

Chapter 7

Teacher Educators Using Cogenerative Dialogue to Reclaim Professionalism



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Abstract Teacher education is a space that is constantly in flux as it responds to the increasing requirements of governments to improve the quality of teachers and teaching in specific and measurable ways. The burden of this work falls to academic staff who then must balance their engagement with research, teaching and service within a higher education sector that has a different set of measures and requirements. Against this background, we (authors) have aimed to identify ways to work together to reclaim our professionalism as teacher educators. This chapter recounts one of our experiences as three teacher educators from different parts of Australia and our use of cogenerative dialogue (interactive social space for dialogic exchange) that included material objects to support our collaboration. Vygotsky's conception of individual cognition being connected to social interactions and speech provided a theoretical context for our explorations. Using metalogue as our methodological approach, we document how using material objects during cogenerative dialogue allowed us to reflexively consider possible ways to improve our practice of research and teaching. The implications of this self-study identify the importance of cogenerative dialogue to support teacher educators to reclaim their identity and academic agency as professionals in an era of measurement.

1 Introduction

There is increasing international emphasis on the quality of the teaching profession that has been articulated through government policies as a long list of compliance

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requirements for teacher educators. While Aubrey and Bell (2017) identify recognition of qualifications and a drive for professional status as positive outcomes of the policy agenda, there are also concerns about the implications for the profession. They note the significant gap between the compliance agenda of government and the democratic professionalism and personal philosophies of teacher educators that have often led to acts of resistance towards implementation. In response to the call to reclaim teacher educator professionalism by Heck and Ambrosetti (2018) and inspired by the work of Biesta (2015, 2017), we (authors) have endeavoured to identify ways to engage with our professionalism through research and practice. This chapter recounts our experience as three teacher educators from different parts of Australia and the way we dialogued cogeneratively to improve our practice of research and teaching in a bid to reclaim professionalism.

2 Literature Review

The move to accountability and measurement of performance has impacted on what it means to be a professional in the context of teacher education. Education philosophers such as Biesta (2015) challenge us to reflect on and balance the three purposes of education, namely qualifications, socialisation and subjectification, in our work. How this can be achieved in the context of government policy that has focussed on generating new processes and procedures that quantify and measure the quality of education is unclear. These new processes privilege what can often be measured, narrowing the focus to the qualifications purpose of education. In the context of teacher professionalism, Sachs (2016) suggests that the increasing emphasis on compliance and audit is indicative of a lack of trust in the profession. These same notions can be applied in the context of teacher education where increased energy expended on compliance leads to de-professionalisation. Evetts (2011) describes the shift towards standardisation and managerial responses as the emergence of organisational professionalism with an emphasis on market and organisational imperatives. Occupational professionalism is an alternative conception of professionalism, focussed on the way a profession identifies itself based on the collegiality of the group, trust and partnership with an emphasis on how the profession protects the interests of the public. In the context of education, alternative terms have been used, for example democratic professionalism rather than the current emphasis on managerial professionalism (Sachs, 2016). The challenge remains for teacher educators to navigate the terrain. While the theory may offer various names to professionalism, we also need to acknowledge the requirement to navigate the teacher education landscape and identify the possibilities for us to generate a hybrid *third space* for our professional work (Forgasz, Heck, Williams, Ambrosetti, & Willis, 2018). Generating a third space is important to afford us opportunities for the collaborative development of new possibilities that we cannot achieve in isolation.

Creating a third space will require us to develop a deeper understanding of the impact the compliance and measurement focus has on perceptions of profession-

alism more generally. Research emerging from the United States by Bair (2016) advocates that teacher educators and graduates have a restricted view of professionalism that contrasts with status professionalism in nursing and activist professionalism in social work. Hence, the need for work on teacher educator professionalism is substantiated as a gap in the research literature that requires further exploration. This gap requires further examination of the teacher educator professional identity that goes beyond accounts of teacher educators' experiences of meeting registration requirements (Boei et al., 2015) and moves towards the exploration of our roles as teacher educators engaged in meaningful self-study to reclaim our professionalism (Jónsdóttir, Gísladóttir, & Guðjónsdóttir, 2015).

Understanding more about the role of academic agency in the context of our professionalism provides a further theoretical lens. Our work draws on the definition of human agency advanced by Emirbayer and Mische (1998):

the temporally constructed engagement by actors of different structural environments—the temporal relational contexts of action—which, through the interplay of habit, imagination, and judgment, both reproduces and transforms those structures in interactive response to the problems posed by changing historical situations. (p. 970)

This definition provides a lens for exploring academic agency in terms of how our actions connect with the past, the future and the present. Emirbayer and Mische (1998) identify these three interrelated components of human agency as the iterational element, projective element and practical-evaluative element. Theories of practice (Ortner, 1984) explain the iterational element where our personal and professional histories impact our actions both as routines and conscious reflection on the past. Projective elements relate to creatively planning for future actions in both the short and longer term. The final element incorporates the practical-evaluative aspects of agency referring to present judgements and actions based on an evaluation of the range of alternatives in the context of past and future issues, challenges and opportunities. This ecological view of agency has been used to consider teacher agency regarding curriculum development in school contexts (Priestley, Biesta, & Robinson, 2013). These different notions of agency provide a theoretical frame to reflect on how we critically shape our engagement with the problem of reclaiming academic professionalism.

