neo-liberal setting; secondly, in my choice of Foucauldian discourse theory which, given my research intent, can be said to be fit to purpose; and finally, in my sampling choice. Guided by the principle that we can learn the most by selecting illuminative cases of policy and of teachers knowledgeable about accomplished practice—and researching these in depth—this qualitative research intensity sampling strategy focuses, as is common, on relatively small numbers of subjects. The point of dealing with small numbers of subjects in a lot of detail is to see specificity and context in fine grain (Yates, 2004).
The data were collected in such a way that confidentiality was ensured for participants. Specifically, the policy texts are published in the public domain through Government publications available to the community, through the media and through Government websites. Similarly, in my thesis, there is no disclosure of the names of participating schools, nor of the full names of participating teachers and students.

3.16 Situating the Reflexive Self

In conducting social science research, reflexivity, as a means of combining the process of reflection with self-critical analysis, is a highly valued practice. It is a means whereby social science researchers are able to explore their own subjectivity, and thus become more aware of the impact they inevitably have on the research data collected, but it also allows researchers to be more sensitive regarding their analysis and interpretation of data (Somekh & Lewin, 2005). Indeed, reflexivity is a process through which the researcher is aware of self in the actual process of researching (Foley, 2007). Moreover, as Denzin and Lincoln (2005, p. 21) note, when taking a specifically poststructuralist approach to research, as I have endeavoured to do throughout, it is understood that ‘there is no clear window into the inner life of an individual’, and that ‘any gaze is always filtered through the lenses of language, gender, social class, race and ethnicity’.

Indeed, all research observations are socially situated in the worlds of—and between—the observer and the observed. By highlighting reflexivity and being aware of my own subjectivity, it is possible, to some degree, to manage the risks associated with carrying out this research. In the case of this project, my understanding of myself as an experienced (impassioned) classroom teacher and now education researcher, allowed me to both problematise the assumptions that I bring to my research, and to position the research in a particular social, political and cultural context. Thus, in the light of my statement regarding ‘researcher’s context’ in Chapter 1, this, like all research, must be regarded as situated and contingent practice (Foley, 2007).

3.17 Limitations of the Research

As previously mentioned, it is necessary to acknowledge the relatively small numbers of people participating in this research. Although the data from ‘Strengthening Standards of Teaching through Linking Standards and Teacher Learning: The Development of Professional Standards for Teaching School geography’ were drawn from a substantial
government study, the data from students were derived from a limited number of school contexts. Moreover, whilst I strove to collect student letters and cards from a cross-section of schools that varied geographically, as well as with respect to school sector, it became apparent that principals and teachers in the independent system were more inclined to contribute to the data set than those in the government sector. In addition, my student ‘participants’ were all drawn from the state of Victoria.

At a more general level, my approach to discourse analysis could be seen as limited by issues regarding the relationship between the level of meaning made in personal letters, understood as social texts (micro-level), and the exploration of political discourses, in the sense that they represent a large-scale, ordered, integrated way of reasoning or constituting the social world.

3.18 Conclusion

In designing this study, I have focused on the notion of methodological congruence (Morse & Richards, 2002) whereby ‘the purposes, questions, and methods of research are all interconnected and interrelated so that the study appears as a cohesive whole rather than as fragmented isolated parts’ (Creswell, 2007, p. 42). As discussed in Chapter 2, it can be confidently asserted that the driving political agenda in configuring the good teacher at present is based on the belief that teachers must be accountable and ‘outcome’ orientated, since, to a significant degree, market forces influence their work. Thus, in the political sphere, the dominant discourse of the good teacher leaves little space for alternative discourses. Accordingly, as a critical sociological scholar, I draw on Foucault’s theorising to inform my discourse analyses of empirical real world materials (the circulating and contesting discourses represented in the three data sets), with the purpose of ultimately unsettling this dominance.
Chapter 4:
Policy Discourses as ‘Rituals’ and ‘Repetitions’

‘Justify’, 2009, Dennis McCann.

In principle, knowledge is disinterested, pure of all power; a sage is the polar opposite of a politician, for whom he feels nothing but scorn. In reality though, knowledge is often used by power, which frequently comes to its aid. (Veyne, 2010, p. 32)

4.1 Introduction to Policy Data Analysis

I have chosen to begin this chapter with a painting whose title, Justify, resonates with the Foucauldian notions of knowledge and power being inextricably linked and, indeed, the ways in which this nexus serves to ‘justify’ the position taken up by various politicians regarding good teachers and good teaching. In this context, Singleton and Law (2012, p. 3) invite a consideration of policy in terms of ‘rituals’, ‘repetitions’ or patterns which ensure that human society ‘holds stable’. At the same time, they argue that there are many ‘quietly permissive and local devices enacting many more or less different local realities’. Adopting Singleton and Law’s terminology, my own career in education has been shaped more so by privileging ‘human craftwork’ at the local level, rather than acknowledging
the argument ‘that without the [policy] patterns things don’t hold steady’ (p. 4). It is important at the outset, therefore, to give some reflexive attention to my (discursively formed) authorial voice in order to show an awareness of how I am attempting to position the reader of my thesis in relation to education policy. For this reason I include a (true) story of my own teaching career.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Story 1</th>
<th>Story 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>My Personal Observation</strong></td>
<td><strong>A 2012 Perspective</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between 1975 and 2007 I taught in Australian secondary schools. I taught thousands of students, marked thousands more essays and conducted hundreds of gruelling (but sometimes joyous) Parent/Teacher interviews. These all placed endless demands on my time. This was rewarded by a procession of outstanding examination results from young minds. My teaching was shaped by my energy and enthusiasm to stimulate young minds and my teaching was often described by these young minds at Christmas time, in cards and gifts of appreciation. As Foucault might have said, the voices of students were <em>constructing</em> me as a good teacher. During my years of teaching my thinking was not shaped by government policies, which then focused on measuring individual student outcomes. My gaze was towards the classroom (and the staffroom) and I looked at each of my students every day simply trying, <em>with all my being</em>, to make the learning vibrant and exhilarating for us all.</td>
<td>In February 2012 NAPLAN results for 2011 appeared on the <em>My School</em> website, prompting <em>The Age</em> newspaper to feature a primary school with NAPLAN results which were substantially above statistically similar schools. In the <em>Age</em> article on 24 February 2012, the principal of the school in question speaks of NAPLAN as merely <em>one</em> form of information, just a snapshot in time, that might help in determining <em>where a child is at</em>. ‘Why should we be cautious about NAPLAN? If a child comes in with the flu or mum and dad has (sic) a whopping fight in the morning or the cat’s been run over, it’s only natural it’s going to affect performance on that day’, she says. ‘When you say 0.5 above benchmark, <em>I see the face of a child</em>', she says.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 4: Policy Discourses as ‘Rituals’ and ‘Repetitions’

Having provided this reflexive move, this chapter begins with a general discussion of how Foucauldian discourse theory can be utilised for learning about the effect of policy data on shaping teacher identity. Accordingly I provide an introductory analysis as a demonstration of Foucault’s *toolkit* in use. I include notions of the nexus between power/knowledge/self, the process of normalising, and how the Foucauldian concept of subjectivity can be deployed. Following this, I present an analysis of eight samples of education policy. These samples include formal declarations on educational goals, excerpts from a government website, media releases, political speeches and, interviews, all of which are scrutinised from a Foucauldian theoretical perspective, in order to explore how policy constructs to good teacher in the current times.

4.2 Foucault and Policy Discourses

From a Foucauldian perspective, the good teacher is potentially ‘shaped’ or constructed by the nexus of knowledge and power emanating from a policy focused on an impetus to inform parents about relative school performance. Thus, the model underscoring the current neo-liberal policy in the Australian education context indicates a technical-rational knowledge and practice, which operates according to data calculated and extracted from the testing of individual students in schools. These data are then recalibrated for publication, school by school, on the *My School* website where the NAPLAN results are now published. As such, it can be seen that the discursive practices of the Federal Government’s education policy are *most* evident in relation to national (NAPLAN) testing.

It is important to note, however, that, for Foucault, people (here politicians and teachers) do not exercise power; people (including politicians) are caught up in circuits of power. In the analysis of sample policy texts in this chapter, therefore, emphasis is given to how political discussion construct the topic and how political discourses rule in and rule out the way a topic can be reasonably talked about and reasoned about (Wetherell et al., 2001, p. 72). Policy constructions of the good teacher are explored here in terms of how

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28 Although material pertaining to Foucauldian discourse theorising has been covered in Chapter 3, I wish to reiterate here, in the context of policy discourses, that Foucault favoured the notion of theory as a *toolkit* for the following reasons: (i) the theory to be constructed is not a system but an instrument, a *logic* of the specificity of power relations and the struggles around them; (ii) that this investigation ‘can only be carried out step by step on the basis of reflection (which will necessarily be historical in some of its aspects) on given situations’ [in Gordon, 1980, p. 145] (emphasis in original).
policy norms reflect a dominant use of power by government, specifically through discourses of information, student outcomes and performance.

In this context, I reiterate that much of the literature reviewed in Chapter 2 highlights the potentially negative impact of current education policies in terms of teacher identity. Governance by ‘numbers’ (Grek, 2009; Stellmach and von Wolff, 2011; Taubman, 2009), and the subsequent priority of presenting data and information in policy texts (and presumably on a public platform such as the My School website), is regarded by some as reducing complex educational practices to simple, supposedly objective, measures of student attainment reflecting the broader ‘audit’ society within which it is located. (Hardy & Boyle, 2011, p. 211).

A further perspective on the wide-reaching impact of education policy on the teaching profession is offered by White (2012, p. 90) who claims that, in Australia, given the politicised and standardised nature of education, the identity of the teacher is currently being shaped and managed, not by universities, but outside the universities by powerful processes of accreditation and standards administered on behalf of the Australian Government. White’s argument underscores the Foucauldian notion of normalisation (of what is taken for granted) whereby the universities, the traditional providers of tertiary education programs, assessment and direction, have now lost ground in the shaping of teachers to fit the dominant discourses of accreditation and standards. White’s argument is couched in terms of the notion of universities now turning a ‘scholarly blind eye’ to the impact of performativity as it relates to changes in pre-service teacher education and changes to higher education itself.

Veyne (2010) describes how politicians present themselves as knowledgeable, powerful and trustworthy, and how, in their professional role, factual discourses are invoked to create an impression of authority. Thus, for example, the Australian Government, in honouring its commitment to the electorate to ‘revolutionise’ education in Australia, creates an impression of credibility. In this regard, Hardy and Boyle (2011, p. 220) note that, while it may be legitimate to see valid concerns (about professional accountability) to have informed the Australian Federal Government’s decision to establish the My School website, ‘its presentation and enactment betray a bias towards accountancy’ (emphasis added).
Following Foucault’s theories, then, within the ‘field’ of education—as in the ‘field’ of politics—there are ‘games of truth’ which help produce our subjectivity (Danaher et al., 2000, p. 40) and these truth claims are dependent on institutional and discursive practices. Since knowledge is something which ‘makes us its subjects’ (Danaher et al., p. 50), this chapter scrutinises the ‘how’ of this ‘making’ with respect to discourses constructed by policy texts which potentially—but not inevitably—‘make’ teachers their subjects.

4.3 Introductory Analysis Applying Foucauldian Discourse Theory to Policy Data

In an interview for the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) ‘Insiders’29 program (11 April 2010) relating to the Federal Government’s My School website, Julia Gillard, who was then Education Minister, censures any future action by the Australian Education Union to block the administration of the NAPLAN tests.

[It is] bad for parents and bad for transparency. The nation should know what is happening in our schools…

What the Australian Education Union is asking me to do is to gut My School and I just won’t do it. My School is all about putting more power into the hands of parents than they’ve ever had before, by giving them more information about their child’s school than they’ve ever had before…

In Foucauldian terms, Ms Gillard positions herself with respect to an emphasis on transparency and accountability (in providing information about academic achievement to parents). Here she takes up a discourse of information dissemination through which it is assumed that it is the norm for the Education Minister to make an authoritative—and, in this case, seemingly irritated—stance on what is ‘bad’ for parents when information is potentially denied to them. Parents are thus positioned (as subjects in this discursive practice) to see themselves naturally as those who receive the verdicts from a convincing—potentially corrective—political figure. Indeed, in this discourse, the Minister privileges her power to make pronouncements on what is tolerable, or intolerable, in accordance with current Government policy. The power/knowledge nexus

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29 ‘Insiders’ is a current affairs program presented by Australia’s national public broadcaster, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC).
here relates to the way the Minister invokes power through her authoritative position and assumed knowledge about what the parents of Australia want from the Government.

Thus, drawing on Foucault’s theorising, it can be seen that, to a certain degree in this period of neo-liberalism in education policy, the power/knowledge nexus is such that the Minister is effectively constructing the topic of the good teacher and good teaching in terms of what can be said and what should be left unsaid (Wetherell et al., 2011). Indeed, as the Minister champions the provision of information and transparency as a key feature in the debate unfolding around NAPLAN administration, she is normalising both her choice in refusing emphatically, requests from the Australian Education Union for changes to NAPLAN and the assumption that parents crave information. In effect she is monitoring actions and attitudes according to the notion of a norm or average throughout the social body as a whole, in order to divide the normal from the abnormal (Danaher et al., 2000). In this regard, it is important to recognise that policy documents *produce a discursive field* within which, by implication, the good teacher is constructed. That is, policy material which may not specify the good teacher or good teaching, still serves to contribute to how teaching and teachers are framed and formed.

4.4 Data Analysis Samples

The selection of policy data for sampling and analysis was discussed and justified at length in the previous chapter as were the ways through which the triangulation of the policy data being examined ensured its trustworthiness and validity.\(^{30}\) Thus, the sample set comprises an extract from the 2008 Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians, two media releases from the Australian Government, two policy speeches delivered by Ms Gillard, the then Federal Minister for Education, an article written by the current Federal Minister for Education (Mr Peter Garrett) and the transcript of a radio interview conducted by a well-known ABC broadcaster with Ms Gillard after she became Prime Minister. Central to this diverse range of texts is the attention given to

\(^{30}\) It is important to note here that terms such as triangulation, trustworthiness and validity are themselves discursively inflected. Thus, discourses of a positivistic epistemological position are implied in the conduct of research here, since it is assumed that by collecting data and analysing it truths can be established. Moreover, an interpretive position may also be implied since the triangulation etc. of data seeks to uncover meaning and understand the deeper implications revealed in the data for the individuals about whom it speaks.
the Australian Government’s controversial *My School* website and the publication of NAPLAN results on this website.

In Chapter 3 I outlined the process of identifying patterns in the texts under analysis, which allowed me to assess and to present the relative dominance of a number of discourses as they are found in each data sample. Specifically these discourses include those of: (i) performance; (ii) information/transparency; (iii) national focus; (iv) reform; (v) measurement; (vi) individualism; (vii) curriculum focus; and (viii) financial investment. Hence a colour-coding process (an example of which is provided in Appendix 4) was utilised in order to arrive at an understanding of the ‘weighting’ that would be applied in the subsequent and crucial discourse mapping process. Table 4.1 presents a numerical overview of the various discourses found to be circulating in the samples of policy material.

*Table 4.1: Discourses circulating in samples 1-8*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample</th>
<th>Performance</th>
<th>Information</th>
<th>Transparency</th>
<th>National Focus</th>
<th>Reform</th>
<th>Measurement</th>
<th>Individualism</th>
<th>Curriculum Focus</th>
<th>Financial Investment</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The Melbourne Declaration 2008</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Speech 27.3.09</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>53</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Media Release 11.9.09</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>35</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. <em>My School</em> Website (Introduction)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Media Release 7.2.10</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>38</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Speech 17.3.10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>43</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Radio Interview 6.8.10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. National Curriculum Article 14.12.10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>32</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Sample 1: ‘Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians’, 2008**

The ‘Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians’, 2008, represents the combined ideas of the Ministers for Education from the Commonwealth and States and Territories and is intended to guide the Australian Curriculum, Assessment
and Reporting Authority (ACARA) work in developing the National Curriculum. As such an emphasis on national capacity is demonstrated by the dominance of references to matters of a national focus (19 of the 27 examples of discursive practices identified. I have chosen to explore the discursive practices circulating in the Preamble to the Declaration in order to give some indication of the intent of the Declaration and the national goals contained therein, albeit that the goals are actually set out later in the document.

In the 21st century Australia’s capacity to provide a high quality of life for all will depend on the ability to compete in the global economy on knowledge and innovation. …Global integration and international mobility have increased rapidly in the past decade. As a consequence, new and exciting opportunities are emerging. …Australians need to become ‘Asia literate’, engaging and building strong relationships with Asia. …Globalisation and technical change are placing greater demands on education and skill development in Australia and the nature of jobs available to young Australians is changing faster than ever. Skilled jobs now dominate jobs growth and people with university or vocational education and training qualifications fare much better in the employment market than early school leavers.

The Declaration Preamble, as one would expect, contains many references to matters of national interest. In particular, commonly recurring themes concern building Australia’s capacity to create economic prosperity and social cohesion, the need to cater for changes in the world, global integration, international mobility and being ‘Asia literate’. In relation to what Feder (2011, p. 55) terms Foucault’s ‘composite’ concept of power/knowledge, the discursive practice here indicates that, in the present neo-liberal historical period, there is an implicit ‘knowing’ at work in that Australians will understand, in a largely taken for granted way, that one of the educational priorities of Government is, and ought to be, future employment and economic prosperity.

In the case of the Preamble, it seems that the Australian public has been positioned discursively to take for granted that educational priorities can and ought to be officially formalised in a ‘Declaration’, a document that presents itself as a powerful influence on the shaping of education in Australia and, by association, the shaping of its workforce (teachers and others). Specifically, the discursive practice here shapes teachers by
positioning them with respect to the economic prosperity imperative, and suggests that teachers have a strong obligation to prepare students for productive employment. As such, the identity of the teacher is understood to involve employment preparation in the interests of the nation. Arguably the role of the good teacher, indeed the good teacher’s professional identity, is defined in terms of shaping not individual students, or even classes, but rather doing what the nation needs to become economically.

**Sample 2: Policy Speech at the National Public Education Forum, 27 March, 2009**

In March 2009, the National Public Education Forum provided an opportunity to look at what is right and wrong with public education in Australia; accordingly an effort was made to bring this discussion into the widest possible public arena. The Forum provided a platform for more than a dozen other key observers, thinkers and practitioners of education to have their say, culminating in a communiqué to inform the future government development of public education in Australia. In her speech at the Forum, the then Education Minister, Ms Gillard, constructed the good teacher (here I draw on Foucauldian theory) through discourses of information, transparency and performance. (These collectively 33 of 53 examples of discursive practices identified.) Notwithstanding the markedly differing backgrounds of the forum speakers, and the underlying focus on the diversity of schools in Australia, Ms Gillard addressed a range of current educational issues of interest to the Government, with little sustained link to the theme of diversity.

For the purposes of my analysis of the speech, I have focused on two issues, namely, NAPLAN and the quality of teaching.

At the start of the speech, Ms Gillard spoke of the Government as celebrating diversity in education and then moved to acknowledge briefly the Union’s misgivings about NAPLAN testing. Despite this acknowledgement, she used the opportunity to promote the government’s NAPLAN vision and claimed that NAPLAN would deliver ‘comprehensive rich information’ about schools. Through what Tuinamuana (2011, p. 74)

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31 Members of this forum were: Father Frank Brennan SJ AO, Professor of Law at the Australian Catholic University; Dr Patricia Hindmarsh, Director Catholic Education Office Hobart and member National Catholic Education Commission; Mr Osman Karolia, Principal of Arkana College, Kingsgrove in Southern Sydney, the NSW representative of the Australian Council for Islamic Education in Schools; Mr Stephen O’Doherty, the inaugural and current CEO of Christian Schools Australia; Justice Stephen Rothman, Judge of the Supreme Court of NSW and Co-chair of the Australian Council of Jewish Schools; and Mr Barry Wallett, the Deputy Executive Director Independent Schools Council of Australia.
calls a discourse of commonsense,\textsuperscript{32} the politician here presents an uncritical view of the merit of providing information to the public in the form of NAPLAN. Thus, it can be argued, the result of this discourse of commonsense is that the problems of schooling and education seem fairly simple, and relatively easy to solve. Tuinamuana describes the controlling effect of this discourse as follows:

One of the easiest ways to be seen to be in control is to set in place a system of controls and measures …as a form of accountability…. In line with the technical rational ideology, this process is fairly linear, but tends to downplay any hint of complexity or difference. (p. 74)

In this light, the discursive practice in Sample 2 takes for granted, in a ‘discourse of commonsense’, the fact that Australians would want such information and that the Education Minister’s authority is associated with her capacity to deliver this information via NAPLAN.

Ms Gillard also positions herself as a stateswoman who is somewhat understanding of contrary policy arguments by saying that she ‘respect[s] the [Union’s] constructive engagement and acceptance of change’. These words, however, seem to understate the Union’s opposition to, and overstate its support for, the policy. In this way, Ms Gillard takes up a discursive practice that positions her audience to view her policy as having wide acceptance (even as she concedes some opposition). This sample indicates a preponderance of comments pertaining to ‘Information’, ‘Transparency’, ‘Measurement’ and ‘Performance’. In Foucauldian terms, the priority to provide information is normalised and constructs the identity of the teacher as subject to the dominant policy discourse of accountability and performance.

In addition, Ms Gillard refers to the Teacher Quality National Partnership as a way of improving the quality of teachers and school leaders. This partnership is a platform for raising student performance and building the foundation necessary to underpin other school reforms endorsed by The Council of Australian Governments (COAG). Therefore, Ms Gillard privileges a discourse of student outcomes and the speech can be seen, in

\textsuperscript{32} In the discussion to which I refer here, Tuinamuana is referring to the argument that having teacher ‘standards’ is beneficial. I venture to suggest that the same discussion can be applied to the justification for the publication of NAPLAN scores.
Foucauldian terms, to subjectify discursively the good teacher as a person who performs well under a regime of measurement and compliance with standards.

Indeed, the discursive practice of this speech takes for granted both the likelihood that the government’s policy will improve the quality of education and that standards are indeed the solution for improving teacher quality. According to Foucauldian discourse theory, however, knowledge which is ‘recognized as true’ or ‘known to be the case’, can only exist ‘with the support of arrangements of power, arrangements that …have no clear origin, no person or body who can be said to “have” it’ (Feder, 2011, p. 56). Discourses of partnership and teacher/student performance provide this support.

**Sample 3: Government Media Release, 11 September, 2009**

In an Australian Government education Media Release, 11/9/2009, a discourse of student performance is privileged as improving ‘skills’ in ‘literacy and numeracy’. (Of the 35 examples of discursive practices identified in Table 4.1, 16 are linked to performance.) Skills linked to performance are described as foundational; they are the skills that are ‘expected of students in their year level’ and the skills that matter. Of less prominence is a discourse of financial investment through which the Government intends to address the problem of student performance. Ensuring higher performance involves lifting student ‘achievement’. Moreover, apart from this emphasis on the foundational nature of literacy and numeracy, there is a seamless segue into the fact that the Government is committed to spending $540 million on improving ‘literacy and numeracy’.

The Minister for Education, Julia Gillard, today welcomed the release of the summary results from the 2009 National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN).

The Report shows that more than 90 per cent of Australian students in years 3, 5, 7 and 9 are performing at or above the national minimum standard in reading, writing, spelling, grammar, punctuation and numeracy.

However, the results also indicate that there are still some students who have not attained the literacy and numeracy skills expected of students in their year level.
The Rudd Government’s Education Revolution is driving a renewed focus on the foundation skills of literacy and numeracy to lift student achievement across the country.

Through the Education Revolution, the Rudd Government is investing $540 million in literacy and numeracy in schools as well as developing a world-class National Curriculum.

In fact, literacy and numeracy pilot projects are already underway in around 400 schools across the nation to help us find the best ways of helping students who may be struggling with the basics.

From Monday, parents and carers of students who sat NAPLAN tests in 2009 will receive information about their child’s individual performance. At the end of the year, the Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) will publish school profiles online for the very first time.

The profile of each school, government and non-government, will provide accurate data on individual school performance and important, relevant data about school context.

These transparency measures will give parents, teachers and the public much better information about how schools are going and allow governments to target additional resources to schools which may be struggling.

NAPLAN results will complement teachers’ class and school-based assessments to provide a comprehensive picture of student achievement and help determine areas of priority to improve literacy and numeracy outcomes (emphasis added).

As is the case in Sample 1, this media release also features discourses of information, transparency and accurate measurement, in the context of pressing issues ‘across the country’. Thus the discourses in this text are working at a number of levels (individual, group and nation). By this I mean that there is an interchange among the individual student’s needs, the needs of parents and the public at large, the monitoring of schools, including the entire Australian school system, and the advancement of the nation as a whole. This discursive practice foregrounds systemic ‘solutions’ to the perceived problem.
of shortfall regarding literacy and numeracy skills. A political move of scaling up may be thought to be playing out here. The problem of attaining the literacy and numeracy skills expected of students is defined at a national (and indeed international) level, giving it weight and gravitas.

In this regard, the fields of knowledge implied in this brief excerpt include the economic, the educational, the psychological and the political. The emphasis on individual student and school achievement/performance implies commitment to the idea of individualisation, that is, that achievement is not a collective matter but is rather the responsibility of each student or each school. That said, the individual appears to be caught up in the bigger picture, in the systemic sphere of massed or aggregated competitive data. Accordingly, this policy material does not look inward to the personal circumstances of each student and the contingent factors that may help explain their literacy and numeracy skills. Indeed the discourse of skills, particularly as it applies to how literacy and numeracy are currently defined (and thus made known) further advances the ideology of instrumental rationalism that superintends schooling today (Tuinamuana, 2011).

In addition, the media release analysed here announces the publication of information about students’ individual performances in NAPLAN testing and anticipates that school profiles will be available online for the first time by the end of the year. The media release is not a policy announcement as such. Indeed, I posit that the political importance of the speech is that it allows the Minister to restate the Government’s commitment to key messages about numeracy, literacy and transparency (otherwise the same announcement could have been made by ACARA or a state or territory educational official). I mention this as a means of demonstrating that the nexus between power and knowledge and student and teacher identity, which is constructed through such dominant policy discourses, does not lie with a particular individual—here the Minister. Rather, according to Foucault, power is centred in discursive and other social arrangements of the time.

Indeed, the policy that underlies NAPLAN testing appears to be endorsed by the state and territory bureaucrats responsible for managing the school system who see it as a management tool. Taking up a discourse of competition and comparison, the following excerpt describes the learning achievements of students as being charted with respect to
average scores of ‘statistically similar schools’, ‘domains’ and ‘coloured bars’. Arguably the explanation of the ‘chart’ of NAPLAN results is designed to unpack or examine ‘numbers’ rather than people:

The chart below displays average NAPLAN scores for each domain in 2008 and 2009. The selected school’s scores are displayed in blue. Also displayed are average scores for statistically similar schools and all Australian schools. The coloured bars indicate whether the selected school’s scores are above (green) or below (red) the other scores.

The discursive practice evident in this text takes as a given that voters actually care about seeing comparative results of school literacy and numeracy achievement and that there is a social benefit in a policy that develops the availability of such information for the public. From a Foucauldian point of view, the Government is discursively constructing what can (and should) be said, and, by association, what should not be discussed, about the means for improving education in Australia.

The media release refers only to positive messages; it does nothing to acknowledge or respond to academic writers who express contrary views or the then emerging union antagonism toward the publication of school-specific data. The appearance of acknowledging a contrary kind of knowledge would give credibility to that view. At this point in the debate, the Minister chose to ignore the opposition. As Lankshear and Knobel (2004) point out, the ‘ideological work’ is revealed by the Minister’s choice of what to emphasise (and what to ‘overlook’) in this text. In Foucauldian terms, such selectivity ‘encourages us as readers to view and approach the world—or ‘bits’ of it—in some ways rather than others’ (p. 117).

Thus, the Minister focuses on broad generalisations and high-sounding claims. For example, she refers to other initiatives, such as the development of ‘a world class National Curriculum’, as well as to helping students ‘struggling’ with the basics. The Minister refers to investing $540 million (but says nothing about over what period that money will be spent or the precise ways in which it will be spent). The impact of these discursive practices is to position the Government with respect to a strong focus on ‘the basics’, and on backing its commitments with a large amount of money. Further, the
Minister’s discursive practice privileges notions of the Australian education system as being ‘world class’.

In terms of contesting discourses being marginalised here, it is noteworthy that, notwithstanding the emphasis on the performance of schools and the importance of teaching in achieving results, this media release does not refer to teachers or teaching. From a Foucauldian perspective, the dominant discourse of performance produces the good teacher performatively, whilst discourses of affect around good teachers and good teaching (or indeed, references to the actual practice of teaching) are sidelined.

**Sample 4: The Australian Government My School Website**

One of the key themes of Ms Gillard’s term as Minister for Education was her political resolve to use the Government’s *My School* website to inform parents of how their children’s school is ‘performing’. The name of the website, *My School*, utilises the possessive pronoun ‘my’ to introduce discourses of individual ownership and affiliates the school with the knowledge that the Government deems important (e.g., informational knowledge, comparative and statistical knowledge). There is clearly a strong discourse of individualisation that runs throughout these data and, accordingly, it is *each* student’s, family’s and school’s responsibility to enhance or increase their performance.  

(Discourses of information and performance comprise nine out of 16 examples of discursive practices identified.)

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33 Furthermore, it could well be argued that a business or market discourse is circulating here as well, as the name *My School* resonates with the widespread media advertising strategy of a prominent department store in Australia, centred on the slogan, ‘My Store, Myer’.
As Filippakou (2011, p. 20) points out, discourses of quality in the education field can frequently be seen to have an ideological aspect. It is also noted that sometimes the boundaries between discourses are fuzzy and that therefore such discourses are ‘invariably in flux’ (p. 19). In my view, an analysis of the My School website reveals such flux, as the two dominant discourses of performance and information seem ‘to overlap and develop a common core’ (p. 21). By this I mean that the ideologically inflected discourse of student performance overlaps with the less ideological (or more subtly ideological) discourse of the delivery of information.

Figure 4.2 provides an indication of the visual impact and content displayed as a member of the public enters the website. I argue that in an analysis of policy constructions of the good teacher, the My School website strongly demonstrates the current Government’s discursive positioning with respect to school education.

Reading the website as a social text, the introduction to the My School website (Figure 4.2) does not acknowledge the idea that this site is an expression or ‘mobilisation’ of a particular government policy. In other words, the introduction identifies ACARA as an ‘independent’ authority, having the imprimatur of all the Australian Ministers for Education. The language used denotes an apolitical body providing reliable, objective
‘nationally comparable data’. A discourse of authoritative knowledge positions ACARA as a body that can speak (with validity) on the benefits of providing comparative data on the academic outcomes of Australian students.

