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Abstract: In this paper, I present the findings of a self-study into my teaching practices as a sociology-of-education lecturer working in the pre-service teacher education programme of a regional university in New South Wales, Australia. The principal data source is a log book of the teaching practices which characterised several tutorial classes taught in 2007. To understand these practices, the paper draws upon Aristotle’s concepts of techne and praxis, and Bourdieu’s understanding of practices as socially constructed and contested. The paper situates tensions between more technicist and praxis-oriented teaching approaches to pre-service teacher education within the teacher education and university contexts in which these classes were undertaken. In doing so, the article reveals tensions between assessment-driven and more authentic teaching practices, and more student and teacher-centred teaching practices. The article also shows how accountability pressures within tertiary settings have led to a more instrumental approach to tertiary teaching. I conclude there is a need for greater attention to the conditions of work which influence teacher educators’ practices, rather than fetishising individualistic instantiations of such practices.

Keywords: teacher education, teaching practices, sociology of education, Aristotle, Bourdieu

Introduction

This paper is a self-study of my teaching practices as a lecturer and tutor working in the pre-service teacher education programme of a rural and regional university in New South Wales, Australia. The paper focuses upon how the teacher education and university contexts in which I work influence my tertiary teaching practices. The paper draws upon a weekly logbook of significant teaching events in a sociology of education subject I delivered across three courses in 2007, and analyses these practices in light of the conditions under which they were undertaken. The three courses are described in the
paper as the Bachelor of Education (Primary), Bachelor of Education/Arts or Science, and Diploma in Education (Secondary), and the students studying these courses are described respectively as the ‘the Primaries’, ‘the Double Degrees’ and ‘the Dip. Eds’.

The conditions which influence these teaching practices relate to both teacher education in particular, and the university sector more generally. In relation to teacher education, Murray, Nuttall and Mitchell’s (2008) overview of research literature into initial teacher education in Australia from 1995 to 2004 reveals teaching practices are heavily influenced by a strong push for reflection and reflective practice. This is in keeping with what Zeichner (1999) describes as a shift over time in teacher education programmes from an emphasis upon narrower, behavioural foci to an increased interest in the more cognitive and affective elements of student-teachers’ practices. Such practices have the possibility of cultivating more socio-politically, morally informed dispositions. However, and at the same time, such practices have been criticised for encouraging superficial learning, rather than higher-order explorations of the circumstances surrounding student-teachers’ day-to-day, concrete experiences (Murray et al., 2008). In this way, the realities of reflective practice have not necessarily lived up to expectations.

Such superficiality is perhaps not surprising, given changes in the circumstances under which teacher educators engage in their work. Drawing upon the professional governance of teacher education in Ontario and British Columbia, Grimmett (2007) argues that relevant policy and research reveal how there has been a shift from more social justice-oriented concerns to more content-based instruction, and an emphasis upon
school-based learning within teacher education courses. This is complemented by a strong push by governments for teachers as ‘competent craftsmen’, rather than critically reflective practitioners (Moore, 2004).

Under such circumstances, there is a tendency to frame teacher education as a technical activity which expunges other discourses and approaches. This involves the valorization of practicum experiences as superior to other forms of knowledge production, such as those associated with critically reflective practice, or critique within the academy more generally (Britzmann, 2003). Such emphases feed into a view of teaching as being about the individual acquisition of skills, rather than the cultivation of a disposition to effect improved opportunities for all, including those most socially, economically and/or politically disenfranchised.

Finally, within the university sector at large, technicist emphases upon monitoring performance – what Lyotard (1984) describes as ‘performativity’ - also characterise the conditions of work of academics in Australia, and challenge more educative stances (Marginson, 2002). Because the institution of the university influences how teacher education is undertaken (Grossman & McDonald, 2008), these more technicist emphases within the tertiary sector at large affect the teaching practices in these programmes.

