Australian Journal of Teacher Education

Volume 39 | Issue 10 Article 3

2014

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Recommended Citation
Mathewson Mitchell, D. (2014). Evolving Practice: A Relational Framework for Developing Understandings of University Teaching Practice. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, *39*(10).
http://dx.doi.org/10.14221/ajte.2014v39n10.3

This Journal Article is posted at Research Online.
http://ro.ecu.edu.au/ajte/vol39/iss10/3

Evolving Practice: A Relational Framework for Developing Understandings of University Teaching Practice

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Abstract: As a teacher educator I am concerned with developing understandings of my teaching as it evolves over time, in relation to the university teaching context and more broadly in terms understandings of teaching practice. In this paper, I outline the development of a framework designed for this purpose. The Relational Framework for Investigating Teaching Practice (RFITP) enables the systematic collection of information about teaching as a formative and cyclic process. Implementation of the framework is explained and data reported on to illustrate the use of this framework in a project involving self study. While this particular example draws on teaching in an online environment, implications for understanding and developing teaching in the particular context of university teacher education are explored.

Introduction

Institutional processes for evaluating university teaching tend to focus on the end point of teaching rather than the processes and journeys that take place as teaching occurs. In focusing on pre-determined compartmentalised areas, such evaluations also tend to take a substantialist position, defined by Bourdieu (1989, pg.15) as "that which inclines one to recognise no reality other than those that are available to direct intuition in ordinary experience". As a teacher educator I am concerned with moving beyond such positions to study my teaching practice as it evolves over time and in its relational complexity. This knowledge of teaching is particularly important in the area of teacher education where I am attempting to illustrate effective teaching for learning. In this context, best practice demands a reflexive relation to practice involving a cycle of engagement, discussion, reflection, evaluation, transformation and documentation over time.

In an attempt to develop an approach that resonates with my understandings of effective teaching and the relational complexities of practice, I have developed a framework for understanding teaching practice. This framework operates as a tool for planning, enacting and evaluating teaching with these operations seen as complementary processes that constitute a constantly evolving cyclic continuum. In implementing and documenting this framework in the university context I have drawn on traditions of self-study. I have also drawn on understandings of practice theory and in particular its application to the field of education. In this paper I will outline the background and development of my approach and the development of the framework as a pedagogical tool. I will then detail the implementation of the framework in one instance of teaching in an online environment. Drawing on qualitative data gathered across a 14 week session of teaching, I will report on analysis and outcomes in relation to developing understandings of teaching practice. I will conclude by discussing the potential use of the framework as a tool for understanding and developing teaching in the particular context of tertiary teacher education.

Background: Examining Practice

I began working in a regional university in New South Wales in Australia in 2007. Previous to this I was a specialist classroom teacher in secondary schools. As an experienced teacher, I entered the university with a firmly established teaching practice and well developed knowledge of my subject. However, I quickly found the need to adapt my teaching to the different context and the range of dynamic relations that I was required to respond to and address in the university setting. In doing this, like Ritter I found that my experience was different to the "the commonly-held assumption that, for former classroom teachers, learning to teach student teachers is a self-evident process" (2009, 59). As I grappled with the transition, I found it valuable to think consciously about my practice as an academic and more specifically to think about my teaching as an evolving professional practice.

My examination began with practice theory (Mathewson Mitchell, Reid & Hoare, forthcoming). The term 'practice theory' is used to indicate the broad epistemological tradition that is concerned with how things are done in everyday life. It is informed by theoretical writers such as Bourdieu, Giddens, Schatzki, Kemmis and Green. Two complementary approaches to practice theory have particular relevance and application to the work I embarked on and at the time were being explored in collaborative research undertaken at the Faculty of Education, Charles Sturt University (Mathewson Mitchell, Hoare & Reid, 2012; Reid, 2011; Daniel, Auhl & Hastings, 2011). The first is a neo-Aristotelian tradition that privileges rational communal activity in the ethical project of education (Kemmis, 2009). This approach examines reason and morality as underpinning action and explores the particular concept of praxis development within what Kemmis calls *practice architectures* (Kemmis & Grootenboer, 2008). These architectures are extra-individual aspects of practice that simultaneously constrain and enable any particular practice and determine the distinctive 'sayings', 'doings' and 'relatings' that characterise a practice. Alongside and in dialogue with this theory of practice, is a sense of the 'primacy of practice' in human activity and learning. As elaborated by Green (2008), this approach follows a post-structuralist tradition and focuses on the subjectivity of the embodied human agent. It questions the idealism of purely rational traditions and raises issues of discourse, language and the body as central. This approach sees what we actually do and who we 'are', as not governed solely by what we know, or by our rational aims and intentions. The practice we are engaged in produces what we actually do, say and how we inter-relate.