At the same time, we are interested in how working together on problems or issues can influence professionalism and agency. Hence, we also drew on the role of relational agency (Edwards, 2007, 2009) to support theorisation of our work. Relational agency emphasises collaboration. As teacher educators, we have worked together on a previous project that explored the challenges of professional experience partnerships in the context of teacher education (Willis, Grimmer, & Heck, 2018). As part of this project, we re-engaged with our work on developing and sustaining professional experience partnerships using cogenerative dialogue as an example of relational agency. We described our developing idea of cogenerative dialogue as “the interactive social spaces—actual and virtual—set up by participants to enable dialogical exchange” (Willis et al., 2018, p. 51). Our developing ideas about cogenerative dialogue acknowledge the use of the approach in both the context of research and

practice within the field of teacher education (Elden & Levin, 1991; Roth & Tobin, 2004; Siry, 2011; Tobin, 2006). Building on the insights of the previous work, we then sought to explore additional ways to enable cogenerative dialogue as a possible third space with application to our practice both as teacher educators and as researchers of teaching.

An opportunity to explore alternative ways to engage in curriculum design in higher education emerged from participation in a conference workshop led by Habel (2017). He provided a workshop that introduced the use of LEGO® Serious Play® (LSP) for educational purposes and explored the underlying philosophy and practice of this now open source approach (LEGO Group, 2010). While initially used to inspire future generations of engineers (Grienitz, Schmidt, Kristiansen, & Schulte, 2013) and in business settings to develop the process of creating and solving problems (Hadida, 2013), there is a move towards use in higher education. In this context, it has been adapted for use in the context of student personal development (Anthony, Stead, & Turney, 2017) and application in coursework where reflection on practice is required (Peabody & Noyes, 2017). We were keen to explore how we might draw on the playfulness of LSP as a way to create opportunities for creativity (Pirrie, 2017). In particular, we were keen to explore LSP as a tool for stimulating cogenerative dialogue for both ourselves and our preservice teachers.

3 Research Design and Theoretical Framework

Vygotsky's (1987) conception of individual cognition being connected to social interactions and speech provided a theoretical context of our explorations. Building on our previous work using cogenerative dialogue and metalogue (Heck, Willis, & Grimmett, 2017; Willis & Exley, 2016; Willis et al., 2018), the chapter recounts our self-study of exploring LSP as a tool for cogenerative dialogue on our journey to reclaim professionalism in teacher education by creating cogenerativity and exploring academic agency. We use the term, *cogenerativity*, to refer to an ongoing process that occurs when we enter into dialogic spaces with others in ways that continue and expand each other's knowledge and understanding in new, different and even unexpected ways (Willis, 2016). Willis (2016) wrote, for example, that: "As people talk, their ideas become enmeshed with others' so that their interactions and transactions may lead to changes in an individual's consciousness or perspective" (p. 127). Cogenerativity thus brings different participants together to enable new learnings and insights leading to more action possibilities than one person could likely achieve alone (Willis et al., 2018). We use the term, *metalogue*, to describe analytical conversations we have about the transcribed texts of our original cogenerative dialogues. Roth and Tobin (2004) identify both cogenerative dialogue and metalogue as appropriate ways to engage in practice and also undertake research reflexively. Our work is based on Bateson's (1972) approach to metalogue requiring conversation focussed on the exploration of a problematic subject, and in which the form of the conversation also reflects the subject of the conversation. The analyti-

cal conversations, sometimes conducted as additional conversations in real time and sometimes as exchanges of emails or working asynchronously on written texts, take these original dialogues to the theoretical level—dialoguing about our dialogues to produce theoretical understandings of our insights.

Using metalogue as our methodological approach, we recorded an initial conversation as we explored the use of LSP materials and methodology. During this exploration, we used cogenerative dialogue to support our practice, problematising the topic in the context of our work as initial teacher education academics. The problem posed was “What is metalogue?” We used LSP materials to individually construct a model in response to the question and then shared our models and reflected on the question posed. This conversation took place in person and was recorded and subsequently transcribed. Photographs and video of our explanations of our LSP models were also taken to support the rereading of the transcription. The transcribed text was then revisited and reshaped (through later Skype conversations about the transcript and while taking it in turns to prepare the manuscript of this chapter) to form the findings as well as the discussion (metalogue) which connects the findings to the literature on teacher educator agency, professionalism and cogenerative dialogue.

4 Findings and Discussion

This findings and discussion section demonstrates our cogenerative process and is presented in three sections. Each section presents an excerpt of our original conversation after exploring the LSP materials, followed by metalogue (Parts 1–3) which provides links to literature and theoretical insights identified during our later analytical discussions about the transcript. In the first section, we focus on the LSP process, share our individual photographs and explanations of our built models and provide an example of the ensuing conversation. The second section focuses on the role of metaphor and the limitations and opportunities that are inherent in the LSP materials. The final section focuses on the importance of making space for dialogue as part of our professional practice.

