Exploring and evaluating Structuration Theory as a framework for investigating formal and informal learning within organisations.

Abstract

This paper explores and evaluates a specific analytical framework that can be used by vocational and education and training (VET) researchers to gain understanding of the complex and 'evolving' relations of formal and informal learning within organisations.

Giddens' Structuration Theory (1984), while developed to explain the cyclic nature of broader societal relations, is also useful tool for exploring learning in the workplace where both 'named' formal training and informal daily interaction both mediate the 'evolution' of individual capability, subjectivity and shared meaning production. The paper argues that the modalities that occur within the continual patterns of organisational interaction are a complex and homogeneous mix that continuously shape and reshape identity, values and capability. Then paper proposes that such relations can be effectively explored through Giddens' structuration lens.

The text then analyses the components of structuration theory and adapts the model for VET research within organisations. The paper provides details of a specific study where Structuration Theory was used as a framework for the analysis of 'learning' relations. The text outlines both the form of discursive analysis used in the study and indicates how

the study used Structuration Theory to conceptualise the key relations producing learning and changes in meaning within the study.

Finally the paper reviews the utility of a theory generated as a broad sociological explanation two decades ago as a framework for current VET investigation, illuminating the efficacy of Structuration Theory within VET research for exploring evolving patterns of workplace learning.

Introduction

AVETRA provides a space for the analysis of VET research not only in terms of reviewing findings but also in terms of exploring research and analytical techniques. This paper is concerned with the latter form of learning, and seeks to provides VET researchers with the analysis of a recent approach within a doctoral study in the VET area. The purpose of this paper is provide VET researchers with an overview of how structuration theory can provide an interesting analytical framework for VET research that seeks to understand workplace learning as a mediating factor in organisational change. Structuration Theory is therefore a conceptual tool that can support VET research that is concerned with macro analysis at the level of human resource development strategies, rather than research focusing on issues of individual identity development and skilling.

Understanding the mechanisms of individual development and skill acquisition is a critical issue for VET research. However, a strategic perspective of workplace learning

focuses upon the cumulative effect of such activity upon the process of organisation. The past decade has seen the growing acceptance that it is both the formal training practices and the informal interactions within organisation that combine to build individual capability (Lave and Wenger 1991). In addition, such interactions also change what organisational systems legitimise, enable, and reward. Within the space colonised by learning activity, previous practices, labels and beliefs are displaced and new routines, processes and norms are negotiated (Boje 1996). The organisational culture changes and 'evolves'. Vocational education and training as a conscious formal construction and an informal often unconscious construction, is part of every organisational interaction, continually reshaping individual identity and re-authoring organisation. This paper focuses upon the analysis of VET activity at this strategic organisational level. Learning as talk, effecting change.

This paper proposes that Structuration Theory provides an interesting and revelatory lens through which to view such relational patterns. However, while Structuration Theory has strong academic credentials, it is a conceptual framework that was developed to explain patterns of broader social change more than a decade before the advent of the internet. Thus, this paper explores the use of Structuration Theory within a recent VET project to provide an explanatory context, and then explores the relevance and utility of this theory as an analytical frame for researchers, and specifically for VET researchers.

There has been a wealth of unique VET initiatives in the past fifteen years within Australia and they have provided fertile ground for research. In many cases the research

has evaluated the impact of innovative and often revolutionary VET initiatives using field analysis of interactivity and perceptions within the field of practice to provide a grounded conceptual response about what was actually happening to individuals within and between organisations. This paper would support the validity of such approaches that build their responses from the voices of practitioners, from the ground up, taking the relations of the field and placing them onto the pages of research reports. However, at the core of this paper is the desire to integrate such grounded approaches with established theoretical frameworks of learning and change to draw out the strong relations reshaping individuals and organisation. Established conceptual frameworks like Structuration Theory provide an additional tool and a helicopter perspective with which to contrast, reconfirm and question the assumptions formed from a grounded approach to the analysis of practice.

To place this perspective in a current context, this paper is being written in the old school house on Rottnest Island just off the coast of Western Australia. While it was obviously the site for instructional learning, most probably to behaviourist principles, one can conjecture that the white sand and shady trees just outside it's jarrah picket fence were the sites of more emancipatory learning experiences. A structuration perspective would encompass both of these sites of learning within the analysis of how the local community evolved from running a penal colony to vacation servicing.