From a Foucauldian perspective, it can be observed that the power/knowledge duality of this discursive practice presents as a given that the Australian Government’s role is to produce the kind of knowledge—comparative and statistical—highlighted in the introduction. There is a strong sense that no other kinds of knowledge can be included or even recognised. This discursive practice suggests that comparisons and statistical information are the only relevant educational consideration of national significance and constructs parents as requiring this kind of feedback nationally. Most notably, the socio-economic backgrounds and circumstances of individual students are downplayed (notwithstanding the deliberate comparison of ‘like’ schools) relative to the emphasis on competition and the comparison of academic outcomes.

Teese and Lamb (2011, para 2)\textsuperscript{34} describe the Government discourse around My School as an attempt ‘to set current funding policies within the context of achievement differences in our schools, both within and across sectors of schooling’. Of relevance here, I suggest, is Foucault’s notion that institutions, such as schools, operate according to a power/knowledge nexus that generally trains bodies (here teachers and students) to be ‘docile’. In Discipline and Punish, Foucault (1991) devotes a chapter to describing the ways in which societies of ‘docile bodies’ are developed and function. In this way, My School can be seen as a social practice which positions teachers with regards to ‘rank’ (based on the academic achievement of students) and leads to ‘the arrangements into classes, groups, hierarchies of subjects [and differences in funding] within a system’ (Downing, 2008, pp. 78–79).

Rather than accept the inescapability of this ‘docility’—as a result of an achievement ‘ranking’ system—it could be argued that commentators such as Teese and Lamb (2011) challenge the ways (the \textit{how}) through which teachers are produced and positioned by

\textsuperscript{34} In March 2011, Richard Teese and Stephen Lamb, from the University of Melbourne, sent a submission to the Chair of the [Gonski] ‘Review of Funding for Schools’ (commissioned by the Gillard Government) to highlight the inequities in opportunities (and resulting discrepancies in academic achievement) for Australian students. The quotation above, attributed to Teese and Lamb, is taken from the covering letter attached to their submission.
devices such as the *My School* website. In mounting such a challenge, teachers are *not* necessarily positioned as biddable subjects in respect to dominant discourses of competitive ‘accomplishment’ in the field of education, but positioned in terms of having more complex and nuanced identities, especially when matters of socio-economic inequity, are taken into account.

**‘School Comments’ on the *My School* website**

In contrast to the quantitative, objective data setting out the results of NAPLAN testing on the *My School* website, School Comments are prepared by schools and represent each school’s perceptions of its own educational attributes. The school statements appear not to be subject to any external vetting or verification. As such, from a Foucauldian discourse theory perspective, in each of the discourses (School Comments) the good teacher is being positioned in relation to particular comments pertaining to his or her school setting.

In order to analyse these statements I have distilled five themes that emerge from the language used in the two selected samples. The two secondary schools, one non-government and one government, are located respectively in an affluent outer suburb of Melbourne, Mount Eliza, and in the regional industrial town of Morwell.35

My sampling here involved adopting a simple stratified sample by choosing schools from different sectors, geographic locations and with different demographics. My decision to examine geographically contrasting schools is taken in the interest of seeing whether the discourses taken up by a school in a regional area, here Kurnai College in the Latrobe Valley,36 contrast with the discourses taken up by a school with markedly differing demographics, such as a wealthy independent school on the outskirts of Melbourne (Toorak College).

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35 The so-called divide between wealthy independent schools and government schools is mirrored, to a degree, in the divide between government schools in affluent suburbs of Melbourne, such as Mount Eliza, and less socio-economically advantaged regional centres, such as the Latrobe Valley where Kurnai College is situated.

36 The Latrobe Valley is a regional area, 150 km from Melbourne, where extensive reserves of brown coal are mined primarily for electricity generation. Kurnai College is situated in a small city in the Latrobe Valley. Its residents rely for employment on the mining and timber industries and it is also an area of high unemployment. These factors mean that the schools have students from lower socio-economic backgrounds.
Specifically, I am interested in the ways in which discourses circulating within documents such as the School Comments (provided by schools themselves) may reveal matters of interest to my investigation of how the good teacher is currently described. I note, firstly, that on the My School website front page, there is an indication of a discourse of comparison rather than achievement. It is claimed that the ‘greatest value of the site will come to those schools that open up productive discussions with other schools that are doing better in similar circumstances to help them review and improve their own practices’ (emphasis added).37

![My School Focus on Kurnai College](http://www.myschool.edu.au/SchoolSearch.aspx)

The Kurnai School Comments refer to a number of achievements in the training and development of teachers but fail to address issues of vision and curriculum. At Kurnai College, there is a focus on ‘teamwork [as a] central element in shaping and promoting improvement in the College’. Implicit in this profile is a sense that teaching concerns the preparation of students for everyday life. Arguably, discourses of community and teamwork are privileged over discourses of attainment and success. In the case of Kurnai College, the school’s average is close to these [like] schools’ average, below these schools’ average or substantially below these schools’ average. In the School Comments, there are discourses circulating around core values (here not specified as high academic achievement) and the establishment of programs that include ‘Mentoring’, ‘English as a Second Language’ and ‘Peer Support’. Arguably, this is a school where the development of students is seen in terms of preparation for social responsibility and inclusion, and where the teachers are constructed discursively as working in the area of improvement rather than in (high) academic achievement.

By way of contrast, in the school profile of Toorak College presented in Figure 4.4, there is a discourse that privileges the academic curriculum, and reference is made to the teaching of academic lessons with specific content and assessment processes (English,
Mathematics, Languages, Physical Education, Art, etc.). Conversely, in this context, ‘other programs’ refers to offerings designed to *enhance* the curricular offerings, in an enriching way, through special opportunities to engage in horse riding, rowing, international and Outdoor Education school trips, quasi-professional school performances, etc.

Through references to the International Baccalaureate and to boarding for international students, a discourse of internationalism is identified and, by extension, there is a discourse of global citizenship circulating in the text. Moreover, the term ‘fortunate’ is used in reference to the staff at the college and it is claimed that there is an ‘extensive range of co-curricular programs [which] includes the visual and performing arts, music and sport’. The discourse of bountiful educational opportunities foregrounds privilege and prestige, as is demonstrated by the reference to the school being situated in a ‘beautiful environment’. Moreover, the excellent environment seems to mirror the ‘excellence through continuous improvement’ that describes the school’s approach to learning. Not surprisingly then, the school displays good results on the *My School* website, results which appear to correspond with the notion of ‘results-driven’ teaching. Thus the good teacher at Toorak College is positioned with respect to performance and information.

In summary, Foucault’s notion of normalising is highly pertinent when one analyses a sample of the school commentaries prepared by different schools themselves for the *My School* pages. Arguably, the good teacher may be inclined to take up a subject position according to the chosen emphases of the author of the comments from each school. From a Foucauldian perspective, the discursive practices here theoretically constitute and produce the teacher who works in each of these schools. Through a Foucauldian lens, it is also possible to argue that, at a particular moment in history—here in 2010—the policy directive to launch the *My School* website and to publicise results for every Australian school began at that time to subjectify teachers. In turn, their subjectified selves took on the additional component of one whose school received a particular set of results in the NAPLAN as published on the *My School* website. Here neo-liberalism can be seen as a discursive formation since, with the introduction of NAPLAN in 2010, the already established neo-liberal approach to education policy took a decisive turn for teachers by
mandating the publication of results of a national testing program where student outcomes were compared with those of other students in ‘like’ schools.

Sample 5: Government media release, 7 February, 2010

In Foucauldian terms, the Australian Government media release, 7/2/2010, normalises the Government’s role in informing the public about what is going on in schools and safeguarding the community against underperformance in schools. (Collectively discourses of performance, information and national focus comprise 23 of the 38 discursive practices identified in Figure 4.1.) Thus, discursively, this media release positions My School as a key policy strategy that ‘stops schools being left behind’. The function performed by the discourses circulating in this media release is that of raising public concern for achieving ‘improvement’ and meeting set standards. In turn, this emphasis on standards and improvement foreground the perceived importance of competition in the educational arena.

…The Rudd Government has identified the schools that would have missed out on a share of the $2.5 billion Smarter Schools National Partnerships were it not for the additional information on the My Schools web site…

The 110 schools include those that have results that are below or substantially below (light and dark red on the My School website) both the national average and those for statistically similar schools in all areas on the NAPLAN national tests…

Ms Gillard said that this is an example of the Rudd Government using the information now available to every parent on My School to direct funding so that those schools who are struggling can be given a helping hand and so students aren’t left behind (emphasis added).

The comment that the current policy stops students being ‘left behind’ implies the urgency of accurate and measurable assessment, adjudication and judgement, so clearly illustrated in the reference to ‘struggling’ schools. What is valued in this media release is

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38 This is a reference to a feature of the My School website which shows a school’s NAPLAN numerical scores for specific ‘domains’ of literacy and numeracy (e.g., spelling and punctuation). The selected school’s scores are displayed in blue. Also displayed are average scores for statistically similar schools and all Australian schools. The coloured bars indicate whether the selected school’s scores are above (green) or below (red) the other scores.
the provision of (factual) information to all parents. Indeed the necessity of this information is taken for granted, as is the fact that My School can and will have a positive impact on ‘struggling’ schools. The public is accordingly encouraged to adopt the imperative of this school ‘improvement’ as ‘normal’ and, therefore, as the correct focus of the current Australian Government.

Thus the text confidently attempts to validate and depict as normal the Government’s funding ‘designed to ensure students improve their literacy and numeracy’. Moreover, it can be argued that a further function of such discourses is to foreground in the view of the voting public the importance of constant scrutiny and exposure so that what are seen as educational imperatives, such as not ‘missing out’ on information, can be addressed. Arguably, from a Foucauldian perspective, the teacher is thus positioned as one who must be scrutinised, in case his or her practice might be contributing to a school having to struggle. That said, a teacher might not take up this position.

**Sample 6: Political speech delivered at the Independent Education Union of Australia Forum, 17 March, 2010**

Noting its discursive similarity to Sample 2 (media release 27/3/2009), I have included in my sampling an extract of a speech delivered at an Independent Education Union of Australia Forum on 17/3/2010 by Julia Gillard, shortly after the launch of the My School website and prior to the May 2010 NAPLAN testing process. The replication of political focus affirms the embedded discourses (of information and performance) around the good teacher that Ms Gillard enacted over a twelve month period. In this speech discourses of performance, information (and individualism) are identified. (Collectively, 19 of the 43 discursive practices identified concern performance and information.) At the time the 2010 media release was written, discussion about My School was contentious and My School strongly opposed by the Australian Education Union and, to a lesser extent, the Independent Education Union of Australia. The speech was given at a forum comprised of people representing different areas of independent education. Consequently, Ms Gillard acknowledged the IEU’s ‘constructive engagement and acceptance of change’:

The Government is clear about its determination to continue delivering on our transparency agenda that has already been such a huge success in the community. Transparency is an essential part of our long-term approach to improve quality and equity across all our schools…
And so *My School* supports our education reform agenda by helping government, schools and communities to share good practice and better allocate their resources—because they will be able to look at others across the country serving the same type of students and make operating decisions based on clear, reliable and accessible information that is comparable across the country.

The information published on *My School* will provide the evidence necessary to support the continuous improvement of students, schools and education systems over time, and inform decisions by government about where resources should be allocated. And so I urge you to look at *My School* in this light.

I think we can agree that it [*My School*] demonstrates how hungry parents are for comprehensive, rich information about their schools.

*My School* has delivered more information to parents about their child’s school than ever before.

The chief benefit of the now more informed national approach to comparing schools is that it focuses attention on ways of improving the performance of every school across the nation.

There are some schools with similar intakes of students to others performing above expectations. These schools show what is possible and raise expectations. They may also hold the key to working out what needs to happen in order for all schools to perform at a high level.

The discursive practices in this speech focus on individualism and performance as Ms Gillard acknowledges that there are positive views—pertaining to the documentation and reporting of individual performances—about NAPLAN testing and the *My School* website. Ms Gillard does not address the particular concerns of opponents; rather she takes up a discourse in which the power/knowledge duality takes for granted that parents are ‘hungry’ for ‘comprehensive, rich information about their schools’. Ms Gillard goes on to say that ‘it is appropriate to shine the full light of transparency on the results schools are achieving’. Thus the discourse of transparency drives, to a significant degree, Ms Gillard’s statements towards potentially having the effect of shoring up confidence in the directions being taken by the Government with regard to education reform, e.g., the
creation of the *My School* website, an initiative that arguably produces the good teacher through an overarching discourse of information.

**Sample 7: Radio interview between an Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) broadcaster and the Prime Minister, Julia Gillard, 6 August, 2010**

In August 2010, Ms Gillard, who had recently become Prime Minister, was interviewed on the ABC Radio Melbourne by Jon Faine (an ABC broadcaster) on the topic of the Education Revolution. This interview sought to investigate a matter of national interest. A transcript of the interview illustrates the ways in which the politician positions herself with respect to the priority for fostering Australia’s national interests, namely those which pertain to economic prosperity, with eight of the 15 discursive practices identified pertain to national interests.

PM: On Building the Education Revolution economic stimulus\(^{39}\) what I’d say is…We did respond to protect jobs during the Global Financial Crisis and global recession. When it hit we made a set of economic judgements to support jobs and if you look at what has been achieved from that in the Australian economy today, we made the right choices. Right choices to keep the economy growing and to keep people in work.

While, in this interview excerpt, Ms Gillard’s immediate focus is on defending management and costs, she is also concerned to emphasise the wider economic stimulatory impact of the Building Education Revolution spending and the benefits of investing in school infrastructure across Australia. Leaving aside management issues, the effect of this discourse of national interests, from a Foucauldian perspective, is to strengthen the public view that a good government sees efficiency as its key function in terms of education policy, and accordingly, will make the right economic judgments. Thus, this sample indicates dominating discourses of national interests and national government expenditure and therefore positions the teacher with respect to discourses that privilege nation building. As such, the identity of the teacher (working within those

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\(^{39}\) Building the Education Revolution (BER) is a key element of the Australian Government’s $42 billion Nation Building – Economic Stimulus Plan. BER is a $16.2 billion component that has provided infrastructure to Australia’s schools and their communities during the economic downturn. The Building the Education Revolution has funded around 24,000 infrastructure projects for approximately 9,500 schools across Australia.
schools being financed from the BER) is shaped by an economic discourse of national magnitude and importance.

**Sample 8: Article by the Federal Minister for School Education, Early Childhood and Youth, Mr Peter Garrett, 14 December, 2010**

Several months after the radio interview described above, the Federal Minister for School Education, Early Childhood and Youth, Mr Peter Garrett, wrote an article ‘A national curriculum to lift education standards’. This article followed the announcement (8/12/10) that Australia’s education ministers had agreed to deliver a new national curriculum for schools. In the article Mr Garrett takes up a discourse of nationalism as he defends the national curriculum, with 13 out of 32 discursive practices pertaining to matters of national interest.

The Australian Curriculum will mean consistency in the knowledge, skills and understanding that all Australian school students will be taught.

And this world-class curriculum will be delivered online—freely available for everyone to see. Parents can see exactly what their children will be learning.

This is a significant national reform for our Federation: Why? Because a national curriculum will deliver consistency and quality in learning.

We are determined to progress these reforms because not only will they enable all students to reach their potential but also because the links between education and productivity are fundamental to delivering long term sustainable economic growth.

The skills of our citizens drive the economy. What we learn at school equips people with the power to transform their lives and ultimately the nation.

Independent modelling undertaken earlier this year by Econtech, part of KPMG Australia, shows that lifting the skills and qualification levels of Australians could help support more than 500,000 extra jobs a year and boost the economy by around $4,000 per person each year, on average, between 2010 and 2040.

The new National Curriculum is presented as providing ‘(c)onsistency in the knowledge, skills and understanding that all Australian school students will be taught’. It is argued that the National Curriculum will, apart from delivering consistency in quality and
learning, ‘drive the economy’ by creating jobs and boosting the gross domestic product. Here a discourse of national economic interests prevails. However, in attempting to make a connection between the benefits of the National Curriculum and growth in the national economy, there is, in fact, very little evidence put forward to identify how a ‘National Curriculum’, as opposed to individual states independently developing their own curricula, necessarily delivers better educational outcomes that then feed into additional productivity. Here the Federal Government can be seen to take up a discourse of national interest regarding education reform and arguably consolidates this discursive position through initiatives like national testing, national professional standards and national authorities such as the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) and the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL). I suggest that the effect of these policy approaches, on the identity of the teacher, is potentially to reduce a sense of individual teacher autonomy, at least at the curriculum design and delivery levels.

4.5 Discourses Lying Outside Policy Discourses

In the Foucauldian tradition, discourses can be defined by what lies outside statements as well as what lies within. Further, a discursive formation continually generates new statements and some of these usher in changes in the discursive formation. So far this chapter has been concerned to elucidate the ways in which the dominant education policy discourses create subject positions which can, and indeed must, be taken up by ‘speaking individuals’ (Downing, 2008, p. 49). Thus, Ms Gillard, for example, is occupying a subject position and speaking from that position. Indeed, in the context of this chapter, these ‘speaking individuals’ include the policy writer, the politician and the teacher.

Nevertheless, it is presently possible to identify contesting (sometimes barely audible) discursive alternatives. Such alternative views note that the current neo-liberal discourses circulating in Australian educational policy compromise alternative constructions of good teaching. These counter-discourses also contribute to the complex and changing subjectifying of the teacher. In some cases, such counter-discourses in education present the dominant discourse as potentially detrimental to the professional bodies about which they speak, since such policy discourses narrow the scope of thinking about, and speaking about, teaching and teachers.
The Tandberg cartoon above, published in the Melbourne newspaper, *The Age* (5/2/2011), can be seen as an example of a direct challenge to the power/knowledge of policy since it depicts the pronouncements of the Government as ‘damn lies’. In addition, an article that appeared in the *The Age* (Topsfield, 2011), entitled ‘Doing well in Footscray doesn’t cost $14m’, challenges the legitimacy of the policy to ‘provide truthful and beneficial information to parents’. In this article the journalist highlights the fact that, in 2009, ‘Geelong Grammar spent $20,452 on every student and $7.8 million on capital works’. In contrast, we are told within the article that ‘St John’s School in Footscray West spent $8,503 on every student and $174,000 on capital works. Since the Footscray students are reported as performing very well, the article takes up a highly critical discourse which presents the Government as erroneous in taking for granted the concept that better resourcing of schools leads to ‘better literacy and numeracy outcomes’. Moreover, the article includes a critique of *My School* from the principal of Geelong Grammar School, Mr Stephen Meek, who points to the way the policy stance ‘only tells half the story because it does not factor in costs, such as staff salaries and maintaining the school’s heritage buildings.’ In addition, Mr Meek asserts that Geelong Grammar does very well in the VCE and the International Baccalaureate, and does not place undue emphasis on NAPLAN results, which he, unlike the politicians, does not

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40 Footscray is an inner suburban residential suburb traditionally inhabited by working class families. It is implied that students in Footscray schools, given their lower socio-economic status, would not be expected to do as well academically as students at the highly prestigious and well-resourced Geelong Grammar School.
depict as a panacea to educational concerns, but merely a ‘snapshot at one time’ of student achievement.

A further example of counter or competing discourse is found in an opinion piece published in *The Age* newspaper (Ludowyke, 2010), in which the Principal of Melbourne High School,⁴¹ expresses the view that the Australian public is being ‘hoodwinked’ by the *My School* website. Essentially the piece is ironic given the outstanding academic, ‘select entry’ nature of this renowned school.

It is precisely schools like mine that potentially have something to gain from the publication of misleading league tables that must raise their voices loudest against this nonsense. (Ludowyke, 2010)

Ludowyke takes up a discourse of derision in relation to the policy claims regarding the benefits of the *My School* website. In this discourse, the Government policy writers, who seek to extol the benefits of *My School*, are likened to ‘prospectors seeking fool’s gold’. Ludowyke, then, is an example of an educator who has chosen not to occupy the discursive space occupied by current education policy writers. Instead he invokes the idea of ‘meaningful stories’ within his school with which he identifies positively. Ludowyke asserts that,

> [i]t is facile and misleading to attempt to compare [Melbourne High students] to ‘statistically similar schools’ while failing to take into account the most important characteristics of our students…So let the gnomes abandon this useless quest for fool’s gold. There are more meaningful stories to be written as we start a new school year.

I include Ludowyke’s comments here because, from a Foucauldian theoretical perspective, like the cartoon, they serve to illustrate a competing or contesting discursive position around the good teacher, in contrast to what is taken for granted and what can be said by politicians in relation to current education policy.

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⁴¹ Melbourne High is a select entry, highly prestigious government secondary school with an outstanding reputation for academic achievement.
4.6 Conclusion

In this chapter educational policy texts are analysed to highlight the embedded discourses, that is, social practices that represent social realities in particular ways (Thomas, 2011). In presenting the views of policy makers on what constitutes good teaching and the good teacher, I draw on the observation that begins this chapter about the ‘use’ of power relations, in ‘real-ising’ what is said and can be said on the topic of the good teacher. Accordingly, this chapter is attentive to Foucault’s undertaking to deconstruct text in order to show the power underlying our knowledge and language (Vincent, 1995, p. 186).

Throughout this chapter, I have drawn on the notion of a discursive analytic whereby I have sought to highlight ‘the location of statements that function with constitutive effects’. By asking why it is that ‘certain statements emerge to the exclusion of all others and what function they serve’ (Graham, 2005, p. 5), I have investigated a range of policy discourses, not so much for what they say but rather for the purpose of investigating the constitutive or political effects of saying certain things (about good teaching and good teachers). This chapter has set the scene for demonstrating how Foucault’s theorisation of the constitutive and disciplinary properties of discursive practices within socio-political relations of power around education policy not only produce meaning ‘but also particular kinds of objects and subjects upon whom and through which particular relations of power are realized’ (Graham, 2005, p. 7).

Chapters 5 and 6 provide further insight into the constitutive effects of policy discourses; they show how these discourses have a direct and indirect bearing on both teacher and student identity. Moreover, these chapters demonstrate how teachers and students can challenge policy discourses as alternative meanings are made about teaching and its many different dimensions, through contrasting discursive positions and practices.
Chapter 5:
Teacher Accomplishment as ‘Feeding and Caring’


*It’s not very clear what the expectation of the ‘good’ teacher is. (‘Clare’, practising Victorian secondary teacher 2009)*

5.1 Introduction

I begin this chapter with the imagery of Vincent van Gogh’s ‘Memory of the Garden at Etten’. The three figures depict contrasting perspectives on the moment: the women on the left show acquiescence or forbearance,\(^1\) in juxtaposition to the woman on the right whose activity and ‘function’ seems purposeful and energised. In short, there is in this painting a sense of discord or ‘contestation’ of perceived demands or roles, a sentiment echoed in the short statement from a contemporary teacher. In contrast to policy writers, what do successful teachers consider to be good teaching practice? How do they go about identifying ‘accomplishment’?\(^2\) In this chapter a case is made that the discursive practices of teachers (when they are focused on the topic of accomplished or expert

\(^1\) In this chapter I align the notion of the ‘good’ teacher with notions of ‘accomplishment’. I have privileged the latter term due to its association with data collected from the ARC geography teachers study.
teaching) construct the good teacher, in ways that differ from the teacher produced by policy discourses.

In the title of this chapter I have made reference to Singleton and Law’s (2012) notion that apart from policy there are ‘other practices patterning and ordering’ the education processes in schools. Drawing on a farm metaphor, they suggest that the practices of ‘feeding and caring’ enact identities (here, I include, of good teachers) that seem to be outside (disconnected from) the patterns of more generalised rituals of policy. Taking this distinction as a means of tracking a sharper discourse analysis than might otherwise be attainable, I am able to foreground the notion that a teacher’s practice is discursively shaped at both general (policy) and local sites.

Methodologically, I have aligned my analysis with Sanguinetti’s (1999, p. 92) reasoning that mapping the configuration of teacher discourses43 (reflected in their ‘textual self-representations’) can ‘reveal some of the ways in which teachers respond to, and produce power in their everyday communications and practices’. She delineates ‘the different discourses and meanings which blend and contend in the field’. Her model of discourse mapping is also helpful in the way it can

connect with the historical evolution of discourses and their political significances; it [can] delineate the different subject positions which these discourses make available and the power effects of each; it [can] focus on discursive resistance, as well as discursive inscription and subjectification and it [can]…account for the evolution of new discourses within the field of practice. (p. 92)

Thus, I describe the discursive positionings of many teachers and their micropractices of discursive resistance (Sanguinetti, 1999). By examining the ways in which teachers variously constitute their selves discursively, and how they position themselves in particular ways with respect to the current taken-for-granted or normalised requirements of their profession, it is possible to scrutinise the complex and sometimes ‘veiled’ dimensions of the contemporary teacher self.

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43 Here Sanguinetti is referring to tertiary teachers. Nevertheless, I contend that the principles of discourse mapping are arguably relevant to teachers in other education settings.
Before proceeding with my analysis, I again introduce a reflexive move in the form of two (true) stories that helps to position me as a researcher of accomplishment in teaching.

### Story 1
On first seeing the van Gogh painting ‘Memory of the Garden at Etten’, my eye was quickly drawn to the woman on the right hand side of the picture. Relative to the rather dour looking women on the left of the picture, I identified emotionally with the sunnier atmosphere of the right-hand side, where the woman in the white bonnet contentedly tends the brightly coloured flowers, her flexible body fully bent over and her hands suggesting animation and purpose. In contrast, I noticed that the hands of the women on the left are ‘tied up’ with their individual concerns. The garden at Etten is clearly ordered and regimented but where the seemingly eager woman works, I saw a more charming ‘disorder’, passion and profusion. When considering my thesis, I thought that if the flowers might represent students, the women on the left would represent the notions taken up in current policy discourses circulating around the good teacher.

### Story 2
After 25 years in the classroom myself, I am ‘unexpectedly’ privy to approximately 500 individual responses from geography teachers, all making statements pertaining to ‘accomplished’ teaching. My instinct after the first reading was to ‘sort’ according to who’s talking about good teachers being smart and who’s talking about good teachers loving the kids and being passionate about their subject. Looking back, this ‘first cut’ said a great deal about my own perspective as a researcher investigating, as it happens, the elements that constitute good teaching! Subsequently, in an effort to formalise these unscholarly ‘impulses’, I accordingly devised the following categories: (i) comments pertaining to these teachers’ capabilities—here I meant what skills, knowledge experience do they bring? (ii) what do they actually do in the classroom? and (iii) what is the impact of their individual dispositions or personalities?

In structuring this chapter, I first provide an overview of the 11 lessons of the accomplished teachers (and the pre- and post-lesson interviews) from the geography teachers study. In Appendix 2, I include detailed contextual information on each of the 11 lessons analysed.\(^{44}\) Secondly, I analyse the online comments made by respondents

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\(^{44}\) For each of the samples the contextual information is taken directly from the Geogstandards website, [http://geogstandards.edu.au](http://geogstandards.edu.au). I have abbreviated it somewhat, but also included information verbatim as it appears on the website. In this way, not only the factual information, but also something of the tone and ‘approach’ of the ARC study are suggested.
(practising geography teachers) taking part in the ARC research project\(^{45}\) pertaining to the question ‘What counts as accomplished teaching?’ in relation to what was observed in the videoed lessons.\(^{46}\) I have produced a three-part summary of these comments.

Following this, I present an analysis of data derived from teacher ‘Reflection Prompt Response Forms’ (RPRFs), a sample of which is provided in Appendix 2. As mentioned above, these third ‘teacher’ data were provided by teachers who were asked about the significance and wider implications of the thank-you letters given to them by students (and collected, subsequently, for this research project). Like the geography teachers data, these data are understood as practices that form the objects (the good teacher) of which they speak. Moreover, drawing on Sanguinetti’s (1999, p. 93) argument that discourse mapping, as a framework for analysing and describing the discourses structuring texts, exposes ‘the dynamics of change, contestation and transformation reflected in them’, I suggest that the RPRFs significantly augment the discourses that are identified in the Australian Research Council’s study of geography teachers.

### 5.2 Discourse Analysis of Videoed Lessons and Interviews

Table 5.1 provides a summary of the particular school settings, year levels of students and the lesson topics, as well as an overview of the discursive practices of the accomplished geography teachers. Drawing on this table, I analyse in some detail the discursive practices of five teachers by identifying the dominant discursive practices evident in the teacher’s interactions with students and in their pre- and post-interviews regarding the lessons.\(^{47}\) In so doing, I identify how these teachers engage discursively with (good) teaching and how they position themselves with respect to the discourses currently circulating on the teaching of school geography. As I discuss in Chapter 3, the analysis of these discourses is framed by Foucauldian theory.

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\(^{45}\) This is the data collected as part of an ARC project on the relationship between professional teaching standards and professional teacher learning; and the development of a specific set of professional standards, standards for teaching school geography.

\(^{46}\) The data collection approach adopted used technically complex methods for video recording classrooms and supplemented the video records with 57 post-lesson, video-stimulated interviews with students and the teacher in an effort to ‘capture’ the specificities of practice. Eleven case studies (22 lessons altogether) were conducted in eight schools in three major Australian states.

\(^{47}\) I purposely limit the number of discursive practices analysed here to five since I believe that the analysis of the (seven) lessons taught by these five teachers provides suitably rich evidence of current discourses taken up in the teaching of geography.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lesson topic</th>
<th>Discourse type</th>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>School type</th>
<th>Sample text</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Regional Centres: the case of Geelong (Year 9)</td>
<td>Engagement and skill acquisition</td>
<td>Katrina</td>
<td>Large non-government school in metropolitan Melbourne</td>
<td>‘tap into the boys’ interests’ and ‘give them a lot of skills’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coasts (Year 10)</td>
<td>Discovery and participation</td>
<td>Steve</td>
<td>Large government co-educational school in metropolitan Melbourne</td>
<td>‘taking part’ and ‘working together’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rivers/Burma cyclone disaster (Year 8)</td>
<td>Empathy and understanding</td>
<td>Rachel</td>
<td>Medium-sized non-government coeducational school in non-metropolitan Victoria</td>
<td>‘the kids and I’ ‘the unexpected’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population (Year 12)</td>
<td>Attainment and knowledge</td>
<td>Jason</td>
<td>Medium-sized non-government girls’ school in metropolitan Adelaide</td>
<td>‘work towards better answers’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topographical Mapping (Year 10)</td>
<td>Skill acquisition</td>
<td>Jason</td>
<td>Medium-sized non-government girls’ school in metropolitan Adelaide</td>
<td>‘giving more practice’ ‘use maps from past exams’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asia Pacific Region (Year 10)</td>
<td>Proficiency &amp; expertise</td>
<td>Chris</td>
<td>Large non-government school in metropolitan Sydney</td>
<td>‘not easy’ ‘juggling’ ‘content, skills timing and equipment’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Olympics (Grade 3-4)</td>
<td>Finding out</td>
<td>Ron</td>
<td>Primary school within country Victoria</td>
<td>‘tune them in’ ‘allows students to enter the realm’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural Hazards (Middle school)</td>
<td>Experiencing the real world</td>
<td>Allen</td>
<td>Large government co-educational school in metropolitan Melbourne</td>
<td>‘this actually happens to people’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Earthquakes and Volcanoes (Year 9)</td>
<td>Technical expertise</td>
<td>Ben</td>
<td>Large government co-educational school in metropolitan Melbourne</td>
<td>‘raise questions’ ‘get them familiar with technology’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.2.1 Discourses of Engagement and Skill Acquisition

In the pre-lesson interview, Katrina takes up discursive practices around knowledge and skill gains: ‘So it will be a skill-based couple of lessons looking at things like location and region [and] geographic characteristics’. Katrina frames her lesson by explaining that she is concerned with how much ‘we know about Geelong’. She is concerned that the
boys acquire ‘different skills’ and in fact the next few lessons she will teach are described in her own words as a ‘skills-based couple of lessons’.