4.1 *Creating Cogenerative Dialogue About Metalogue Using LSP*

As part of our initial exploration, we followed the four essential steps of the LSP *Core Process* (Frick, Tardini, & Cantoni, 2013, p. 8):

Step 1: Posing the question—In this case, our question was, “What is metalogue?”—although it could just have easily been about anything. Questions we typically use with our preservice teachers are, “What is learning?” “What is good teaching?” et cetera.

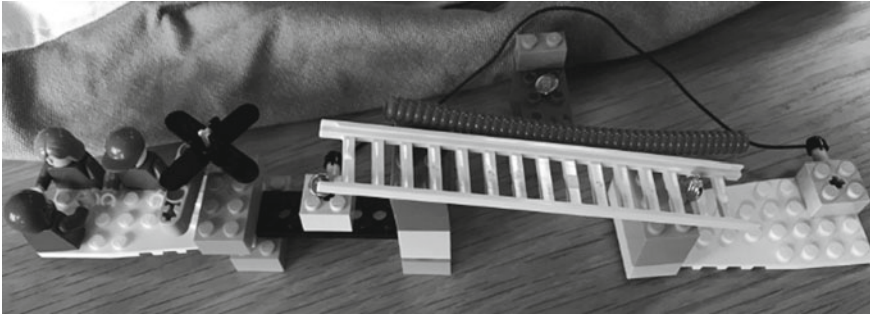


Fig. 1 Metalogue representation by Deb

Step 2: Construct—We each spent about 15 minutes simultaneously using the LSP materials to build our own individual construction representing the idea of metalogue. Although we worked alongside each other, we did not engage in discussion during this time.

Step 3: Sharing—We then took turns to talk about our own model, explaining the meaning and story behind our representation of metalogue.

Step 4: Reflection—Open discussion about each other’s models and what they illuminated about the topic.

After these four steps, we broadened our discussion into a cogenerative dialogue about the process we had experienced and the possibilities this could hold for our own teaching with preservice teachers.

This core process forms the basis of the LSP methodology that was extensively field tested and researched from the mid-1990s until 2010 while the LSP materials and methodology were only available to be used by trained facilitators (Frick et al., 2013). LSP materials are now openly available for public purchase, and methodology documentation and manuals are available to download free of charge through a Creative Commons Licence (LEGO Group, 2010). The question posed and the process used to generate the LEGO models were articulated in the research design section. Hence we pick up the process here at Step 3—Taking turns to share recounts of our representations of metalogue.

The model created by Deb is represented in Fig. 1. Deb begins:

I’ll go first. Well, I suppose I tried to pull together the idea of a bit of, “How does metalogue work as a process?” So, I kind of saw myself at this end of the model being people gathering together, and I tried to make those people look all different. They could be all different walks of life, different kinds of people, but that then they actually have the opportunity to take this journey together. There will be gems along the way and the gems [pointing out the gold pieces] are actually in different locations. The gold represents knowledge or wisdom, but there are potentially different pathways that the group could take or that individuals might take along this journey of the metalogue, but that it all comes together at the end. So, some of these journeys are a bit more tenuous [pointing to the wire], and are a bit more problematic. Some of them are a challenge if you are a little bit claustrophobic [pointing to the tube]. Others of them are quite unstable but that everyone pulls together at the end and ends up in a location with a richer view, collecting the relevant gems along the way. You might not

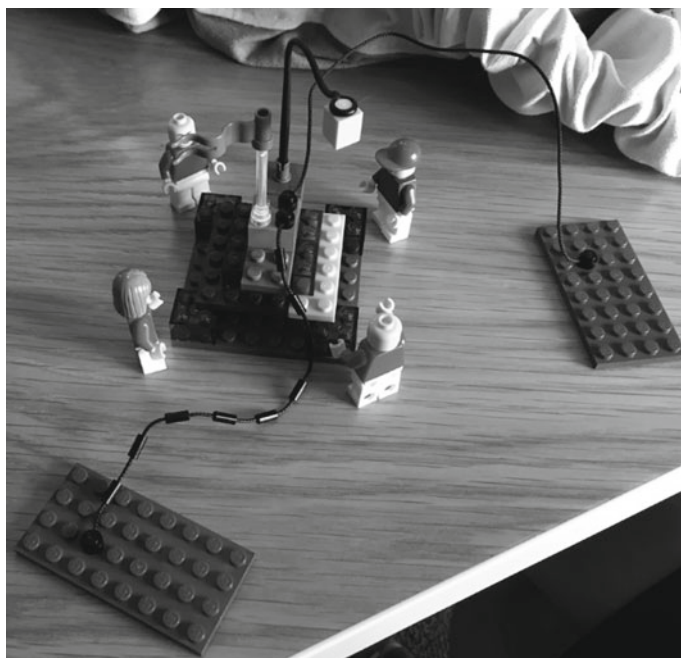


Fig. 2 Metalogue representation by Helen

collect all of them, because no one might take that path, and that's actually okay. But that's the representation. The spinning wheel here is just that there are obstacles in the way that might impede your journey [Debbie spins the wheel and suddenly all the pieces collapse]. And these are all very tenuous. As you see, they fall apart at the blink of an eye!

