'Writing up' neighbourhood centres and 'writing in' the professional doctor

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Certificate of Authorship/originality

I certify that the work in this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree except as fully acknowledged within the text.

I also certify that the thesis has been written by me. Any help that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

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Abstract

This thesis presents a dual problematic in a dialogic relationship. The first problem is a concern for the invisibility and lack of acknowledgement of the provision of learning in New South Wales' neighbourhood centres. Taking this as a starting point, this thesis presents a reflexive study that traverses and contributes to several educational debates. A main contribution is to provide a reflexive account of the way that the provision of learning in NSW neighbourhood centres is significant both in its presence in its empirical site of practice, and its absence in the discourses of education. The thesis interrupts this absence by both arguing for its injustice and demonstrating different ways that this provision can be accounted for.

A second problem is both conceptual and methodological, and is conceived through notions of identity. The concern here is with the interplay of identities that come together in the production of a professional doctoral thesis, as well as the way identity is at stake when considering the provision of learning in neighbourhood centres. The related forms of identity addressed here include shaping aspects of organisational identities as well as how the author's identities as researcher, practitioner and candidate for a professional doctorate shapes, and is shaped by, this work.

In response to the dual problematic the thesis presents itself explicitly as a reflexive piece of work that is politically motivated and personally mobilised. Specifically, the thesis provides three different versions and analyses of the provision of learning in neighbourhood centres that draw from three different sources of data. The first is a review of practitioner-oriented literature. The second is the quantitative analysis of a survey of NSW centres. The third is an analysis of interviews with people involved in centres. Reflexively each of these (sub)versions is premised on the desires of the candidate-practitioner-researcher. First the desire to become an authorised knower, second a moral desire to right the world, and third a desire to take pleasure in the production of knowledge. Analytically, each of these data sources and desires are positioned against each other so as to be able to acknowledge as well as work within and against the problematic categories they rely on.

The result is a thesis that refuses, establishes, and destabilises the categories of its own analysis simultaneously. Drawing on Haraway's analogy of research as a game of cat's cradle, and Lyotard's theorisation of the pagan, the thesis develops a new and different conceptual and textual framework and uses this to pursue its investigation. This approach is justified in response to the legitimacy and authority of research and its practice, as well as to calls for developing new textual practices for professional doctorates in Australia.