Taking up a knowledge practice around the importance of promoting skill acquisition, Katrina describes how she undertook a trip to Geelong to gather information for the broadsheet on Geelong,48 including a visit to the Geelong Chamber of Commerce. She also supplements the information to be presented to the boys with material sourced from the Internet and newspapers. Katrina’s discursive practice gives emphasis to wanting ‘to lift’ the boys’ knowledge of Geelong to a ‘different level’, thereby indicating her dual intention of ‘tapping into the boys’ interests’ in order to help ‘give them a lot of skills’. Katrina’s discursive practice around the curriculum positions her with respect to the importance of sequence and structure in learning.

In Foucauldian terms, Katrina’s subject position is constructed through discourses of engagement (she describes herself as being a Geelong ‘tragic’ in her involvement with the Australian Football League). Furthermore, Katrina explains in her pre-lesson interview that, in her particular educational setting, you have ‘got to have something interesting’ and, consequently, she has rejected the use of text books, preferring to generate her own stimulus material designed with her students in mind. Discursively Katrina also positions herself with respect to a (professional) imperative to bolster student ‘buy in’ since, as the norm, she believes only one-third of the class are actually enjoying the lesson and feel fully engaged in the lesson’s academic content. As such, Katrina positions herself with respect to an emphasis on creativity and innovation through which she describes the designing of an innovative strategy for the lesson, which she believes is likely to engage her students through its connection to sport.

In the post-lesson interview, Katrina again takes up a discourse of skill acquisition and achievement. She indicates that she was satisfied with the way the lesson unfolded and the way the boys ‘were doing the skills’. She goes on to say that ‘the mapping looked good’ and their answers ‘seemed to be on track’. When asked about the identification of key learning and teaching moments, she highlights her ‘open’ questioning, the fact that the boys have some choice and ‘freedom’ to talk with mates and to get things ‘off their

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48 Katrina decides prior to teaching the topic that, rather than use a text book, it is more appropriate to present the boys with selected information on a laminated sheet (broadsheet).
chest’. Pertaining to her professional judgement, Katrina explains that ‘you’ve learned to do this over time’. Of note is that Katrina also privileges affect, since she believes in students ‘sharing answers’ and in the teacher creating ‘safe conditions’ in the classroom. In addition, Katrina takes up a discourse of care as she explains to the researcher that she moves around the classroom because ‘everyone needs to feel valued’. Katrina mentions, in passing, issues of respect and ‘positive interaction’ between her students.

When asked about her ‘identity’ as a geography teacher, Katrina is able to articulate freely that there are key skills and information that a good geography teacher imparts. She is emphatic that a major part of the role of the Year 9 geography teacher is to pave the way for success in Year 11 and 12 geography classes. As Katrina puts it, she does not want students coming into Year 11 and 12 without ‘absolute’ skills. Alternatively, Katrina positions herself in relation to discourses of student well-being. She mentions the importance of students relating to what is in the newspapers, for example, on the issue of water use. But when asked why she sees this as important, Katrina answers by explaining that students ‘don’t read the paper’. She goes on to explain, however, that she is committed to helping the boys understand the community issues they ‘need to know’ and explains that she is always keen to do ‘anything’ to help in this regard.

From a Foucauldian perspective, Katrina’s discursive practices both reflect and reinforce the dominant discourse of the good teacher as one who imparts knowledge and provides skill acquisition for students. Specifically, however, there is a further dimension to Katrina’s discourse of skill acquisition, which pertains to the way she takes the opportunity to shape the subjectivity (Mulcahy, 2010) of the Year 9 class, implying the importance of school geography in the senior years, and the potential to shape the students as future geographers:

Now in Year 12 they have to have a range of media in order to present their work. And they’re tested at Year 12 and 11, we test the ways that they can present information. So I’ve given you a selection of media here to show data about Geelong. So…

Discursively Katrina positions herself with respect to her role in complying with subject and curriculum requirements and school administrative issues, in particular, the benefits of keeping high numbers of students in senior geography classes. In addition, Katrina’s
discourses of academic performance and accountability seem to be a reflection of the wider school culture of high academic achievement. Thus, it is helpful to consider Katrina’s discursive practices in the light of Larson’s (2010, p. 216) reference to the ‘technical conceptualisation of practice’, which is situated in the ‘broader discourse of competition and efficiency now framing much current educational policy debates’. Within this context, however, Katrina is observed to be engaged in a comfortable affective relationship with the students as evidenced by a particular student who notices the ‘Cats’ logo on the stimulus sheet and with mock cheekiness enquires ‘was it necessary?’

5.2.2 Discourses of Discovery and Experience

Steve’s discursive practices privilege notions of hands-on discovery and the benefits for the students of engaging with lived experiences. His videoed lesson is centred on a field trip with his middle school geography students. In his pre-lesson interview, Steve uses inclusive language to explain that the students will be ‘taking part’ and ‘working together’ to make observations in the field that will help them understand ‘what they have been talking about in class’. Thus, it can be argued that Steve’s focus—around geography fieldwork in particular—position teaching and learning as socio-material practices in which human ‘bodies’ and ‘the spaces they inhibit’ play a constitutive part (Mulcahy, 2010, p. 9). This element of Steve’s discursive practice is indicated in the following excerpt from Steve’s pre-lesson interview:

…I went down a few weeks ago along the coast…I’m re-looking at ‘oh yeah, that’s changed, I can see….’. With my senior fieldwork, I go up the weekend before, just to see the site, see what’s going on, access, camping facilities and that.

Moreover, the video of the field trip lesson shows Steve using discourses of inclusion that suggest that his teacher identity is shaped by matters of affect with regard to student learning. This is particularly evident as Steve moves between students, encouraging them in their observations in the field. Steve’s discourse of acceptance and inclusion is demonstrated in his comment that ‘some of us see things differently’. Thus, Steve

49 Logically it can be argued that middle school teachers and students are not, and do not need to be, so ‘examination focused’. Nevertheless, I contend that there are noteworthy contrasts in the discursive practices between Steve’s teaching and that of teachers such as Katrina.
positions himself in respect to a focus on discovery as he describes taking the students with him on ‘the learning journey’ by making good links and asking open-ended questions. For example, on the field trip, designed to allow students to observe coastal features and management issues at Sandringham beach, Steve asks students, ‘What do you think needs to be done?’.

Moreover, Steve describes an optimum teaching situation whereby there are teachers ‘spread out’ along the length of the excursion location so that students can engage with a teacher spontaneously as a question or difficulty presents itself. He also speaks of his belief in cooperative learning and ‘conversations that flow’. He explains that students have got to make sense of their learning and be able to make links with prior knowledge. Steve’s teacher ‘self’ or identity seems less dominated by the neo-liberal discourse of performance and outcomes, and relative to Katrina, for example, he has not been subjectified (in relation to student achievement) by policy discourses to the same degree.

5.2.3 Discourse of Empathy for Others

The discursive practices of Rachel contrast with those of the previous teachers’ in subtle but distinct ways. In the pre-lesson interview Rachel does not principally position herself with respect to discourses of student academic performance and student attainment. She uses the expression ‘the kids and I’ to indicate an empathy with her students. When pressed by the interviewer, Rachel states that her objective in the lesson is familiarisation with ‘terminology’ but she also states that ‘kids love stories’. She explains that she is vitally interested in the ‘impact humans are having’ in the world and she mentions that the kids find international river systems ‘fascinating’.

Rachel introduces the lesson topic in the following way: ‘We’re going to start looking at river landforms and the way rivers work in erosion, deposition, transportation’. In this way Rachel sets out what she intends as the direction of the lesson, but after a short period of time she ‘interrupts’ this plan and reveals that she needs to deal with what she regards as a superseding matter, the tragedy of Cyclone Nargis unfolding in Burma:

Before I start though…something pretty big has happened and I couldn’t …not talk about it today.
Chapter 5: Teacher Accomplishment as ‘Feeding and Caring’

I just couldn’t come today and not talk about this…it’s a big deal. Sixty thousand people, that’s a bit of a big deal and Australia is currently tossing up (as to) how much support we should provide. …That’s was just my little quick introduction; ‘cos we couldn’t live without that.

When the ensuing classroom discussion on the cyclone in Burma\(^{50}\) begins, it is apparent that the students take the emotional lead from their teacher. Rachel explains to the students that she feels a personal, emotional and moral imperative to deviate from her lesson plan. She has already ‘disclosed’ that she had been discussing the tragedy with other teachers in the staffroom and thus makes a transition between her professional life in the classroom and her wider concerns. In the course of discussing the cyclone, however, Rachel draws the students into thinking about people in crisis by asking them to compare Australia’s response to emergencies with those in Burma.

Arguably then, the dominant focus in Rachel’s practice is one of spontaneity, the unexpected and, to use her own term, getting ‘involved’. As evidence of such involvement, Rachel comments on the body language of her students who lean forward as they become more involved in the lesson.

Viewed through a Foucauldian discourse theory lens, Rachel does not seem compelled to follow the dominant discourse of policy with regard to performance and student academic outcomes. Rather, within the institutional constraints of the school classroom, Rachel positions herself with respect to discourses of empathy for others and compassion. Her identity or teacher self is not apparently made subject to dominant neo-liberal policy discourses. Moreover, Rachel’s subject position seems to resist the normalising of performance as all-important, preferring, as she feels inclined, to privilege contesting discourses (of compassion and empathy) within her classroom.

The first thing I decided to do this morning was to talk about the cyclone. I added that to the (lesson); that to me was important. Because one of the things I have been talking to them about is current events in geography. So, I thought I have to talk about this. That was a key event.

\(^{50}\) As background information, immediately prior to the recording of this lesson, Rachel had become aware of the devastating cyclone that had hit Burma. She felt the need to convey her concern for the Burmese people to her class.
The felt intensity expressed in ‘I’ve got to talk about this’, ‘cos we couldn’t live without that’ and ‘I couldn’t…not talk about it today’ indicates how Rachel thinks herself as a teacher, and in Foucauldian terms, is an expression of subjectivity.

In addition, what comes to mind here is the degree to which Rachel positions herself with respect to, as it were, having authority to step outside the surveillance of (policy) prioritising performativity. Foucauldian theorising allows for a ‘panoptic’ perspective on how focus the prisoners in the machine (here educational institutions) are isolated and are the clear objects of the anonymous gaze signified by the invisible inhabitants (here neo-liberal policy makers). Nevertheless, Rachel is able to negotiate a pathway between those expectations and her own values and empathy for those in need.

5.2.4 Discourses of Attainment, Knowledge and Skill Acquisition

Jason, also regarded as highly skilled teacher, explains that his lesson on the Australian population falls ‘within the Year 12 course’ and that the students have recently ‘moved on’ from a previous topic. Discourses of student achievement were foremost in Jason’s pre-lesson interview, indicating that his intention in the lesson was to ‘pull together’ various ‘facts’ and ‘concepts’. Jason positions himself with respect to a discourse of ‘higher order thinking’ by predicting that a lesson will be deemed good if the students are thinking deeply as well as ‘just learning’. Jason states that he is concerned to challenge students so as to produce by ‘thinking and predicting’ certain consequences. Conversely, when discussing his preparation for the lesson Jason again privileges a discourse of student achievement (in forthcoming examinations) by highlighting the teaching material students will be ‘examined on’ and the specific ‘aims and objectives’ for the lesson, namely, that students need to ‘work towards better answers’.

Arguably, Jason occupies a discursive space in which cognitive skills and academic achievement are dominant. His discursive practice is clearly focused on time constraints and ‘factors’ to be covered as solid preparation for upcoming senior examinations. For example, Jason provided a detailed schema on the whiteboard so that students could use this material more effectively in their examination preparations for this subject.

The Foucauldian notion of normalising is pertinent in Jason’s teaching since he is seemingly aligned in his practice with the neo-liberal ‘given’ that calculable student outcomes are of paramount importance. Thus, when prompted to comment on his overall
satisfaction with the lesson, Jason’s comments privilege a discourse of critical evaluation, in that the students ‘were fine’, that they had a ‘reasonable overview’ of the lesson content but were ‘still not quite’ there, and that they had a ‘general idea’ but in some cases were a ‘bit vague’. Jason also commented on his concern about lesson management in terms of ‘having enough time for everything’. Arguably, therefore, Jason is positioning himself as a teacher operating effectively within the policy discourse. His identity seems to be shaped in this way and his teacher self has been constructed or subjectified (made subject) by the neo-liberal discourse on student outcomes and associated teacher accountability. As suggested above, this policy discourse foregrounds academic coaching for strong test performance and improved scholastic achievement.

5.2.5 Discourses of Proficiency and Expertise

An analysis of Chris’s lesson and interview content revealed that the discourses of teacher pressure and the demands of time constraints were two of his principal responses. In contrast to the previous teachers discussed, Chris expresses concern and frustration over competing demands relating to his practice. In the opening sentences of his pre-lesson interview, Chris mentions the need to deal with the combination of ‘content, skills and timing’, and during the post-lesson interview he is seen to take up a discourse of self-reproach over being ‘caught out’ by time constraints. Chris stated that certain elements of the lesson ‘caused some grief’ and that, given the difficulty of the lesson, at times it seemed ‘all over the place’. He was aware that he had used ‘open-ended’ questioning (which seemingly takes more time to complete) and engaged in other professional choices that led to being caught up in practical difficulties relating to the effective use of student resources. He also admits that he was caught unaware by students moving in and out of the classroom.

A further discourse identified in the interview with Chris pertained to the external examination that his students must take as part of the ‘education and political ideas’ mandated by the New South Wales Government. Chris explains that he is conscious of the importance of preparing students well in terms of their knowledge and skills in case ‘they get a question in the exam’, and he states explicitly that he sees a competing obligation to make the lesson content ‘interesting’ for students. From a Foucauldian perspective, Chris has been subjectified, in keeping with the dominant policy discourses, as one who fosters student examination preparation.
In addition there is, in Chris’s case, a discourse of empathy for individual students. This is shown clearly in his concern to involve ‘Chloe’ in the lesson by ‘bringing her in’ and he goes on to explain the importance of his students being willing to ‘connect with’ him professionally. In this way Chris’s identity is being shaped by a discourse of inclusion and empathy and, as such, in his initial comments on the videoed lesson, Chris mentions his concern to foreground the PowerPoint work, to ‘set the mood’ for the class to engender a sense of ‘empathy’.

### 5.3 Discourses in the geography Teachers’ Viewing Diaries

Adapting Sanguinetti’s (1999) notion of discourse mapping outlined in Chapter 3, I undertook to summarise from the Viewing Diaries data a list of issues or propositions about the attributes and characteristics of the good teacher. In this mapping process my first task was to establish key themes that could, in turn, be mapped as the major discursive threads circulating in the data. From this I identified three broad categories on which an analysis of data might be based: the capabilities, the predisposition and the actions of the teacher. Table 5.2 provides a sample set (Sample 1) of Viewing Diary responses of teachers A-H.

In order to discern some valuable meanings in the Viewing Diaries data, my first task was to use the principles of the Sanguinetti discourse mapping model to ‘map out’ recurring categories of responses. As a result of this process, I identified frequently occurring references to ‘capabilities’, ‘dispositions’ and ‘actions’ that were, in terms of Foucauldian discourse theory, the dominant discourses here in producing (and reproducing) the accomplished teacher.

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51 Clearly it is an advantage that the geography study encouraged a wide range of responses; however, it is challenging to come up with a quantitative measure of responses. Nonetheless, I made a judgement as to the most appropriate classification procedure and put a value of ‘one’ on each issue even though, in some cases, the same value was given to one- or two-word responses as was given to longer, more considered comments which were limited to one idea.

52 I note here that, in terms of Foucauldian discourse theory, my decision to classify the responses in this way speaks to my subjectification as a teacher who assumes that a teacher’s work can be broken down in this manner, an issue I addressed in Story 2 at the beginning of this chapter.
Table 5.2: Sample set of ‘Viewing Diary’ responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Some examples of responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>The provision of the Broadsheet as the main source of information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>A relaxed personality reflecting confidence of knowing the educational limits of her class as well as the actual teaching material.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>The introduction of data and how to read it. I believe geography teachers are able to draw kids’ attention to data by that constant reference to figure numbers, asking what the map/graph is showing and the legend.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>The content being skills/concepts based. Materials prepared and learning planned. Preparation of materials that allow for the needs of students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>The use of assumed knowledge and applying it to the task at hand.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>The use of stimulus to create thought, discussion and student opinions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>The teacher’s ability to link everyday happenings to geography. The ability to include a number of types of geographic media as vehicles for students learning. Students’ ability to analyse material and present their findings using geographic specific concepts/language.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>Having the kids in the class learn geography and the skills of geography without even realising they are learning.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.3 presents the three discursive themes that were identified as key factors in the Viewing Diaries’ constructions of the good teacher. First, discursive practices around the teacher’s capabilities were identified (e.g., ‘skill in carefully choosing and preparing resources’; in ‘structuring a lesson’; in ‘using materials relevant to the students’). Second, I identified discursive statements relating to affect (the disposition of the teacher) being observed in the videoed lesson (e.g., ‘has a good relationship with students, relaxed personality, friendly relaxed style, knows his/her students, emphasis on personal connections, makes geography enjoyable’). Third, I highlighted discourses of ‘action’ (e.g., ‘gives clear instructions…directing students well…speaking clearly…very focused…uses links’ to prior knowledge).
Table 5.3: Three discursive themes in Viewing Diary comments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Examples of comments indicating broad ‘capabilities’ of a teacher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Experience is evident. Skill obvious in carefully choosing and preparing resources. Teacher uses materials relevant to the students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[High level] skills used in structuring a lesson: content is gender/age specific.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher changes strategies to fit available time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher has the ability to interpret information presented by a satellite image and interpret change.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Examples of comments indicating teacher ‘disposition’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher has a good relationship with students, a relaxed personality, a friendly relaxed style, knows the students, places emphasis on personal connections and makes geography enjoyable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher seems genuinely interested: allows some passion to show, enthusiastic about what students are learning, uses positive language to show how much he values the activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher shows confidence and flexibility and an ability to diverge from the teaching plan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher has inclusive approach to all students and allows for needs of all students.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Examples of comments identifying teacher’s ‘actions’ in class</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clear instructions given and expectations for the lesson explained. Teacher directs students well, speaking clearly with a very focused manner showing an ability to communicate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher links content to prior knowledge and to everyday happenings such as sport (e.g., using the student interest in AFL footy final).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visuals used effectively and tasks modelled which lead to good understanding.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher questions class effectively, suggesting a range of possible answers and affirming student responses. Teacher gives ‘clues but not answers’ and checks for understanding.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.3.1 Examples of Discourses of Accomplished ‘Capabilities’

When investigating the comments made in the online Viewing Diaries, I noted that the discursive practices of many commentators privileged specific capabilities as the hallmark of accomplishment. For example, in Sample 1 Terry notes that Katrina’s lesson reveals,

knowledge of the higher order geography skills and techniques which underpin this task.

Terry also comments on Katrina’s skill in ‘allowing students to discover what they think is important in the data’ presented in the lesson, and the way she is able to offer comfort with the open discussion...allowing some of her passion to show (Cats’ supporter!).

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Similarly, Anthony notes Katrina’s capabilities in the way she ‘uses knowledge and applies it to the task at hand’ and, in Tegan’s comments, Katrina is constructed as a teacher whose capabilities are indicated by her,

knowing the curriculum well enough that [she] can move away from using the textbook and create units of work for students that are much more relevant to them and their immediate area or interests.

Andre comments on the preparation of Katrina’s ‘own materials to allow for [her] own teaching style and needs of students’.

With regard to Steve’s lessons on coasts, Allen notes that accomplishment is indicated through Steve’s capacity to demonstrate effectively ‘a fundamental practical skill in simple direct terms’. Indeed, Allen highlights Steve’s deftness in presenting fieldwork:

The teacher’s effort was not ‘text book clinical’ and demonstrates ‘rough edges’ that are part of fieldwork.

Allen’s comments on Rachel’s lesson on rivers focus on her ‘effective questioning technique’, whilst Andre notes Rachel’s use of the whiteboard ‘to allow images and animations to show what is being discussed’. Andre also notes Rachel’s skilful interaction with her students and the ‘free-flowing discussion and ideas being brought in’. Indeed, Andre observes that in Rachel’s lesson,

everything [is] linked back to content and expanded on as part of the discussion process… [and that Rachel was] prepared to take the time to let this build up to a broader range of ideas.

Furthermore, Amanda observes Rachel’s skill in relating ‘this example’ (disaster in Burma) ‘to kids and their environment: “What would happen if this happened in Bacchus Marsh?”’. Rachel’s accomplishment is also described in terms of her capacity to give students…

an understanding that this type of event has varying impacts depending on where it occurs… [and therefore] a better understanding of the world.
Deana, Alon and Andre, respectively, comment on Jason’s capacity to structure the lesson such that the students are fully engaged through discussion:

[Jason demonstrated] the ability to encourage a student to participate in a class discussion. As one student said, ‘because all issues are not…straightforward’. (Deana)

The lessons were well structured and let the students come to the final conclusion of what size population Australia needed. It seemed like the senior students were engaged. (Alon)

Content presented [was] dealt with in a very focused manner…challenging students to come up with ideas to get them involved and to identify the factors related to population. (Andre)

Moreover, discourses of flexibility and inclusiveness respectively are evident in Terry’s and Sally’s comments on Rachel’s teaching:

Being able to change what you were planning for the lesson to insert an important global event. (Terry)

Demonstrating how everything is connected—that a discussion on cyclones can still influence [the] topic of rivers. (Sally)

5.3.2 Examples of Discourses of Accomplished ‘Dispositions’

In contrast to discourses of capabilities, some comments from the Viewing Diaries indicate a discourse of relationship and responsiveness. For example, Tegan takes up such a perspective in her comments in relation to Rachel’s lesson: ‘The teacher seemed to have a really good relationship with her students’. Similarly, Alon comments on Rachel’s ‘relaxed personality reflecting confidence of knowing the educational limits of her class as well as the actual teaching material’, whilst Nina identifies Rachel’s accomplishment in the following comment:

The immediate acknowledgement of the disaster and the need to teach about it in class straight away…engaged students immediately as they were hearing about it on the news etc. and the teacher was able to draw connects to a number of areas of
geography and help students to think on a deeper level about the geography of the disaster (emphasis added).

Paul, meanwhile, makes the link between Rachel’s disposition and the associated positive impact on the students’ learning:

The teacher’s enthusiasm in a big way [is something that] the students …would be responding to [also]…The sharing and encouragement …Discussing a recent and relevant issue and showing students how this directly relates to the materials they are studying.

Arguably, the discursive practices which position the good teacher with respect to the teacher’s disposition add a divergent dimension to how working teachers think accomplishment as it pertains to teaching practice in the current times.

5.3.3 Examples of Discourses of Accomplished ‘Actions’

Discourses of effective actions (what is actually done in class by the teacher) are evident in Sharon’s comment that Katrina is,

using geographical language at every opportunity—pre-testing/introduction of lesson through the delivery of stimulus [material as an introduction] and at the end of lesson…using relevant data and incorporating geographical skills into lesson.

In addition, Noelene notes ‘the emphasis of the importance of key geographic concepts (content area) and the way in which this is linked to students’ own experiences’, whilst Sandy notices that Katrina ‘expects students to develop skills in reading and interpreting a wide range of statistics, data and maps’. Richard also specifies which actions of Katrina are impressive by commenting that,

[she] looks for opportunities to build on [students’] prior knowledge, introduces new ways of connecting places and things in the environment, [and] constantly walks around the class.

Making a similar observation about Katrina’s expertise, Amanda makes a specific link to actions by noting that (accomplished) teachers are able ‘to draw kids’ attention’ to data ‘by the constant reference to figure numbers [and] asking what the map/graph is showing in the legend’.
A discourse of ‘actions’ taken by accomplished teachers is identified in the ways both Vivienne and Terry comment on Jason’s teaching. Vivienne notes that Jason has great ‘questioning techniques to extract information for the table’ and that a good ‘table summary’ was ‘generated on the board’. Looking more broadly, Terry comments on the effectiveness of Jason’s actions when ‘discussing the options with the class’ which involved ‘treating the students like experts’. In addition, Russell comments on Jason’s use of ‘the brainstorming approach’ or what Anthony refers to as ‘linking students’ personal knowledge’ with the topic.

Regarding Rachel’s actions, Kristy comments on the accomplished way in which,

the teacher uses geographic media (satellite image and maps) effectively [incorporating] spatial concepts implicit in the teaching (e.g., location of Burma relative to Australia as shown on [the] map and spatial change over time to the region as shown in satellite images).

Further, in relation to Steve’s teaching, Andre observes that accomplished teaching is ‘asking for student input at each stage of the task’ and also

making clear connections between [a] class activity and what [students] will be expected to do later.

In this way, Andre observes the way Steve is using class time well by changing ‘strategy to fit time available’. Similarly, Brett highlights the accomplished actions of expert teachers by commenting on Steve’s ability ‘to present new concepts’ whilst, on a related theme, David comments on Steve’s (technically impressive) expertise in using ‘line drawing as an overlay of an actual photo, rather than simply presenting drawing’ and also his ‘approach to labelling of [the] diagram and further annotation of processes involved’ as well as the ‘link between [the] visual indicators and labelling of processes’.

Notable also is the way much of Claire’s commentary on Steve’s lessons focused on actions:

Aims/purpose of tasks in class and field very clear…i.e. illustrating, labelling and annotating [showing a] good approach to a new skill…linking class learning with real life (the field trip).
5.3.4 Overview of the Discursive Practices in the Viewing Diaries

Having categorised the discourses evident in the Viewing Diaries, I sought to ascertain the relative frequency of references to teacher ‘capabilities’, ‘dispositions’ and ‘actions in class’ in the Viewing Diaries. I include in Appendix 4 a numerical table that displays the relative dominance of each of the three discourses. From this table, it can be observed that over half of the comments relate to teacher capabilities and about one third to actions in class, while a relatively small number relate to discourses of ‘disposition’. These data indicate that the geography teachers who participated in the ARC study (by observing and commenting on accomplished teaching via the online Viewing Diaries) focus strongly on capacities and actions. That is to say, the discourses taken up by the teachers who responded to the Viewing Diaries generally indicated that accomplishment has to do with teacher attributes in terms of issues such as the demonstration of (geographic) skills and preparation and lesson delivery, rather than in terms of ‘student’ responses to this learning experience.

Correspondingly, however, responses in the category termed ‘dispositions’ do suggest that teachers understand the relevance of matters of affect in classroom teaching and learning, specifically, how students react to the ways in which a particular teacher ‘presents’ to the class. Thus in the teachers’ responses there are discourses of affect and relationship apparent in statements such as seems ‘genuinely interested’, ‘allows some passion to show’, ‘enthusiastic about what students are learning’, and ‘uses positive language to show how much he values the activities’.

5.4 Discourses Evident in ‘Reflection Prompt Response Forms’

As well as the ARC material on accomplished teaching, my analysis of the ways teachers construct the good teacher has a secondary focus on the reflections made by teachers who offered thank-you cards and letters from students for this research project. As mentioned

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53 I limited the analysis of this data to the 358 responses from Samples 1-6 since these samples had a much larger cohort of respondents when compared with Samples 7-11.

54 I acknowledge here that the ARC Linkage project under discussion was in fact comprised of several components. There were the respondents’ Viewing Diaries, from which the data being discussed were extracted, but also pre- and post-lesson interviews with the teachers in the videos and the videoed lessons themselves. In addition, selected students were interviewed about the teacher and student comments noted as a part of the combined data for the project. In my analysis I refer only to the comments made by respondents in the Viewing Diaries, the content of the videoed lessons and associated interviews.
above, the rationale for the collection of these reflections, what I have called the Reflection Prompt Response Forms (RPRFs), centres on harnessing an opportunity to explore how accomplished teachers view good teaching in the current times. Deliberately, I embraced the chance to accumulate data that are associated with teachers ‘in relationship’ with individual students. As teachers agreed to provide their thank-you cards and letters for my research, I explained that I would like to understand how they ‘felt’ about receiving these letters and how it has informed or influenced their view of the good teacher in the current times. As can be seen in the sample of the Form provided as an appendix, the questions on the form itself are purposely open-ended—for example, ‘Since finding on rereading my thankyou letters and cards from students, I have been mulling over…’—and thus I was hoping to elicit informal, candid and spontaneous responses.

In a lecture at the Collège de France on 9 February 1983, Foucault addressed the notion of ‘truth telling’ as it pertains to the question of ‘voice’. Drawing on Plato’s adviser being sent to address the State, Foucault notes that, when addressing the State, ‘truth-telling’ has to do with seeing that ‘the voice expressed in the discussion and debates, in the opinions formed, and in the decisions taken, really is in keeping with the politeia’.\(^\text{55}\) I venture to posit that, given Foucault’s notion that all discourses are historically and socially shaped, the RPRFs are ‘voiced’ very differently from the discourses of accomplished teachers videoed in the ARC geography study and, indeed, from the discourses of practising teachers who made online comments about the accomplished teaching they observed. The factors I highlight here are the fact that the ARC study was undertaken as a joint project of the University of Melbourne, the Association of Geography Teachers of Australia, the geography Teachers’ Association of Victoria and the Victorian Institute of Teaching. In contrast, the RPRFs (although comparatively small in number) are more introspective, less formal and arguably would be perceived by teachers as less aligned with the ‘State’. Therefore the inclusion of the RPRFs allows for a purposeful exploration of the configuring of the good teacher from the viewpoint of teachers who offered their thank-you cards and letters for this research project. Of note also is the fact that the RPRF was designed to evoke a response to the general question: What is seen to get in the way of what counts in good teaching? Necessarily, then, the

\(^{55}\) In this case Foucault is referring to what might be called the ‘State’ or ‘the constitution, insofar as it has a structure, in the form of democracy’ (Davidson, 2010, p. 212).
analysis of the ten teacher RPRFs has provided, in some cases, a contesting discourse regarding teacher accomplishment and one that is infrequently circulated in a public domain.