**Understanding and contextualising practice**

To make sense of the tensions which characterise my teaching practices under these conditions, the paper is informed by the Aristotelian conception of practice as either more
technicist or praxis-oriented, and Bourdieu’s notion of practice as a socially constructed product of tensions between conflicting positions in recognisable social spaces, or ‘fields’. The paper draws suggestively upon the Aristotelian concepts of praxis and techne, but in a more critical, historically and socially-conscious manner than originally intended by Aristotle. To this end, Bourdieu’s notion of practices as socially contested is useful to more fully understand the socially contingent nature of teaching practices which transpired within a particular set of classes. This is in keeping with Kemmis and Smith’s (2008) neo-Aristotelian argument that the disposition of practical wisdom, or phronesis, calls for actions to be judged in light of their broader social and historical circumstances.

The paper draws upon Aristotle’s (1953) more individualistic conception of practice, understood as differentiated into three distinct categories, each guided by a particular disposition. Theoria, the first of these forms of human action, involves contemplation to determine the ‘truth’ in any given situation, and is guided by the disposition of episteme. The second form of action, poesis, entails engaging in means-end, purposeful, instrumental action. Such action is influenced by a mode of reasoning described as techne, which fosters an approach to the world characterised by technical problem-solving, but which gives scant regard to issues of morality about the appropriateness of particular ‘solutions’. These more moral concerns and influences are attributed to another form of action, praxis, which is guided by the disposition of phronesis, and entails not simply acting responsibly and in a morally informed and committed way in terms of individual needs, but also in terms of what is right or good for humankind in general.
To make sense of the inherently social nature of practice, and the contestation between more theoretical, technical and *praxis*-oriented approaches to practice, the paper draws upon Bourdieu’s (1990a; 1998) concept of the social world as comprising multiple and contested ‘fields’, each characterised by conflict over the practices considered of most value. Fields are social spaces which both reflect and influence the dispositions, or ‘habitus’, of groups and individuals who comprise them. Such dispositions are a product of the accumulation of particular attributes, characteristics or ‘capitals’, which come to be valued. Under these circumstances, any given practice only makes sense in light of other possible alternatives; that is, all social practices are relational (Bourdieu, 1998).

Consequently, this paper utilises socially informed conceptions of *techne* and *phronesis* to understand the tensions which characterise my teaching practices. In doing so, the paper foregrounds the conditions which influence these practices.

**Method**

The research is presented as a self-study of my teaching practices as a lecturer working in a regional Australian university. After Baird (2004), it is recognized that there are multiple interpretations of “self” in “self-study”. These include focusing upon my *teaching, me* as teacher, myself as *doing self-study* on myself, myself as researcher of *teaching, teacher education or educational research*, and myself as a researcher of *self-study* more generally (Baird, 2004). In this paper, the emphasis is upon my teaching practices. In trying to convey these experiences, I adopt a deliberately reflexive position in relation to these practices, acknowledging that any representation of such practices is
limited by my own interpretations of these experiences, and the ‘objectifying’, scholastic nature of the writing process, which is itself influenced by the demands of the academic field of production in which this work is undertaken (Bourdieu, 1990b). With this in mind, the paper details the nature of my teaching experiences as I engaged with student-teachers in a sociology of education subject taught across several teacher education courses.

The data reported comprise critical teaching incidents during weekly tutorials and lectures. In particular, the data collection/reporting process focused upon those key incidents which best revealed the conditions influencing the teaching which transpired. In keeping with the focus of self-study in teacher education upon concerns about the nature of teacher education as a complex and problematic undertaking (Berry, 2004), and Bourdieu’s (1990b) calls for an increasingly reflexive sociology of practice, this research is not presented as a clear and ‘correct’ account of events, but instead as one interpretation of one educator’s experiences and efforts to better understand his teaching practices under a specific set of circumstances.

The research involved a detailed study of my reflections on teaching various iterations of a sociology of education subject to students enrolled in primary and secondary teacher education courses. The primary students mentioned in the paper were divided into two groups (A & B), and were encountering the subject in the second semester of their first year of a four year Bachelor of Education (Primary) degree. One group of secondary students was in the second semester of the second year of a four year Bachelor of
Education (Secondary) degree, while a second group of secondary students was in the second semester of a one-year Diploma in Education course. Ethics considerations were taken into account throughout the self-study, rather than during just the initial stages of the research process (Mitchell, 2004). Identifying information is not included in the final presentation of findings and analysis; all names are pseudonyms.