Why Structuration Theory?

The exploration of workplace learning can focus on a range of units of analysis. This paper asserts the relevance of using an approach that both investigates individual experience and then maps the effects of those experiences in terms of changes in the culture of the organisation. Arguments could also be developed for using just a grounded approach, unadulterated by a priori frameworks; an Actor Network approach based upon the power embedded within in texts; a Communities of Practice analysis emphasing local relations; or employing Activity Theory and Learning Network Theory to investigate the relations of the learning/organising dynamic (Law 1986; Lave and Wenger 1991; Engestrom 1999: Poell et al 2000). This paper argues that Structuration theory provides an effective lens through which to view the continual, complex and homogeneous mix of the patterns of organisational interaction as they shape and reshape identity, values and capability.

Structuration theory is a theory of social change focusing upon the relations between reified structures and individual actions. It provides a theoretical framework that can be used to analyse 'organisation' at the micro-business level and underpins much of the theory about 'culture' that has influenced organisational analysis over the past two decades. It is both a theory about how people behave within organisations and a theory about how organisation is formed. It therefore provides an appropriate theoretical basis for developing understanding the relations between discursive announcements and behaviours in practice, or values placed into action. Giddens provides a perspective that views the organisation as a series of interlinking cogs, in motion and in tension, always structured

but always changing, reproducing values in action, but mediating and re-authoring those patterns of practice. The theory has been widely critiqued and often criticised (Adam 1992, Clark et al 1990). Before relating the theory to our specific case and application it is necessary to explain the conceptual relations that Giddens (1984) explores. In terms of culture it is a theory that gives hope. We can change, and be instrumental in changing our organisations.

Structuration theory attempts to reconcile two historically disparate views of social analysis and providing a pivotal framework for social and organisational analysis. This perspective is in sharp contrast to a Foucaultian perspective that displaces the role of agency, and privileges the flows of organising power. For Foucault, discourses are constructing, violent and leave little room for resistance. It is a turbulent repressing Marxian world, without the hope of revolution. Giddens, in sharp contrast, emphasises the reflexive nature of social systems, and emphasises the constructing nature of human agency. Both perspectives have their allies.

Structuration theory was developed by Giddens (1984) during the early 1980's. It provides a structural framework to explain the conditions that govern the continuity and change within social structures, and therefore maps the reproduction and development of social systems. Giddens (1984, p.xix) describes structuration as a social theory constructed after the post-empiricist linguistic turn of social analysis. He largely rejects Freudian explanations of social interaction solely focused on the subject and the unconscious, insisting on the centrality of socio-cultural agency and self as a conscious

reflexive process (Giddens 1984, p. 42-44). Gidden's framework also appears to reject the totality of Foucaultian perspectives of power that discipline the body in time and space, removing agency (1984, p. 32). At the core of Gidden's theory lies his thesis that the polarisation of society and individual actors is an *erroneous dichotomy*. Far from a duality, Giddens asserts that a *dualism* exists where continual social interaction both constitutes and is constituted by social structure. Structure and social action mutually mediate and constitute each other. As structure acts to shape action and practice re-shapes patterns of structure. The patterns of social practice are a social construction that we view over time, and reify as structure. His purpose is to provide a framework that neither starts from, nor privileges, the subject or society, but reconciles such binary positions by presenting this duality, as a dualism. A dualism where freewill and determinism are viewed as continually at play, through process and product.

This framework de-thrones the concept of structure as some immutable reified construct that is external to us, and to our actions. Social structure is viewed as a concept that is formed through the reproduction and reoccurrence of social patterns, and is embedded within organisational context. This duality of structure insists that social structure both mediates social actions and is formed through those actions. That it is our social actions that are the medium of structural reproduction and visibility, but that they are also the agency of structural change. According to Gidden's theory, the structural properties of social systems, the patterns of social action, are both the medium of social reproduction and the outcome of social performance, creating the 'notion of duality of structure'.

An explanation of the components and relations

Before relating the theory to our specific case and application it is necessary to explain the conceptual relations that Giddens explores. In terms of culture it is a theory that gives hope. We can learn, change, and be instrumental in changing our organisations.