> Professional practice … consists of *speech* (what people say) plus the activity of the *body*, or bodies, in interaction (what people do, more often than not together)– a play of voices and bodies. In this view, practice is inherently *dialogical*, an orchestrated interplay, and indeed a matter of co-production. (Green, 2008, p. 5)

The idea of dialogical relations drew me to consider the work of Bourdieu (1977, 1989, 2005). Bourdieu's theory of practice opposes the persistent dualism of objectivism/subjectivism and agency/structure that has dominated sociology. Instead, he states "the objectivist and the subjectivist stand in a dialectical relationship" (Bourdieu, 1977 cited in Bourdieu, 1989, p.15). In proposing a relational approach Bourdieu asserts a connection between structure and agency, in ways that connect with the ideas about practice presented by Kemmis and Green. Here it is also useful to look at Bourdieu's concept of habitus. As Bourdieu (2005, p. 45) argues, a professional *habitus:*

> is something *non natural*, a set of *acquired* characteristics which are the product of social conditions and which, for that reason, may be totally or partially common to people who have been the product of similar social conditions… .

In this way teachers acquire a professional habitus, which allows them to engage in teaching in appropriate and effective manners. They develop a practical sense as they unconsciously develop familiarity and expertise in working in classrooms or in educational settings. This practical sense allows them to unconsciously incorporate the theoretical knowledge they have developed (about learners, teaching and learning) as they attend to the nature, quality and management of learning. The development of habitus occurs over time-space (Schatzki, 2006) as teachers adapt to changing educational contexts.

Teacher education as a context for practice research

Teaching is both a very common and very complicated activity. Although there is a common perception that a good teacher needs little more than patience, basic content knowledge, and a positive regard for children, Ball & Forzani (2011) remind us that teaching is actually "unnatural" work. As they argue, teaching is "unnatural" because it involves specialized expertise and knowledge; it demands particular skills along with the capacity to take these skills apart so that others can learn them; and it requires the ability to work with many learners and manage inclusive, safe and productive learning environments (Ball & Forzani, 2011, p. 40).

In recent times there has been an increased focus on how we might explore the nexus between practice theory and teacher education (Grossman et al., 2009; Ball & Forzani, 2009). Ball and Forzani (2009, p. 503) propose "a shift from a focus on what teachers know to a greater focus on *what teachers do*", as a matter of attention to *both* theory and practice in teacher education. Grossman likewise calls for an expanded focus for teacher education that extends curriculum for teacher knowledge to include greater focus on practice alongside theory. For Grossman (2009, p. 277) this requires the identification of 'core practices' – ones that occur regularly and often in teaching. In this sense 'core practices' are key components of teaching and exist at different levels of complexity and teacher experience. Grossman's procedure for teaching core practices (2008, 2009) proposes a framework involving the use of *representations*, *decompositions*, and *approximations* of practice. Applied to teacher education, this framework provides for the comprehensive study of teaching through studying 'representations' of teaching practice and then 'decomposing' those representations. Through attending to elements, discussion and analysis, student teachers are able to identify how core practices are enacted in teaching and learning. Student teachers can then take discrete and demonstrated skills and practise these together in controlled situations and in integrated ways as 'approximations' of practice. In this way they are applying in practice, what they have learned about teaching through the study of teaching.