Helen's model is represented in Fig. 2 and the conversation continues:

Okay. So, when I think of metalogue I think about it as layers. You do a first round of talking, so each person is bringing their little brick of input or information, and that's sort of that first layer of metalogue. And then from there you do a bit more input, and everyone's input is getting a little bit closer towards this one meaning that you're heading for. And another layer, and then you come to a shared product or something [pointing to the flag at the top of the structure] and you might think of that as, "Hooray, we've reached the pinnacle." The purpose of this thing [pointing to the pole and white brick that looks like a street lamp] is to shine new light on your experiences and your understandings. But actually, from here, although it's a pinnacle in a sense that you've created this metalogue, it's actually also then a springboard to new journeys, to new seas, new lands [pointing to the wires connecting outlying platform pieces]. There you go. But yeah, that layered thing was what I was thinking about.

Linda then explains the final model of metalogue Fig. 3.

Okay, I suppose I started with what we talked about yesterday as a thorny problem. So I put my thorny problem in the middle. <laughter> That's what that is down there [pointing to the plant-like shape at the base of the structure]. I also started with a platform, and I thought about the three of us, so I started with each of these big platforms to represent our body

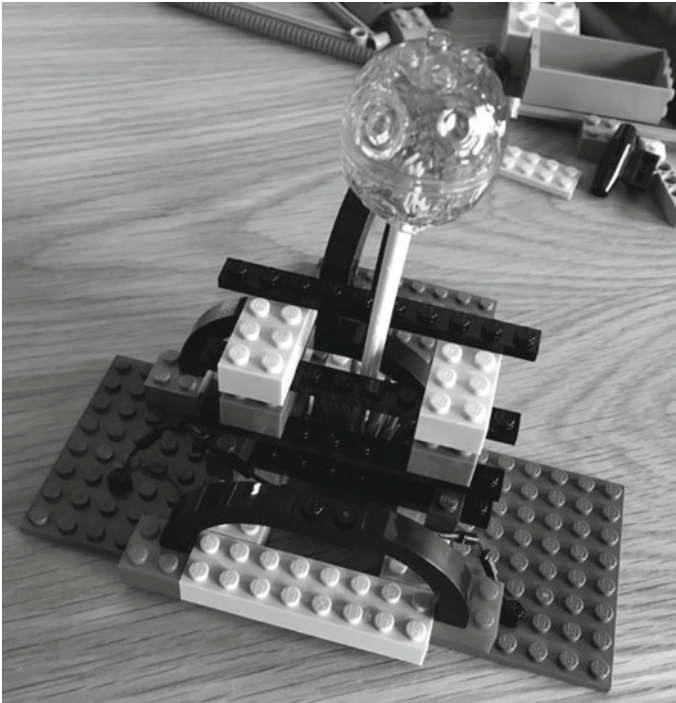


Fig. 3 Metalogue representation Linda

of work and where we each are, and then to try and show that somehow when we work together we step into this cogenerative space. These ones, the black ones [arch shaped piece, centre front], I used to show the idea of when we make connections; they're the bridges and represent the idea of the process being iterative. So, it's sort of backwards and forwards. This one [flexible connecting piece] is a little bit more contorted and, in some ways, the material suggested that process, because I couldn't get it to work anyway. But I thought the process sometimes loops back and goes forward, but all the while moves towards some greater understanding among those involved. And, I guess, these were the layers [pointing to the heights of the pieces], and these were the connections [horizontal black piece, top back] as bridges form between and across our work. And ultimately, this doesn't quite do what I wanted it to do, but I wanted it to represent, not so much an outcome, but a problem that was thorny and messy, to one that's become clearer and more compact, yet complex. Everything is still complex, but because of the process of metalogue, we have a greater understanding of the thorny problem.

Following the presentations of each of our representations of metalogue, a cogenerative dialogue naturally ensued among the group that represents the reflection stage in the LSP process:

Helen [Speaking about Linda's creation] Yeah. But I think what's interesting is, because we've been cogeneratively thinking about this notion, it's not unusual therefore that the kinds of images that we have of what metalogue