Giddens' model of structuration is dynamic, and based on three key features, that should be viewed as interrelated and not separate components, that are mutually mediating and continually in tension (see Figure 1). First, there are the *structures*, the structural properties of the organisational social setting. These are properties created by regular sustained interaction or agency, not isolated social performance, and form the rules and patterns that bind social systems through time and space. Second there are the interactional *systems*, performed by human activity, the relations of organising as social practice. The observable patterns of practice and relations occurring between individual and group based networks. *Social structures* seek to mediate these *systems of practice* through resource authorisation and allocation (human and material), as well as coercion and inducement. Third, there are the *modalities* or meaning generating processes that mediate the generation and reproduction of relatively similar social practices across time and space. They are the bridge between the acts of social action, and the patterns of social structures. However these modalities not only enable the repetition of patterns of practice but enable subtle changes and variations in practice that then change those very structures that are being reproduced. An analysis of the structuration of a social system entails

examining ways systems are produced and reproduced, through cycles of social interaction, *privileging neither* social structure nor human agency.

> ….constitution of agents and structures are not two independently given sets of phenomena, a dualism but represent a duality. Giddens 1984, p. 24
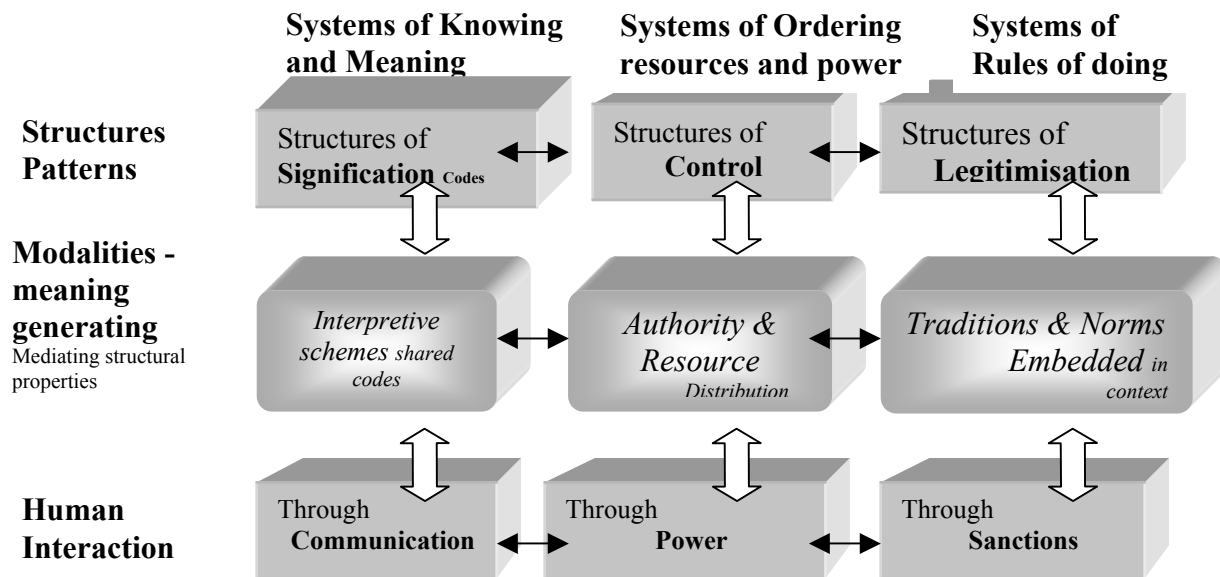
Giddens indicates that from this perspective the *production of social action* is synonymous with the *reproduction of social structure,* and they inhabit each other. Social structure cannot be considered as separate to social performance. Human agency continually produces and reproduces social structure. Structure does not exist without human agency, for it actually exists, and is embodied, within each actor. Structure and agency are not a polarised binary duality, but an inseparable cycle of re-production. Structures and systems are reified over time. The discursive replication of such abstract concepts objectifies them, but they only continue to exist if they are continuously reproduced. In structuration theory the agent or human actor is viewed as discursively knowledgeable, a conscious actor with the capability to reflexively monitor social activity. Agency is the power of human actors to operate, at times, independently of the determining constraints of structure. The domination of structures is always an incomplete project, and inevitably there is space and opportunity for alternative practices. Interaction within social networks can therefore only be understood in terms of the both historical and current structures mediating social action. Giddens (1984, p. 2) presents an argument that;

> Human social activities, like some self-reproducing items in nature, are recursive. That is to say, they are not brought into being by social actors but continually recreated by them via

the very means whereby they express themselves as actors. In and through their activities agents reproduce the conditions that make these activities possible.