5.4.1 Bree’s Discourse of Heartfelt Concern and Attachment

Bree strongly rebukes of the current dominance around good teaching.

When I think about the current policy ideas of ‘good’ teaching, I feel that… the focus on ENTER scores, VCAA data, NAPLAN and percentage [of high scores] appears crude and simplistic—the teaching and learning environment is much more complex than I imagined it to be when I started teaching...

Here, a young teacher challenges what is ‘significant’ to her in her teaching and what gets in the way of the best aspects of teaching. Interestingly, she refers to the ‘crude and simplistic’ aspects of data representation and is surprised at how ‘much more complex’ she now believes teaching to be.

When I think about working with students within my classroom, what immediately springs to mind is… the depth, variety and potential of the young people with whom I work. I am sometimes humbled by the amount I don’t know about their lives, their demons, their desires, their fears and their hopes. Once I began teaching I often heard teachers talk about the need to fall in love with their class… to care about them so deeply that the learning is just part of what passes between teachers and students.

Bree’s comments suggest that the teacher self is not necessarily limited to that constituted through policy discourses but, rather, can be defined emotionally. Indeed, Bree’s comments resonate with Zembylas’s (2007a, p. xi) explanation that

It is difficult… to imagine teaching and learning without the images and shadows of an affective terrain: images of gentleness and agony, passion and silence, fear and desire – all experience of a self that feels (emphasis in original).57

56 Bree sits outside the specific criteria for my accomplished teacher set since she was in her 4th year of teaching only, but she had been recommended by her Head of English as an ideal participant in the research and I have included her reflection since it is profound.
Further, Bree’s reflection resonates with Noddings’s analysis of the ways in which moral education is dependent on the need ‘to care, to saturate the other with our presence, as well as [provide] confirmation to/for the other’ (Noddings, cited in Semetsky, 2010, p. 248).

This process was never addressed in my teacher education but I have experienced it with some of the classes I have taught. The process where, as a teacher, you are part of your students’ journeys and the more you discover about your students the better you are able to teach and the more switched on to learning they become. It is difficult to explain but it is what I enjoy most in my classrooms.

It is clear that Bree has taken up a discourse of personal professional satisfaction that emerges from strong relationships with her students. She also makes the connection between such relational aspects in teaching and optimal student achievement.

5.4.2 Sarah’s Discourse of Fatigue and Burnout

Discourses of ‘burnout’ were foremost in Sarah’s comments as she highlighted her ‘exhaustion through student volatility and teacher excitement’:

…Plus building these relationships is exhausting!! Teaching has changed significantly in the last 10 years, I think. As a classroom teacher we are relationship managers of the most volatile, but exciting age group—the teenager—and there is little recognition of this publicly.

In this excerpt Sarah also privileges a focus on the complexity pertaining to her relationship with her students; as such she is speaking back to the dominant discourse of performance and academic achievement. She has taken up a discourse through which she foregrounds the volatility and the excitement of being in a relationship with students. She positions herself in a way which contrasts with the configuring of self evidenced, for example, in the discourses of Katrina and Jason. In Foucauldian terms, Sarah is defining her subject position in a visceral and bodily sense. She is describing how she is doing

57 In this light, some teachers take the view that emotion work is now particularly vulnerable to the education reforms associated with the neo-liberal agenda since it is seen to have recently become more prescribed in order to fit into definitions of good teaching that are easily measured (Hebson et al., 2007).
‘self’ in these circumstances; this self is concerned with a personal ‘exhausting’ experience of students, which presumably is more than academic.

In the discursive practice evidenced here, Sarah embraces, albeit briefly, an awareness of the historical evolution of configuring of the good teacher, which she claims has ‘changed significantly in the past 10 years’. In this way Sarah is making a resistant reading of the legitimacy of the current dominant discourses circulating around the good teacher, which does not publicly acknowledge the complexity of the teacher’s role in managing teenagers.

5.4.3 Clare’s Discourse of Resistance to Regulation

In terms of Foucault’s theorising, Clare takes up a subject position resistant to what she describes as the current trend to ‘quantify’ too much in our efforts to define good teaching. In the syntax of the last eight words of the excerpt, the blunt juxtaposition of ‘good judgment’ and ‘absolutes’ produces an authoritative tone, especially since it echoes the binary of ‘what you can and can’t do’.

We try to quantify what it [‘good’ teaching] means too much. Of course, to explore the idea of good teaching, we need to see and share; writing an essay or completing a project won’t show that. Good teaching is a craft, there is so much regulation around what you can and can’t do—which cannot hope to cover all situations—it is about good judgment rather than absolutes.

5.4.4 Liz’s Discourse of Lament

Liz’s lament resonates with Taylor Webb’s (2006, p. 202) notion that neo-liberal policies, by monitoring the performance of teachers, are creating an ‘axis of coercion’—a term understood in many professional fields as ‘data surveillance’. Indeed, through what is termed ‘the pressure to improve’, it is claimed that performativity has become ‘a constructed concept’ rather than an assumed ‘neutral’ regulator of genuine performance (p. 206). Liz, makes the following comments:

Good teaching cannot be prescribed, although common elements may be identified. Good teachers make good teaching and since teachers are individuals the good teaching they do will be as varied in its composition as they are.
If these good teachers spend most of their time collating meaningless ‘results’, ‘report writing’ and so on at the expense of their teaching time with students where together they journey through the learning process, then these good teachers may become disillusioned and use their skills elsewhere…People before policy—policy is only as effective as the individuals implementing it—and that’s hard to measure and collate….RESULTS do not necessarily directly indicate effective teaching. There are too many other variables (emphasis in original).

Initially, Liz engages in the discursive practice of criticising the current policy whereby teachers waste valuable time ‘collating meaningless results’ to the extent that they may eventually abandon the profession. Furthermore, she privileges a discourse of defiance in relation to the current educational landscape, through which she demands that we place ‘(p)eople before policy’ and opt for more nuanced view of good teaching. Evidenced in this excerpt from Liz’s RPRF is a strident call to action. She implies a resistance to the current policy discourses and challenges her readers to consider the implications of maintaining the status quo.

5.5 Conclusion

In approaching the analysis of the geography teachers’ data from a Foucauldian perspective, I have identified three major discursive themes relating to teacher accomplishment that are, as a consequence, both producing and reproducing the good teacher. Firstly, there is the subset of discourses that touch upon the commitment of teachers to apply themselves to the task of getting the best academic outcomes for the students. To some extent, this seems aligned to the policy discourse of accountability and compliance with the current policy discourses of improving outcomes. There is, however, also a strong implication of the professional and personal satisfaction that stems from such commitment. Secondly, there is a subset of discourses that touches upon teacher professionalism and the nature of expertise in teaching, and how these qualities are manifested in demonstrable capabilities of practising teachers. Thirdly, in a series of discourses related to those in the previous category, there is the issue of teacher resourcefulness and pedagogical know-how that shapes the pragmatics of decision making in the design and execution of a particular lesson.
These discourses foreground engaging students and the merits of innovative pedagogy and have a strong focus on student discovery. They also highlight, to varying degrees, a pressured professional reality. In this regard, it is pertinent to consider Larson’s (2010) concerns about the dominant discourses in education that influence a teacher’s pride and professionalism, those which reinforce feelings of blame and derision and result in isolating and individualising the teacher, and those which suppress alternative ways of thinking.

Singleton and Law (2012, p. 10) similarly highlight the frustration of ‘intolerant’, ‘repeating rituals’ (in the case of this project, for example, the focus on NAPLAN results on the My School website), but nevertheless, a claim is made that good workers ‘make enough space to enact local realities’ in the course of their daily practice, thus suggesting that they are ‘resisting capture’ by the dominance of intolerant general policy rules (p. 11).

By way of contrast, I turn now to an analysis of the student data with the intention of investigating the ways in which the configuring of the good teacher is revealed in discourses circulating via student ‘voice’.
Chapter 6:  
Student Discourses of Local Care


‘What is essential is invisible to the eye’ (The Little Prince, Saint-Exupery, 1997).

‘In all things we learn only from those we love’ (Goethe 1749-1832).

6.1 Introduction

How do the voices of students construct the good teacher? In this regard, could the content of a thank-you letter to an esteemed teacher actually give an account of the good teacher that could be held up against policy and other, professional discourses? In Foucauldian terms, what knowledge/power relations are evident in these letters?

Relative to the dominant neo-liberal policy discourses of performativity and accountability, this chapter analyses discourses of thankfulness (those which embrace notions of both gratitude and appreciation) in terms of how student voices construct the good teacher locally—in order to understand how students produce the good teacher in
their letters. Here I take the term ‘locally’ to denote the close interpersonal connection between student and teacher.

The Vermeer painting at the beginning of this chapter depicts a moment of special communication as the girl delivers a letter—presumably a love letter—to the mistress of the house. The illumination of the gold gown and the expressions on the women’s faces indicate an awareness of a particular and intensely shared local knowledge of the contents and significance of the letter. Indeed, the receiver of the letter in the painting seems to be re-interpreting herself—and perhaps her social position—in relation to the knowledge/power duality of the letter’s content delivery. Accordingly, I suggest that this painting invites a reflection on ways the good teacher is produced by the letters written by students to their highly esteemed teachers. Thus this chapter provides an exploration of how the student communications to teachers might construct and circulate beliefs about the good teacher in a way that seems distinct from the (policy) general truth claims around the good teacher.

Following Foucault, therefore, the letters could be seen to provide an alternative—and therefore potentially resistant—understanding of how the good teacher is constituted discursively relative to the dominant policy discourses. Of relevance here is Feder’s (2011) observation that, for Foucault, power is not the sole domain of the dominant discourse but also resides in an effort of ‘resistance’. I do not imply here that the students who composed the thank-you letters and cards were generally aware of positioning themselves with respect to opposing dominant discourses, although this is the case in a few instances.

This chapter is concerned with the distinctive construction of the good teacher in student data, namely 50 thank-you letters written by individual students whose ages range from approximately 7-18 years. I begin by reflecting upon the complexity of exploring discourses, from a Foucauldian perspective, mindful of what different students accept ‘as if it went without saying…that it is true’ (Veyne, 2010, p. 15). Regarding this complexity, and acknowledging that not all students write to their teachers, in Stories 3 and 4 I have attempted to encapsulate (a localised) set of personal experiences as they pertain to student voice, and to provide a reflexive perspective on my own teaching, in the hope that these experiences may preface the complex relationships—documented in student discourses of thankfulness — between teachers and students.
### Story 3: A box of letters
Whenever there has been a natural disaster where people’s homes were threatened, conversation would sometimes turn to the question ‘what possessions would you try to save in the case of an emergency evacuation of the family home?’ In response to this hypothetical question, I would always think of the family photographs, ‘sentimental’ keepsakes, precious jewellery and so on. But hovering close to the imagined list was the cardboard box under the bed that contains the thank-you letters and cards my students have given me and which I have kept, some of them for decades, safe from harm.

### Story 4: A letter from Bessie
In late 2007, prior to beginning my PhD, I received a letter from a former student, Bessie. Bessie wrote of her remembered moments of intellectual revelation in our Year 10 literature class, of parties to celebrate our texts, especially the ‘flapper party’ for *The Great Gatsby*, of sayings and expressions she had appropriated from me, of hard work and her later accomplishments as a top law graduate. In Bessie’s long letter, aspects of my ‘capabilities’, my ‘actions’ and my ‘disposition’ as Bessie’s teacher were documented. Yet the discursive practice is very different from that contained in policy texts, for instance, since Bessie privileged a discourse of relationship and emotional connection with her teacher.

### 6.2 ‘Mapping’ Discourses of Student Thankfulness
Drawing on the Foucauldian theoretical framework discussed in Chapter 3, I interrogate the knowledge practices through which students position themselves with respect to expressing thanks, and thus produce, as a consequence, a (teacher) subject. Acknowledging that the student cards and letters are seen collectively as expressions of thankfulness, I have purposely drawn on Sanguinetti’s analytic methods, also detailed in Chapter 3, in order to identify and map the distinguishing discourses that are prominent. Thus it is possible to investigate the role played by discourses of student thankfulness in constituting the good teacher.

The 50 letters which I have chosen express gratitude and appreciation to the teacher. However, as with any relatively unstructured gathering of material, the themes identified
as emerging from the letters do not easily fall within already defined categories. Nonetheless, in order to identify the major discourses that emerge, a process of creating a ‘web’ (Sanguinetti, 1999) of clustered discourses was undertaken. Following Sanguinetti’s conceptual lead, I worked from the premise that discourse mapping enables the researcher to analyse how traces of the politics of [constructing the good teacher] are reflected in the student letters. The detailed mapping of the discursive elements of the students letters are described in Appendix 6.

Arguably, however, the three clusters are intertwined because there is inevitably a sense of unrehearsed and unscripted ‘thinking out loud’ being enacted by these students as they engage in the social practice of writing a thank-you letter to a teacher. They frequently touch upon various discursive elements as they attempt to communicate their thankfulness for having experienced good teaching. Nevertheless, by tracing the discursive elements in the texts which indicate the production and reproduction of the good teacher, I identified three discourse clusters around the good teacher’s authority, friendship and academic expertise. Each of these clusters is discussed in subsequent sections of this chapter. Throughout the analysis of the student letters, I sometimes add underlining for emphasis of important discursive elements. Firstly, however, I make reference to the notion of interdiscursivity in relation to the student data.

### 6.3 Interdiscursivity in Student Data

According to Foucault, all texts are historically and socially defined. Thus the student letters form part of a cultural practice where thanks are given by a student for interest taken by a teacher and where students’ and teachers’ identities are viewed as performed. The student data are understood, in turn, to reference other texts and forms of understanding. Accordingly, interdiscursivity allows for an interrogation of various knowledge practices through which students position themselves with respect to expressing thanks, and thus produce, as a consequence, a (teacher) subject.

As demonstrated in Table 6.1, it is possible to distinguish between text embedded in discursive practice, discursive practice embedded in social practice, and the ways through

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58 Here I include expressions taken directly from the letters as well as terms used in my discourse analysis of individual letters. This is due to the fact that some letters (particularly those from very young students) need a certain amount of ‘decoding’ discursively.
which social practice circulates and reproduces ideology. In Table 6.1, for instance, the student’s words ‘thank-you’ relate to (are embedded in) the common social practice of expressing gratitude, which in turn can be seen to circulate discursively such that it constructs the good teacher as powerful and authoritative.

Table 6.1: Examples of interdiscursivity (adapted from Johnstone, 2008, p. 53)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text embedded in discursive practice (indicated by Discursive Elements)</th>
<th>Discursive practice embedded in social practice</th>
<th>Social practice circulates and reproduces beliefs (about the good teacher)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thank you</td>
<td>Gratitude</td>
<td>Teacher as authoritative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>... have valued every minute... you have opened doors</td>
<td>Appreciation</td>
<td>Teacher as enabler/adult ‘friend’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>… learning about mathematics</td>
<td>Content specific practice</td>
<td>Teacher as academic expert</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.4 Discourses of Authority

This first cluster of discourses mapped creates subject positions (that are occupied by speaking individuals, namely students) through knowledge practices that construct the teacher as having a significant impact on the lives of students. This impact derives, it seems, from the honourable, fitting and ethical values of the teacher, characteristics that have been exhibited to students in the classroom. Thus, in the context of this analysis, ‘authority’ is used in the sense of wise or learned, rather than in an intimidating or disciplinarian sense. Noddings’s (2005, para. 12) notion of ‘the integrity of the relation’ between teacher and student is pertinent here:

[a]s we listen to our students, we gain their trust and, in an ongoing relation of care and trust, it is more likely that students will accept what we try to teach. They will not see our efforts as ‘interference’ but, rather, as cooperative work proceeding from the integrity of the relation.

Most significantly, in this cluster there are numerous references to the link between the teaching and the building of the student’s self-confidence, and the trust that has grown in the student as a result of the teaching. These discursive elements frequently touch upon the teacher’s capacity to ‘influence’, to ‘inspire’, to ‘forgive’ or to ‘reconcile’.
Written by a senior male student at a regional, independent school, the text of Sam’s letter, for example, makes a direct reference to the teacher’s character (‘I respect you so much as a person’) and personal qualities.

(Teacher’s nickname)\textsuperscript{59}

I’m proud to say you had an incredible influence…you have in fact changed my life, you’ve opened my eyes to not only the news, but the world… What you’ve taught me topic-wise is so interesting…you’ve opened my ideas to a lot this year, and I respect you so much as a person.

These are not, apparently, light-weight compliments; rather they seem to go to the heart of Sam’s emotional and academic well-being during a crucial part of his education journey. In this excerpt, the teacher is firstly positioned as an ‘enabler’, a professional who is able to ‘open eyes’ and change lives for the better. Secondly, there is interdiscursivity between Sam’s appreciation of his teacher’s enabling capacity and Sam’s discursive elements with respect to his teacher’s mastery of subject content (‘What you’ve taught me topic-wise is so interesting’). Thirdly, there is the circulation and reproduction of the teacher as an ‘authority’ who is deeply respected.

Moreover, Sam’s ‘respect’ for his esteemed teacher is expressed through a contrast to other ‘alien’ teachers—presumably those who have not formed a (authoritative, friendship or academic) connection with Sam. It is pertinent, here, to consider Noddings’ (2005, para. 2) claim that the relational sense of caring forces us to look at the relation not merely from the teacher’s point of view, but to also ask questions from the student’s point of view.

Does the student recognise that he or she is cared for? Is the teacher thought by the student to be a caring teacher? When we adopt the relational sense of caring, we cannot look only at the teacher. This is a mistake that many researchers are making today. They devise instruments that measure to what degree teachers exhibit certain observable behaviours. A high score on such an instrument is taken to mean that the teacher cares. But the students may not agree.

\textsuperscript{59} Excerpts of student letters are in their original state but sometimes adjustments have been made is to incorrect spelling.
In this light, a discursive element of honouring the influence of her teacher is also evident in Steph’s letter. As a senior student at a government co-educational school in metropolitan Melbourne, Steph highlights ‘the importance of [the teacher’s] role in [her] schooling life’ and the ‘joy’ it has been to know her teacher, who has ‘been at [her] side’.

I shall try to convey the importance of your role in my schooling life, the … value I place on my relationship with [you], … the brilliant teacher, tutor and friend, the joy it is to know you and the fear of entering the world without my beloved tutor by my side…

In this way Steph’s knowledge practice circulates and reproduces the belief in ‘the value’ of the good teacher, primarily here as a person who supports students through the challenges of the education process and with whose help their ‘fear’ of the outside world is kept at bay.

In a letter from another senior student from the same school, to her teacher, Anna honours the teacher for teaching her ‘to embody’ exemplary ‘expression’ (presumably a reference to academic skill), but also privileges the expression of a profound appreciation of the teacher’s influential relationship with her.

Dear (Teacher’s nickname)

It seems that words are failing me. How can one express the entirety of their thought or emotion in mere words, how could they possibly encompass the gratitude, or inspiration, or love that one has been imbued with by another person? It is simple, they can’t. You have taught me that…. Thank you for your tireless enthusiasm and encouragement. Thank you for traversing the role of teacher and being a friend.

The authority and importance of the teacher are established in the fact that ‘words are failing’ Anna as she attempts to position her teacher as a major influence in her life. Indeed, here, the teacher’s subject positioning is multiple since Anna asserts not only that the teacher has sensitised her to life-wide learning but also that the teacher has been ‘a friend’. Discursive elements pertaining to the professional accomplishment of the teacher are implied here with regard to the teacher’s capacity to teach (the subject content) in a way which is seen as ‘traversing the role of teacher and being a friend’.
In addition, the of the good teacher as an authoritative figure can sometimes be seen to circulate and be reproduced specifically through references to the teacher’s *moral* authority, often demonstrated through kindness and consideration. This discursive element is marginally different from the discursive elements of friendship and enabling since they seem to align with the teacher’s professional role.

For instance, the letter from a very young student, Emmaline (eight years old), includes a discursive element that positions her teacher as influential, because in her role this teacher exhibits the parental qualities of her mum.

    Emmaline

    It has been so good having you as my teacher. I’ve learnt heaps academically and just how to be nicer. I said to my mum that you’re just like having a mother at school and you teach me.

    Thank you so much for having time to listen to me. I will see you next year if I can. I will yell out to you…

Emmaline suggests that the reason it ‘has been so good’ being in her teacher’s class is because her teacher was interested in Emmaline’s personality in a maternal way, so she will not only be more knowledgeable ‘academically’ but also ‘nicer’. From a Foucauldian perspective, the word ‘nicer’ signals an emphasis on moral education as a means of *augmenting* the positioning of the good teacher with respect to academic education.

Similarly, the letters from Matt, Jaidyn, Bailey, Marcus and Abigail, all primary school students (ranging in age from seven to ten years old) indicate knowledge practices that position the good teacher with regard to good (academic) ‘teaching’ skills (*all the cool things we did*) and also elements of kindness, affect and attachment that position the good teacher as a person of moral authority and as an adult friend.

    Jaidyn

    I will miss you. You have been very nice and kind. Thanks for all the cool things we did.
Chapter 6: Student Discourses of Local Care

Bailey

I hope you visit at (school name).

We will miss you.

I was eating fruit salad. You are cool.

(Here Bailey is remembering a ‘counting’ exercise in class where pieces of fruit were counted as they were threaded onto skewers making a fruit salad.)

William

We will miss you. I had fun doing the treasure hunt. Hope you have fun at your new school.

(This is a reference to a lesson (treasure hunt) designed by the teacher of young students at a special school to stimulate an interest in spatial awareness.)

Matt

Dear (Teacher’s last name)

You are always happy and never angry. It’s great that you’ve never had to yell or give detentions. I will miss you next year.

Abigail

You are the best teacher!

You are always nice & friendly to people!

Despite the brevity of the comments and the sense that much seems left unspoken, there are discursive elements of embodied feeling which position the good teacher as compassionate (‘You have been very nice and kind’) and at the same time pedagogically authoritative in designing and delivering engaging lesson content. (‘Thanks for all the cool things we did’ and ‘I was eating [and counting pieces of] fruit salad’.)

Turning to the discursive elements in senior letters, I venture to suggest that one of the most measured, conscientious and painstaking of the student letters was written by Alex,
a senior male student at an independent school. In this comparatively formal letter, penned at the end of his final year of secondary education, Alex’s knowledge practices produce the good teacher by praising both his teacher’s academic expertise and her moral authority.

I have realised that my study score is not very relevant anymore, and whilst I am planning to perform to the best of my ability, it doesn’t matter whether I get a 50 or a 5. I know I will leave your class a much better person than I arrived into your class as, with a comprehensive awareness of my world. Most importantly, I have the capability to challenge and question my environment and its conventions…

The list of your students who have embraced your dedication to the world we live in is simply astounding. So many of these brilliant students are deciding to study politics at a Tertiary level; despite having the ability to achieve in any field. You should be very proud of this… The compassionate and empathetic approach to your fellow humanity…is something that I recognise and admire. I distinctly remember being first back to class after a Thursday Chapel service, and you were visibly upset after watching a video about the plight of an impoverished Cambodian girl, reinforcing to me that there are more important things than the objectives of the World Trade Organisation or the year that DFAT was created. Also the poignant class discussion we had after the news of students attacking each other…made me realise the impact you have on your students…I believe you really bring the best out of people, and not just academically…

Alex constructs his teacher with respect to his aspirations for academic success—and his teacher’s supreme authority, which stem from her ethical and moral influence over her students. (‘I [now] have the capability to challenge and question my environment and its conventions.’) Alex discursively ‘produces’ his teacher, by valuing ‘the impact’ his teacher has on students (‘I believe you really bring the best out of people’). Alex’s

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60 In the final year assessment in this subject, 50 equates to a perfect score.
61 Of interest when reading the letter from Alex is the subsequent message I received from his teacher, informing me that this student had, in fact, achieved a perfect study score of 50 in his final examination in the subject. He was later awarded the Premier’s Prize in this subject for his outstanding academic achievement and is currently pursuing his studies in the field at the Australian National University.
knowledge practice also positions his teacher discursively as being morally authoritative, in the sense that the teacher, through her ‘compassionate and empathetic approach to [her] fellow humanity’ made her students evaluate their future aspirations as global citizens.

However, although Alex downplays his anticipated academic result, he demonstrates simultaneously the strong interrelationship between the academic and the affective. In terms of interdiscursivity, Alex’s belief in what he has gained from the class is embedded in the social practice of formally expressing appreciation—here in the letter to his teacher. In turn, this circulates and reproduces the belief in the good teacher as a memorable authority, as ‘an enabler’, one who allows students to grow in an appreciation of the world and their place in it.

Rufus is a male senior student who attends an independent, co-educational school in inner metropolitan Melbourne. In his letter, Rufus refers to the character of the teacher (‘Your care and compassion for all of us has been so touching and I really admire it’) and here this honouring is associated with the teacher’s capacity to deal with an ‘irritating Yr. 7’. In this case ‘Yr’ (Year) 7 refers to the student’s first year in a secondary school. Thus, Rufus is looking back on these years with amusement from the perspective of his senior years.

I’m really sorry I was such an irritating Yr. 7! I’d like to thank you for being so helpful and supportive through my formative years. I’d like to think I’ve grown up; and you’ve definitely helped me mature.

Your care and compassion for all of us has been so touching and I really admire it.

Thanks for everything, let’s stay in touch!

Using a Foucauldian lens, Rufus produces a teacher who has the moral authority to ‘forgive’ and to support a (difficult) student through the formative years. The teacher’s personal qualities of care and compassion are attributes to the admiration Rufus feels towards his teacher. The ‘truth claim’ that Rufus circulates pertaining to the good teacher is centred on the good teacher as a strong and compassionate moral authority.
Esther, a senior student at an independent, coeducational school, wrote her letter on her examination paper (having completed her formal answers), positioning herself with regard to knowledge practices that construct the good teacher as authoritative, an enabler and as a conduit to a positive adult life.

Letter to B (Teacher’s nickname) (smiley face symbol)

Hey B!

So I’m writing this letter because I finished with time to spare. Don’t worry. I went over my answers and I don’t know what else to do so I’m not wasting my time. Ha ha. Anywho, it has been a great delight having you as a teacher. I know I haven’t been that enthusiastic towards business but I did try just coz you were the teacher and are totally awesome (extra bonus points for playing TV shows (*just blanked on its name*). AND I have learnt quite a lot, more than I thought. So many times I have been living life (aka work and church and stuff) and stuff we covered in business has come up and I’m like OH MY GOSH! I know what that is. So now I understand more about what goes on in the world. ha ha thanks…And as you depart into new adventures of life, I wish you good luck and hope you have a killer time

Esther (smiley face symbol)…

In her letter are discursive elements of familiarity, affiliation and indebtedness associated with her teacher’s capacity to make lessons enjoyable and to prepare her for life beyond school. Esther expresses gratitude for her teacher’s willingness to accept her (despite her lack of enthusiasm for the subject) and refers to the teacher’s influence beyond the classroom (So many times I have been living life (aka work and church and stuff) and stuff we covered in business has come up) that positions the teacher as a person who connects students to the world beyond school.

Arguably, then, despite the references to the impact of academic learning (thus constructing her teachers as an academic expert), Esther’s letter constructs the teacher more around being an adult friend, indicated by the greeting and sign-off of the letter. In addition, however, Esther also privileges the teacher’s capacity to build in students a strong sense of self.
From a Foucauldian perspective, some teachers are constructed as having qualities that are ‘encouraging’, particularly when they ‘have confidence’ in their students who, in turn, need (to learn how to) believe in themselves, as is the case with Georgia, a middle school student at an independent, co-educational school in inner metropolitan Melbourne.

Dear (Teacher’s nickname)

Thank you so much for always supporting and believing in me. I know that it’s times like this afternoon when I must deep down infuriate you but you still manage to make me feel so much better and normal… I also just really trust and respect you and the way in which you teach so I would love it if you could give me so (some) (advice) on how to study effectively and maintain as calm and in control as you are everyday! I’m so sorry for the grief I’ve given you this year it has been selfish, and self-indulgent… You are such an inspiring woman… I have spent many hours taking comfort in the fact that we are privileged enough to know you as a (subject) teacher.

(Heart symbol) XOXO

Georgia positions herself discursively with respect to a knowledge practice relating to students needing a sense of agency and self worth. From her perspective, Georgia believes that her sense of self worth stems from her teacher being ‘such an inspiring woman’. Thus Georgia praises the teacher’s character and the way the teacher manages her (challenging) students. Indeed, the knowledge practices through which Georgia positions herself produces, as a consequence, a (teacher) subject who is both an enabler and an adult friend. Here and elsewhere, I have included the original ‘kisses’ and ‘hugs’ symbols, evident in the student letters, in order to give a further flavour of the nature of these communications to the teachers.

6.5 Discourses of Friendship

Some of the students’ letters shape the good teacher as an adult friend, a person who is able to engender comfort and understanding in the classroom setting. Arguably this friendship is different from the relationship with peers and often entails the teacher paving the way for students to reach their potential once their confidence and well-being have been nurtured. This aspect of the way we think the good teacher is summarised in the words of Sophie and Ellie as follows:
‘To Mr G, For being the most comfortable teacher in the world. From Sophie and Ellie’

As Noddings (2005, para. 14) suggests, ‘the great privilege enjoyed by some children is that they have become participants in an ongoing conversation with caring, knowledgeable adults’ (emphasis added). Thus, Harry, a senior student at an independent, co-educational, inner metropolitan school, discursively constructs his teacher as a person who forges strong and lasting bonds:

You have been such a brilliant teacher this year. Your perfect blend of care, humour, experience, compassion motherly instincts and a whole lot more are what have made you so wonderful this year. Your love of maths has inspired me. You have been like a second mother to me in times of crisis and celebration. We have had a few good laughs this year and many valued conversations.

Love Harry.

In addition to acknowledging the teacher’s passion for the subject content (‘Your love of maths has inspired me’), Harry’s knowledge practice around the good teacher here discursively produces the teacher fundamentally as a caring (motherly) adult friend whose ‘brilliance’ derives from multifaceted characteristics—here I read ‘friendship’ characteristics—of ‘care, humour, experience, compassion…and a whole lot more’.

Similarly, as a middle school student at an independent, outer metropolitan, co-educational school, Richy has written a letter that includes discursive elements of friendship, affection and familiarity, indicated by the informal greeting, ‘Hey Mr C’.