A Framework for Representing Practice

In thinking about practice using the conceptual tools outlined I came to understand that I had moved across educational contexts and that this transition and its impact on my professional habitus was worthy of particular scrutiny. I also came to understand that teaching about teaching with a focus on practice requires the development of representations

of teaching practice that can be decomposed as instances of teaching. This recognition suggested to me that it would be valuable to map and represent my teaching practice for the purposes of developing understandings of my teaching in the university setting and to provide a framework for the study of teaching more broadly. An understanding of practice theory suggested that such work required a relational approach in the Bourdieuan sense of attending to both structure and agency.

Efforts to think about, map and represent practice are by no means new and there are many models to draw on. For example, Ball and Forzani (2007), drawing on Cohen, Raudenbush and Ball (2003), view it as encompassing multiple interactions between teachers, learners, subject and the environment of schools. Schwab (1978) similarly maps aspects practice in relation to teaching in identifying the four commonplaces of education as subject matter, teachers, learners and milieu. Eisner (1997) has represented a view of teaching as triadic, involving society-centred, child-centred and subject-centred emphasis (1997, p.58), which is similarly taken up by McDonald (1992). Bernstein (1971) has also considered the message systems of education in ways that recognise the activities and context of practice. My aim was to build on these models to develop a framework that reflected my experience and the anticipated experience of student teachers.

I began by identifying dimensions of teaching. In taking a relational perspective and drawing on practice theory, I noted the need to identify how both structure and agency were related in teaching. I identified structural aspects as external structures of teaching. In doing this I drew on Bernstein's (1971) educational message systems of assessment, curriculum and pedagogy, identifying those message systems as fundamental structures of teaching that are objectifiable and that provide the conditions for sayings, doings and relatings. In this application, curriculum is understood as "the substantive content of learning and its organization, as subjects and topics" (Kalantzis & Cope, 2008, p.6). The term 'pedagogy' reflects a focused conception of pedagogy as the process of teaching or as the art and science of teaching (van Manen, 1999). Assessment is defined as "gathering, interpreting and describing information about student achievement" (Brady & Kennedy, 2007, p.220).

Referring to Ball and Forzani (2007) and Schwab (1978), I then noted subjective or agentive aspects of practice as engaging personal experience at the level of particular stakeholders and their habitus. The stakeholders I identified were learners, teacher/s and community. Learners are individuals who collectively participate in education. Teachers are specifically acknowledged as part of teaching practice, rather than solely responsible. Community articulates the connections between teaching in schools, the multiplicity of experiences outside schools, and the people who have an interest in schooling. The inclusion of community recognises that the private, enclosed space of the classroom has become more publically visible (Kalantzis & Cope, 2008, p.225) and that learning has a relationship to communities beyond the site in which it is delivered.

In identifying these structural and subjective aspects of practice, my aim was not to determine the ways in which practice could be viewed, but rather to provide a starting point, which could be adapted, altered or added to. For this reason I started exploring the use of a matrix as a representational tool. The matrix is a form for constructing and relating concepts. Matrices are structurally stable while allowing for interactivity and dynamism. They avoid linear modes of thinking, facilitate exploration in any direction and allow assimilation of knowledge to facilitate relational understandings. To illustrate the relational aspect of practice, I bought the subjective and structural dimensions I had identified together in the matrix through the use of two axes. The horizontal axis represents the structural aspects of practice, while the vertical axis represents the subjective aspects of practice. The axes intersect within the nine cells of the matrix. In its intersection of the axes, each cell represents the relation between the subjective and structural in practice. This relationship was first

articulated in two linked statements with each statement developed from the initiating axis and from foundational literature. The articulation of these statements provided the foundational conceptual framework for understanding teaching. In utilizing the framework as a tool for planning and investigating teaching practice, I then adapted the statements into inquiry-based questions that would enable investigation of the focus of the cell in a particular instance. So, each question focuses on an aspect of practice in relation to the structural and subjective elements that each cell is linked to. The final framework can be seen in figure one. It has been termed the Relational Framework for Investigating Teaching Practice (RFITP).

	EDUCATIONAL MESSAGE SYSTEMS			
STAKEHOLDERS		Curriculum	Pedagogy	Assessment
	Learners	1.1 What content is being taught? Who are the learner/s?	2.1 How are learners engaging with teaching?	3.1 How are learners demonstrating learning?
	Teachers	1.2 How does the teacher engage with curriculum?	2.2 What processes are used to promote learning? Who are the teacher/s?	3.2 How is the teacher gathering information about teaching and learning?
	Community	1.3 How does the curriculum connect to the community?	2.3 How does pedagogy connect with the community?	3.3 What assessment is being used? How is assessment connected with the community?