Each of the three key features of this dynamic model, structure, human action, and modality, are segmented by Giddens into three component properties, which together form an interactive and integrated framework. These component properties fall into three grouped systems of knowing, of ordering, and doing. Structure is viewed in terms of component systems of signification, control and legitimation. Social action is viewed in terms of systems of communication, power and sanction. Finally, the modalities that link structures and human action, are viewed as interpretive schemes, rules and resources, and norms. These modalities are accessed by human actors to recursively link structures and human action, to reproduce and modify systems of interaction, through the component relations indicated in the figure that follows.

In Structuration theory, organisational practices access the modalities or interpretive schemes of the organisational structure to form enduring and changing structural patterns. These structural patterns in turn mediate the form of subsequent organisational practice in a continuous cyclical process. Giddens (1984) asserts that this cyclic patterns involves three interrelated component systems, that continually attempt to, establish meaning, order relations, and delineate behaviour patterns.

Systems of Knowing and Meaning | **Systems of Ordering resources and power** | **Systems of Rules of doing**

Structures Patterns

Structures of **Signification** Codes ↔ Structures of **Control** ↔ Structures of **Legitimisation**

Modalities - meaning generating
Mediating structural properties

Interpretive schemes shared codes ↔ *Authority & Resource Distribution* ↔ *Traditions & Norms Embedded in context*

Human Interaction

Through **Communication** ↔ Through **Power** ↔ Through **Sanctions**

Adapted from Giddens 1984, p. 29

Figure 1: Dynamic components of structuration theory

In Giddens' duality model (figure 1), the *modalities* are both a production of systems and a reproduction of structures. They are the knowledge resources that social actors access to enact social performance. The three interrelated dimensions are focused upon issues signification or meaning making, issues of power and control, and issues of regulation (Giddens 1979, 1984)
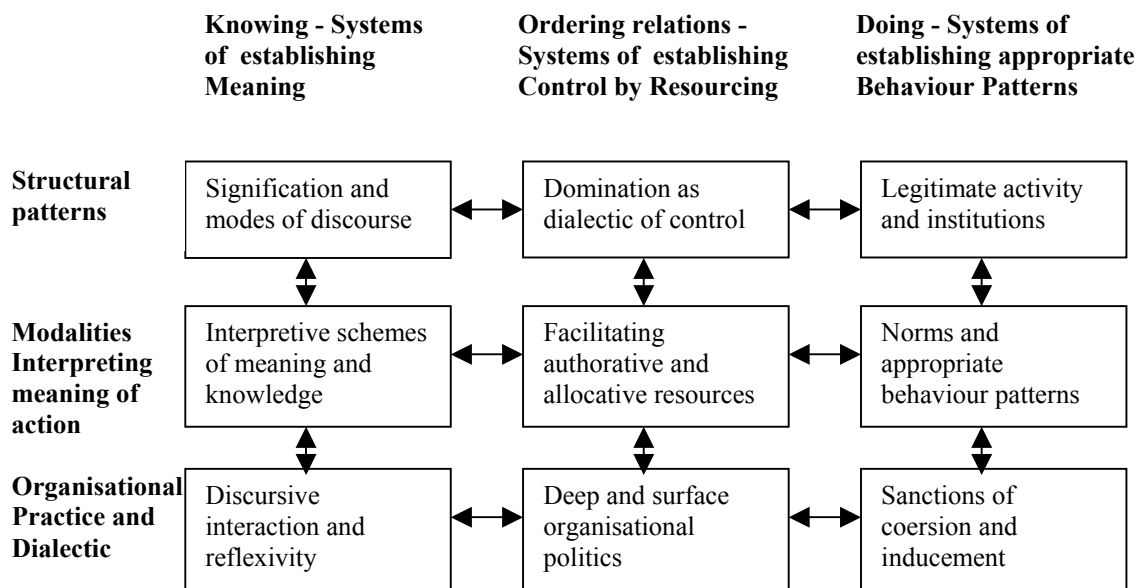
In terms of *signs and communication*, social actors draw on the sources of shared or mutual knowledge to construct meaning. Shared meaning is an integral to the production and reproduction of social interaction, which is itself shaped by each interaction. Social actors use the rules and codes of interpretive schemes to make sense of new or changed situations (Cohen 1989, p. 27).