Hey Mr C

I just wanted to say thanks for putting up with me every morning. I have really enjoyed your sense of humour! And I’m going to miss our chats in homeroom, but I’m sure that I’ll see you around (smiley face). I’ll have to pop in and say hi.

Well I hope that you enjoy the summer holidays…

God bless
As is the case with some other students whose letters are analysed, Richy seeks on-going and informal contact with his teacher in the future (‘I’ll have to pop in and say hi’). His letter also indicates discursive elements of appreciation (for the ‘chats in homeroom’) and for his teacher’s friendly and humorous approach to disciplinary matters (‘thanks for putting up with me’).

In addition, Sara, a middle school student at an independent, inner metropolitan, co-educational school, seeks ongoing contact with her esteemed teacher.

You can’t get away from me that easily. I will call when school reopens and I’ll come in and have a chat about stuff…I am missing your chats a great deal and will be certain to come and catch up often.

Be good and enjoy life!

(Heart symbol)

Sara constructs her teacher as an adult friend with whom she can ‘chat about stuff’. The depth of her appreciation of this friendship is expressed in Sara’s statement that she is ‘missing’ the chats with her teacher but she promises that she will ‘be around’ because of the strong bond she has formed with her teacher. Thus, discursively Sara positions herself with respect to her teacher as a friend through the casual and affectionate way she assures her teacher that they will ‘catch up often’ as well as the affectionate way Sara signs off with a heart symbol. Evident here is a knowledge practice through which Sara, expressing thanks with respect to affection and trust, produces as a consequence, a (teacher) subject who is a valued friend.

As a male middle school student at an independent, inner metropolitan, co-educational school, Christian also discursively produces a teacher who is warm, approachable and friendly. Thus Christian addresses his teacher as ‘Mr Perfect’.
Dear Mr Perfect (Nickname) – Head of House

Thank you for all your help this year…I know it mustn’t have been easy making the move to (House name) this year, but your help and support has been unforgettable.

All the Best.

From

Christian (last name)

In this case, Christian is discursively constructing and reproducing the good teacher as a conduit and an enabler. This is evident in discursive element of ‘help and support’ that Christian claims to have received and his belief that his experiences with his esteemed teacher are ‘unforgettable’.

Disco is a female secondary student at an independent, coeducational school. In her letter, the relaxed, enjoyable and ‘interesting’ pedagogical approach of the teacher is acknowledged (‘Thank you so much for everything you have done for me, the classes have honestly been more like parties! Often they were’).

I must say that I will sorely miss your open and friendly office next year!

Thank you so very much for everything you have done for me, the classes have honestly been more like parties! (often they were). Every class was interesting and I found you to be truly inspirational in your approach to teaching—you’re so friendly and happy and passionate about (subject) and there is no way that I would have ever developed my English skills as I did without your diligent attempts to make me…I always felt I could relate to you and you have been so much more than a teacher; guidance, reassurance, comic value and motivator are just a few roles you have played!

Keep in touch

Love and best wishes always, XX

Here both the academic and the affective are playing out discursively as Disco constructs the teacher as one to be honoured for her wide-ranging interpersonal skills (which have
triggered Disco’s academic development), but also as an instigator of fun and the party-like atmosphere in the classroom. Disco’s letter privileges the affective domain since the party atmosphere of the classroom seems directly related to the way this student was inspired to ‘develop [her] English skills’. In addition, Disco positions herself with respect to her teacher’s authority by commenting that ‘there is no way that I would have ever developed my English skills as I did without your diligent attempts to make me’. And again, as in other letters from students, there is a desire on Disco’s part to stay connected to her teacher (‘Keep in touch’) whilst there is also a suggestion of warm affection in her sign off, ‘Love and best wishes always, XX’.

Discursive elements of affiliation and the desire to emulate the teacher’s skills are revealed in Luke’s letter:

Dear Mr C

Thank you for a great class this year. It’s been much fun. Who would ever forget Mr C’s famous words including servile, obsequious and sycophantic?

As well as a discursive element of fun, approachability and affection, Luke’s letter also contains a strong sense of respect for the teacher’s disciplinary knowledge (in being able to share his ‘famous words including servile, obsequious and sycophantic’). Here Luke is using the teacher’s typical (that is, unusually challenging) vocabulary to make the point that the lessons were stimulating and memorable.

Moreover, in Emily’s letter there are also discursive elements of relationship and appreciation that emphasise the friendship between teacher and student.

Thank you for talking to me when I needed to and when I was just wanting to chat. It’s been fantastic having you teach me this term and I don’t want to leave. I’ve had so much fun and I’ve learnt stuff and you’re just like a friend except your older and responsible.

I really hope to keep seeing you.

Beyond this, Emily acknowledges, relative to herself, her teacher’s (professional) ‘responsibility’. She positions herself with respect to the knowledge practice of expressing thanks, and produces, as a consequence, through her letter, the good teacher as
an adult friend (‘I really hope to keep seeing you’) who has enabled her to understand her future ‘responsibilities’.

Correspondingly, in a letter from Furmzz, a middle school student at a government, co-educational, metropolitan school, discursive elements of humour, affiliation, familiarity and affection are suggested in the instruction to his teacher to ‘read carefully!’ since ‘this’ (presumably writing a thank-you letter) ‘will rarely happen’.

This will rarely happen – so read carefully!

I want to thank you heaps for everything this year. You helped me out with my basketball which I am grateful for but most of all thanks for all the help with my maths. Not only did I learn A LOT in a short amount of time **but I had a lot of fun with you...**

So thanks a million. It’s been awesome.

The characteristic of good teaching that is highlighted in this letter concerns Furmzz’ relaxed relationship with the teacher. This is evident in Furmzz’ statement, ‘(n)ot only did I learn A LOT in a short amount of time but I had a lot of fun with you’. Similarly, Hayley, a fellow middle school student at the same school as Furmzz, positions her teacher with respect to a ‘fun’ atmosphere in class.

Thanks for such a fun year…and making learning enjoyable. I will always remember the laughs we had.

In this way, Hayley’s letter circulates the belief in the good teacher as entertaining and engaging but reinforces the notion that good teachers have effective pedagogical skills which advance ‘learning’.

Some further examples of discursive elements of praise are evident in the student data that construct the good teacher as an adult friend. For example, Dave, a senior student at a government co-educational metropolitan school, thanks his teacher with familiarity and affection in the following note:
Thanks for the absolutely fantastic Year 10 and Year 12 English!

Best Teacher.

Dave

Belle, a middle school student at an independent co-educational inner metropolitan school, refers to her teacher’s ‘hard work’ and sense of humour (‘all the funny things you said and did’) in Aladdin (the school play).

It was so much fun! You made it fun. I’m still laughing from all the funny things you said and did. Aladdin would not have worked without you. I have learned so much from you!

Here Belle discursively produces a teacher who engages students through humour and, in turn, makes the learning memorable. The on-going impact of the teaching is also evident in the way Belle is ‘still laughing’ and in the juxtaposition between the personal engagement (with the teacher’s warm and friendly character traits) and the quality of the learning (Aladdin would not have worked without you).

In addition, some of the student letters construct the teacher as a person having the character strengths to guide (otherwise uncooperative) students towards constructive learning. Thus, the teacher is constructed as important to the students because, as Noddings (2005, para. 9) puts it, there are ‘some things that children must learn even if they are not inclined to do so’. Accordingly, the discursive practices of some student letters construct the teacher as a person who provides the kind of moral education that will impact upon the student’s later life that can be identified in the letter from Tara, a middle school student at an independent co-educational inner metropolitan school.

I know I have not always been the easiest student to be in charge of and I am so thankful that you had faith in my abilities and I hope one day I can live up to being a very interesting woman when I grow up as you once said I could be. I need to thank you for being a bit of a surrogate mother to me. I hope you are not too disappointed that you never managed to make me wear my hair up but I hope I have not otherwise disappointed you! Thank you for everything. XXX
In this letter it is possible to identify discursive elements of forgiveness (‘I know I have not always been the easiest student’), of faith and encouragement (‘I am so thankful that you had faith in my abilities’) and of discipline (‘you never managed to make me wear my hair up’). In addition, Tara’s knowledge practice pertains to a deep admiration of the good teacher’s inspiring character (and her moral strength) and consequently produces a subject (teacher) as an adult friend and role model (‘I hope one day I can live up to being a very interesting woman when I grow up as you once said I could be’).

Turning to letters from senior ESL (English as a Second Language) students at an independent, co-educational metropolitan school, there is a discursive element of ‘deepest feeling’ about her ‘very precious’ teacher in Joan’s letter. As an international student, Joan has seemingly struggled at times to be understood, both literally and in a cultural sense.

I have finished high school finally and start a new life …I will never forget your kindness [or that] you [have] been a great support to me…Honestly, you’re the only teacher at the school who had patience [and] great understanding, especially in understanding our language [is different]…You’re such a fun and wonderful person to know, especially [at] your age! (he…he…he…)

I like writing a letter to express all of my deepest feelings about my very precious teacher!

In Foucauldian terms, Joan’s ‘knowledge’ about what constitutes good teaching produces her teacher as a ‘support’—by showing extraordinary patience and kindness in Joan’s struggles to master a new language. The teacher is also constructed as a person of good character (‘I will never forget your kindness’) who has strong moral and ethical perspectives. In addition, Joan includes in her text discursive elements of sensibility and sensitivity that are mentioned in relation to other teachers at the school: Honestly, you’re the only teacher at the school who had patience [and] great understanding. Correspondingly, as another ESL student at the same school in Melbourne, Suminto’s thank-you letter includes discursive elements relating to the teacher’s capacity to teach in a way which is suited to particular students’ needs, in this case, to a student who has come from another country to gain an education in an Australian school:
Thanks for being the best teacher ‘for me’ [and] for your patience throughout the year.

Furthermore, discursive elements of affection and praise (for individual and personal support given) are evident in the letter from Andhy, another ESL student at the same school. Thus, Andhy also constructs her teacher as an adult friend and as an enabler of success at school: ‘Thankyou very much for everything, specially your support to me’.

Georgia, a female middle school student at a metropolitan independent school, constructs her teacher, whose ‘authority’ she clearly admires, as an adult friend and as an enabler as this student struggles to find emotional stability during her schooling.

You probably couldn’t understand what I was trying to choke out to you in between sobs…so I thought I would give you a slightly more cohesive version on paper! When you turned up at…I knew that us at (school name) were going to do everything possible to keep you close to our hearts…

You opened your mouth and this voice emerged; one that make you piss yourself laughing, one that brings tears to your eyes one that scared you into sitting down and shutting up, and one that would stay with us for a long, long time…

Thanks… Xoxo

When experiencing distress, Georgia was moved by the teacher’s kindness (‘You probably couldn’t understand what I was trying to choke out to you in between sobs’). There is also an indication of the discursive elements of affection, familiarity and ongoing honouring of the teacher’s qualities (‘that would stay with us for a long, long time’). In addition, a particular power relation is evident in Georgia’s reference to the teacher’s voice being able ‘to scare[d] you into sitting down and shutting up’.

In both of the letters that follow, Lizzie and Woody, both middle school students at an independent, regional co-educational school, discursively construct the teacher as a person who will understand even though the statements made are brief.
Lizzie

Thank you so much for all that you have taught me over the past two years. I have learnt to believe in myself, which has gone beyond my English writing!

Thank you for all your caring support this year,

Woody

To my dearest budd...

I don’t know where to start!

Thank you so much for everything, you are the best. Have a merry Christmas and a happy new year.

(heart symbol) always and forever,

In Lizzie’s letter, the teacher’s pedagogical skills when teaching ‘English writing’ feature, but she also comments that she has ‘learnt to believe in [herself]’, an experience that ‘has gone beyond [her] English writing!’ In Woody’s letter, written presumably by a boy who may not be as confident in his writing as the senior boys, there is a similar discourse of embodied feeling towards his ‘dearest budd’, as well as graciousness (Have a merry Christmas and a happy new year) and affection (heart symbol) ‘always and forever’. Viewing these brief letters through a Foucauldian discourse theory lens, power is linked to knowledge, that is, the teacher’s knowledge about making interpersonal connections. Thus the good teacher is being constructed as a powerful enabler and as a conduit to positive future experiences for the student.

In the forthright letter from Tom, a middle school student at a coeducational school in an outer metropolitan location, the teacher is shaped as an adult friend through a discursive element of reconciliation. Tom has been (eventually) impressed by his experiences in class. ‘I may not have liked you at the start, but I am truly happy that I got over the erroneous judgement!’ and (in the end) ‘truly enjoyed the time that [they] have spent together’. Moreover, Peter (middle school, regional location) comments on a memorable and ‘awesome semester’, constructing his teacher as an enabler attuned to providing something extraordinary: ‘…you have helped me heaps’ (emphasis in original).
Correspondingly, Mick, a middle school student at an independent metropolitan, co-educational school, pays a somewhat ‘reluctant’ tribute to his teacher by stating that he found her class ‘bearable’ and constructing her as tolerant (‘thank you for putting up with the occasional distractions from Con and I’) but also, due to her personality, as a person with whom he wishes to keep in touch.

I actually found being in (subject) bearable. I will never forget the many hours put towards football conversation instead of (subject) study, I think overall it was definitely worth it. I must also thank you for putting up with the occasional distractions from Con and I, we do apologise for that. I look forward to seeing you again.

Here Mick’s teacher is being constructed discursively as a conduit to future success and his letter also circulates and reproduces the belief in the good teacher as an enabler and adult friend (‘I look forward to seeing you again’).

### 6.6 Discourses of Academic Expertise

As indicated at the beginning of the chapter, there is an obvious and understandable intertwining between the three clusters of discourses identified in the student letters. As I have demonstrated, some students refer to their academic achievement and simultaneously identify the authority of the teacher or the affective components of the teaching and learning process. Nevertheless, an analysis of the remaining cluster of discourse elements in the letters that construct, to a significant degree, the teacher as an academic expert is now undertaken.

In this regard, Nik, a male secondary school student at a government, metropolitan, coeducational school, has written a thank-you letter to his teacher in which there are discursive elements of schooling and beyond, in particular, of being set up for a life journey by his teacher.

Thank you immensely for your tuition and assistance throughout this year. The enthusiasm and flair with which you approached our classes made them hugely enjoyable, and I could never have achieved the score that I did without your support and guidance. Most importantly, you have helped to spark interest in Shakespeare’s works that I will certainly pursue in years to come.

Thanks for the phenomenal year.
Nik acknowledges his teacher’s ‘tuition and assistance’ but also discursively constructs the teacher as one who has ‘helped to spark’ an interest in Shakespeare’s works that Nik will ‘certainly pursue in years to come’. In this letter, the ‘good’ teacher is constructed as a subject specialist who is able to ‘spark interest’, that is, as a practitioner who is pedagogically astute.

In a series of succinct and sometimes laconic letters from senior and middle school boys at independent and government schools, the pithiness of their messages to their esteemed teachers seems to belie the significant association made between the enjoyment of the class and the lasting significance of the learning. For example, Cam, a senior student at an independent, outer metropolitan school, thanks his teacher for an enjoyable year and explains that he ‘won’t forget the great things learnt’. Kevin, another senior student (at a government, metropolitan school), constructs his teacher as an academic expert whose classes were ‘special’ to the extent that Kevin comments that his teacher has ‘changed [his] perspective many times.’

In the letter below from Emma, a senior student at an independent, co-educational, metropolitan school, the strong discursive element of affiliation with her teacher is related to the ways through which she has been ‘shaped’ academically. Emma champions (and constructs) her teacher in a nuanced and highly complex way.

Dearest (Teacher’s nickname)

I cannot even begin to tell you how your teaching has shaped me over this past year. You have provided me with a confidence in my writing that I never thought was possible. Your beautiful words have inspired me to find my own voice within my writing, and I sincerely thank you for that. What may have started as a dedication in English based on fear of your disappointment, transformed into a passion for the written word? I hate that in the end all we care about are the numbers, because I wanted to be better than that and it was your belief and faith in me that allowed me to be better than any number that defined my abilities…Thank you for all the Monday mornings (good and bad). Thank you for all the essays you marked (and especially the double ticks)

(Heart symbol) always Emma (last name)

I also hope…you will remember a young girl called Emma, whose life you changed.

xxx
Emma states that she has been ‘shaped’ in a way that was not necessarily known to the teacher, constructing her teacher as a person whose ‘beautiful words’ have ‘inspired’ Emma to find her ‘own voice within [her] writing’. In Emma’s letter, specific practices of the teaching (‘thank you for all the essays you marked’) and (‘the double ticks’) are noted, but so too is the enigmatic ‘transformation’ that has taken place. In Foucauldian terms, Emma’s subject position here is that of an awe-inspired student as she hopes that her teacher ‘will remember a young girl called Emma, whose life you changed’.

Indeed, circulating within Emma’s letter are discursive elements of transformation and change, and of being ‘set up’ for life, through the teacher’s influence. It is also possible to discern a contrast between the measurable outcomes of good teaching (‘the numbers’) and the intrinsic ends of this teaching—‘find(ing) my own voice within my writing’. Moreover, there is evidence of particular power relations circulating in these discursive engagements, for example, ‘fear of your disappointment’ and its transformation into passion for the subject. Viewing this letter through the lens of Foucauldian theory, power is linked to knowledge, that is, the teacher’s disciplinary or subject knowledge.

Alternatively, in a letter from Eliza, a senior student at a government, coeducational, metropolitan school, complex discursive elements privilege both affect and academic improvement.

I’m sure you have heard it all before, but I would like to tell you from the bottom of my heart how much I appreciate your efforts throughout the year...There’s no doubt I wouldn’t have got the score I did for English if it wasn’t for you. I’m not the most academic girl out there, but it was definitely your attitude and persistent influence that made me strive the way I did. Not only did I try not to miss a single one of your classes...but I learnt a lot of life lessons that will stick with me for life. You are not only an amazing teacher, more than words can describe, but you are a really special person that I was truly lucky to have met. I could keep writing like this until my pen runs out, but thank you once again (smiley face)

Lots of love XO Eliza

In Foucauldian terms, Eliza constructs herself as a student affected by her teacher in ways that seem to her infinitely valuable. Her discursive practice privileges the capacity of her teacher to transform her otherwise limited academic potential—since she is ‘not the most
academic girl out there’. Moreover, the teacher is defined in Eliza’s eyes through a particular ‘attitude’ and ‘persistent influence’ that will have life-long effect.

An analysis of the thank-you letter from George, a senior student at an independent, (single sex) inner metropolitan school, reveals a knowledge practice that privileges scholastic achievement and the effective pedagogical aspects of teaching by acknowledging his teacher’s part in his academic achievement.

I just wanted to thank you for your support, faith in me and your understanding. I guess I do owe half my AMUSA to you. It’s disappointing that I’m about to finish my high school years but of course I’ll cherish my AMUSA and the effort you put in.

George, a Chinese student, is in the final year, having been an international boarder at the school throughout his secondary schooling. In particular, the letter privileges affect and emotion by highlighting the teacher’s capacity to show ‘support, faith [in him] and [her] understanding’. George’s letter goes well beyond a general acknowledgement of gratitude by stating: ‘I guess I do owe half of my AMUSA to you’, imputing the seemingly specifiable part played by the teacher in his academic excellence and success. Here George is referring to the qualification of Associate in Music, Australia (AMusA). In addition, George tells his teacher that he will ‘cherish’ not only his academic achievement but also his feeling of being privileged by the effort his teacher ‘put in’.

Luke, a former student at an independent (single sex), inner metropolitan school, writes his letter to his esteemed teacher after the commencement of what Luke regards as his dream course in tertiary engineering.

I just wanted to express my gratitude to you for being such a stimulating and encouraging teacher to me…You helped me achieve success by always believing in me and reminding me that I was capable of attaining the score I wanted…Thanks again for helping me with VCE Physics and for believing in me

This past student expresses a very strong appreciation of the link between his teacher believing in him and the enjoyment being experienced after he has moved beyond the school classroom. Thus, the good teacher is constructed as someone who stimulates, encourages and believes in his students. Predominantly Luke’s knowledge practice
discursively produces a teacher whose major contribution to students will be the provision of fulfilling academic achievement and success.

Similarly, a discourse of lasting appreciation is also apparent in the way Arthur, a middle school student at an inner metropolitan independent boys school, acknowledges the teacher’s ‘awesome’ teaching skills.

Thanks so much an awesome...teacher this year! I really enjoyed being part of our great form, all learning together. You really explained everything clearly in Science.

Thanks a lot!!

See you around the school!

From a Foucauldian perspective, in this example Arthur constructs his teacher in terms of academic expertise (‘You really explained everything clearly in Science’) and also as an adult friend as Arthur seeks ongoing contact (‘See you around the school!’)

Likewise, a letter written by Milly, a senior student at a regional, independent, co-educational school, privileges the notion that the good teacher is an academic expert.

I’d like to thank you for your support and dedication to our class and my own personal development. Your continual feedback and encouragement enabled me to see both errors and areas in which I could further enhance my writing skills.

Here the teacher’s pedagogical skills (‘continual feedback and encouragement’), in combination with elements of ‘support and dedication’, have ‘enabled’ Milly academically and are seen as a conduit to Milly’s success with her writing.

Jess’s thank-you letter, composed by a senior female student at an independent, co-educational, regional school, contains discursive elements pertaining to Jess’s (eventual) academic success and the teacher’s pedagogical skills in making the lessons ‘bearable’.

Thank you so much for such a great year. I really don’t like English but this year you not only made it bearable but enjoyable and I actually looked forward to English classes and seeing what you would be wearing…You are an incredibly strong and courageous woman and you taught me a lot, not only about English. Your love for
teaching and your dedication is truly inspirational and really helped me get through this year especially during the last few weeks. Thanks again and best wishes.

Interspersed with references to the teacher’s fashion sense (‘I actually looked forward to English classes and seeing what you would be wearing’) and to the teacher’s ethical and moral authority (as ‘an incredibly strong and courageous woman’), the construction of the teacher is also discursively produced through knowledge practices that position the teacher with respect to affiliation and closeness akin to family ties (‘one of the daughters you never had’). However, it is the teacher’s ‘dedication’ (presumably to Jess’s academic performance) which ‘really helped [her] get through this year especially during the last few weeks’. Jess also constructs this teacher in relation to a lasting impact on Jess’s life, both through the content taught in class (‘Your love for teaching and your dedication is truly inspirational and really helped me get through this year’) and in preparation for life beyond school (‘you taught me a lot, not only about English’).

Finally, the knowledge practices of Bess, a former senior student at an independent, metropolitan, single-sex school, pertain primarily to academic growth (as well as to life-long learning and affect), producing the subject (good teacher) as an individual who has a seminal impact on the students’ academic life.

Importantly, your classes shaped my love of reading. I remain faithfully attached to the books and poetry we read... I want to reassure you that you are remembered by your students for all the very best reasons a teacher can be remembered- because we loved you, admired you & were endlessly inspired by you.

Bess uses the term ‘shaped’ to describe the influence of her teacher on Bess’s ‘love of reading’ and the longevity of the teacher’s influence is implied in the comment that Bess remains ‘faithfully attached to the books and poetry we read’. Here, I suggest a nexus becomes apparent between the learning in the classroom, the anticipated ‘life’ (-long) learning and the emotion in which this learning is couched. Discursive elements of values and dispositions are accented through which the teacher is constructed as someone who engages students intensely through affect and therefore has an extraordinary impact on her students’ learning (‘I want to reassure you that you are remembered by your students for all the very best reasons a teacher can be remembered – because we loved you, admired you and were endlessly inspired by you’).
6.7 Conclusion

In this chapter ‘thank-you’ letters from students to teachers—like the policy and teacher data before them—were investigated in terms of the ways they represent social realities around the notion of the good teacher (Thomas, 2011). Thus, my analysis of the views of students on what constitutes good teaching and the good teacher affords a further and, in some ways, largely contesting observation about ‘what is said’ and what ‘can be said on the topic’ of good teaching and the good teacher.

Unquestionably, many of the letters communicate an awareness of the good teacher’s academic ‘expertise’, high-level content knowledge, endeavour and effective pedagogical approaches (couched often in terms of the corresponding academic performances of students). Thus, it is not the intention of this chapter to diminish in any way the fundamental business of school education that is to advance academic accomplishment. However, from a Foucauldian perspective, it seems that the student letters understand the ‘metrics’ of teaching and learning outcomes somewhat differently from neo-liberal policy, and also somewhat differently from the teacher data analysed.

It seems that by ‘recalling’ (in a thank-you letter) how a teacher stood out in the mind of a student, the what (was achieved academically) becomes only partially important. The student letters seem to highlight a moral and ethical perspective to teaching which will have an impact on students beyond their formal schooling, to the extent that the students now feel ‘set up for life’. In addition, to paraphrase Saint-Exupery’s (1997, p. 97) words included at the beginning of this chapter, what is valued, and seemingly essential to students’ learning, is often ‘invisible to the eye’ but felt deeply by students.

The particulars of remembered lessons, however, frequently have to do with fun and familiarity and the teacher’s passion for the subject. For this reason, I included at the beginning of the chapter Goethe’s provoking notion (in the context of neo-liberalism) that we can only learn from those we love. Moreover, the image of Vermeer’s painting at the start of this chapter depicts a woman receiving a covert letter (The Love Letter) in the midst of an ordinary, and rather drab, domestic scene. But clearly the letter is not ordinary. The light in the painting illuminates the recipient’s face and there is a knowing look on the face of the girl who has delivered the letter as if to say ‘This communication will have great meaning for you!’
By design, the three data chapters (Chapters 4, 5 and 6) in this thesis are all attentive to Foucault’s notion of the power underlying our knowledge and language, particularly in relation to how the good teacher is produced discursively through the nexus of knowledge and power. In the following chapter, I highlight the ways in which this present chapter on student constructions of the good teacher might unsettle the dominant policy discourses and bolster the significance of teachers’ and students’ voices. Specifically, in Chapter 7, I draw together the mapped threads of analyses from chapters 4, 5 and 6 to give shape to the concept of two contrasting discursive terrains around the good teacher, the implications of which, I venture to suggest, are significant.
Chapter 7:
Discourse Dissonance

'A painting made on grass', 1980, Batuz.

7.1 Introduction

This chapter begins with Batuz’s ‘painting’ on grass. At first glance the image denotes
schism and rupture, with the incongruous, discrete sections clearly separated from each
other. This image sets the scene for an interrogation of the challenges to, or tensions
between, discourses of policy and practice around the good teacher. Accordingly, in this
Chapter I argue the case that the analytic approach to understanding configurations of the
good teacher has thrown into sharp relief two divergent discursive terrains, namely, one
based on calculation (typified by those discourses which circulate around policy and
teachers’ actions, and the other based on care (typified by less public discourses which
circulate between the teacher and the student. Consequently, I briefly explore how the
notion of opposing logics helps to account for the perceived discursive dissonance
between the two discursive terrains. My discussion then draws substantially on
Foucauldian discourse theory to account for the effects—particularly the power,
knowledge and subjectification effects—that the contrasting discourses produce and
reproduce. The concept of two discursive terrains, based on the analyses in Chapters 4, 5 and 6, is represented in Table 7.1, providing a plausible answer to the question: How do we think the good teacher in the current conjuncture?

Table 7.1: Tensions between the major discourses of calculation and care

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy makers – teacher</th>
<th>Students – teacher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘General’</td>
<td>‘Local’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prescription/compliance</td>
<td>Flexibility/discovery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting standards/‘reporting’</td>
<td>Potential/empathy and participation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competition (NAPLAN)</td>
<td>Individual requirements/consideration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evidence/Data</td>
<td>Intangible experience/lasting impact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directive for Improvement</td>
<td>Skill acquisition through ‘engagement’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching linked to performance</td>
<td>Teacher as Enabler/Adult Friend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers’ work under scrutiny</td>
<td>Teacher as Academic Expert</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher as Accountable</td>
<td>Teacher as Authoritative</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An alternative way, however, of viewing the Batuz painting is to focus on the intervening space—the strong green jagged line—between the seemingly separated sections. In terms of my thesis findings of what at first seems to be two separated discursive terrains, I am committed to interrogating the interdiscursivities (between the two discursive terrains of calculation and care) which may have the capacity to simultaneously accommodate the discursive elements of each.

Purposely eschewing any suggestion of convergence—attempting to render the complexity of the relationship between these two terrains—I investigate ways in which discourses of care (circulating at the local level since they are to do with the teacher and the student) can be imagined as working both within and against the discourse of calculation (circulating mostly at the general, policy-driven level). Here, I take my cue from Sanguinetti’s (1999) work on discursive engagement in adult literacy and basic education entitled ‘Within and Against Performativity’. In Sanguinetti’s thesis, an argument is made that, notwithstanding the dominant shaping of the good teacher in terms of of performativity (here mainly in regard to teaching in Tertiary and Further Education or TAFE colleges) there are grounds for hoping that the politics of discourse may ‘create a space for teachers to become more reflexive in their pedagogical and political praxis’ (p. vii). Suggesting similar grounds for hope around the production of the good teacher by both policy and practice discourses, and acknowledging Foucault’s key
metaphor of ‘difference’, I imagine the emergence of a new discourse around the good teacher.

In relation to issues of discursive dissonance (and an intimation of discursive possibilities, discussed in the final chapter) I begin with Story 5, inspired by Singleton and Law’s (2012) metaphorical description of juggling the local (care for animals) and the general (complying with policy) in the practice of farming beef cattle, a complication which makes it so difficult to define the good farmer.

In Story 5, which I present in the next section of this chapter, I have paraphrased Singleton and Law’s (2012) description of farmers caught up in the UK Cattle Tracing System (CTS), a ‘device’ that ‘divides, separates and classifies’ (p. 2) cattle in the UK through a rigorous regime of ear tagging. An argument is made by Singleton and Law that this generalised and repetitious system or device (compliance regulations of the CTS) is seen as disconnected from the farmer’s more localised enactment of farming, such as the time consuming necessities of feeding and caring for his cows (doing essential cattle care). To this end, I include as Figure 7.1 a photographic elicitation of the kinds of localised characteristics of particular farms where it could be argued that the generalised (or universal) imposition of government regulation is less evident in places where it encounters some ‘practical resistance’.

Practices enact realities in part by disconnecting themselves from alternative practices and attributions of identity; …in order to create the space to enact particular realities they generate outsides that are held apart. But, and alongside this, we [can] distinguish between permissive practices and those that are intolerant (p. 11) (emphasis in original).

**Story 5: An Elegy on a Farmer and His Cows**

In the UK a farmer called Michael
Might be responsible for 60 beef cows.
He might own them because they have official tags in their ears.
Without fail he brands them with official tags – numbered and catalogued.
Tags in cows’ ears mean that they are legal and the farmer is AOK!