Figure 1: Nine -cell relational framework for the investigation of teaching practice

The Site of Implementation

I have used this framework to evaluate my teaching in a subject delivered online that has been recently revised. Implementation of the framework occurred in the first offering of the subject, following revision. The subject is focused on Visual Arts curriculum method. It is a subject offered in a Graduate Entry Bachelor of Teaching (Secondary) course that is offered by distance education. The subject is the first of two curriculum method subjects that focus on Visual Arts curriculum at the secondary level. The subject is delivered in one teaching session (or semester) over 14 weeks, including a two week mid-session break.

The students enrolled in the subject are studying to become specialist secondary visual arts teachers or studying Visual Arts as a second curriculum area. If it is their second curriculum area, they only study one Visual Arts curriculum subject. If it is their specialist curriculum method subject, they will go on to study a second Visual Arts curriculum method subject. Students are located in a variety of places including New South Wales, other areas of

Australia and internationally. The enrolment in this subject is generally relatively small. In this particular teaching session, the enrolment totalled twenty three.

The subject is delivered entirely online. It largely operates through an online learning management system. This site is where the online teaching and learning is delivered. Teaching and learning content is delivered through seven modules. These modules provide a narrative, links to readings, and a range of study tasks. The modules are supported by a range of additional resources including video clips, audio files, exemplar tasks and weekly announcements. Students interact with their Subject Coordinator and with one other through the subject forum. A study schedule is provided in the subject outline, along with a list of prescribed and recommended texts and an outline of four assessment tasks. Assessment tasks are submitted online.

Methodology: Using Self Study

In engaging with this example of practice utilising the RFITP framework I have drawn on traditions of self study as evident in the work of researchers such as Loughran (2006, 2010a, 2011), LaBoskey (2004), Hamilton and Pinnegar (2013) and Samaras (2002, 2011). As Zeichner (1999, p.8) notes, self-study research is an empowering methodology that "has been probably the single most significant development ever in the field of teacher education research". As noted by Loughran (2006, p.10) it is a tradition that challenges teacher educators "to describe, articulate and share in meaningful ways their knowledge of teaching and learning about teaching". It is also described by Samaras (2002) as the "critical examination of one's actions and the context of those actions in order to achieve a more conscious mode of professional activity, in contrast to action based on habit, tradition, or impulse" (p. xiii). LaBoskey (2004) identifies five methodological features as being important to self-study. They are: (1) that it is aimed at improvement; (2) has evidence of reframed thinking and transformed practice; (3) is interactive or collaborative; (4) employs multiple, primarily qualitative methods; (5) is self initiated and self-focused; and (6) that it is made public.

The use of self study as a research orientation is rooted in my concern for engaging in research into practice to feed back into the practice setting. Drawing on Loughran's discussion on becoming a teacher educator (2011) I was concerned with positioning myself not just as an academic using other's knowledge but as a producer of that knowledge in ways that might influence teacher education of the future. For this reason, the focus of this paper is not on telling the story of my practice as an individual instance, but rather moves beyond this to examine the implications of that practice and knowledge about practice.

Gathering and Analysing Data

Data was continually collected prior to, during and after the 14 week teaching session. I kept a teaching diary in which I was reflecting and documenting on a weekly basis. Forum postings and email correspondence were captured. Assessment responses were also documented and recorded. I used this data at three pre-determined data points to inform the completion of a RFITP framework at each data point. Completion of a framework involved using a template in which the guiding questions of the framework were removed but used as an external reference point.

The first data point was at the beginning of the 14 week teaching session. At this point, I mapped my intended teaching practice. I used this mapping to inform my planning

and programming. The second data point was at the end of week 4. At this point, I referred to all of the collected data and completed a RFITP to reflect on my teaching to that point. The third data point was at the end of the teaching session (week 14), where I once again reflected on my teaching. At this point I also drew on responses from the university online evaluation survey. The end-point evaluation was the standard university course evaluation consisting of 11 Likert-scale questions and two open-ended questions.