In terms of *control and power*, social actors draw upon authorative and allocative resources to respectively generate control over people and objects (Giddens 1979, p. 100). Power is mutually vested in the institution or individual, but structures of control have *transformative capacity* over organisational actors through the consistent allocation of resources (Giddens 1979, p. 93). While there is a fundamental relationship between actors and power, control is not absolute, and alternative action is know as the *dialectic of control* (Giddens 1979, p. 6). Control is never absolute in any system, and systems must engage in debate about degrees of application, limits of discretion and adaptation to new social circumstances, changing the 'rules'. Frost and Egri (1991, p. 231) described politics as 'power in action' and suggest that actor performance may involve surface and deep political action that are reciprocally interactive.

In terms of *legitimisation and sanctions*, social actors draw upon rules and normative practices that govern legitimate social practice according to different contexts. The values and goals deeply embedded in structure are articulated as rights and obligations. Rules define normative practice and mediate appropriate performance through sanctions and inducements. Legitimate social performance is often articulated and sustained through orchestrated socialisation, or the rituals, rites and ceremonies of tradition. Broadcasting preferred behaviours and enculturing acceptable practice.

The recursive relationship being acted out between structure and systems through the modalities is not the only relational balance in the model. There is a similar and continual pattern of reinforcing relationships between the three major constructing social practices

themselves (meaning making, control and regulation). Asymmetrical relationships exist within and between sanctions and resources (Cohen 1989, p. 27/28). The mobilisation of resources in a social system involves practice that is both normative and follows existing codes of meaning. Rules not only sanction conduct but themselves also constitute meaning. Structures are sustained through the mutual interaction of resources and rules and without this recursive regeneration they would over time disintegrate and cease to exist (Sewell 1992, p. 13). In order to focus upon workplace learning interactions in VET organisational terms, the key relations are re-configured as in the following figure 2.

	Knowing - Systems of establishing Meaning	Ordering relations - Systems of establishing Control by Resourcing	Doing - Systems of establishing appropriate Behaviour Patterns
Structural patterns	Signification and modes of discourse	Domination as dialectic of control	Legitimate activity and institutions
Modalities Interpreting meaning of action	Interpretive schemes of meaning and knowledge	Facilitating authorative and allocative resources	Norms and appropriate behaviour patterns
Organisational Practice and Dialectic	Discursive interaction and reflexivity	Deep and surface organisational politics	Sanctions of coersion and inducement

Based on and adapted from Giddens 1984, p.29

Figure 2: Dynamic components of structuration theory in VET organisational terms

Structuration theory provides the most enduring theoretical framework with which to analyse VET practice. The structuration framework forms an interesting analytical frame for VET both as a broad social innovation and as a mediator of local practice. From a structuration perspective VET activity consists of technologies constituted to disrupt,

mediate, and displace existing individual identity and social patterns of organisational practice.

Structuration theory as a lens for analysing management development activity

More than ten years ago the Australian Industry Taskforce on Leadership and Management Skills produced the so-called 'Karpin Report' (1995). The report emphasised the inadequacy of managing practice and development, expressing the need to re-author managing identity in a relational mode, from 'cops to coaches'. The sole enduring heir of the report is recommendation eleven that proposed a national Frontline Management Initiative (FMI), which is the empirical MDT focus of this paper. The initiative targeted 100,000 untrained frontline managers through a workplace and competency based portfolio approach to work on their self.

The rhetoric of the framework heralded a second generation competency based approach in Australia, rejecting prescribed curriculum, and privileging individual programmes, workplace evidence collection, mentoring and coaching (ANTA, 1998). This was a unique opportunity to investigate the discursive practices and productions of such a technology, and the paradox of constructivist intentions located within a reductionist framework.

The national evaluation of the FMI mirroring the academic interest in the oscillating relations between theory and practice and the need to develop understanding of both the emerging patterns of practice of such management development technologies (MDTs)

and in their performativity, or theory in practice. That is, from a structuration perspective, how they were changing organisation[1].