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62 This tracing system is part of the British Cattle Movement Service.
The tags are a compulsory compliance measure.
Michael has no choice, and does not resist.
It is time consuming, but necessary
For the system
(And for getting good beef products into supermarkets).
When you are dealing with as many cows as Michael has
It would be hard to imagine an alternative way of ‘tracking’ the individual cows through
the system.
He can keep track of groups of cows through the various stages of development and sale
this way.
He can report on the cattle movement
To the system.

But the tags won’t help the cows if they are calving, hungry or sick.
Producing high quality cows involves much more
Than just branding them though.
That is the straightforward part of the process.
There is so much more to his job –
More unpredictable, but equally (if not more) necessary,
He must help them calve, he must notice and be responsive to their hunger or illness.
There is no real system.
Just care.

Do cows belong to Michael because he feeds them?
And because they know him?
(They moo loudly when they see him!)

Alas
It is not generally acceptable for farmers who might own cows.
To borrow the neighbour’s bull
Natural insemination of a neighbourly cow
Is OUT and ‘AI’ is all that is tolerated.

But sometimes, at Michael’s farm, a little ‘permissiveness’
Sneaks in
The Bull just comes ‘to visit’
60 neighbourly cows, each resplendent in her nicely labelled tags!
Chapter 7: Discourse Dissonance

Figure 7.1 ‘Alternative breathing spaces’63 (Singleton & Law, 2012)

I have found it helpful to draw on Singleton and Law’s (2012) juxtaposition of intolerant practices (in terms of my research, the obligatory compliance with education policy) and the more permissive practices that occur when a ‘breathing space’ is created (through the positive impact of particular interpersonal connections between teacher and student) to enact alternative identities (farmer identities, teacher identities). The term breathing space is used by Singleton and Law (2012, p. 13) when writing about the possibility that within ‘an intolerant and colonising’ government imposed regulation on farming, ‘that seeks to capture other practices by insisting on its own version of reality in general’, there may coexist ‘other quite different practices’. Since I have outlined the current notion of two contesting discursive terrains of calculation and care, I have also foreshadowed a possibility of ‘other quite different practices’ in the configuring of the good teacher which I discuss in the next chapter.

7.2 Addressing Discursive ‘Dissonance’

Drawing now on the empirical evidence, which has resulted in my identification of two discursive terrains, I begin here to explore the notion of discourse dissonance which may be seen as taking hold on the education terrain. White, Bloomfield and Le Cornu (2010, p. 181) claim that the macropolitical frame in which such concerns emerge is the socio-economic agenda of neo-liberalism, a force that is redefining roles and responsibilities

63 The photograph of cows is taken from the http://www.defra.gov.uk/rural/website (accessed 1 April 2012).
within education. Against this force, however, I juxtapose empirical evidence of another, hitherto less spoken about discourse, which constructs the good teacher in terms of affect and positive relationships with students. In so doing, I foreground a somewhat obscured counterforce whose sway is to unsettle the dominant discursive practices around the good teacher.

The intention in this section of the chapter is to highlight the serious consequences (in Foucauldian terms, discursive truth effects) for teachers and their work when the ‘acid test’ for success is performance, most specifically in the marketplace (Mulcahy & Perillo, 2011, p. 125). As a point of clarification here, the notion of performativity underwriting the study of policy data in this research project is taken to mean ‘a technology, a culture and a mode of regulation’ that ‘employs judgements, comparisons and displays as means of incentive, control, attrition and change—based on rewards and sanctions (both material and symbolic)’ (Ball, 2003, p. 216).

As I have demonstrated empirically in Chapter 4, policy discourses in the current conjuncture are primarily concerned with performativity. However, in the light of the powerful policy acid test of publically available calculations of student performance outcomes, my analysis of discourses pertaining to the good teacher suggests critical inconsistencies in discursive perspectives between policy discourses and the discursive practices of teachers and students, some of whom choose not to position themselves within the policy discourse and thus dwell in a differing discursive space, although some may seem mobile as they move through various discursive terrains. A feature of the policy discourses in which teachers are caught up is that teachers are implicated actors (Clarke & Montini, 1993) in that they have had little or no hand in formulating education policy yet this policy is consequential for them. By contrast, discourses of care pertain largely to the production of the teacher at the local level64 since they are concerned with what particular students learn, how they learn, what stays with them and what impressions they have of school.

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64 I am aware of various education policies, including some professional standards for teacher accomplishment, which touch on matters of student engagement and/or the teacher’s rapport with students. I venture to suggest, however, that such inclusions do not take centre stage in current neo-liberal policy.
In Figure 7.2, I present an overview of the politics or contestation of the discourses of calculation (largely circulating between government and teacher) and the discourses of care (largely circulating between student and teacher). Before moving on to the next section of this chapter, to interrogate the nature and effects of the dissonance or ruptures identified, I will augment my discussion of different discursive terrains through reference to notions of ‘logic’ as discussed by Mol in *The Logic of Care* (2008). The ‘good’ in practice, to use Mol’s phrase, has been traditionally seen as pertaining to the so-called caring professions, such as teaching and medicine, and although Mol’s field is not education but health, it is not difficult to take the sense of Mol’s writing and substitute the idea of teaching for doctoring. In particular, Mol recognises the logic of care and the importance of focusing on human interconnectedness as a professional responsibility in medicine, and this is equally applicable to education in the sense that ‘lived reality …[can] be better incorporated into scientific research’ (p. 86).

Therefore, in considering contemporary discourses of care in the education literature, I purposefully engage explicitly with the Mol’s ‘logic of care’, for example, since it connects with the theorisation in the literature pertaining to teaching practice. Nevertheless, it is correspondingly important to highlighting the dangers of ‘normalising’ discourses of care, particularly in a romanticised way, when claiming a synergy between the caring professions of teaching and medical professions.
Chapter 7: Discourse Dissonance

Mol’s (2008) notion of the good in practice foregrounds an aspect of care which seems to challenge dominant discourses about choice. This challenge occurs where the facts alone (here the processes and representations of calculation) do not necessarily allow an individual to make the right choice and consequently, care is also needed in the potentially complex process. Indeed, Mol presents a perspective or a lens through which to see that the teacher’s role is to journey with students, but not in a detached way where the curriculum is delivered and student attainment assessed in an objective manner. Translating Mol’s philosophical approach into an educational setting enables consideration of the notion that every student and every teacher should be ‘taken seriously just as they are’ (p. 31). Thus, the philosophical discussion in which Mol engages in *The Logic of Care* (2008) has sharpened my awareness of how the discourses of calculation and care operate in the empirical context of my study. Specifically, the logic of care demands professionals ‘not to blindly apply the results of clinical trials [or student outcomes] but to translate them carefully’ in a setting where potentially helpful technologies are ‘locally fine-tuned’ (p. 85).

Moreover, arising from Mol’s (2008) work is a challenging dimension of the word ‘good’—here as it pertains to the ‘good’ teacher. Mol brings into view an aspect of professionalism which privileges real bodies (flawed to varying degrees) and complex lives over knowledge and technologies. In so doing, a new logic emerges which speaks directly to the current lived experiences of teachers. Resonant in Mol’s writing is the requirement to care in a way that honours both the patient (read student) and the circumstances unique and paramount to each individual in the care of the professional. Thus, Mol’s notion of the good in practice and her idea that medical care includes more than simply patient choice (regarding their treatment options) raises notions of the human complexity involved in care issues. Mol uses the term logic to denote the rationality or the rationale of the practices she is studying (p. 8). Logic, according to Mol, invites

> the exploration of what is appropriate or logical to do in some site or situation, and what is not. It seeks a local, fragile and yet pertinent coherence. This coherence is not necessarily obvious to the people involved…It may be implicit: embedded in practices, buildings, habits and machines. (p. 8)

It is important to clarify here that I do not intend for the term logic to take precedence over the Foucauldian notion of discursive practice. Rather, I refer to Mol’s (2008) notion
of logic of care since it does important work in refining an understanding that, in the
arena of care, practitioners apply an innovative set of perceptions of the logical. Pertinent
to my thesis is Mol’s claim that lived reality (at the local level) needs to be better
incorporated into research and that ‘difficult questions’ do not always have easy answers.
Moreover, Mol’s concept of care, and the logic with which it is associated, provides a
striking contrast regarding the discourse of calculation. In the discourse of calculation,
professionalism is conceptualised in terms of managerialism, that is, a philosophical
approach in contemporary Western society that defines social, economic and political
issues as problems to be resolved through management.

Arguably it is more difficult to define discourses of care in terms of an ‘ism’, and perhaps
that is part of the reason why, in the current climate of neo-liberalism, the political
context privileges calculation over care since neo-liberalism implies—as it pertains to
policy issues—that a particular system of beliefs should be accepted as authoritative.
Arguably the authority of the system is linked to the calculations made by its authorities.
Conversely, attaching an ‘ism’ to interpersonal matters would seem derogatory; this is in
keeping with the comparatively honoured but multifaceted and often intangible character
of care.

### 7.3 Effects of Discursive Ruptures for Teachers and Teachers’ Work

The following sections of this thesis address the guiding question: What might be the
consequences of these discourse omissions for teaching and learning? Having reprised the
empirical basis for the distinction between discourses of calculation and discourses of
care, I turn now to a discussion of the troubling effects of the considerable discursive
dissonance between these discourses as they influence the identity and the work of the
good teacher. Foucault argued that certain discourses in particular contexts have the
power to convince people to accept statements as true. In the discussion that follows, I
pursue the notion of truth-effects as seen as contesting effects, in the same light that
Foucauldian theory highlights the possibility of contesting discourses. My focus here is
on the narrow scope of policy discourses relative to the contrasting discursive practices
evident in the teacher and student data. Emerging from my research is the following
problematic situation: on the one hand, relationships can be seen to lie out of sight and be
largely taken for granted (Giles, 2011) in policy discourses on the work of the teacher,
but on the other hand, for students and for teachers, relationships are central to learning (Hargreaves, 2001).

7.4 Policy Discourse Effects: Factual Information and Calculable Improvement

As noted above, the effect of the dominant policy discourse on the current constituting of teachers’ work is fundamentally singularising. Ball (2003, p. 215) points to the pervasive nature of neo-liberalism in education by suggesting that in various guises the key elements of the education reform are ‘packaged’ in three interrelated policy technologies; the market, managerialism and performativity’. Indeed, the notion of a policy being described as ‘packaged’ is indicative of the expediency of current education policy in neo-liberal settings, yet teacher and student positionings regarding good teaching point to practices that simply cannot be packaged, and teacher and student discursive practices point to the elements of good teaching which escape regulation and prescription.

(i) For the teacher

Within the policy discourse of economic productivity, the emphasis in policy on calculation of improvement means that the teacher is constituted with respect to the requirement to achieve more, by making better and bigger improvements in educational outcomes, which, in turn, will furnish business and industry with suitable employees. Certainly, scholarly enquiry (Alexander, 2010b; Apple, 2009; Biesta, 2009; Connell, 2009; Hayes et al., 2006; Stronach et al., 2002, 2010) has been undertaken regarding the ‘incoherent but insistent way’ the good teacher is now defined under neo-liberal governance by teacher registration authorities (Connell, 2009, p. 213). Accordingly, Biesta’s (2009, p. 35) critique of current policy directions is boosted by his concern that the purpose of education is now easily overlooked because of the excessive emphasis on information:

The problem is…that the abundance of information about educational outcomes has given the impression that decisions about the direction of educational policy and the shape and form of educational practice can be based solely upon factual information.

By way of contrast, in many of the student thank-you letters presented in this research project, references to affect seem to both amplify and challenge the neo-liberal focus on
information. In addition, however, it is a noticeable feature of many of the letters that although there is a deliberate emphasis on care—an admiration of the teacher’s moral authority or willingness to be an adult friend to students—there is arguably an implicit connection between students feeling valued and inspired, and their potential to perform well academically. Such tributes indicate the ways in which notions of care and calculation work within and against each other.

With this in mind, it is helpful to view Alex’s letter from the perspective of inter-discursivity between calculation and care. Indeed, although Alex takes up a discourse of schooling and the emphasis on calculable assessment, his letter also talks back to the notion of scrutinising students’ (and presumably teachers’) performance numerically. Relative to the importance of his relationship with his teacher, Alex explains that he no longer holds as his ultimate goal a perfect academic score. Emma’s letter can be seen to focus on calculation but sits within a discourse of care in that she hopes her teacher ‘will remember a young girl called Emma, whose life [you] changed’ through the interpersonal relationship that was established. Emma, like Alex refers directly to the ‘policy’ emphasis on ‘the numbers’ and arguably positions herself and her teacher somewhat differently with respect to present day policy:

I hate that in the end all we care about are the numbers, because I wanted to be better than that and it was your belief and faith in me that allowed me to be better than any number that defined my abilities.

(ii) For the teacher’s work

Certainly there is an indication in the teacher data (and to some degree in the student data) that there is a powerful external (government policy-directed) expectation of calculable improvement in the academic outcomes of students. In some cases it must be said, there seems to be no clear-cut line between the logic of (i) the care of teachers who wish, for the sake of the students’ well-being, to get the best out of students academically and (ii) the imperative to ensure that the final examination results are calculated as satisfactory in accordance with the discourse of calculation. As an accomplished teacher, Jason’s determination to ‘work towards better answers’ seems to resonate with the policy discourse of improved outcomes. Therefore, notwithstanding Jason’s friendly relationship with the students and his pedagogical expertise, his identity seems to be constructed (or subjectified) to a significant degree by the neo-liberal discourse on student outcomes and
associated teacher accountability. As suggested above, such a policy discourse foregrounds academic coaching for strong test performance and improved scholastic achievement in accordance with policy directives.

Similarly, Katrina enters into discursive practices around effective pedagogical strategies for ‘tapping into’ the boys’ interests, but she is also constituted by her commitment to giving her students ‘a lot of skills’ such that they will succeed in senior examinations. Moreover, in Katrina’s lesson, it is easy to observe an accomplished teacher’s discourse of care through her banter over the ‘Cats’ football victory, whilst at the same time being mindful of her role as the instrument through which the students acquire the necessary skills in keeping with the expectations of her traditional school.

Senior student Alex’s distinction between academic goals and ‘journeying’ through the interpersonal communication between teacher and student differs somewhat from the letter from Nik (also a senior student) in which a connection is made between the actions of the teacher and academic achievement. Nik thanks his teacher for both the ‘tuition and assistance’ and then notes that it was the teacher’s ‘enthusiasm and flair’ which made the lessons ‘hugely enjoyable’. This leads Nik to conclude: ‘I could never have achieved the score that I did without your support and guidance’. In addition, a discourse of care is evident in Nik’s comment about how his teacher has shaped an ongoing interest, one which will extend beyond the present examination period: ‘Most importantly, you have helped to sparked (sic) interest in Shakespeare’s works which I will certainly pursue in years to come’.

A helpful way of approaching this dichotomy regarding performativity and affective care in the teacher’s work is through Robin Alexander’s (2010a) warning that the current policy direction in education, with its focus on government standards, is inclined to circumvent a teacher’s idiosyncrasies and what he terms ‘internalised’ teaching talent from being realised. Similarly, Ian Stronach (2010) and Michael Apple (2009) challenge the ‘hollowed out’ discursive practices around a globalised economy and the current preoccupation with global capitalism and international competitiveness.

Certainly, from the response sheets in the geography teachers data, and also from student comments, there is a sense of resistance to such a strong focus on the calculable—since it is the embodied and therefore particularised (and ‘internalised’) classroom teaching
dynamic which is privileged. Moreover, it can be argued that a policy discourse puts the focus clearly on teachers’ ‘performance’ but does not provide teachers with a clear definition of what ‘quality’ in teaching is. Although a debate over how the Australian Government does or should recognise and reward quality teachers is not the focus of this thesis, it is important to note the policy implication that some schools lack such quality and hence the need for a new era of quality (which will presumably be spearheaded by imposing further professional ‘loads’ on teachers).

In the comments made by teachers Rachel, Sophie and Katrina, and students Alex and Emmaline, for example, there is a clear and compelling discourse of choice around either adhering to policy directives or, as it were, digressing by positioning oneself with respect to other priorities, namely, those to do with emotions and affect. That is, the data indicate that both teachers and students are aware that, for teachers, professional choices are being made. I am aware here that my notion of digression may seem to contradict my previous discussion of the identifiable interdiscursivities between calculation and care. In this light I stress that in some circumstances the data highlight an interdiscursivity whereby a teacher (or student) indicates an awareness that there is a contestation of prevailing discursive practices around the good teacher and good teaching.

I now turn to a discussion of the impact of these choices and the ways in which they can create a professional tension.

7.5 Non-Policy Effects: Wider Values and Imperatives

(i) For the teacher

Teachers position themselves with respect to ‘creativity’ of practice

As a teacher who contributed thank-you letters to this project, Sophie’s reflection, included below, acknowledges the importance of the ways in which students respond to the teacher’s particular ways of interacting with them. In fact, Sophie sees good teaching as a creative phenomenon, a ‘shared conversation—a dance’. Moreover, in this reflection, the ‘defining element’ in (Sophie’s) teaching is described as the ‘connection between me and them [where] the learning takes care of itself’. Thus, it is very clear that Sophie positions herself with respect to a discourse of care (albeit within the context of strong
academic performance). In an illuminating account of good teaching which is worth quoting largely in full, Sophie writes:

Since finding and rereading my ‘thank-you’ letters and cards from students, I have been mulling over ... the power of connections...I have always been conscious of making sure I cover the necessary content (although I am also very conscious of trying to make the delivery as interesting and accessible as possible) ... but what my kids are telling me through these letters is that their time in class with me is not about content, it's about personal growth and engagement with the big questions of the world we live in. They appreciate the content (which has to be there!) but what they value is the way they learn it – through shared conversations and through a valued relationship with me as their teacher. On the basis of that connection between me and them, the learning takes care of itself.

When I think about the current policy ideas of ‘good’ teaching, I feel that ... the focus is on methodology at the expense of the human element. Yes, it is essential that there is structured content delivery and competent classroom management, but ‘good’ teaching needs to be more than delivering content. ‘Good’ teaching (as a positive experience for both teacher and students) comes from relationships that are formed between teacher and student. This essential ingredient needs to be recognised and prioritised through the development of policy that incorporates the facilitation of learning relationships.

By the term ‘good’ teacher, I mean ... a teacher who knows his or her material, knows the students and loves being in the classroom. A teacher who has all of those three essential ingredients will ensure a learning environment that enables their students to realise their potential. Bringing passion for your subject into the classroom is intoxicating—the kids can’t help but get caught up in the excitement. But to get lost in the passion, they must feel confident that you are taking them on the right journey, so they must also feel confident in your capacity to address the material...

When I think about working with students within my classroom, what immediately springs to mind is ... a shared conversation! I know that I come into the classroom with a set of knowledge, but my students also come into the classroom with
knowledge…I find that the teaching and learning environment becomes an equal participation—a ‘dance’ if you will … sometimes, an intense tango and other times a swooning waltz, and often a joyous frolic … but always a dance that involves both partners—me and my students. And that ‘dance’ is defined by conversation … usually typified by great enthusiasm and passion in my classes!

Indeed, Sophie’s views as an experienced and accomplished teacher coincide with the ideas of scholars such as Christopher Day (2004) and Parker Palmer (2008), who probe deeply the moral purposes and intangible characteristics of good teaching, especially care and courage. Sophie’s comments, suggestive of her positioning within a discourse of care, indicate a reflective, profound and personal regard for her students. Arguably such a situation presents a sharp contrast to what Florida (2007, p. 258) regards as a feature of the dominant educational discourse: ‘giving lip service to better school systems and throwing more money and slogans at the problem’ of providing a good teaching and learning experience for all stakeholders. I mention this notion of lip service as it implies a lack of complexity and depth in the current policy discursive practices around good teaching, and seems to speak to the need for a more nuanced approach to education policy.

Teachers position themselves with respect to a broader vision than what can be measured

A salient aspect of the dissonance between discourses of calculation and discourses of care is the consideration given to what can and what cannot be measured objectively. Foucauldian theory renders discourses ‘irreducible to language and to speech’ and thinking with this theory, the data from the geography teachers study, from the teachers who provided personal reflections and from the students’ letters, I posit that non-policy discursive practices do more than use signs to ‘designate [measurable] things’ (Foucault, 1972/2002a, p. 54). I argue that the ‘more’ in this quotation pertains to the intangible local experiences of interpersonal connections and relationships between teacher and student. In the light of what can be seen as the narrow or singularising nature of policy texts, where particular concrete ‘numbers’ regarding student performance data seem paramount, some students suggest the importance of something significantly different regarding good teaching. In the light of this observation of narrowing, I refer to the letter
written by a young female (Grade 5) primary school student, Emmaline, which I have commented on in Chapter 6.

It has been so good having you as my teacher. I’ve learnt heaps academically and just how to be nicer, I said to my mum that you’re just like having a mother at school and you teach me.

Thank you sooooo much for having time to listen to me. I will see you next year if I can. I will yell out to you.

Here Emmaline infers that something more than measurable academic learning has taken place. Interdiscursively, the teacher’s capacity to make Emmaline, by her own admission, ‘nicer’ speaks to a practice that is not measurable but is seemingly important, as is the teacher’s preparedness ‘to listen’ to Emmaline. Indeed, Emmaline’s comments are localised and embodied—‘I will yell out to you’—specific to the relationship that she has achieved with her teacher and conversely, that the teacher has achieved with her. Arguably, the dissonance between the two discourses emerges here.

It is as if Emmaline is receptive to distinct discursive threads regarding what good teachers do. She tells her teacher that, ‘It has been so good having you as my teacher’, but she then distinguishes between what she has learnt ‘academically’ and the interpersonal impact of the teacher’s presence in her young life. Emmaline seems to regard academic learning as a legitimate part of schooling, but she also acknowledges and values something else, something more and something less tangible. The distinction is reinforced when Emmaline highlights the connection with the teacher’s ‘maternal’ care (‘you’re just like having a mother at school’) and the separate observation that, as an added bonus perhaps, ‘you teach me’. Finally, Emmaline takes up a discourse that typifies the subtle interpersonal communications between teacher and student when she elongates the word ‘so’, and also in her stated desire to continue the relationship with her teacher even when the school year is over:

Thank you sooooo much for having time to listen to me. I will see you next year if I can. I will yell out to you.

Luke’s letter, which is set out below, is clearly written by a much older student, yet Luke also positions himself with respect to gratitude for his teacher’s care in helping him
achieve success by always ‘believing in’ him and reminding him that he was ‘capable of attaining the score’ he wanted. Luke, like Emmaline, has a strong awareness of the academic, not in a narrow sense, but rather as it relates to the interpersonal affective aspects of the student’s relationship with the teacher.

I just wanted to express my gratitude to you for being such a stimulating and encouraging teacher to me…You helped me achieve success by always believing in me and reminding me that I was capable of attaining the score I wanted…Thanks again for helping me with VCE Physics and for believing in me.

Of relevance here is Mol’s (2008) suggestion for those in the caring professions, like teaching and nursing, to avoid giving up on re-thinking what is accepted as best practice,65 by contemplating the world of the other. In the case of my project, the ‘other’ is taken to mean the affective world of the teacher and the student, and its impact on student learning. Thus, for Luke, the academic (or the measurable) is entangled in affect, yet, for the contemporary teacher, neo-liberal policy positions teachers as obliged to take up the dominant discourse of performance and calculation and, at the same time, to practice in a caring way that is responsive to individual student needs.

In addition, as Luke’s letter reveals, a consequence of the interpersonal relationship (discourse of care) is the ongoing legacy of wanting to stay in touch with his former teacher. Luke shares a joke with his former teacher and, in so doing, reinforces the connection between his current ‘dream course’, ‘having a ball’ at university and the belief the teacher showed in him whilst at school. In the case of Luke’s letter, it is interesting to relate the sentiments expressed to Young’s (2009) notion of the ‘voice of knowledge’ (which clearly was ‘heard’ by Luke). What Luke’s teacher seemingly provided was not knowledge in a strictly calculable sense, but rather in a lasting and career-inspiring sense.

Thus, Young (2009) argues against ‘an empty and rhetorical notion of knowledge’ with its increasing tendency to ‘blur distinctions between the production of knowledge and its acquisition on the one hand and between knowledge and skills on the other’. As the latter, unlike the former, is something ‘measurable and targetable’, a focus on it ‘becomes a way

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65 Mol’s commentary in this regard is based on the dominant medical viewpoints of the time around patient choice.
of denying a distinct voice for knowledge in education’ (p. 6). Moreover, according to the empirical data, the anxiety over coming to terms with discourses of calculation with discourses of care can be troubling at an operational level for classroom teachers such as Sophie who concedes that ‘it is essential that there is structured content delivery and competent classroom management’, but emphasises her belief that ‘good teaching needs to be more than delivering content’ (emphasis in original).

Evident in the emphasis on care is a sense of self which looks not only to blindly identify test results but, as Mol (2008, p. 85) puts it, to ‘translate them carefully’. The good teacher is a teacher who not only strives to achieve high academic outcomes but also to create the conditions for students to thrive morally, socially and in terms of responsible citizenship. This discourse positions the good teacher as one who gives ‘full service’ to students, which includes academic progress and, importantly, embraces Mol’s notion regarding the good in practice (p. 73).

Certainly the empirical evidence, from the student letters in particular, points to the good teacher being caught up in a discourse and practice of care, care of the kind that releases students’ capabilities and potential—and also their insecurities and vulnerabilities—in a way that will ultimately be effective in placing them on a pathway to academic progress; this is a process in which the students are affected by the embodied and individualised characteristics of both the teacher and fellow students in a given educational setting (and at a given moment in time).

In the case of Rachel’s Year 8 geography lesson, for example, it is possible to track the teacher’s ‘responsiveness’ in the way she moves from a curriculum focus, driven by a predetermined plan, to an unplanned response to a natural disaster in Burma. Rachel responds to the human disaster in a way that provides an invitation to her students to also respond to an event outside their personal experience. This responsiveness is not in alignment with the discourse of ‘calculation’, which arguably focuses on the teacher as an instrument in the provision of calculable student outcomes. Indeed, the video of this lesson reveals the students leaning forward and asking questions empathetically about the plight of the Burmese people, particularly regarding the difficulty for them of getting assistance in times of distress. Rachel engages in a discursive practice which she seems to acknowledge as aberrant in the current education conjuncture (‘I just couldn’t come today and not talk about this’).
In this light it can be claimed that, in contrast to policy discourses, the teacher can be seen to have a broader purview than what can be measured. In Jason’s discourses, although the lesson is (quite legitimately) highly focused on the academic, there are references made to life-long learning and to the importance of fostering students’ awareness of current events. Thus, the teachers in the geography study feel a responsibility to ‘globalise’ their students, not so much in keeping with the Government’s economic agenda, but rather for reasons of empathy and compassion.

In the student data, Esther takes up what can be seen as an example of a discourse of care when, despite acknowledging that she is not a conscientious student, she highlights what the interpersonal connection with the teacher has meant: ‘I did try just coz (sic) you were the teacher and are totally awesome’. Indeed, like Nik, Esther focuses on the importance of measurable academic outcomes (‘I know what that is’) but the reference seems a by-product of the relational component of her experience:

    AND I have learnt quite a lot, more than I thought. So many times I have been living life (aka work and church and stuff) and stuff we covered in business has come up and I’m like OH MY GOSH! I know what that is. So now I understand more about what goes on in the world.

Furthermore, it is possible to draw a parallel between the discourses of calculation and care within the tributes to their teacher written jointly by much younger students, Sophie and Emma: ‘You are the most comfortable teacher in the world’. Within the parameters of my study argument, these very young (Grade 2) children seem to speak of ‘comfort’ (discourse of care) in the context of the classroom environment where academic teaching is the main activity. It is not clear whether these very young students have any perception of what might cause other teachers to be less comfortable, or indeed whether some teachers are less ‘comfortable’ due to pressure to do with policy directives. In the student data, however, there is some indication of students’ peripheral awareness of a discourse of calculation.

An analysis of the student letters indicates relatively little direct reference to calculable or measurable outcomes. However, it can be argued that the letters do point to some teachers being caught up in something other than—or more than—care (in the sense that the discourse of care has been outlined here). Tara’s message to her teacher, for example,
seems to show that this student was aware that the teacher in question could have succumbed to other ‘priorities’ in her professional role, but resisted these other influences (or professional demands) in order to support her, not only emotionally but also academically. In view of her poor academic performance, Tara explains that, despite her recalcitrance, she is ‘so thankful’ that the teacher nevertheless had ‘faith’ in her ‘abilities’. Tara’s discursive practice, as the letter continues, is aligned with a discourse of care: ‘I hope one day I can live up to being a very interesting woman when I grow up, as you once said I could be’. If it can be assumed that Tara did not write to her other teachers, her view of contrasting teacher identities is telling. In other words, what Tara highlights about her chosen teacher provides an indication that many of her other teachers did not connect with her in the same way.

**Teachers position themselves with regard to good interpersonal skills**

In her thank-you note to her teacher, Lizzie shapes her teacher in terms of care when she thanks her teacher by writing, ‘(t)hank you so much for all that you have taught me over the past two years. I have learnt to believe in myself, which has gone beyond my English writing!’ In the discourse of self-belief in evidence here, the student positions herself in relation to her academic achievement through being ‘taught’, but there is reference also to the ‘value’ of the teacher, the teacher’s interpersonal skills that have allowed this student to experience a self-efficacy ‘beyond’ the reach of the academic (‘my English writing’).

Palmer (2008) recounts a similar experience of a teacher whose style he recalls,

> What mattered was that he generously opened the life of his mind to me, giving full voice to the gift of thought. Something in me knew that this gift was mine as well, though it was years before I could fully trust that knowledge. (p. 23)

**(ii) For the teacher’s work**

**Teachers resist positioning themselves as administrators (of tests)**

From the teacher discourses analysed, practising teachers do not interpret their major role as being administrators (of tests) and a means of achieving ever improving results (teacher as instrument). Indeed, the strong focus on the merits of good lesson preparation, tailored to the needs and interests of a particular cohort of students, is paramount in many of the geography teachers’ discourses. Accordingly, in the light of the tendency for
current policy to position teachers as instrumental in the production of calculable improved outcomes for students, the discursive engagements of the teachers tend to challenge the narrowness of this perspective.

Zembylas (2007b, p. 19) claims that ‘teachers and students are often not supposed to have bodies and affects because education should be about the acquisition of knowledge’ (emphasis in original). Thus, the teacher is not conceived of as an important education actor, often doing embodied emotion work, but instead is constituted as preoccupied with keeping an eye on and accounting for the ‘metrics’ of school improvement. In this regard, Liz expresses her resentment of time spent on ‘meaningless’ tasks around assessment and reporting ‘improvement’ thus:

If these good teachers spend most of their time collating meaningless ‘results’, ‘report writing’ and so on at the expense of their teaching time with students where together they journey through the learning process, then these good teachers may become disillusioned and use their skills elsewhere…People before policy – policy is only as effective as the individuals implementing it – and that’s hard to measure and collate.