To provide insights into the nature of conditions influencing my teaching, I maintained a log-book of key events over the thirteen-week semester in which the courses were offered. The primary data set consisted of one to two-page summaries of the activities undertaken during each tutorial, and my perceptions and reflections on the nature of the contexts within which this teaching was occurring.

In keeping with Bourdieu’s (1998) understanding of the social world as comprising contested practices within identifiable social fields, key themes relating to my teaching practices were distilled from the data and analysed ‘relationally’; that is, these teaching practices were interpreted in relation to their social context, and other possible practices within this context. The Aristotelian concepts of *techne* and *praxis* were drawn upon to describe tensions between more instrumental teaching practices, and those which were inherently concerned to try to provide the best possible educational opportunities for students. This analysis was also undertaken in collaboration with academic colleagues, who acted as critical friends in a process of intersubjective understanding and meaning-making about these conditions (Habermas, 1992). Such a process helped to bring to light multiple possible interpretations, as well as revealing initial interpretive
misunderstandings. During this process, two key themes were distilled from the data – how student assessment was influenced by both educative and instrumental pressures, and how the tutorial setting served as a learning space for students within the performative university.

Findings & analysis: Contextualising contested tertiary teaching practices

Assessment for learning?

The way in which assessment issues were broached during the tutorials revealed tensions between a more educative stance, and a tendency within the field of teacher education for assessment issues to be dealt with in an expedient, and often instrumental manner. Such tensions were apparent in discussions with Double Degree students about completing university assignments while on practicum:

I also mentioned that they should not be writing up their assignments while on prac. I said, ‘When you are on prac, you are on prac. – learning about your own and other teachers’ practice – not doing assignments’. This resonated with students’ sense of how they believed they should be spending their days during prac i.e. focusing on teaching. (Double Degree students, Tuesday 21 August, 2007)

On this occasion, I placed strong emphasis upon everyday teaching during practicum, rather than more active reflection on practice, and in relation to other aspects of the course, revealing a habitus predisposed to a more technical orientation to pre-service teacher student learning, one which runs the risk of valorising practicum over students’ other educational experiences (Britzmann, 2003). By doing so, the artificial divide
between university-based, written assignments, and students’ practicum experiences is perpetuated. At a time when there is increasing pressure to adopt a more technicist approach to teacher education, such a response reflects a habitus disposed towards students’ demands for tertiary learning experiences perceived as relevant to schooling practices. The way in which organisational rather than educational matters dominated practicum-related discussions reflects these concerns and reveals the influence of a long history of marginalisation of more active engagement in practicum related issues in teacher education courses.

Even when efforts were made to more explicitly link practicum related issues and a more active inquiry stance on the part of students, concerns about the former dominated the latter:

When I mentioned Mike Thomas [practicum co-ordinator] would come in the following week to speak with them about prac issues, an almost audible ‘about time’ pervaded the room. They were very interested in any information about their upcoming prac. Given I was discussing prac. issues in the context of their second assignment, there was also the opportunity for them to make connections between the two. I mentioned that they were required to document some specific elements of their prac. experiences while they were on prac. They didn’t seem overly concerned about this. (Double Degree students, Tuesday 21 August, 2007)

Under such circumstances, issues of mutuality, and inter-subjective meaning making proved elusive as both tutor and tutored struggled to develop a more robust sense of the collective enterprise of teacher education in which we were engaged. The capitals most valued by both myself and students were those associated with a narrow conception of a
theory-practice divide socially and historically embedded within university-school relations, and most obviously evident in the way I saw value in linking practicum and assessment related issues together. There is a sense in which I was acquiescing to students’ demands – the manifestation of more technicist pressures within the field of teacher education – to both focus upon practicum-related issues, and to clarify assessment related issues as expeditiously as possible. As a result, relatively little attention was given to exploring the relationship between students’ practicum and documenting elements of their practicum experience for more educative purposes. Given the emphasis in the field of teacher education upon how more substantive reflective practices and processes tend to be marginalised in relation to the practicum (Murray et al., 2008), such responses are problematic, but perhaps not surprising.