- looks like have been more distilled into that space that you've got there in that model? Do you know what I mean? That we are going someplace and that's not unusual.
- Linda** Yeah. No, I think we used similar but different metaphors to show that, didn't we? You [speaking to Deb] used the metaphor of a journey. I don't think you used that, Helen. Did you use "the journey"?
- Helen** No. But mine is more coming up, whereas yours [speaking to Deb] is
- Deb** Going someplace.
- Linda** Yes. You [speaking to Helen] specifically used other metaphors. I was just trying to think what you used. But you used different ones. We both use layers.
- Deb** And that's why mine has different heights.
- Linda** Yes, the heights.
- Deb** Like, it went up and down and around.
- Linda** Yes. There was a sense of the process, trying to represent that in each of our models, and the sense of connected to something that's not connected to other things, but then all of these things coming together, and then also a point that we reached. There was an endpoint. There was a celebration, or there was insight, and, for me, there was still this complexity, but it was clearer, whatever the complexity was. <laughter>
- Deb** You could actually see through it [referring to the transparent sphere shape at the top of Linda's structure]. <laughter>
- Linda** Yes, true.
- Helen** And that endpoints are only endpoints for a moment in time, but actually are springboards to further things.
- Linda** That's right. So that's where I was going, that this was going to keep going.
- Deb** That's where I kind of was wondering where, if we looked at putting them together, you could almost say, "Well, these are a series of different ways of representing metalogue using the materials," and we move from one to the next to the next, as a cycle. And that was what I couldn't represent in the way I did it. I felt like it would be nice to go around in a circle. And if I'd had more time I would have recreated it to try and show that.
- Linda** The iterations

4.1.1 Metalogue Part 1: Creating Cogenerative Dialogue About Metalogue Using LSP

Our individual models and stories provided multiple perspectives of what metalogue is as both a process and a product and yet also highlighted shared understandings that were held by all of us. The LSP core process provided a structure that enabled all of our views to be expressed and shared on an equal footing. Rather than constraining and standardising our views, as the compliance measures that are imposed on our work as teacher educators so often do, this LSP structure flattened power hierarchies and opened up opportunities for going beyond preconceived ideas. Our conversation

dipped back and forth between talking about our products (our models and our understandings) and our process of creating these. We felt a sense of agency, in that we were collectively creating our own meanings and understandings rather than having others' views imposed upon us.

This structure fits well with our pre-existing commitment to the value of cogenerative dialogue as a possible third space, but adds the new element of using materials to build physical models as *thinking tools*. This allows thinking to take place not just as a cognitive and verbal process, but also as a physical process of thinking with our hands, allowing manipulation of physical materials to construct understanding of our individual interior experience (Bürge, Jacobs, & Roos, 2005). This is particularly useful when grappling with very abstract ideas and processes that are often difficult to explain verbally. The building process allowed our hands and materials to make “the invisible visible” (Hadida, 2013, p. 4), which then made verbalising the ideas easier.

4.2 The Role of Metaphor and Agency Emerge in the Limitations and Opportunities Inherent in the Materials

Our reflective conversation continued, providing further stimulus for thinking about how the materials facilitated creativity and provided a tool for cogenerative dialogue.

Helen Yeah. But it's true, the materials do dictate, to a certain extent. Like, I started doing one thing and couldn't make that work so I thought, “Oh, how do I do it with these materials?” And different materials start to suggest different things to you. You think, “Okay, I can go with that metaphor.” I was trying to work out how to make something springing off and then I thought, “Yeah, I quite like these.”

Linda Well, it's interesting, because I have one of those too [referring to the same piece as Helen], which I didn't talk about, but that's the tenuous connections where you can kind of see connection, but you're not quite sure.

Helen Yeah, and these can go in many different places and directions.

Linda Yeah. And this is nice because you've got that spiralling out as well. You've got that idea.

Helen I was surprised at the frustration of bits not going together in the way that you wanted them to go. But that actually is part of the process too. It represented dialogue as well, that it's unexpected or that you've got ideas about what you want something to be like.

Deb And it doesn't always work exactly the way you want.

Helen Yeah.

Deb And so therefore, what's my way around or how will I represent it?

Helen And sometimes, by what you can do with the materials, it presents new opportunities that you hadn't thought of before, which is exactly what hap-

pens. It's cogenerativity, in that the bringing together of the different ideas creates new possibilities that weren't in your individual head before. So, in a way, the materials are a new partner in that process that open up new spaces for thinking or doing or making.

Deb And I think in terms of, not so much us, but in terms of working with preservice teachers around this kind of idea, is the fact that you actually have to make a product. It means that you've actually got something, a talking point, and it facilitates you to think, "Well, what do I think that looks like and what is something I can use to represent that?" Unlike when you ask preservice teachers to actually get together in a group and talk about something and by the time it gets around my idea is the same as everyone else's because they actually didn't think about it.

Helen That's right.

Deb And the busyness of your hands, I think. Even if you aren't really sure what you're doing to start with, I feel like you're collecting pieces, and I collected some pieces and started something and then went, "No, that's not what I want. I want this and I want that." But the actual ability to just do, rather than just sit and wonder was actually facilitated, "Well, why am I putting that like that? That connects like this and this is what I think."

Helen Yep.

Linda I think the level of concentration was very obvious, wasn't it?

Helen Yeah.

Linda I wondered whether down the track, if we were more familiar, we might say, "Hey, I'm collecting people. If you find any, give them to me." Like, I was collecting certain bits there, and we were all so quiet I didn't ask, but maybe in a group or if we did this more often I'd be saying, "Look, I'm collecting these long black bits," or something.

Helen Yeah, like I had a sense that you had come to a finish and so you wouldn't mind helping me look for some links.

Deb No. Yeah, exactly.