The focus when analysing this data was to make sense of this information as a teacher educator simultaneously immersed in teaching and researching that teaching. The focus of the research was not on the RFITP as an artefact itself but rather the learning that occurred through the process of using this framework. In terms of data analysis, the data recorded on the RFITP provided a documentation point. It reflected the data collected at each point cross-referenced to track changes over time. Data in relation to each cell of the framework was analysed individually and then relationships across cells were investigated. Data analysis was a hermeneutic, recursive process involving reading and re-reading the data across rows, down columns and in five cell descriptive sets that encompassed connected rows and columns. This analysis used an inductive approach, which Patton (2002) describes as an, "immersion in the detail and specifics of the data to discover important patterns, themes and interrelationships" (p. 41). The analysis facilitated the production of key themes through a systematic process of engaging with the data, illustrating patterns and findings within it and then drawing conclusions which were constantly verified through reference back to the data.

Findings

Data point one

The RFITP was used at the beginning of the teaching session, in the week prior to implementation. This was data point one. Using figure one as a guide, I mapped my intended teaching practice on to a template of the framework. While in practice I would work through each cell in detail, for the purposes of this paper I will focus on selected cells as outlined in figure two. To explain the use of the framework I will outline each of the three definitional cells. The definitional cells are 1.1, 2.2 and 3.3. These cells define the key concepts of the framework, while the additional cells elaborate on those definitions and look at additional connections.

Cell 1.1 identifies curriculum and learners. Curriculum in this instance is focused on secondary visual arts. For accreditation reasons it is focused on the secondary visual arts curriculum in NSW but also situates this particular curriculum focus in relation to art education nationally and internationally. The curriculum is foundational and broad. It is documented in a subject outline published by the university two weeks prior to the beginning of session. The foundational nature of the curriculum recognises the nature of the learners. Learners are identified as Bachelor of Teaching (Secondary) students. Twenty three students were enrolled at the beginning of session. In this case it was known that twenty one students were studying to become visual arts specialist teachers and two were studying visual arts as a second teaching area. Both of those two students were studying Design and Technology as a major. As it is a graduate entry course, all learners would have some undergraduate background in visual arts, but that experience might be diverse. Learners were located in diverse locations in NSW and beyond and could be of any age. Three students were male and twenty were female.

Cell 2.2 identifies pedagogy and teacher/s. Pedagogy is identified as constructivist in approach. Approaches would involve identifying background knowledge, developing

supportive online environments, encouraging active engagement, using multi-modal resources, providing ongoing feedback, providing individual consultation, providing clear criteria and creating relevance through linking theory with practice. As the sole teacher, I am an experienced visual arts classroom teacher and teacher educator with five years experience in higher education. My experience in teaching secondary visual arts is further informed by my active involvement in research in this area. I am experienced in distance education but newly challenged by an entirely online delivery.

Cell 3.3 identifies assessment and community. Assessment was designed in the form of four assessment tasks. The four tasks involve the creation of a digi-story, short answer questions related to curriculum concepts, a lesson plan and a unit outline. The tasks are intended to scaffold learning and move from an investigation of the self that utilises presentation skills to a task that assesses foundational knowledge to tasks that apply learning to practice, firstly in the form of a lesson plan and then more extensively in a unit outline. The tasks are presented in different formats and are uploaded through an online assignment tracking system. Community is conceived as a broad concept encompassing the broader context of art teachers. It is addressed through considerations of the place of art education in education, in schools and in relation to place. Learning beyond the classroom is introduced in the second half of the subject as providing sites of learning that exist in all communities. How to use community sites such as museums are addressed. A case study is incorporated and is linked directly to the final assessment task, where students will incorporate a community site in a unit outline.