The nominalist approach was based upon an inductive, naturalistic, heuristic, critical constructivist framework. The study was ideographic, searching for emerging social processes and valuing the voluntarism of researcher-practice dialogue. The strategy involved multiple methods of data gathering within case studies, with an increasingly ethnographic approach. We were sensitised by both practitioner interaction and prior work with organisational pedagogic theory. The fieldwork began with formal and informal practitioner interactions conceptually mapping the emerging relations of practice, guiding, but not prescribing, the investigation. The research into this technology had two linked phases. A national evaluative study (1998 to 2002) was undertaken that involved twelve multidisciplinary researchers from six Universities focused on the technology's impact on individuals, organisations and businesses. Funnelled down through focus groups, broad surveys, and telephone interviews to twenty three case studies, from which content analysis tabulated statistics were obtained to a produce a functional assessment of the initiative (Barratt-Pugh and Soutar, 2002).

Concurrently, a more ethnographic study of practices at specific case study sites continued until 2004 that focused on the discourses associated with the technology and the social patterns that were generated. This phase explored how the technology was discursively constituted, what learning was produced and how practice was mediated. Resources were focused on longitudinal relations within three specific sites where

---

[1] And not a study of fidelity, or how well the patterns of the page had been reproduced in practice.

structured interviews, unstructured conversations, discussions, observations, record scanning, pictures and video were gathered. The complete NVivo data sets consisted of more than one thousand events from more than four years of field-work. The data produced practitioner reviewed vignettes that formed rich case study narratives and a tabulation of thematic phenomena. Moving the analysis from the descriptive to the conceptual, axial coding and discourse analysis illuminated the relational patterns and subject intent. Our iterative form of discourse analysis was informed by the work of Fairclough (1995), Janks (1997), Luke (1995), Hardy and Palmer (1998), Gee (1996) and Boje (1994) and consisted of tree nodes branching from prosody, values, cohesion, mode, mood, genre, voice and collusions. A grounded theory approach acted as the framework for the search for enduring, visible and instrumental relational patterns with subsequent theorising across the cases. Our intention was to explore how actors draw on the discursive resources of MDTs, shape discursive mechanisms, and author managing identities (Brown 2006).

Detailed accounts of our analysis can be found in other documents (Barratt-Pugh and Soutar 2002; Barratt-Pugh 2004), and indicate how this workplace based MDT is characterised by unique translations. It is a script from which orchestration is all. The diversity of productions spans a continuum from functional productions, such as technical manager skilling, accreditation and work ordering, to more generative productions, such as relational managing practices and pedagogic capability with a taxonomy of adoption. The study depicts the FMI script as an inscription for change. Yet the diversity of interpretation generates a multiplicity of meaning within organisation. In terms of rich

performances, it can be labelled a technology of discursive translation, changing beliefs about learning and managing practice within organisations and generating space for reflective practice to continue such dialectic.

Structuration theory provides the most enduring theoretical framework with which to analyse FMI practice. The FMI is a technology constituted to disrupt and mediate the existing social patterns of managing practice and to institute changed structural patterns.

Just as the dualism of agency and structure is recast by Giddens (1984) as a duality, so the FMI is embedded with the same ambitions with regard to work and learning, and the mediation of relational managing identity. The framework of Structuration theory illuminates how the FMI is both enabled and constrained by structures, resistance and local agency, which are then themselves consequentially modified by that interaction.[2]

In structuration terms, the FMI is a significant impact on organisational practice, disturbing current modalities of interpreting learning and managing practice and mediating existing structures of learning and managing practice. By introducing new learning and managing concepts into the organisational dialectic, meaning is changed, mediating the dialectic of control, the balance between autonomy and dependence in system relations and related political and resource allocation. Finally, the FMI asserts that new learning and managing behaviours are legitimate practice, supported by various sanctions. FMI performances can be analysed at an organisational and then at a national level.

---

[2] The FMI intervention can be viewed from interactionalist and innovationist perspectives.

In organisations, *structure* exists through performativity. Only where the FMI is engaged do repeated patterns form the reifications of FMI 'structure.' In the tabulation, thick performances of the FMI develop where boundary-spanning managers develop alternative systems of signification for workplace learning. Engagement often produces an energetic dialectic of learning, with reflexive practices examining existing patterns of learning and managing, and enhanced where CEOs leads the rhetoric. Knowledgeable HRD actors and managers engage the modalities of signification with vigour, confronting existing signification, mediating existing learning patterns with new spaces and relations of learning. The interpretive schemes are strongly mediated by these discontinuities and alterative discourse. In thick FMI performances, learning becomes a conversation, an agenda with roles, contractual relations and a defined language with inscribed practices. FMI practices become the language of learning and learning becomes a functional code within an emerging managing practice.