Helen But also, the other thing was that at one stage I felt like I was finished. I nearly just stopped at my layers. But everyone else was still going so I thought, "Oh, okay. What else can I add?" and you probably did the same.

Deb I did the same thing. I was going to put people and then I went, "I can't find some of those bits. I won't worry." Then there was more time and I went, "Well, now there's time, I will do that." So, I think if you're doing it with preservice teachers though we'd need to be pretty precise about the time to get it into our tutorial times. I think actually for us to then say, "Well, the similarities between what we did are amazing."

Linda Well, that's interesting too. Getting back to the materials, two things, I wonder whether, when we're more familiar with what the materials can do, that allows us to make a model that better represents what we were trying to do, or our greater understanding of metalogue influences a change in what we use. And that would be interesting to sort of say, "If we come again, at some other point down the track, and re-represent metalogue, after we've

had time to see what our preservice teachers do and more time for us to talk about it, what would we do differently? Would we choose things because we understand the materials better or would we have a different or better understanding of metalogue?

Deb And that could be a good conversation to have at a later date.

Helen But I think there is a thing about the time being a little bit longer than

Deb Than is comfortable.

Helen Yeah. Because it actually makes you think, “Oh, hang on.” You sit with them for a second and think, “Okay, I think I’m done,” and then realise, “I’ve got more time so I could just...”

Deb And there’s more pieces. I think that’s also the thing, isn’t it?

Helen Yeah.

Deb The amount of materials needs to be large.

Linda Yes, for the choice.

Deb So that there’s choice, but there’s also not competition.

Linda Yeah, that’s right. I think that was really important there was no competition about the pieces.

Helen “I need that. I need that.”

Linda Yeah, not fighting over it. <laughter>

4.2.1 Metalogue Part 2: The Role of Metaphor and Agency Emerge in the Limitations and Opportunities Inherent in the Materials

In this part of our cogenerative dialogue, the role of metaphor emerged alongside a discussion about the limitations and opportunities of using the LSP materials. Metaphors permeate our language and culture and enable us to think more deeply about a topic or concept by drawing a comparison or analogy between things imaginary and/or concrete (Thomas & Beauchamp, 2011). In education, metaphors are deployed by teachers of every subject as powerful tools to enhance student conceptual learning. Metaphors used by teachers and preservice teachers, and in our case, teacher educators, can also provide a window into our beliefs, thoughts and actions. They can therefore support our practice in teaching and research by providing insight into our experiences and simultaneously contributing to the development and re-development of our individual and collective professional identity. When using LSP materials to represent metalogue, metaphors initially appeared to emerge in the context of the materials, specifically what the materials suggested they might *do*. That is, we each chose materials less for their colour and shape and more for their ability to “spring off,” “connect,” “go in different places and directions” and “spiral out.” However, the materials we selected for construction were ones that aligned with our respective concept of metalogue. The words we used in conversation to describe what we did seemed to suggest our selection of materials focussed on the *processes* involved in metalogue and how the materials might best represent our understanding and experience of these. The metaphor of a journey was also evident. This featured beginning and end points as well as critical learnings (e.g. Deb’s “gems”) along the way. At the

same time, we each used layers and/or height as metaphors to convey the challenges and complexities involved. Our models of metalogue thus represented processes and products simultaneously.

Seen through Emirbayer and Mische's (1998) three-pronged notion of agency, it would seem that our previous knowledge and experience of participating in cogenerative dialogue (iterational element) to produce metalogues (projective element) informed our decision making during the construction of our models (practical-evaluative element). Our use of relational agency as a further element became most visible when we engaged in cogenerative dialogue to talk together about our individual experiences of developing our models. During this dialogue, we showed how we supported each person's ideas by accepting what they said and responding in positive respectful ways. Turn taking and talk time were mostly equitably distributed among all three participants. Ideas were built upon and expanded in ways that built shared understandings. We thus intuitively used the experience of representing metalogue with materials as a way to illustrate cogenerativity in action (Willis, 2016; Willis et al., 2018). Our conversation also showed the potential for these representations to change and improve in relation to our changing knowledge of metalogue in future.

Emirbayer and Mische's (1998) notion of agency is also useful for thinking about our use of the materials themselves. We were familiar with metalogue but less so in using LSP materials. Although we discussed how the number and variety of pieces offered multiple different opportunities for our individual purposes and minimised competition between us, our dialogue showed that we were less secure in the knowledge of what different pieces could *do* (i.e. we lacked *technical* knowledge and skills to work with these materials). This was evident when we voiced our frustrations and unmet expectations about how pieces might fit together. In this way, our possible lack of previous knowledge and experience of manipulating LSP materials (iterational element) may have limited our possible representations of metalogue (projective element) and constrained decision making during model construction (practical-evaluative element). Nevertheless, we recognised that using hands-on materials may have increased our level of concentration and length of time on task during construction. Indeed, we discussed how more time not only seemed to increase familiarity and ease in using the materials, but also afforded more opportunities to be creative and open to new and different ideas than first thought. We later cogenerated about the possibilities of working in a group rather than individually and how this might further speed up the process of finding pieces and the processes of collaboration. Working individually initially thus constrained relational agency during construction but this was offset later during cogenerative dialogue by talking together about: the different experiences of playing with the materials; the variety of interpretations for the possible use of different pieces; and the limitations and opportunities for representing and cogenerative dialoguing about metalogue using the materials. As Helen noted above:

It's cogenerativity in that the bringing together of the different ideas creates new possibilities that weren't in your individual head before. So, in a way, the materials are a new partner in that process that opens up new spaces for thinking or doing or making.