	EDUCATIONAL MESSAGE SYSTEMS			
STAKEHOLDERS		Curriculum	Pedagogy	Assessment
	Learners	1.1 Secondary visual arts curriculum; foundational & broad 23 students; 3male; 20 female; 21 visual arts as first method; 2 visual arts as second method; diverse backgrounds in art or design; visual arts as first or second teaching method; studying by distance and online; diverse locations	2.1	3.1
	Teachers	1.2	2.2 Constructivist; background knowledge; active engagement; supportive environment; scaffolded learning, multi modal resources;	3.2

			ongoing feedback; clear criteria; relevance Experienced secondary visual arts teacher; 5 years higher education teaching experience; experience in distance education and some online delivery; researcher in visual arts education & teaching practice	
	Community	1.3	2.3	3.3 4 assessment tasks; moving from self, to curriculum to practice; different modes- presentation, short answer question, lesson plan, unit outline Community as source of ideas; examples from art education nationally and internationally; case study of one community museum as exemplar; authentic tasks

Figure 2: RFITP-Data point one: Definitional cells

Data point two

At the end of week 4, I used the RFITP to document teaching in practice. To complete the framework I referred to my teaching diary, to the first two student assessment tasks, formative student work and responses as presented on the Interact site. Again for the purposes of reporting and to show different ways to approach the framework, I will focus on selected cells that form a row. In this case I will focus on the first row encompassing cells 1.1, 2.1 and 3.1. This is shown in figure three.

Cell 1.1 has been addressed in the analysis of data point one. In this case, revisiting this cell at data point 2 did not illustrate any major changes. However greater detail about the learners could be added as more became known about them. It was also noted that additional curriculum resources had been added as the curriculum was taught and in response to perceived needs. This included podcasts, web links and exemplar tasks.

Cell 2.1 addresses learners and pedagogy. In Cell 2.1 I noted the maintenance of a constructivist approach. Through encouragement of introductions, student background knowledge was identified and a supportive online environment was developed. Students enthusiastically represented their individual learning journeys in the first assessment task in the form of a digi-story. Their sharing of those stories on the Interact site and their response to the stories of others in the first two weeks of session set the scene for active involvement in

the subject. From this point onwards, approximately ten out of twenty three students conscientiously completed study tasks and posted them on the Interact task. Some were also proactive in co-teaching. For example, students posted links that related to student tasks as evident in this forum post: "I found an interesting link of digital stories from ACMI, and thought I would share....". Students engaged with the subject in diverse ways. While it was anticipated that most would interact after hours and on weekends, scrutiny of the forum postings suggests that no clear patterns such as this were evident. While some students tended to interact at the same time each day, reflecting a particular individual pattern of work, this approach was diverse. Analysis of forum posts showed that there were eighteen lecturer initiated posts in the first four weeks, while eighty five were student initiated. The student posts included seventeen introductions, forty one voluntary study tasks, fifteen assessment questions, six community links, four technical problems and two general greetings.

Cell 3.1 addresses learners and assessment. In Cell 3.1 it was noted that assessment one (digi-story) was crucial in developing a sense of community in the group and linking to the world in terms of background experience and future skills. The assessment task focused on the learner and effectively initiated interactivity, providing pre-assessment of skills and knowledge. It also engaged students with experiential and object-based learning. Students embraced the activity and approached it in a variety of ways. It was assessable but was weighted minimally. Assessment two required students engage with curriculum. It was clearly linked with content in a more objective way and fore-grounded visual arts curriculum. The format of the task was a series of short answer questions. Answers to the questions could be found through reference to syllabus documents, articles and module content. Responses indicated general understandings of foundational curriculum concepts. Following submission, any misunderstandings were identified and addressed individually and through whole group feedback prior to the next two tasks. This scaffolded the application of curriculum concepts in assessment three and four. It was noted that students had some trouble with understanding the concepts at this stage, due to their newness and unfamiliarity. Misunderstandings were also attributed to the fact that no students had been on professional experience and they therefore had little current contextual background to draw on. Engagement with assessment leading up to submission is evident in the following Interact post: "How are you all going with the digi stories? Mine is slowly coming together ...just wondering how everyone else is going about their digi-stories?" Another example asked: "Is anyone else a little confused as to what the key concepts in question 1 are? I was thinking; Practice, conceptual frameworks, the frames. But I am not 100% sure. What does everyone else think?"