In terms of *ordering*, organisational politics demands the recruitment of powerful figures within the initial FMI discourse. Discursive action links into existing agendas, competitive pilot processes secure budgets and substantive strategic commitment, accessing allocative resources that engage further authorative actors, and creating enduring patterns. Moving the locus of power towards local communities increases autonomy and ownership, thickening performance.

The modalities of ordering are confronted where there is greater distribution of authorative and allocative power within an FMI performance. Distributing the locus of power spreads and permeates engagement, understanding and eventually advocacy for the FMI. Knowledge becomes locally generated and centrally circulated. Multiple contracts of learning and steering groups distribute FMI responsibility, building localised authorative resources. The domination of learning by externalised training agendas is displaced to workplace models. The dialectic of control shifts from engineering dependant compliance towards constructive responsibility. Local and learner control of learning emerges in thick FMI, mediating a new distributed and relational managing perspective, where power is viewed as flowing through relations, as meaning is *translated* into local action.

In terms of the *systems of legitimisation*, the FMI is most productive where there are asymmetries between resources and sanctions. Competition for resources through 'pilots' privileges participants and mediates active engagement. More successful performances are associated with manager partnerships, producing collective competence, rather than individual actor competence. Mandatory recruitment strategies produce more dysfunctional FMI performances.

The interpretive schemes are confronted with complex interactions that confront existing meanings of learning.[3] The repetition of action group, 360 degree feedback and mentoring establishes visible competing learning rituals and establishes a greater learning

---

[3] The 'modalities of legitimisation' are accessed by FMI actors in order to assert new practices and relations of learning.

democracy in thicker cultures. These networks of learning establish norm cultural patterns and then migrate, becoming networks of managing.

Structures of legitimation are strongly mediated by thicker FMI productions that access the interpretive schemes and establish new patterns of practice. The FMI is established as the dominant paradigm; the way to learn, manage and introduce change. New spaces, values and relations of learning and managing are institutionalised.

In summary, thicker performances are based on more pervasive inclusion and access to powerful voices. Radical assault on the modalities of structure distributes authority and resources. Learning conversations and networks establish new learning rituals producing managing networks valuing reflective practice, relational power and greater individual autonomy.

Evaluating structuration theory as VET research tool

Giddens' theory was produced in a decade where the Berlin Wall stood and our only interconnections were unstable telephone lines. How does his framework stand the test of time and the application to a specific issue? In terms of social relevance the theory is formed from a broad conceptual base drawing together the threads of many previous theoretical constructions form previous decades. It appears unsullied by any connection to previous social ordering but critics from a Foucaldian or actor network perspective (Law 1984) would emphasise that it champions agency and denies the hegemony of discursive systems. From this perspective we are subjects of powerful discourses with

little agency and just align our subjectivity with specific discourse that shape and reshape our being. Any 'use' of structuration theory should be tempered with such perspectives.

In terms of applicability to organisations and the particular issue of learning, structuration theory again appears to provide utility. While framed as a grand sociological theory, it forms an effective platform for organisational analysis as organisations are semi-bounded open systems and microcosms of the broader social entity. However, one caution would be to recognise that organisational actors are social beings with other lifeworlds. They walk away every day, and every morning, bring in other world learning. This paper makes the assessment that Structuration Theory provides an effective frame for studying the patterns of discursive relations in organisational practice and can help illuminate how learning practice is produced and itself produces organisational change.

In terms of VET research Structuration Theory serves to break VET analysis away from a focus on 'learning relations' and position VET activity within the critical political battle for organisational space as learning production challenges the more tangible productions of the workplace (Du Gay 1996). In addition, it provides an etic perspective for analysis that is a valuable contrast to the emic nature of grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss 1997).

Conclusion

Workplace learning permeates organisational interaction. While organisation attempts to shape formal and informal learning relations it is itself continually being reshaped by

those interactions. This paper has sought to introduce Structuration Theory as a relevant platform for analysis that attempts to 'see' learning activity as a mediator of organisational culture as well as individual identity. Indeed, the example of the FMI analysis indicates how such theory can complement a grounded approach. This paper has also critiqued Structuration Theory as framework as a VET organisational research resource.