Accordingly, it appears that teachers do not accept that they should be positioned as miniature policy makers, whose agenda is to generate and then monitor designated policy targets for improvement in curriculum outcomes. In the discursive practices of teachers, the work of the teacher is constructed as highly complex and multi-faceted, such that it embraces both the cognitive and affective components of performance. In this light, it is interesting to note Ball’s (2003) description of ‘the terrors of performativity’; as Ball puts it, ‘performance has no room for caring’ (p. 224). In his view, this results in ‘inauthentic practice and relationships’ such that teachers ‘are no longer encouraged to have a rationale for practice, an account of themselves in terms of a relationship to the meaningfulness of what they do, but are required to produce measurable and improving outputs and performances, what is important is what works (p. 224).

**Teachers begrudge the ‘emptying out’ of their role**

In current times, as I have indicated, there are key components of the dominant policy discourses which include performance, accountability and standards. These shape teaching and the good teacher in ways which are concerning to many education scholars
and commentators (e.g., Alexander, 2010a, 2010b; Ravitch, 2010). Indeed some of my findings pertaining to the teacher and student data sets can be seen to validate the ways in which current policy in education matters seems to empty out other concerns, such as the embodied and affectively intensive aspects of good teaching, with disturbing effects.

Darling-Hammond (2010, p. 73) draws attention to a further concern for teachers operating under a regime of neo-liberalism where there is no meaningful investment in testing. By this she means that the testing results appear detached from important issues such as investments in teacher knowledge, curriculum resources and school supports. The case is made by Darling-Hammond that it is ‘disastrous’ for some students (and arguably for some teachers) when governments believe that ‘standards and tests will motivate change [and teachers can be] used to target punishment to those who fail to meet them’. Moreover, responding to low performance with more testing tied to greater sanctions is a ‘cheap and easy’ way to appear to reform schools, ‘without making the systematic transformations needed to truly change the conditions for the most vulnerable students’.

From the empirical data it seems that the richness and completeness of a good teacher’s role has to do with nurturing the potential of students who may not have performed as well academically without the skills and character traits of their teacher. Although the data do not touch on resourcing particularly, it is implied by some teachers that the emphasis on outcomes and performance is currently compromising the good teacher’s role in assisting students who, for a range of reasons, may not produce high scores on tests such as NAPLAN.

The literature suggests that neo-liberalism in education has not necessarily ‘resourced’ teachers; rather it leaves some teachers feeling ‘emptied out’. Whilst the Australian Government has ‘invested’ financially in the Education Revolution (e.g., computers in schools, new buildings, NAPLAN, the My School website and a national curriculum) there has been relatively little emphasis on taking teachers’ hearts and minds along in this enterprise.

**Teachers compromised by ‘accountability’ and ‘transparency’ foci**

The empirical data suggest that policy documents that focus on accountability and transparency affect teachers’ notions of professionalism. Thus, as a practising teacher, Liz challenges the current emphasis on evidence, data and competition, complaining that
‘good teachers are expected to spend precious time ‘collating meaningless results ... at the expense of their teaching time’. Indeed, Liz challenges the validity of the testing regime because she claims that results ‘do not necessarily indicate effective teaching’. It seems that the term ‘necessarily’ in this context points to an awareness of other factors which are more indicative (or at least, equally indicative) of good teaching.

Moreover, drawing on Scanlon’s (2004, p. 105) research, for which she interviewed students with a view ‘to position the [teacher professional] standards discussion in the learners’ frame’, I argue that my research project has also identified, in what I term a discourse of care, ‘poignant accounts in the words of students’ everyday learning needs in real classrooms’, which do not lead to ‘abstractions’ but rather to the ‘embodiments of real practice’.

Certainly a case can be made that, for many of the geography teachers, their professionalism is constructed as knowledge-based. That is to say, on the one hand the geography teachers are concerned to impart knowledge to their students—through the means of effective pedagogy—and their positioning as professionals seems bound up in the degree to which they successfully achieve this goal. On the other hand, there is some empirical evidence from this teacher data set to suggest that there is concern around whether policy references to good teaching may circumvent, to some degree, the self-sufficiency of teachers in making judgements about learning strategies and priorities (arguably with an emphasis on learning experiences rather than ‘teaching for tests’) for students.

Mulcahy and Kriewaldt (2010) highlight how a teacher in the geography study (Rachel) reclaims her self-sufficiency—and shakes off a feeling of being constrained by the formal plans for the lesson. Thus, for this particular Year 8 geography class, the thrust of the lesson is conceived as content driven, according to the curriculum, but as this lesson begins there is a pedagogical shift. This turn takes place when the teacher puts aside her planned lesson to discuss a humanitarian crisis. Thus, what can be seen as a pedagogic discourse and practice of affect changed the focus of the lesson.

The first thing I decided to do this morning was to talk about the cyclone. I added that to the (lesson); that to me was important. Because one of the things I have been talking to them about are current events in geography. So, I thought I have to talk
about this. … Talking about the cyclone, that was unexpected for me. I, I, that was just something, I just thought this morning, I’ve got to talk about this because I get excited.

Arguably, in the case of this lesson, Rachel’s sense of professionalism is not bounded by a pre-determined course. Seemingly she would feel compromised if she did not speak to the class about the human disaster in Burma. On the other hand she is aware that such a discussion may appear as an irregularity in the established practices of the school where covering specified content effectively is prioritised.

The argument that policy is focused on ‘calculation’ to the exclusion of ‘care’ is supported by Connell (2009, p. 217) who suggests that market-oriented neo-liberalism is ‘profoundly suspicious of professionalism’ because it regards professions as ‘anti-competitive monopolies’ to the point where ‘neo-liberalism distrusts teachers’. This notion of the damaging aspects of mistrust in the professional setting of teachers is also reiterated by a range of commentators (e.g., Bryk, 1988; Covey, 2006; Robinson, 2009).

**Teachers position themselves with respect to professional ambivalence**

Implicit in the approach presented by the young teacher, Bree, there is a tension around what she ‘expected’ of teaching, what she ‘experiences’ in the classroom and the seemingly incongruous policy directives regarding assessment and reporting. Although not specifically stated, there is a sense of perplexity at the shifting ground around her professional role. Bree, as an early career teacher, seems acutely aware of meeting multiple needs, her own sense of a professional role, shaped presumably by her teacher training, her need to connect with her students and her obligation to operate within neo-liberal education policy.

Stronach (2010, p. 81) reports the tension between policy discourses of teacher professionalism and practice/professional discourses of teacher professionalism by describing how teachers ‘walk the tightrope of an uncertain being’, whilst also claiming that it is important for theories of professionalism to ‘hold on to these notes of ambivalence and contradiction’. As he explains, ‘the teacher’s role is experienced deeply and frequently ‘as a series of dilemmas’ in which professionals juggle between ‘economies of performance’ and ‘ecologies of practice’. Indeed, Stronach’s observations underscore the current hybridity of the good teacher’s identity.
Although the Australian Government has undertaken not to encourage the publication of ‘league tables’ of school performance based on NAPLAN results, there is a concern for teachers, where neo-liberal policies of performance and accountability prevail, that what Darling-Hammond terms ‘school labelling’—in relation to the status and success of their schools—is inevitably a potentially damaging part of a national testing process such as NAPLAN.

Urgent concern is also expressed regarding the ‘damaging’ impact on children of policies such as the US ‘No Child Left Behind’ policy initiative. An argument is mounted that the ‘one-size-fits-all’ testing program in the US ‘unfairly judges schools…hurts quality school programs, unequally impacts children, hinders the professional judgement of our teachers, and limits the accountability schools have to those they serve—parents and students’ (Wood, 2004, p. xiv).

Thus, acknowledging the differences in the particular circumstances of Australian education issues and those in the US in recent times, I include here Darling-Hammond’s views (2010, p. 79) on the US experience where she notes that under neo-liberal policy regimes,

[S]tudents who have no control of the quality of education they receive are the ones held most accountable – and punished most severely and repeatedly—for the failures of the systems in which they are trapped. That there has been little outcry is undoubtedly linked to the fact that the victims are overwhelmingly poor children of colour, viewed as expendable and undeserving of serious investment.66.

The empirical data (of policy, and teacher and student discourses around the good teacher) from this research suggest that the dominant discourse circulating strives to

66 By way of comparison with the Australian equivalent of those students who may be regarded by some as the ‘failures of the systems in which they are trapped’, I simply make mention here of the NAPLAN results for indigenous children in Australia (downloaded from The Centre for Studies website, http://www.cis.org.au/media-information/opinion-pieces/article/1413-naplan-tests-show-the-indigenous-gap (26 February, 2012). The NAPLAN 2009 tests show three clear results: (i) very few of some 20,000 Indigenous students in remote Indigenous schools—about 15% of all Indigenous students—are achieving minimum national standards. Their failure rates range between 60% and 70%, while for non-Indigenous students they are about 10%; (ii) some 40,000 Indigenous students from welfare-dependent backgrounds attend mainstream schools in the southern states, including the Newcastle Region. Their failure rates are also higher—about 25%—than for non-Indigenous students; and (iii) the majority of Indigenous students—some 90,000—achieve minimum national standards like most non-Indigenous students.
shape teacher identity in two distinct ways. Firstly, education policy characterises teacher identity in terms of concerns about calculations—how will students perform on NAPLAN tests and how will the school rate on the My School website? Secondly, the dominant discourse of calculation tends to subjugate, within policy discourses, knowledges around care. Therefore the teacher’s identity as a carer is marginalised, as is the policy construction of the good teacher as a professional whose work is bound up in the social and emotional (as well as academic) needs of the students. However, as this chapter has demonstrated, care (as a knowledge practice) is practised within teacher and student discourses.

7.6 Discursive Politics

Drawing on Sanguinetti (1999), I note that discursive politics refers to a kind of political practice that is implied by Foucault’s framework of power and discourse. Regarding the notion of how teachers should be ‘named and constituted’, it can be argued, therefore, that there is currently a contest over meanings in terms of how the good teacher should be constituted. In Figure 7.3, I offer a representation of what might be termed discursive politics. I base this representation on the notion that there is a kind of ‘power’ struggle occurring for the good teacher whereby he or she is obliged to look in two directions at once when meeting the requirements of both the discourse of calculation and of care.

![Figure 7.3: Current tenuous links between politicians and teacher/student discourses.](image)

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67 Sanguinetti (1999) cites Yeatman who claims that political activity itself becomes pre-eminently a politics of contest over meanings. Sanguinetti notes that Yeatman describes discursive politics as comprised of ‘the disputes, debates and struggle about how the identities of the participants should be named and thereby constituted, how their relationships should be named and thereby constituted’ (p. 80).
The good teacher in the current times is, to varying degrees, caught up in two discourses and these discourses are perceived by the teacher to stem from different sources. Even though teachers are aware of the dominance of calculation in policy discourses, they see both discourses as means through which teacher validation occurs, but the nature of these separate validations renders them incompatible with each other. As I demonstrate in this chapter, the discourse of care has a validation that speaks powerfully to the teacher who takes it up.

As has been demonstrated, current policy discourses are focused on the calculation of improvement and performance—as narrowly defined in terms of quantified ‘objective’ benchmarked data. Thus, the policy discourses imply that it is possible to infer from NAPLAN testing a linear relationship between student outcomes and the quality of the teaching. The empirical evidence from this research study suggests, however, that in the eyes of students the only important relationship—and rightly and understandably so—is with the teacher. The discourse of care—which of course includes a strong focus on good academic progress by students—circulates between student and teacher and is, as the evidence has indicated, largely subjective, affective and intensely personal.

The salient point here is that policy discourses appear very narrow, in their calculation and reporting of improvement and performance, relative to the rich stories of good teaching evident in the accounts of teaching and learning emerging from the empirical material in which discourses of care are at work. Because they are (rightly and understandably) driven by political will, discourses of calculation have to do with what policy actions denote for future teacher actions in the general sense.

Of course the repetitive and routine goal (and repeated pattern) of such policy action is to enhance the students’ education experience, but the policy is directed at what teachers ‘do’ (or need to do) as a consequence of what is being calculated and reported to parents and to the public at large. Discourses of care currently appear to circulate under the political radar to a significant degree (notwithstanding government consultation and surveying processes), because they are confined within the teacher/student relationship. Naturally, there is a scale difference here since, in the current conjuncture, policy operates nationally and internationally (e.g., through policy transfer and travel) whereas teacher-student relations are local, contingent and in situ. Nevertheless, I believe the concerns I have discussed regarding the nature of these discourses’—regardless of the
scale differences—are of critical importance because they may open up a space for a new discursive practice pertaining to the good teacher.

In addition, the reflections of accomplished teachers such as Sophie—when considering the specific characteristics of discourses of care—might prove to be of interest for policy makers when invoking the notion of quality teaching.

Bringing passion for your subject into the classroom is intoxicating—the kids can’t help but get caught up in the excitement. But to get lost in the passion, they must feel confident that you are taking them on the right journey, so they must also feel confident in your capacity to address the material. These two elements can only become powerful agents of educational development when there is a relationship of mutual respect, trust and genuine enjoyment of each other between the teacher and the students.

For the purposes of clarifying my notions of possible future connections between policy, teacher and student discourses, I now provide an excerpt from the Singleton and Law article (2012, p. 13) that informed much of my thinking in this discussion. Following this, I interpret the terms in the article through the conceptual lens that has guided my research.

Our argument is thus that alongside the rituals of the CTS [Cattle Tracing System] there are many quietly permissive and local devices enacting equally more or less different local realities. And then we would want to add that some of these realities—indeed many of them—need more nurturing and crafting…So the politics here is partly about saying that there is otherness within, and it is partly about attending to that otherness.

I interpret ‘the rituals’ of the CTS as comparable with the discourses of calculation, compliance requirements and publication of the Australian NAPLAN testing ‘device’. Correspondingly, the reference to ‘many quietly permissive and local devices enacting equally more or less different local realities’ is more attuned to discourses of care.

By local realities I am thinking particularly of the discursive practices identified in the student letters. Indeed, the student letters testify discursively to an ‘otherness within’ the practice of the good teacher, which can seem to resist the ‘intolerant’ aspects of policy.
Accordingly, the complex concept of ‘Otherness’ in academic discourse (for example, Bauman, 1995; Buber, 2000; Deleuze & Guattari, 1988; Koh, 2012; Zembylas, 2007a) encourages me to hold up to view the good teacher’s ‘otherness’ as a means of exploring aspects of a teaching practice which can withstand – either working within or against—what Ball (2003) calls the terrors of performativity, by producing a professional identity which is characterised by empathy, compassion and tolerance of differences. In this sense I argue that, at the local level, an individual teacher can ‘heed’ the general policy directives and simultaneously draw back into a personal and localised version of practice. In this regard, the notion that we might now consider the degree to which we ought to be ‘nurturing and crafting’ the realities of teaching in a more ‘tolerant’ way emerges.

7.7 Interdiscursivity

As Sanguinetti (1999, p. 73) demonstrates, when applied to the study of texts interdiscursivity allows us to study how texts are constructed intertextually: ‘to recognise that the meaning of an utterance or an event must be read against the background of other utterances and events and diagonally’. To use Foucault’s terms, interdiscursivity refers to ‘implicit dialogue with other points of view [and] other discourses on the same subject’ (Rabinow, 1991, p. 58). Thus, for example, in Chapter 6, a degree of interdiscursivity was identified in student letters to teachers such that discursive elements pertaining to academic performance and affect were encompassed within individual letters. Conversely, in many of the teacher (non-policy) data gathered for this project, interdiscursive elements pertaining to enhancing (measurable) student outcomes, performativity and accountability were certainly apparent.

I must point out here, however, that my identification of interdiscursivity is not intended to dilute the major argument in this thesis that there is demonstrable evidence of two distinct parallel discursive terrains currently being, as it were, traversed by the (good) teacher. Rather, it is my intention to acknowledge the complexity involved in identifying the boundaries and potential interfaces around these parallel discourses of care and calculation and also to highlight where discursive shifts might conceivably emerge.

In this regard, I turn to a discussion of teacher professional standards, which it can be argued, represent a policy text where the emphasis on measurable student outcomes conjoins the belief that there is something that good teachers ‘know’, ‘do’ and ‘value’
which leads to increased academic performance. An examination of the Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) professional standards for teachers, for example, indicates that there are three pillars of standards which concern knowledge, skill/practice and dispositions/beliefs/values. Thus mention is made in the VIT standards of the following: ‘Teachers share an essential and privileged responsibility with parents and communities to care for all young people, and to discover and develop their potential to learn independently and critically throughout their lives’ (p.1). In this way it can be seen that (moral) ‘caring’ discourses are circulating in policy instruments such as teaching standards. Arguably then, if one traces references to values in standards one comes closer to a discourse of care and in terms of the interdiscursivity identified in this thesis, this may be where the most powerful interdiscursive and political work can be done.

Regarding professional standards, such as those produced by the VIT, it can be argued, I suggest, that standards concurrently invoke two assumptions. Firstly, there is an assumption of a high degree of technical competency on the part of high performing teachers. Secondly, attention is given to taking an interest in and connecting with students on a personal level. Noting, however, that in relation to the policy interest in these practices, professional standards have been produced (in consultation with practising teachers) as guidelines to enhance teacher professional practice, the evidence from the student data in this thesis seems to imply that discourses of care are produced from, constitute and circulate around individual cases—from the deeply personal experiences of students and teachers. Therefore, it can be argued that professional standards such as those produced by the VIT must be interpreted through a ‘lived’ sense of what a particular teacher knows, does and values at a particular moment in time, which makes all the difference to a given student’s experience of learning.

A further way of interrogating the notion of interdiscursivity in the empirical data is to note that the teacher data do not suggest that ‘care’ is weak or ineffectual, or devoid of a ‘performance’ component. Indeed, given the number of student letters which praise a beloved teacher’s pedagogical approach, which, in turn, is seen to lead to outstanding academic progress, academic success seems often to reside within a discourse of care, as well as a discourse of calculation (where it takes on a more instrumental inflection). Thus the discourse and practice of academic achievement crosses the terrains of both discourses and, as such, it is an interdiscursive practice.
Thus, for example (teacher) Sophie’s statement, ‘(t)hey [the students] appreciate the content (which has to be there!)’, speaks to affect (e.g., appreciation) and also speaks to the cognitive processes of absorbing content. Arguably, the empirical evidence suggests that the key factor in the interdiscursivity between the discourses of calculation and care is the quest for attaining the best academic performance for every student. It is possibly around this objective, an objective shared by policy makers, teachers and, indeed, students that the current education discourses connect. Further, it is a given that students enjoy academic success and the satisfaction of making good progress, especially in the subjects that they find most enjoyable. Drawing on the empirical evidence, I would argue, however, that a student’s investment in attaining good academic outcomes is often associated in some way with a connection to a particular teacher’s authority, the capacity to be an enabler/adult friend, or as an expert in terms of academic knowledge and pedagogy.

In George’s thank-you letter, for example, there are discourses of care and affect but, importantly, this student speaks of his improvement in terms of a measurable academic outcome associated with his teacher’s input. I mention this here because it seems to speak to the complex nature of the discourses in which George’s letter plays: on the one hand George speaks of ‘affect’ but, on the other, he literally calculates the value of his teacher’s role in his becoming an Associate in Music, Australia: ‘I guess I do owe half my AMUSA to you’. In this letter to his highly esteemed music teacher, George acknowledges his teacher’s part in his academic achievement by reference to his teacher’s ‘support, faith [in him] and [her] understanding’ and, in a compelling discursive (care-full) statement, says: ‘I guess I do owe half of my AMUSA to you’. Thus, there is evidence of interdiscursivity between the discursive terrains of calculation and care since he takes up both a discourse of ‘measurement’ regarding his examination outcome as well as a discourse of care by acknowledging the patience of his teacher.

In addition, identifiable throughout the geography teachers’ responses, is a clear emphasis on helping students to acquire skills and knowledge and to improve cognition and understanding, so that they may then be able to perform well in assessment tasks. There is also a strong sense that good teachers feel accountable to the students (and presumably to other key stakeholders) to teach content engagingly. Thus, there is interdiscursivity around the notion that the best teachers somehow engage students in their learning.
The matter of how this engagement actually takes place in the ‘lived’ experience of the classroom is not, however, the primary concern of policy discourses. In this regard, the policy emphasis on using data to calculate improvement in student performance seems to set up a limitation for interdiscursivity. Indeed it can be observed from the evidence that teachers are caught in a discursive juggle, not only around the desire to improve student academic outcomes, but also around the demands of policy to provide (and constantly document, through data collections) numerical representations of students’ (improved) academic performance. Thus, it is the administrative practices required by policy makers that are potentially problematic for practitioners (Apple, 2009; Stronach, 2010; Taubman, 2009; Webb, 2009).

Indeed, education writers, such as Scanlon (2004) and Groundwater-Smith and Mockler (2003a, 2003b), have conducted research on student perspectives of what defines good teaching with an interest in discerning the attributes of teachers consistently valued by students. Scanlon’s research was directed at uncovering and documenting students’ ‘actual perceptions and experiences’ of good teaching (p. 99) and addressing ‘the lacunae’ (p. 105) in other discussions about standards (i.e., historical, policy and professional). Scanlon reports that what becomes evident are ‘the complex nature of learners’ needs, the significance of teachers in accommodating these needs and the ability of learners to articulate these needs’ (p. 99). Certainly there is, in the student letters data gathered for this research project, a sense that the teacher is positioned through the kind of care that recognises the student’s capabilities and potential—and indeed his or her insecurities and vulnerabilities—in a way that will, ultimately, be effective in leading the student onto a pathway of academic progress.

This thesis contends, however, that the interdiscursivity between policy and practice around student attainment is currently constrained by the dominant policy discourse of measurable student outcomes. With regard to policy texts, discourses of calculation are clearly prevalent. In policy speeches, for example, we see politicians implying that teachers’ performance is intrinsically interlocked with a national responsibility to ‘deliver’ on the Government’s commitment to bring about an Education Revolution in Australia. Although not explicitly stated, the teacher is constructed largely as a means of delivering—as an instrument—this policy directive, which, in turn, has been linked politically to a desired and desirable aspect of social reform, namely, better educational
outcomes for the nation’s students. Thus, seen as a broad discourse of improvement, these political statements at best underscore the significance of the teacher’s role in helping students achieve academic success, but at worst position teachers as a part of the problem, since for every teacher hearing these statements there is a clear message that improvement is the order of the day—that the professional status quo is unacceptable—and arguably no teacher can escape scrutiny.

It can be further argued that interdiscursivity between policy and practice is impeded through media coverage of stories to do with education. Keogh and Garrick (2011, p. 443) make the point that,

The media regularly present negative news articles about teachers and teaching. We find that complex and contradictory moral categories of teachers are assembled within and through the text. We then zoom out to consider the potentially detrimental effects of such public discourses on teachers and the teaching profession…We provide ‘evidence of a public discourse that might be contributing towards continuing concerns and negative public opinion regarding teacher quality and schooling standards’. We argue that such news articles may well work to influence public opinion regarding declining teacher quality and standards, and views of public schools as being in crisis, creating moral panic.

7.8 Conclusion

This chapter argues that there is something of a discursive impasse between discourses of calculation and discourses of care, and that this impasse is an unavoidable and distinctive characteristic of the present day teacher’s experience. Therefore, in the concluding chapter, I propose ways to move towards navigating this discursive impasse, while keeping in view the productive role that interdiscursive practice can play. Specifically, I address the last of the guiding questions for my thesis: What can be done to address concerns around the current imbalance in the discursive practices that constitute the good teacher?
Chapter 8:
Discursive Possibilities

‘Clean River’, 2012, Tomonikon.68

By the term ‘good’ teacher, I mean ... a teacher who knows his or her material, knows the students and loves being in the classroom. A teacher who has all of those three essential ingredients will ensure a learning environment that enables their students to realise their potential. (Sophie Farrow).69

8.1 Introduction

What is a good teacher? Are we currently caught up in dominant discourses that construct the good teacher in terms that are too narrow or too congealed? What would need to happen for a new, more nuanced, more complex discourse to emerge? I begin this chapter with the detailed image of a beautiful free flowing river. When viewing this photograph,

68 Image downloaded 14/6/12 from http://www.dreamstime.com/free-images
69 Sophie Farrow is a practising teacher and study participant who provided student letters, and personal reflection on the significance of these letters.
it is not the two separated rocky terrains that catch the eye (here, metaphorically, the discourses of calculation and care) but the vibrant, stirring and enlivening river flowing through and between these terrains. Accordingly, in this final chapter the interdiscursive possibilities between discourses of calculation and care are explored in the interests of redressing the current discursive imbalance between the two.

The possibility of a new discourse, however, is not envisaged as a union or an amalgam of the two discursive terrains that I have identified in the previous chapter; rather, in keeping with the central premise of Foucauldian theory, it is perceived as a difference. I concur with Graham’s (2005, p. 5) observation that Foucault does not invite ‘prescriptive models’ and therefore research which relies on Foucauldian theory needs to ‘make an effort to remain open to undecidability and resist the closure that systemisation inevitably brings’. To paraphrase Foley (2007, p. 225), possibilities for more fluid practices that incorporate caring impulses while maintaining discourses of calculation, can and do, open up (emphasis in original).

Therefore, I accent in this final chapter the challenges to the discourse of calculation that lie within this discourse; it is these challenges that need to be lifted up to view. In the previous chapter, for example, I note that ‘teachers in the geography study feel a responsibility to ‘globalise’ their students, not so much in keeping with the Government’s economic agenda, but rather for reasons of empathy and compassion’. Thus, it can be argued that the challenge to (the dominance of) calculation lies within the discursive practice of calculation. New shoots of rhizome roots offer variety and complexity. Thus by working the tension between disparate discourses, acknowledging the idea that they can and do intermingle, while seeking all the while to redress the imbalance between these discourses, a productive space between these discourses, an interdiscursive space, may open up. Thus, an underscoring of the level of interdiscursivity between what I have termed discourses of calculation and of care may offset the disconnectedness of the two discursive terrains whist also demonstrating the complexity that attaches to teaching at a situated and lived level.

Accordingly, in this thesis, I have explored Foucault’s concepts regarding the way we think about the connections between individuals (here teachers) and the society in which they live. As Graham (2005, p. 6) recommends, I have endeavoured to engage in ‘a respectful conversation with Foucault, whilst looking to and building on the insight of
others’. From this conversation I have been able to identify a thwarting dissonance between policy and practice in the way we currently construct the good teacher.

In this concluding chapter I revisit the research questions, in light of the literature, in order to discuss a series of implications arising from my findings. In so doing, I indicate the potential contribution made by this thesis—albeit limited in its research scope—to current sociological understandings of the good teacher. Nevertheless, there remains a weighty and unsettling concern in much of the critical sociological educational literature, and certainly on the part of some practitioners discussed in this thesis—here I am thinking particularly of the reflections of the teachers who offered their thank-you cards and letters, as discussed in Chapter 6—regarding the current dominant policy discourses on the good teacher.

8.2 Future Challenges

Pertaining to the current neo-liberal period, the literature I reviewed can be viewed to a significant degree as antagonistic towards the ‘madness’ (Ravitch, 2010; Stronach, 2010) and ‘terrors’ (Ball, 2003) and policy deficiencies (Alexander, 2010b; Apple, 2009; Darling-Hammond, 2010) of the dominant discourse of performativity. As I commented in Chapter 2, popular literature also echoes serious concerns about teacher identity and social relations for the good teacher in the current times. However, there are also commentators who contribute to the literature by viewing the current times from the perspective of ‘a thousand possibilities’ (Zembylas, 2007a), particularly around the impetus of matters of affect (and student emotional well-being) in student learning (Day, 2004; Rompelman, 2002; Seligman, 1995). Thus, a discursive focus on affect in teaching is currently bumping up against the antagonism felt by some scholars and practitioners over an elision of consideration of educational ‘purpose’ (Biesta, 2009). There is ‘a hope’ for reform that, as Zembylas (2007a, pp. ix) puts it,

entails a political aspect in that it encourages the development of praxis which overcomes any despair. In the present context, to be hopeful and to overcome despair means not to take globalization, for example as the only possibility…even when one does not have a better alternative to offer.

Ultimately, the implications of this thesis (and future research in this area) are very likely to be informed by what we (as academics, practitioners and policy makers) do with these
seemingly contesting truth claims about the good teacher highlighted in this research. Drawing on Cheek’s (2005, p. 305) notion of what postmodern approaches to research methods in the social sciences are about, my own assumptions in analysing (dominant) discourses concerning the good teacher align with the theoretical inclination of postmodern research towards ‘challenging, interrupting and interrogating aspects of reality that are so central or entrenched in our understanding of what is “normal” that we come to take them for granted’.

Indeed, in the process of writing this thesis, I have thought deeply about the assumptions I brought to the classroom and how the emphasis on affect circulating in my own schooling, my family and my adult life produced (and reproduced) the teacher that I became. It has therefore come as something of a shock to analyse and consider the implications of the current neo-liberal socio-economic agenda, or as Ball (2012a) has termed it recently, the neo-liberal imaginary. This is because it has led to a profound sense of disharmony between the way I enacted my practice and what I now understand to be the dominant education (neo-liberal policy) s currently circulating.

However, I have also considered Gough’s (2005, p. 303) observation pertaining to postmodern perspectives and I am, therefore, committed to avoiding any attempt to produce essentialist alternative metanarratives around the good teacher, accepting that postmodern perspectives in social inquiry ‘are not a uniform set of shared assumptions but rather, a loose collection of ways of thinking about how to go beyond modernist perspectives without producing alternative metanarratives’.

Undeniably, on the one hand, there are serious concerns in the literature with what Yates (2011) terms our ‘hypnotic fascination with tests taking priority over what we teach our kids’ and especially, in the current neo-liberal setting, questions regarding ‘what are we teaching our children’ and the ‘stories’ they hear ‘about who we are and our place in this world, and what impact will this have on future generations?’ (Yates, 2011, para 14). Yates’s concern about the wisdom of current neo-liberal policy is echoed by Boxley (2003) who troubles the long-term worth of accepting the competitive needs of the economy as a rationale for educational reform against other less measurable objectives. Thus, Boxley (p. 15) offers the following view on the potential future consequence of current neo-liberal policy for teachers:
Teachers’ relationships with the people with whom they work, colleagues and learners, would…become relationships to ‘things’, for in handing over their labour-power in the educational marketplace, teachers would become alienated from the products of that labour, which, as Marx\textsuperscript{70} makes clear, seem to exist only insofar as they are expressible in the commodity form of level descriptors or performance management success criteria, operating in relation to each other, beyond the producer’s control.