Tensions between completing assessment tasks for the sake of assessment, and assessment for learning, were also evident in the Primary classes. This was apparent in relation to a class presentation which students had to complete in groups of 2 to 3 persons:

I finished by asking several members how they were progressing with their presentations. They were all much more eloquent in their explanations about how they would present their ideas in the upcoming weeks as part of their formal presentations. I was increasingly relieved as each pair explained what they would do… (Primary Group B, Tuesday 28 August, 2007)

This sense of relief can be interpreted in several ways. On the one hand, it reflects a more technicist approach to my teaching, focused explicitly upon assessment and
assessment-related issues. A focus upon assessment issues can be construed as a techne-oriented response within a field of teacher education dominated by instrumental concerns, and which makes it difficult to sustain more learner-oriented approaches to teacher learning.

However, such a disposition is arguably also a product of something of a ‘fractured’ habitus simultaneously concerned about student learning, and whether, indeed, students do understand the work in which they are engaging – whether they can interpret practice in light of relevant socio-political theories, and whether they can theorise practice. In this way, the tutorial is a space for the promotion of intersubjective meaning making, as well as a forum for expeditiously addressing assessment for assessment’s sake. The notion of teacher education courses providing the circumstances for more robust introspection is at least partially evident.

There were also instances when presentations for assessment were more tightly tied to learning within the tutorials:

The first group presentation for this class was scheduled for today. The three students gave a reasonable overview of the topic of indigenous education … There was one particularly interesting moment during the discussion when two students, Tony & Lilly, were engaging with one another about whether enough was being done about indigenous students’ needs in the curriculum as it currently stands. Tony argued the curriculum took indigenous students’ perspectives into account. Lilly took exception to Tony’s comment and passionately argued that there was little likelihood that that would ever occur, and that it certainly wasn’t the case at the
moment. The rest of the room remained silent during the discussion between these two students. They were fully engaged. (Primary Group B, Tuesday 4 September, 2007)

Under these circumstances, the assessment task was a valued capital which seemed to stimulate learning, rather than serving as a contrived proxy for learning. Mutuality and collective meaning-making were achieved through the discussion about the extent to which the school curriculum catered for indigenous students. The fostering of the circumstances which enable such a critique reveals a more *praxis*-oriented, educative disposition on my part, and how the tutorial setting can be a space for promoting critical and political consciousness amongst students. Under these circumstances, students are not only active participants in their own learning, but are also afforded the opportunity to engage in learning which values a personal and collective socially-conscious reflexivity (Moore, 2004). At least in part, the tutorial can become a social setting responsible for the promotion of a form of communicative rationality which enables students to critique one another’s understandings of the social world, with an ultimate view to expunging injustice.

This capacity for the tutorial setting to be educative, and not simply to reinforce more regressive, historically embedded practices, was also evident in relation to the Dip. Ed. students:

What was interesting, however, was that when I went around the group and asked each about how they were going in their assignments, they were mostly able to justify both critical and functionalist accounts of educational practice. I held my breath when it came to ‘Spider’
delivering his insights into performance based pay. So did everyone else. However, his account was lucid, and he delivered a coherent argument in terms of the two sides of the argument he would present in his essay in a few weeks’ time. It was unexpected. I didn’t expect the source of ‘I like pussy’\(^1\) to be quite so insightful. He didn’t just present an account of both sides of the argument, but he nuanced the argument! He had done some research, had his articles with him, and was able to elaborate upon the various perspectives presented. (Dip Eds., Friday, 17 August, 2007)

For one student who had been resistant to engaging with substantive elements of the course, explaining how he would respond to the assessment task within a tutorial setting provided an opportunity to engage with key ideas in a much more robust manner than may have been anticipated given his previous disposition towards the subject. Such a response shows how I provided students with the circumstances to create meaning in relation to key issues in the tutorials, again revealing a more \textit{praxis}-oriented academic habitus.