4.3 *Creating Space for Dialogue*

We continued our reflective conversation and explored the potential of LSP to create dialogue and connect with our sense of academic agency. We began with explorations of how LSP developed our own thinking about questions we posed as Step 1 of the process. Then, we explored connections and impacts on our past and future practice to explore our academic agency as teacher educators with both teaching and research responsibilities.

Helen Using the materials does spark conversation.

Deb It does.

Linda But in different ways. A different kind of conversation than we'd be having. We'd be having much more of an academic conversation perhaps in that more abstract way, whereas I think this (LSP) anchors it a little bit more in the way we've represented metalogue and that gives us other language to talk about it.

Helen And it's the starting point, isn't it, of the conversation?

Linda Yeah.

Helen Like, that's always the hardest thing. You go, "What do you say first?"

Deb Yeah, and how do you get it going?

Helen Everyone has something to say here.

Linda I think if we think about an equitable conversation where people are able to have the same amount of time each and the same amount of input not just the same number of turns, but the length of turn-taking as well, which I think we're quite good at, quite naturally, because we're very respectful and we're also very respectful of this third space. And I think, Helen, coming back to that point of "everyone's had a turn" is equitable because, firstly, everyone's doing one and, also, it's yours. Everybody loves to talk about themselves, not in a selfish way or self-centred way, but because it's natural. It's just natural.

Helen And even if they don't like it, it actually is a starting point. Your focus is on that [pointing to the model]. Your focus is not on looking at me.

Linda That's right.

Helen You're looking at that [model] as well.

Deb It takes the pressure off.

Helen That's right.

Deb And what I thought was interesting as we progressed, is we built on the ideas of other people and so when you mentioned something about the model then, Linda, when you talked about your model you mentioned something about both models, and so we made the connections naturally through the conversation. It wasn't a tutorial activity that actually we had to say, "Do this, do this, and now bring the connections together." I think it will happen.

Linda I tried not to, but I felt it was inevitable to mention all the models, but I think we could have discussed the connections even more so.

- Deb** Yep, we could. And that's where I think the next stage is to say, "How do we bring these together? Can we bring them together in some way?"
- Helen** I think it's actually important that everyone feels like, at first, they are just talking about their own, because otherwise they feel like they have to start bringing in everyone. So I think it's important, as a first stage.
- Deb** Have bringing together and connecting as the next step. To actually have that conversation about, "What's the similarities? What's the differences?"
- Helen** Yeah. And I think some of those do come up naturally in talking about your own anyway, but that then provides the springboard for the next conversation.
- Deb** And I think that notion of the uniqueness about each one could link really nicely to that subjectification notion from Biesta (2015). "What's unique about them? What's similar, but what's unique?" So, the similarities are really in that socialisation of language and ideas. But the uniqueness could be a really interesting way of thinking about that.
- Linda** So, my big challenge is to help our preservice teachers to recognise that teaching is not just about how to teach them to read. That there's a bigger purpose.
- Deb** A bigger agenda.
- Linda** And that they could make such an enormous difference to their communities, to the profession, if they weren't coming to it or exiting, possibly, from our programs thinking, "Okay, I've ticked all of those boxes. There's nothing more here." This kind of thing might actually enable those kinds of ways of bigger picture thinking about changing the world. I mean, we try and help them to think that's what you do with your students in your classrooms. We tell them that, "You can do anything," kind of attitude. But I think we should be helping our preservice teachers to see that's what they can do too.
- Helen** And I think what this does is allows them to make a concrete object with materials to represent what they're thinking, and even if the complexity of what they've done doesn't even come to them until they speak about it and they maybe hear someone else say, "Oh, this means that," and they go, "Oh, okay. Well, why did I put that there? I can actually come up with a much more complicated description of what I've done." But if you'd actually sat there and asked them to explain, would a teacher, particularly a first year preservice teacher, be able to come up with that kind of language?

4.3.1 Metalogue Part 3: Creating Space for Dialogue

Our conversations and reflections on the use of LSP identified that a different kind of dialogue and discussion could be generated using this approach. LSP generated conversation that provided a third space for us to draw upon our past, imagine the future and evaluate these thoughts and ideas in the present moment through the construction of a model of our thinking about a problematic topic. The act of building and then explaining our model allowed us to connect our thinking with a representation that connected with each of us uniquely. Each model has its own story, and

the process for sharing allowed each person to take centre stage to talk about their story and thinking. Within the third space that we created we had the opportunity to think about and consider the ways LSP might provide opportunities for us to work with preservice teachers in different ways to engage them beyond the narrow focus on ticking off the achievement of qualifications that is only one of the purposes of education (Biesta, 2015).