Giddens (1984) asserts that a *dualism* exists where continual social interaction both constitutes and is constituted by social structure. Producing learning is a complex labyrinth of assumptions about what is good for organisations at the global and local level. Competing discourses align with specific values, codified inscriptions distribute representations of specific values, but it is these values in action that produce workplace practice (Giddens 1984, Hassard 1996). Learning practices, formal and informal continually fight for organisational space to assert their representations of how we should be within our organisations. Structuration Theory provides a template to see how learning practices contest the existing system, negotiate with and displace, traditional processes, norms and significations, to establish new legitimate practices. Each interaction affects the subsequent values of organisational actors, who conform, comply or change their interactional patterns. Such analysis is all about organisational talk, but it is organisational talk that forms practices which change identity and evolve organisation.

References

Adam, B 1992. Giddens' Theory of Structuration. *The British Journal of Sociology, vol. 43, no. 1, pp. 144-146.*

Barratt-Pugh, L G B & Soutar G N, 2002. Paradise nearly gained: Vol 2 Case studies of impact and diversity from FMI practice, *National Centre for Vocational Education Research - Australian National Training Authority, NCVER, Adelaide.*

Barratt-Pugh, L G B & Soutar, G N 2002, Paradise nearly gained: Vol 1 Evaluating the Frontline Management Initiative, *National Centre for Vocational Education Research - Australian National Training Authority, NCVER, Adelaide.*

Barratt-Pugh, L G B 2004. An exploration of the discourses associated with the Frontline Management Initiative and their relationship to managing practice. *UWA, WA.*

Boje, D M 1994, 'Organisational storytelling: The struggles of pre modern, modern and postmodern organisational learning discourses', Management learning, *vol.25, no.3, pp.433-462.*

Boje, D M 1996, 'Lessons from the pre modern and modern for postmodern management', Constituting Management, *S Clegg and G Palmer, de Gruyter, Berlin.*

Brown, A D 2006. 'A narrative approach to collective identities'. *Journal of ManagementStudies*, vol. 25, no. 4, pp 731-53.

Clark, J, Modgil, ., and Modgil, S. Eds. 199). *Anthony Giddens and the Constitution of Social Life*. MacMillan, London.

Cohen, I J 1989, Structuration theory: Anthony Giddens and the constitution of social life*, Macmillan, Hampshire.*

Engestrom, Y 1999b, Perspectives on activity theory, *Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.*

Fairclough, N 1995, Critical discourse analysis, *Longman, London.*

Frost, P J & Egri, C P 1991, 'The political process of innovation', Research in Organisational Behaviour, *vol.13, pp.229-295.*

Gee, J P 1999, An introduction to discourse analysis: Theory and method, Routledge, London.

Giddens, A 1979, Central problems in social theory: Action, structure and contradiction in social analysis*, University of California Press, Berkeley.*

Giddens, A 1984, The constitution of society*, University of California Press, Berkeley.*

Giddens, A 1991, Modernity and self-identity*, Polity, Cambridge.*

Glaser, B G & Strauss, A L 1967, The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research, *Aldine Publishing Company, Chicago.*

Hardy, C & Palmer, I 1998, Discourse as a strategic resource*, Department of Management working paper (HR/IR), University of Melbourne, Victoria.*

Hassard, J 1996, 'Exploring the terrain of modernism and postmodernism in organisational theory', in Postmodern management and organisational theory, *D M Boje & R P Gepart, London, Sage.*

Janks, H 1997, 'Critical discourse analysis as a research tool', Discourse: studies in the cultural politics of education, *vol.18, no.3.*

Karpin, D (Chair) 1995, Enterprising nation: The report of the industry task force on leadership and management skills*, Australian Government Publication Service, Canberra.*

Lave, J & Wenger, E 1991, Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation, *Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.*

Law, J 1986, ' Editors introduction: Power knowledge and the dissolution of the sociology of knowledge', in Power action and belief: A new sociology of action, *J Law, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London.*

Luke, A 1995, 'Text and discourse in education', Review of Research in Education, *vol.21, pp.3-48.*

Poell, R F, Chivers, G E, Van der Krogt, F J, Danny, A & Rob F 2000,'Learning-network theory', Management Learning*, vol.31, no.1, pp.25-50, Thousand Oaks C A*

Sewell, W H 1992, 'A theory of structure: Duality, agency, and transformation', *American Journal of Sociology*