\textit{The tutorial as a learning space?}

However, the log also reveals that the tutorials were also sometimes spaces of low-order learning in which students were not active participants:

Again, today’s class was tough. It was clear several had not done the reading. They looked at me with semi-defiant expressions on their face as if to say, ‘So what are you going to do about it?’ I questioned them about what they had picked up in the lecture. Silence. I kept badgering and asked individual students. They responded but were not able to elaborate. We went through the

\(^1\) A reference to an earlier comment in which this student sought to establish a heteronormative masculine position during a discussion about education, society and sexuality.
key points from the relevant chapter in a similar way. (Primary Group A, Monday, 20 August, 2007)

Under these circumstances, a tutor-centred exchange dominated, and conflict, rather than learning, seemed to come to the fore. Such a response is, again, indicative of a more fractured habitus as I struggled to juggle competing educative and more instrumental approaches – the latter encouraging course coverage, rather than deep learning. Even when students were more willing to engage, such engagement was limited to their immediate experiences, without recourse to a broader understanding of the issues to which these experiences related:

The remainder of the lesson was based upon the issue of rurality. Students were asked to reflect upon this issue in light of their own experiences, and in terms of the key points delivered by Larry Simons\(^2\) in a guest lecture earlier that day. Students seemed to struggle to come up with some of the key points from the lecture, but they were able to expand upon their own experiences ...

(Primary Group A, Monday, 8 October, 2007)

Such evidence of tutor-focused classroom experience and superficial reflection on the part of students validates how teacher education courses can serve as sites of lower order learning (Murray et al, 2008). Influenced by such circumstances, my habitus struggled to consistently foster sustained, rigorous engagement on the part of students during tutorials. At times, I espoused a limited and limiting approach to learning, leading to students simply responding to my questions and queries. The result was encouragement of superficial student reflections upon their own experiences – a form of domestication.

\(^2\) Pseudonym for a guest lecturer within the faculty specialising in rural education
antithetical to the more reflective and reflexive practice which should characterise teaching and learning practices in the field of teacher education (Moore, 2004). Under these circumstances, student-direction of their own learning was missing, and mutual trust between intersubjective participants somewhat lacking, or at least heavily adumbrated. *Praxis* oriented engagement towards the good for humankind (Aristotle, 1953), or as a vehicle for more emancipatory achievements (Habermas, 2003), struggled to gain traction. The tutorial served as a site for the continuation of more typical initiate-respond-evaluate interactions, thereby reflecting the conservative teaching practices which characterise the field of teacher education more generally.

However, there were also instances when the tutorial as a learning space seemed to be dominated less by myself as tutor, and served as a site for more robust, active student engagement in the learning process:

Today’s session was much smoother than yesterday’s. In part, this was due to the effective way in which one of the students who was scheduled to provide a summary of today’s chapter fulfilled his responsibilities. He had a reasonably clear understanding of the key points covered in the chapter, and was able to elaborate upon these understandings. While he only covered half the chapter, he did this well. I was able to build upon his efforts and to encourage the other students to develop a better understanding of the key points covered in the second half of the chapter as a result of his efforts. This students’ efforts reinforced to me that the approach I had adopted to encourage students to construct and explicate their understanding of key concepts during the course of the subject was having a positive effect. Students seemed settled and responded well to the dialogue which developed during the course of the tutorial. It was apparent that they were
trying hard to engage with the key theories presented, even if they were still unsure of their capacities in this regard. (Primary Group D, Tuesday, 14 August, 2007)

The teaching approach of regularly scheduling students to provide summative accounts and insights into the contents of set weekly readings provided the circumstances for more active student involvement in their own learning. Such an approach is indicative of a \textit{praxis}-oriented disposition to the provision of students’ learning.