On the other hand, the empirical evidence from the geography study shows a cohort of teachers who have outstanding content knowledge and a clear and comprehensive knowledge of good pedagogy as it pertains to teaching geography. As outlined in Chapter 5, much of the video data involves a discussion of the good professional decision-making that goes on, both prior to and during the course of an accomplished teacher’s lessons. Arguably, the accomplished teachers videoed have highly impressive capabilities, actions and complementary dispositional qualities. Indeed, although some teachers experience a degree of tension around the ‘pressures’ associated with compliance with curriculum and examination demands, engaging all students in classroom activities, timetabling issues and factors that affect student attendance at lessons, their skills and accomplishment (as good teachers) are clearly evident to their peers.

I venture to argue, however, that the thwarting factor, even for accomplished teachers (here I include the geography teachers and the teachers who wrote reflections on their thank-you letters) can be attributed to the fact that the ‘accomplishment’ of the (good) teachers does not protect them from the constant imperative for producing ‘measurable’ improvement, as well as the more complex demands of modern-day teaching.

### 8.3 Revisiting the Research Questions and Findings

In the light of the two contrasting discursive terrains of calculation and care established in Chapter 7, the guiding questions for this research project take on a new significance. That

\textsuperscript{70} In Marx’s view, the underlying structure of society is an economic one based on the means of production and means of distribution. Foucault did not agree with the Marxian conception of power as instrumental, that is, as the possession of the dominant class; for Foucault the types of discourse that society makes function as true are constantly changing and what is constituted as the truth changes across history. I contend, however, that Marx’ notion of instrumentalism is pertinent to the current discussion.
is to say, the questions that follow and that hitherto seemed unwieldy in their scope can be addressed, fruitfully, through a focus on the tension between discourses of calculation and care.

1. What discourses of the good teacher are circulating in education policy, practice and academic arenas?
2. What do the measurements and reporting that characterise contemporary education policy in Australia leave out or render invisible?
3. What might be the consequences of these discourse omissions for teaching and learning?
4. What can be done to address these consequences?

Thinking with Foucault, I have formulated answers to each of these questions. This process has entailed investigating how, within certain power relations—in this case the current neo-liberal education policy ensemble around measurable outcomes and student performance—certain truth claims have led to the marginalisation, within policy discourses, of knowledges around teacher care. In the case of teachers’ professional lives, I argue that discourses of care have been positioned (by the dominant discourse, calculation) as a subjugated knowledge that is undervalued, at the general level, in society. As a consequence, knowledge/power practices around the good teacher’s care has become relatively unappreciated and unacknowledged within education, other than, it seems, at the local level.

Therefore, I now present a commentary pertaining to the third and fourth of the key questions of this inquiry regarding the ways in which an opening might be created for a discursive shift, towards the production of the good teacher which is less dominated by ‘calculation’.

Firstly, it is worth noting that the production of the good teacher’s identity is shaped by recent policy developments. Bree, as an early career teacher, feels frustrated by the current policy focus on outcomes:

When I think about the current policy ideas of ‘good’ teaching, I feel that…the focus on…NAPLAN and percentage [of high scores] appears crude and simplistic—the teaching and learning environment is much more complex.
These developments are particularly prominent in Australian education which, as Comber and Nixon (2009, p. 219) claim, is now ‘firmly ensconced within the government’s productivity agenda [such that]… it now seems impossible to discuss high-quality education without the insistence on reporting, standardised curriculum and assessment metrics’. The discourse of calculation resonates with this overarching description of the neo-liberal approach to education and to teachers and constructs the teacher’s identity as a worker in the education sector who is accountable to the public as a generator of high (measurable) student academic outcomes.

In contrast, the discourse of care currently sits mostly below the policy radar and, it might be argued, has far less impact on the production and reproduction of current teacher identity. In addition, the discourse of calculation can be seen to position subjects, both students and teachers, in a minor role in the current power structure. Moreover, notwithstanding the empirical (student) data that good teacher-student relationships are an integral component in academic performance, the good teacher’s identity is shaped by the policy assumption that all good scholastic achievement is measurable.

Secondly, despite the dominance of policy discourses around student outcomes and performance, an argument has been made that there are elements of interdiscursivity in the data analysed in this study which, when highlighted publically, might begin to redress the imbalance. As discussed in Chapter 7, there are appropriately and logically, numerous discursive elements in the student letters recognising the importance of academic improvement and/or the satisfactions of unexpected academic performance—albeit as a result of the esteemed teacher’s approach to his or her teaching. Correspondingly, the geography video material seems to frequently advocate a focus on learning and skill acquisition for students which is consistently delivered by a teacher who genuinely cares about his or her students, as well as the academic outcomes achieved by them.

Ultimately the empirical evidence from this research project suggests, as I have already mooted, that the discourses of calculation and care can be considered to be mutually implicated. That is, one cannot have calculation (here, high achievement) without caring teachers. Correspondingly, a case could be made that the converse is also the case since care, on the part of the good teacher, demands a clear vision and sense of purpose for education, which is, irrefutably, at least at one significant level, to do with academic
advancement. Thus, education and schooling must be seen, after all, as practices that involve more than care.

Therefore, as Biesta (2007b, p. 26) reminds us, it is timely to explore education in terms of ‘what kind of understanding of the notion of education might be relevant and maybe even necessary in the current times (emphases in original). In terms of relating these challenging ideas to my thesis, I note that Biesta (p. 34) states that it is not necessary to do away with judgement (here calculation regarding student academic performance) in education and in politics. Rather, it appears that what is needed on the (general) landscape of calculation—in order to make it more than just ‘socialisation’—is the kind of (local) care that ‘does not specify what students and children should be before they arrive’ at school (emphasis in original).

Biesta (2007b, p. 34) claims in fact that we, as teachers, ‘should let them [students] arrive first, and only then engage in judgement’. Indeed, in acknowledging the riskiness of this step in the current climate of ‘socialising’ calculation, the role of the good teacher is held up to view: taking Biesta’s notion of education (in contrast to socialisation), the good teacher’s role is, at least in part, concerned with ‘wider questions about the formation of human beings and the ways in which they find their place in the world’ (p. 26).

Indeed, in both the teacher and student data care is seen as manifested in the careful preparation and execution of lessons. In rethinking how the good teacher might be produced differently, the broadening of the characteristics of discourses of calculation, that is, the political manoeuvring and deliberate manipulation in the production of policy texts might be a starting point.

However, in all of the discussion produced thus far in my thesis, I acknowledge that the discursive dissonance that I have investigated is not necessarily inclusive of the multifarious stakeholders that comprise the field of education. Thus, arguably, there are inevitably on-going complications in terms of deciding whose voice and whose perspective are apposite to the issue of the construction of the good teacher. In this research project, I may have flattened out a range of discursive practices from all three data sets, in order to discuss two major discursive terrains. It has not been my intention, however, to skip, smother or leave out key factors. I believe that my contrast of the discourses of calculation and care has taken place, to use Mol’s terms, at a site and at a
moment when a comparison might have the effect of showing a new variety, a variation on the current discursive terrain around the good teacher. The comparison, then, is hopefully a constructive one.

It needs to be stated, however, that the chosen research design for this project limited the size and scope of data sets to a group of three, each of which is arguably incomplete or partial in its reporting on a particular discursive patterning. For example, the student letters were drawn from a specific group of students, namely, students who have chosen to express gratitude to a particular teacher. In addition, I have been selective in the representations of policy and, similarly, the ARC geography study, although extensive in its reach, cannot be seen as an all-embracing rendering of the accomplished teacher in current times. Nevertheless, in the clear light of the potential limitations of this thesis I now venture to take my findings a step further and envisage a discursive terrain on which we might think the good teacher differently. Drawing on Mol’s (2002) challenge to comparison, I consider whether it can be equally argued that the effect of holding the discursive comparison (of calculation and care) up to view might be productive of a variety in our construction of the good teacher.

Making comparisons implies simplification. But there is not just one kind of possible simplification: quite different things may be skipped, bracketed, smothered or left out. There are simplifications that flatten the world and others that do not. And depending on the site where and the moment when comparisons are made, the effects of making them show variety as well. (p. 21)

For example, regarding a different future construction of the good teacher, this variety might be characterised by an investigation of the way calculation and care are reciprocally or conjointly implicated in good teaching. Thinking with Foucault, perhaps a new truth claim then emerges, in which the power/knowledge duality is not disproportionately focussed on calculation but rather accommodates, discursively, an intersection—or indeed a crossing over—of discursive practices around care (and its vital impact on student learning) and calculation. The underscoring of this interdiscursivity is envisaged as a challenge to the discourse of calculation currently advocated by education policy makers as an effective strategy for enhancing student (measurable) academic outcomes. Such a possibility resonates with Singleton and Law’s (2012) notion of ‘breathing spaces’—seen here as a respite from performativity—where, at the local level
at least, general practices are re-worked by teachers with the needs of local students in mind.

In Foucault’s later writings an ethical dimension of trying ‘to change something in the minds of people’ (1988, p. 10) emerges. More broadly, Foucault succeeded in producing a body of work that forces its readers ‘to re-examine their relationship to truth, to power and to self’ (Brown, 2000, p.1). I include here a further comment from Brown (2000) pertaining to Foucault’s significant contribution to an understanding of the human condition:

His [Foucault’s] ability to teach readers to transform their lives is due, among other things, to his refusal to prescribe a set of universal paradigms of truth, power or self and to his relentless belief that people are free. (p.1)

Accordingly, the empirical evidence from this research, of an imbalance in the relative dominance of discourses of calculation and care, might embolden a re-examination within contemporary society of our relationship to truth, to power and to self, in terms of how we currently think the good teacher.

8.4 Thinking Differently about Good Teachers

I see this potential rethinking of the good teacher as a way of releasing good teachers from the confines of feeling lodged between two discursive terrains where dissonance does not auger well for achieving optimal learning environments for teaching and learning in our schools. Thinking differently about the good teacher might be tolerant (but not necessarily inclusive) of various valid and important education foci, both at the general and the local levels. For Giles (2011), this centrally involves ‘an attunement to notice’ how relationships matter in the classroom context (p. 80). Accepting, of course, that it is difficult to articulate definitively what good teacher-student relationships mean, the notion of teachers and students being attuned to each other is highly enlightening. That is to say, in accordance with Zembylas’s (2007a, p. 1) notion of the ‘pedagogy of unknowing’, and through adapting Mol’s (2008) concept of considering ‘the other’ (which here I interpret as the student in the sting of the classroom), an opening may be created for the emergence of a new discursive practice.
Chapter 8: Discursive Possibilities

To this end, and with this possibility in mind, I wondered how an educator might tinker with the idea of new discursive possibilities in a practical sense. Therefore, as an experiment, I ventured to design a hypothetical series of guiding questions, as criteria for observations or interviews, which are typical of current school procedures but are ‘tolerant’ of dissonant discursive terrains.\footnote{On the topic of discursive shift or new discursive imaginings, it is important, given the methodological framework of this study, to return to Foucault’s notion of the school and its operations. Hunter (1996) highlights the dimensions of the Foucauldian concept of the school and its workings (including its teachers). Foucault’s concern is to describe, not the ideals of education or its hidden class functions, but the detailed organisation of the (monitorial) school as a purpose-built pedagogical environment assembled from a mix of physical and moral elements: special architectures; devices for organising space and time; body techniques; practices of surveillance and supervision; pedagogical relationships; and procedures of administration and examination. I mention this here to obviate any sense in this thesis that the task of rethinking schools, with all the infrastructure, tradition and processes (which potentially render those in schools ‘docile’) is other than formidable.} Below I present a sample of the kinds of questions I envisaged, in this case, those that might be used to interview teachers for teaching roles. Hypothetically, the participants, comprising various stakeholders from the school context, could be asked to ‘weight’ the importance of each interview question. In this way, the teaching and learning experience might from a different discursive perspective be held up to view and such practices might then pave the way for greater attunement to notice how variously the discourse and practice of the good teacher can be defined.

**Table 8.1: Interview questions relating to calculation and to care**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions pertaining to calculation</th>
<th>Questions pertaining to care</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What strategies have you employed to maximise student academic performance?</td>
<td>Can you think of an example of how your care of students has paved the way for good learning opportunities?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What do you currently do to support the Australian Government’s policy regarding improving literacy and numeracy outcomes at your school?</td>
<td>What do you do at the start of a lesson to indicate to students that ‘knowing’ them, individually, is very important to you?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are you doing to track student performance outcomes against data produced by like schools and why is this important in the current times?</td>
<td>How is your teaching practice affected by your awareness of your own passion for your subject and your time with students in the classroom?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In this thesis I have been able to contemplate the re-problematising of the two major discourses by postulating the progress of discursive practices around the good teacher towards those which are more nuanced such that, potentially, education policy is driven...
not so much by ‘fact’ (discourses of calculation) but by what Latour\textsuperscript{72} (2004), and later Decuypere, Simons and Masschelein (2011), term ‘concern’. Indeed it was Latour who initially explored the tension between matters of fact and matters of concern, arguing that the capacity to be critical has run out of steam as a result of the threat of being excessively absorbed in facts.

According to Latour (2004, p. 232), matters of fact are ‘only partial and…very polemical, very political renderings of matters of concern and only a subset of what could also be called states of affair’. Decuypere et al. (2011) state that, in ‘denominating’ educational realities in the current times, the constituting of discursive practices can be examined. Through this naming we might conceive of a particular state of affairs in different ways to current policy makers who assume, as Decuypere et al. (p. 119) observe, that ‘every practice can be improved’ and that this improvement can only take place if the methods of measurement are as accurate as possible Thus, through his reference to possible changes in the way we configure the good teacher, a window is opened as to how a new discourse around the good teacher might evolve:

Tentatively, we can put forward the issue/controversy ‘what constitutes good education’ as a possible matter of concern…it can appear in terms of matters of concern around which a public is gathered as well…. A concern-oriented policy…would thus refuse to reduce the debate regarding ‘education’ to an allotted matter (that is ‘known’ and, hence, in hands of a small group of experts), but would treat such a debate as an issue or a matter of concern, which has the potential to generate a concerned public centred around this issue. (p. 130)

I acknowledge, however, that this discursive shift is a formidable challenge indeed. However, I suggest that the possibility of rethinking the discourses that produce the good teacher might be enhanced through the circulating of discursive elements pertaining to concern. Here I refer to ‘concern’ that acknowledges high academic performance as a given, at the general level, and also recognises a local phenomenon, sometimes operating within the discourses of calculation (and sometimes even seemingly against discourses of

\textsuperscript{72} Clearly I have not chosen to focus on Actor Network Theory in my thesis and it is in this light that I acknowledge only fleetingly the ideas of Latour and Decuypere, specifically to borrow from their writing around ‘concern’.
calculation when the overall well-being of the student is a consideration), namely discourses of care.

8.5 The Purpose of the Good Teacher

Regarding the importance of restoring the balance in education discourses, which Decuyper et al. (2011) regard as a formidable challenge indeed, I believe that this process might be partly facilitated through a reconnection with the purpose of education.

Consequently, I have chosen to reiterate and accentuate, in the concluding sections of this thesis, the salient ideas of Gert Biesta (currently at The University of Stirling, UK), whose writings (Biesta, 2007a, 2007b, 2009), mentioned in various sections throughout this thesis, critically evaluate the current evidence-based education against what he sees as the ideal purpose of education. This broad purpose, in Biesta’s view is ‘a thoroughly moral and political practice that requires continuous democratic contestation and deliberation’ (2007b, p. 1).

In discussing education in general, Biesta (2009) makes the point that there is currently very little explicit discussion on what constitutes good education. Thus, by extension, I contend that there is very little explicit discussion on what constitutes the good teacher. In Biesta’s view, however, it is possible to make a systematic analysis of three composite elements that constitute the purpose of education (and inform the purpose of the good teacher’s role): making provision, through good teaching, for students’ ‘qualification, socialisation and subjectification’ (p. 33). This recommendation, I suggest, might provide a valuable starting point in the process of re-problematising current discourses circulating around the good teacher.

Reasonably, Biesta acknowledges (2009, p. 39) that a major function of education lies in the qualification of children. This he describes as providing students with ‘knowledge, skills and understanding’ and often also with ‘the disposition and forms of judgement that allow them to ‘do something’—a ‘doing’ which can range from the very specific…to the much more general’. Yet equally significant is what Biesta sees as the socialisation function, whereby we become ‘members of and part of particular social, cultural and political orders’, which play an important role in the continuation of culture and tradition. In addition there is the subjectification function of education, through which individuals,
to an extent, resist these orders by developing their own independence and sense of autonomy (2009, p. 40).

Biesta (2009, p. 44) makes the case that a concern for ‘good’ education (one that embraces the three elements in the purpose of education) rather than a concern for effective education or for learning as such, that is, without any specification of the learning ‘of what’ and ‘for what’, should be central to our considerations. I believe that looking at the good teacher through this nuanced lens may be advantageous to the emergence of a new and more workable discourse around good teaching.

8.6 Concluding Comments

In a sense I have been writing this thesis, in my mind, since 1975 when, as a twenty-four year old, I sat in Diploma of Education lectures at Monash University, a leading Victorian university. The political discourse then—to the degree I was aware of it—was around controlling classes and getting the students to jump through hoops in examinations. However, the following year, raw and perpetually exhausted, I did indeed experience what Bree calls ‘falling in love’ with many of my students—and in the 25 years of teaching that ensued, my students invariably performed well in examinations whilst, I believe, being cared for well. Altogether, my research has sought to expand the current understanding of the ways in which notions and practices of the good teacher are configured. It has investigated how the Australian community, in the current times, builds and maintains notions of the good teacher through the discourses that disseminate and reinforce them.

The findings of this thesis suggest that the current discursive dissonance around the good teacher is far from ideal. However, Foucauldian discourse theory points to the possibility of a new era in ‘thinking’ the good teacher, an era which makes provision for multiple and more complex representation of the good teacher to play out and open up the discursive terrain. For Foucault, the current times should be regarded less as an epoch than as an array of questions, and that the coherence with which the present presents itself to us and in which guise it is re-imagined by [so much] social theory is something ‘to be acted upon’, something which ‘needs to be cut up and decomposed’ so that it can ‘be put together contingently out of heterogeneous elements each having their own conditions of possibility’ (Barry, Osborne & Rose, 1996, p. 5).
Furthermore, Foucault’s ‘ethical’ consideration of the future foresees that ‘the received fixedness and inevitability of the present is destabilised, shown as just sufficiently fragile as to let in a little glimpse of freedom—as a practice of difference—through its fractures’ (Barry et al., 1996, p. 5). At the vanguard of such change might be Singleton and Law’s (2012, p. 9) notion of both policy makers and teachers being ‘permissive of other realities and the practices that carry these’. Of great interest now is further exploring the ways in which the general (in policy discourse) can tolerate the local working within it.

Furthermore, based on the concept that society defines people in a particular way, Foucauldian theory invites a consideration of the effects of the current policy construction of the good teacher, for the wider society as well as for teachers and students. However, the discourses identified as playing out in the empirical data of this thesis suggest a somewhat entrenched discursive dissonance around teacher care and what is now the taken-for-granted truth claim regarding the good teacher as an instrument for producing high measureable student outcomes. In turn, such dissonance invites an evaluation of the discourses underpinning professional judgement in regard to the good in practice (Mol, 2008) and the purpose in education, as it is implied through policy and practice discourses (Biesta, 2009).

Foucault, however, does not invite us to work towards a convergence of discursive practices; rather he offers hope for something different. Perhaps Foucault’s theorising on discourse—highlighting as it does a constitutive form of knowledge which fashions subjects—helps to point policy makers and educators in what Zembylas (2007a, p. 117) terms ‘the direction of fugitive and inventive work in education which views affectivity as a transformative investment’. Given this encouraging possibility, the questions that began my thesis—What is a good teacher? and Who decides?—now resound with a transformative potency, one that aligns more comfortably with this researcher’s long experience in the classroom. It seems fitting then that this thesis began with an image of a blossoming tree.
References


Gillard, J. (2009b, March 27). Speech delivered at the National Public Forum convened by the Australian Education Union, Canberra, ACT.


References


Appendices
Appendix 1: Plain Language Statement

Plain Language Statement

Dr Dianne Mulcahy (Supervisor)
Melbourne Graduate School Of Education
ph: 8344 8656
Mrs Jeanne Shaw (Doctoral student)
ph. 9598 1973

Project title: The ‘good’ teacher in contemporary times: A discourse analytic approach

Introduction

This research project seeks to explore conceptions of ‘good’ teaching as held by practising teachers, students, policymakers and members of the general public. It is concerned to investigate a possible mismatch between conceptions of good teaching held by teaching practitioners and students and by policymakers and the general public. The context for the research is the new era of accountability and transparency to which teachers must adjust today. This project has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee.

As a teacher who is or has been acknowledged by her students to be a quality teacher, you are invited to participate in this project.

What will I be asked to do?

Should you agree to participate, you will be asked to contribute in two ways. Firstly, by providing photocopies of original ‘Thank-you letters’ and/or cards from students and secondly, by responding to a short series of written reflection prompts. We estimate that the time commitment required of you will not exceed 30 minutes.

How will my confidentiality be protected?

We intend to protect your anonymity and the confidentiality of your responses to the fullest possible extent, within the limits of the law. We will remove any references to personal information that might allow someone to guess your identity. You should note, however, that as
Appendix 1: Plain Language Statement

the number of people we seek to interview is very small, it is possible that someone may still be able to identify you. The research data will be kept in the Melbourne Graduate School of Education for five years from the date of publication. After such time the data will be destroyed.

How will I receive feedback?

Once the thesis arising from this research has been completed, a brief summary of the findings will be available to you on application at the Melbourne Graduate School of Education. It is also possible that the results will be presented at academic conferences.
Appendix 2: Contextual Information on Accomplished Geography Teachers’ Lessons

Katrina’s lessons on Geelong (Samples 1 and 2)

Located at a large non-government boys’ school in metropolitan Melbourne, the topic of Katrina’s lessons is regional centres: the case of Geelong was triggered by the premiership win of the Australian Football League team Geelong in 2007. In the first of two lessons the teacher concentrates on the Victorian city of Geelong as a significant regional centre. Having compiled a data broadsheet about Geelong, she uses it to teach skills and to raise awareness of the various roles that Geelong plays as a regional centre. The broadsheet was compiled from information from the Geelong Chamber of Commerce, atlases, sports information, the Bureau of Meteorology, newspapers and the Australian Bureau of Statistics. In the second lesson, the boys are forming the concept of relative location by considering and measuring the distance that the regional city of Geelong is from metropolitan Melbourne.

Steve’s Lessons on ‘Coasts’ (Samples 3 and 4)

Located at a large government co-educational school in metropolitan Melbourne, this Year 9 class is preparing to embark on fieldwork in a coastal environment approximately 15 kilometres from the school. The first lesson focuses on developing students’ skills in field sketching using a photograph that the teacher has sourced from the Internet. Students have not experienced geography fieldwork before. In the second lesson, this class embarked on their first geography fieldtrip for the year. The field trip took place along the Victorian coastline of Port Phillip Bay and, later that day, the ocean beaches of the Mornington Peninsula. During the field trip, the teacher encourages students to concentrate on coastal processes that have been studied previously in class.

Rachel’s lessons on ‘Rivers/Burma disaster’ (Sample 5)

This sample of geography teaching is taken from the beginning of a lesson in which the students are studying rivers. It is their first lesson after the cyclone Nargis devastated Southern Burma on 2 May 2008. This teacher, in a medium-sized non-government co-educational school in non-metropolitan Victoria, is conducting a discussion about the disaster with her year 8 class before returning to their lesson on river landforms and processes of erosion, transportation and deposition.

Jason’s lessons on ‘Population’ (Samples 6a and 6b)

This year 12 class was held at a medium-sized non-government girls’ school in metropolitan Adelaide. As part of the year 12 course, the students have been studying population geography ‘mostly on a global scale’. In the first lesson (6a), the teacher’s stated purpose is to get students to ‘look at the population of Australia and try to relate it to what you have done on population and relate it to what you are doing now on environment and ecosystem and ecological footprints’. In the second lesson (6b), the teacher was attempting to get his students to ‘think about the facts and make them think and predict…get them to try and predict perhaps what they think Australia’s population should be’.

On the whole I have not deemed it necessary to distinguish between the first and second lessons of teachers in the analysis of comments; it is nevertheless relevant to see the sequencing of activities in the case of teachers who recorded more than one lesson.
Jason’s lesson on ‘Topographical Mapping’ (Sample 7)

Here Jason is teaching in the same setting as above but this time to year 10 girls. The teacher is revisiting topographical mapping skills. He wanted to help the students revise their understandings, and extend their knowledge, by introducing some new skills. This lesson concentrated on scale, bearings and the introduction of sketch maps developed from the topographical maps. The teacher intended that this lesson would ultimately assist the students to prepare for the final exam.

Chris’ lessons on countries in the Asia Pacific region (Sample 8)

Located at a large non-government girls’ school in metropolitan Sydney, this year 10 class is engaged in a study of countries of the Asia Pacific region. The task for this class was to research aid organisations (World Vision, AusAID and Global Education) and use the information gathered via work in different groups – computer-based and paper-based – to create a poster. The teacher provided various resources and encouraged the groups to liaise and negotiate.

Ron’s lesson on the ‘Olympics’ (Sample 9)

This composite 3-4 classroom at a primary school in country Victoria has been working on the topic of the Olympics (which were being held at the time of the filming). The grade initially generated questions concerning what they’d like to know about the Olympics and, along with the teacher, identified five areas ‘that you couldn’t not touch on’. The five areas were: human rights; modern Olympics; ancient Olympics; Olympic cheats; and facts and records).

Allen’s lesson on ‘Natural Hazards’ (Sample 10)

After studying natural hazards, and investigating the characteristics of the small island of Montserrat in the Caribbean, students completed a practice simulation prior to the lesson. Set within a large government co-educational school in metropolitan Melbourne, in the lesson under consideration students are working in teams of five, with each student having an expert role. They have developed an evacuation plan and are responding to a simulation in which a hurricane approaches Montserrat at the same time as volcanic activity occurs on the island. Students analyse the data and decide if they should evacuate the population and, if so, where it would be safe to move them.

Ben’s lesson on ‘Earthquakes and Volcanoes’ (Sample 11)

Located at a large government co-educational school in metropolitan Melbourne, this year 9 geography class has just begun a topic on plate tectonics. In this lesson they predict the global distribution of earthquakes and volcanoes, marking their predictions on a world outline map. They then undertake an analysis of the distribution of earthquakes and volcanoes using a data set available in ArcMap (a Geographical Information System). The lesson is designed to provide a platform so that students can develop their own research questions for a major project.
Reflection Prompt Response Form

The purpose of the reflection is to capture your thinking about teaching and your relationships with your students. I invite you to make brief entries in response to the reflection prompts below. These can be emailed to me at jeshaw@exgratia.com.au. The data is confidential and will not be used for any purpose other than this research project. As with other communication regarding this project, you will not be identified.

Please enter brief details in the boxes provided.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years of teaching experience</th>
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<th>Year levels of secondary teaching e.g., Year 7, Year 8 and Year 10</th>
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<th>Age group (optional) E.g. under 30 under 40; under 50; 50+</th>
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The writing is designed to be open-ended. The following sentence stems may provide triggers for your thinking:

Since finding and rereading my ‘thank-you’ letters and cards from students, I have been mulling over …
When I think about the current policy ideas of ‘good’ teaching, I feel that …

By the term ‘good’ teacher, I mean …

When I think about working with students within my classroom, what immediately springs to mind is …

The more I think about notions of the ‘good’ teacher and ‘good’ teaching, the more I would like to confirm that …
At this moment, 16 months after the election of the Rudd Government, we are delivering on our commitment to bring about an Education Revolution in this country. Education is now acknowledged as a major social good, with a big role to play in our economic fortunes, something unrecognised for too long…. During last year I argued that disadvantage is not destiny: that we have a responsibility to every child in Australia to deliver them the highest quality education. During last year I argued that nothing matters more than the quality of teaching to the improvement of educational outcomes for those children…. And during last year I argued for a new era of transparency, a new era of accountability, that would mean we would all be held to account for actions – politicians, school leaders and teachers. A new beginning. We went to the election in 2007 arguing that Australian families deserved better…. That it was possible to undertake ambitious, long term reform through collaboration. We’re now delivering…. A new focus on accountability for outcomes, rather than control over inputs…. A new era of transparency, which for the first time in our history provides details of individual school performance along with relevant contextual information. A new framework for accountability that will track performance and resourcing consistently across sectors, systems and jurisdictions in Australia. A new investment in teacher professionalism, developing national standards against which teachers can demonstrate their achievements and supporting excellence among advanced and accomplished teachers…. The need for transparency. These principals have shown that massive improvements are possible in every school. That is why I am unapologetic about my commitment to a new era of transparency. I understand some of your concerns about the misuse of school performance data. I understand that league tables based on raw test scores can create a misleading picture and make the jobs of principals and teachers that much harder…. Without reliable, comprehensive information about both need and impact, how can we ever be confident that we are applying the right resources and learning strategies to achieve the best results for every child? And while public scrutiny might make all of us uncomfortable from time to time, so it should. I accept the desire of teachers not to be judged by narrow or misleading measures. But we serve the public. We are accountable to the public. And we can’t shield ourselves from public scrutiny. Nor should we. The legitimacy of a publicly funded education system must flow from public confidence and trust in it – and from the extent to which it is able to demonstrate quality and improvement…. There will be plenty of time in 2010 and 2011 to settle the form of the review, conduct the review and deal with its report…. We are committed to building a dynamic, high performing school system…. The National Partnerships create the opportunity to confront tough choices about reform and to build approaches that really work in practice.
## Appendix 5: Three Discourse ‘Components’ in Viewing Diaries

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</table>
Discourses of Gratitude and Appreciation

Moral Authority
- caring
- compassion
- acceptance
- affiliation
- morality
- honouring
- preparation for life
- discipline
- ethics
- inobedence
- character
- impressive
- humanity
- precious
- sensibility
- belief in students

Adult ‘Friend’
- seeking
- ongoing contact
- relaxation
- affection
- fun
- familiarity
- strong bonds
- approachability
- rapport
- informality
- empathy
- friendship
- relationship

Academic Expert
- lessons
- responsibility
- knowledge
- development
- disciplinary
- interesting
- approach
- pedagogical
- support
- passion for subject content
- academic
- hard work
- enjoyable
- help

Appendix 6: Mapping of Student Discourses (adapted from Sanguinetti 2000, p.240)
Minerva Access is the Institutional Repository of The University of Melbourne

Author/s:
Shaw, Jeanne Edith

Title:
The good teacher in contemporary times: a discourse analytic approach

Date:
2012

Citation:

Persistent Link:
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