Our engagement with the LSP process identified that while we were able as professionals to draw together synergies between our emerging discussions, the process would require further scaffolding for preservice teachers. We identified the value of moving through the four steps in the LSP process and providing time for each person to speak. This process not only allowed for each person's model to be explored by the group but also facilitated cogenerativity. We reflected on Biesta's (2015) notion of subjectification and felt that the LSP process provided an opportunity for each person to talk about their own ideas highlighting their uniqueness. Although as teacher educators we were able to move between sharing and reflection, we identified the value when working with preservice teachers of keeping these aspects separate. We also identified that before moving on to the reflection stage where similarities and differences can be examined, we would need to redirect preservice teachers back to the initial question and provide them with a way to identify their uniqueness before moving on to more collective conversations.

We were drawn to the use of material objects for discussion as an extension of our own experiences of using cogenerative dialogue (Willis et al., 2018) and engagement with LSP (Habel, 2017) and the use of material objects in our own professional practice. We then connected these experiences with the current research on teacher talk that suggests regularly engaging students with classroom dialogue increases their participation and has a positive impact on student outcomes (Mercer & Dawes, 2014). We were drawn to the work of Alexander (2017) who challenges some of the dominant types of classroom talk that emphasise recitation. Our practice seeks to explore ways to move beyond question and answer that are limited to recall. We feel LSP offers the opportunity for the development of what Alexander defines as both discussion and dialogue. Discussion represents the opportunity to share ideas while dialogue moves towards the development of a common understanding. The four steps in the LSP process, in the context of cogenerative dialogue, offers opportunities for both of these kinds of teaching talk to take place in classrooms both at schools and in universities.

Our own academic agency became evident as we discussed how we could use LSP in our professional practice. We drew on our previous experiences with preservice teachers together with our understanding of theory and practice to signal the need for preservice teachers to consider their own understandings of what it means to be a teacher. Beauchamp and Thomas (2009) identified the need for initial teacher education programmes to begin the process of engaging with teacher identity. We see LSP in the context of cogenerative dialogue provides a mechanism for us as educators to engage in talk within the teacher education classroom that engages preservice teachers in a way that they can generate their story of teacher identity.

One of the challenges is the time required for these conversations in comparison with the recitation models of teacher talk that occur in many higher education classrooms.

5 Conclusion and Implications

The implications of this self-study identify the value and importance of cogenerative dialogue to support teacher educators to reclaim their identity as professionals in an era of measurement. The development of this work allowed us to create a third space for conversations about professionalism that connects with Evetts (2011) occupational professionalism and Sachs (2016) democratic professionalism rather than the managerial professionalism that is dominating teacher education. It allowed us to reflect on our own identity as teacher educators and consider the role of the past, the future and the present in the way academic agency connects with our practice. It also allowed us to use relational agency (Edwards, 2007, 2009) to build upon the expertise and ideas of each other, in effect creating new ideas and practices that were beyond our previous individual or shared practices. We identify implications here for our practice as teacher educators and the importance of relational agency as part of reclaiming our professionalism.

The LSP materials provided us with new ways to talk about topics we have problematised in our work and to reflect on our own academic agency. Similarly, the LSP processes offer opportunities for preservice teachers to begin the process of identifying their own developing story of becoming a teacher. The hands-on nature of using the LSP materials is engaging and provides a unique opportunity for all to participate in generating their story. A wide range of materials needs to be available to choose from during the creation process to ensure everyone has the opportunity to build their response. Time is an important factor in the individual building process and more time encourages more building. Lack of familiarity with the materials was a challenge; however, it was not insurmountable and often provided scope for improvisation. Using the LSP process in the context of a cogenerative dialogue approach throughout a program would provide some unique markers of preservice teachers' changing teacher identity.

This work demonstrates the value of LSP to provide additional resources and opportunities to structure cogenerative dialogue among teacher educators in ways that positively contribute to research practices and autoethnographic research. As evidenced by the metalogue in this chapter, this contribution identifies our academic agency with particular emphasis on the way the relational practices develop our work and thinking. We aim in our work to identify how we might continue to engage in authentic cogenerative ways to develop our research and teaching practice. It is this joint work that allows us to engage our academic agency in ways that meet the needs of academic managers in the current context of higher education practice.

In reclaiming our professionalism in the context of initial teacher education, our aim is to problematise aspects of work in relation to teacher education. We identify the importance of our own exploration of academic agency for connecting with

the need for our preservice teachers to begin the work of exploring their teacher identity. Acknowledging to our preservice teachers that the work of academic agency and teacher identity development is never complete but an ongoing and continual process throughout our professional life is a challenging message. We feel that the use of material objects has deepened our engagement with cogenerative dialogue and allowed us to generate a rich metalogue. We also feel that it has helped us as teacher education researchers to develop our identity not just individually but also collectively. We have enhanced our understanding of these research practices and what we are able to achieve through them because of the way cogenerative dialogue together with metalogue enables deeper thinking and conversation and therefore learning and insights.

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