More active engagement on the part of students was also apparent even when tutorial relations may have been expected to have been strained from the outset:

The Dip Eds are a ‘bunch of no-hopers’, so I was told by several staff members. It was certainly the case that not all of them had done the allocated reading for the week. However, it was also the case that they were very interested in the issues we were discussing. I brought in a newspaper clipping about the appointment of Justice Susan Kiefel to the High Court to replace Ian Callinan, and used this as a stimulus to discuss the role of women in society and the way in which gender continues to play a part in influencing people’s expectations of themselves and others. I mentioned that a big deal was made about her appointment, and that of Susan Crennan last year, and this in itself was significant and indicative of the gendered nature of our society. They found this very interesting and a lengthy conversation ensued about whether this was the case. Several felt that the place of women in society had improved markedly. However, several also pointed out that there were still some significant gaps and agreed with the point I was making via Kiefel’s appointment… (Dip Eds., Friday, 17 August, 2007)

Responses to the use of the newspaper clipping about the appointment of Justice Kiefel to the High Court, and subsequent student engagement, reveal how tutorials could serve as a
more engaged setting for student learning, and provide evidence of how, while contested, my academic habitus was also informed by more socially, politically and historically conscious proclivities. This initial discussion led to a more robust conversation about the role of women in society, and how schooling was implicated in gender-related issues. These practices reveal how the field of teacher education serves as a site for the development of more praxis-oriented teaching practices which seek to critique and contextualise schooling within its broader socio-historical context. This is particularly effective in raising students’ consciousness, and fostering mutuality, enlightenment and understanding, and exemplifies how teacher education courses can be a space for substantive reflective practice (Zeichner, 1999).

Within one of the two Primary tutorial groups, there were also instances when the tutorials stimulated active engagement on the part of students:

Tony, a mature-age student was by far the most active member of class during these discussions. He seemed to have an innate sense about what the subject was designed to achieve, and was interested in contributing to his own knowledge construction. It was also apparent that he wasn’t just playing along to keep me happy; at different moments during this class (& other classes), he made some very salient, and very pointed comments about the extent to which his own experiences in schools and the B.Ed. programme reflected some of the various forms of discrimination and anti-educative stances which the subject sought to bring to light and challenge. He asked how it was that different lecturers could talk about how particular approaches to behaviour management or in relation to particular curriculum areas could be put forward as if they would always work, or as if they were the only or best ways of achieving educational outcomes. How was it that context seemed not to be taken into account in these extended summaries of what
teachers should do? I agreed he did indeed have a good point and that the purpose of subjects such as this one was to encourage students to think about the ideas they learnt at uni, and the experiences they had had themselves while on prac., and to consider how to best engage with students in various settings in light of this myriad of ‘dos’ and ‘don’ts’ etc. Everyone was very engaged during these discussions. (Primary Group B, Tuesday 28 August, 2007)

This recognition of the tutorial setting as a beneficial learning environment was even made explicit by some students:

As Will & Andrew were leaving my office, Will made the comment, ‘The classes we do with you are actually really enjoyable’. I was a bit dumbstruck. Will is a reserved student; quite articulate & able to organise his thoughts, but without all of the theatre which accompanies a comment by somebody such as Michael. He isn’t the sort of student who just gives compliments, and from his reserve in class, I have sometimes wondered about the extent to which he considers the classes beneficial or worthwhile. (Dip Eds., Friday, 7 Sept, 2007)

In this way, the tutorials served as social settings which fostered not only engagement, but enjoyment on the part of some students.

Interestingly, however, my response to Will’s comments also reveals how tutorials are not just an opportunity for student learning but are also potential sites to address external accountability requirements:

I mentioned to Will that I might get him to put those positive thoughts on paper. He responded, yes, that would be fine, & that he was happy to contribute comments which could be used towards my own performance review. (Dip Eds., Friday, 7 Sept, 2007)
The nature of the tertiary environment is such that an opportunity to gain evidence for internal performance reviews could not be passed up. In this way, instances when students were fully engaged in their learning, and enjoying it, were exploited by an academic habitus predisposed to the performative university’s demands for evidence of student engagement (Marginson, 2002). This is occurring at a time when there is significant pressure to perform in universities, to ‘be operational ... or disappear’ (Lyotard, 1984, p. xxiv).

These concerns about performativity had a material effect upon not just my teaching practices but also those of colleagues within my department more generally:

At times, it seems as though accounting for our practices is more important than actually engaging in them. This was brought home to me by a colleague who mentioned that she had turned down a request for a guest lecture because it didn’t fit into any of her “stretch goals” and simply represented more work for no outcome – where outcome was defined as relating directly to performance-based criteria negotiated with the Head of School.

They are also uncompromising criteria against which it is impossible to argue if some element of practice is deficient. If a particular initiative has not been undertaken, a goal attained, which may have been set 12 months previously, there is no ‘wriggle room’ (Primary Group A, Monday, 6 August, 2007).

Concerns about undertaking teaching evaluations also reflect these concerns about performativity:
Lena\textsuperscript{3} came into the lecture today to do a teaching evaluation. This was a bit of a trial. I always find these evaluations difficult. In spite of the rhetoric around them being to improve teaching practice, it still feels more like an evaluative rather than a developmental activity. (Lecture, Monday, 27 August, 2007).

Under these circumstances, teaching is construed as a valid activity for performative rather than purely educative reasons. Concerns about accounting for performance within the tertiary environment reveal my (and colleagues’) academic habitus as responsive to more educative concerns and emphases, as well as pressures to account for performance, even when the mechanisms employed may not necessarily contribute to genuine development and improvements in teaching practice.

**Conclusion**

While the teaching practices within the tutorial settings mentioned are a product of my own peculiar desires and sensibilities, they may be more usefully understood as effects of a habitus predisposed to a particular set of socially inscribed educational practices which characterise the tertiary context in which I work. The field of teacher education, as it plays out in relation to my teaching practices, reflects both *praxis*-oriented approaches to learning, as well as more technical emphases. *Praxis*-oriented approaches are evident in a more intrinsic desire to promote active and socio-politically informed learning in relation to assessment practices and tutorial discussions. More technical emphases are apparent during those moments when concerns about completing assessment tasks for the

\textsuperscript{3} Pseudonym for an educational designer whose role also included undertaking individual assessments of teaching performance for lecturers. Such evaluations were considered valid for annual performance review purposes.
sake of assessment seem to over-ride concerns about the learning associated with such assessment practices. More technical emphases originate, in part, from concerns about accountability and performativity within the university, and from the conservative and unreflective ways in which teaching is often undertaken within faculties of education. The result is a field of tertiary teaching practices characterised by complex tensions between tutor-centred tutorial discussions and the provision of opportunities for more active, student-centred, intersubjective, meaning making.

Consequently, the nature of teacher education teaching practices is revealed as complex, and as reflecting broader social circumstances and contexts in which such teaching is undertaken. At times, this teaching seems to be influenced by a desire to foster morally committed, socially emancipatory action which would benefit individual students, and the society in which students live. However, at other moments, the activities occurring within tutorial settings seem more closely allied with satisfying accountability and other more immediate contextual and typically technicist concerns as they impinge upon an academic working in a sometimes managerial tertiary teacher education setting. At first glance, it may seem tempting to ask the question: Is the teaching which transpires in these settings oriented towards the self of the tutor, working within the constraints of the current tertiary environment, or the ‘other’ of the students, always deserving of a quality education regardless of circumstances?

However, Bourdieu’s concepts of habitus, field and capital assist in revealing the shortcomings of the simplistic, dualistic and somewhat decontextualised nature of such a
question. These analytical tools, together with Aristotle’s conception of praxis and techne, reveal that the field of teacher education is an environment characterised by constant, ongoing tensions between more praxis-oriented approaches and emphases, and those associated with means-end rationality; my teaching practices reflect these complex and contrary emphases, revealing and contributing to a somewhat fractured, even contradictory, habitus struggling to make the best decisions for my students under sometimes challenging circumstances. The paper reveals that teaching is both enabled and constrained by the teacher education and university contexts in which it is undertaken, rather than being simply the product of individual educators’ proclivities. The paper also shows how those instances of teaching for genuine student learning can be appropriated for more external, accountability-oriented purposes within a performative tertiary context which seems to increasingly value the capacity not only to perform, but to be able to account for such performances. Within a context already influenced by technicist approaches to learning on the part of students and staff, such accountability mechanisms have the potential to further impoverish student-teacher relations. Consequently, this paper is an invitation to further critique those conditions within the tertiary environment, in general, and teacher education, in particular, which encourage conservative teaching practices on the part of academics, and passivity on the part of students.

References