	EDUCATIONAL MESSAGE SYSTEMS			
STAKEHOLDERS		Curriculum	Pedagogy	Assessment
	Learners	1.1 Secondary visual arts curriculum; foundational & broad; additional resources added to supplement and for currency 23 students; 3male; 20 female; 21 visual arts as first method; 2 visual arts as second method;	2.1 Studying by online; engagement at different times of the day; 85 student initiated posts; (17 intros; 41 study tasks; 15 assessment questions; 6 community links; 4 technical problems; 2 general greetings	3.1 Digi-stories actively embraced; few technical problems; notion of story; object important; interactivity enabled; immediacy of response important; curriculum knowledge developed; some misunderstandings of key concepts

		diverse backgrounds in art or design; visual arts as first or second teaching method; studying by distance and online; diverse locations; core group keen to be involved; another group keeping quiet but responsive; 3 non-responsive		

Figure 3: RFITP – Data point two: Three descriptive cells across the first row

Data point three

At the end of session, the RFITP was used to reflect on teaching in practice. To complete the framework I referred to my teaching diary, to the third and fourth student assessment tasks, formative student work and responses as presented on the Interact site. I also referred to online evaluation survey results. Again for the purposes of reporting and showing an alternative use of the structure, I will focus on selected cells, in this case to form a column. The column I am investigating is the second column encompassing, 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3. It is shown in figure four.

Cell 2.1 focuses on pedagogy and learners. In Cell 2.1 I noted that students continued to engage online in diverse ways. Their engagement was at different times of the day and varied depending on individual commitments. Over the last 4 weeks of session there were 9 lecturer initiated posts and 22 student initiated posts: 9 were related to assessment; 3 community links; 8 study tasks; and, 2 general greetings and thanks. This indicates a significant reduction in interaction since data point two, at the end of week 4 of session. An Interact post indicates an example of a student engaging critically with curriculum choices in relation to the final assessment task while using the Interact forum as an interactional space:

> Have been spending a bit of time looking at the Chifley Home website and trying to gather some ideas for assessment 4. I think this will be an interesting challenge as not only will it be the first time I have attempted a scope and sequence plan/ unit outline but also to try and develop something that could be engaging for stage 5 students. At the moment I am struggling with thinking of a central topic. To me the Chifley Home is very relevant to History as a subject, just need to link it to Visual Arts somehow. What does everyone else think?

Cell 2.2 addresses pedagogy and teacher. In Cell 2.2 it is noted that the focus of teaching in the latter half of the session was on supported application of content presented in the former part of the session. This involved a dynamic approach through weekly podcasts addressing content but also responding to student needs, forum interaction and emails. Additional resources were provided as a 'just-in time' addition to enable connection to a case study site. As a lecturer my presence was continual and supportive. This would involve checking and responding to posts and emails on a daily basis with direct email feeds enabling almost instantaneous response. Responding quickly was an intentional aspect of my pedagogy and a strategy for facilitating interaction and a sense of connection. It also maintained momentum in teaching and learning and supported student autonomy. As noted in

cell 1.2 curriculum had intentionally been constructed to scaffold increasing levels of autonomy across the session. In working individually with students, I would offer the opportunity for feedback on first drafts of tasks. This was for the purpose of scaffolding understandings in relation to completely new experiences. Assessment 3 and 4 involved lesson plans and unit outlines. In each case students had not produced these documents previously and had little understanding of how to do so. Through working with each student individually I also established a relationship with each student. This provided a connectivity that did not seem achievable through other means. However this individual connection via email may have impacted on the reduction in forum activity.

Cell 2.3 identifies community and pedagogy. In cell 2.3 the link to community was clearly made through the use of the Chifley Home and Education Centre, a museum located in Bathurst, NSW, as a case study site. Engagement with this site also involved collaboration with expertise from the Chifley Home to produce resources and answer student queries. Drawing on this expertise and the site itself illustrated an approach to community engagement in teaching. A student response to this approach to pedagogy illustrates its effectiveness:

> Just thought I'd mention how much I loved listening to the audio tour of the Chifley Home. The stories that came from the objects still within the home were so interesting. ..Hope everyone else enjoys it as much as I did. Now I want to go and see it for myself.....might have to take a road trip!!??

Exemplars of lesson plans and unit outlines were also provided to illustrate links to the practice of teaching as it currently exists in schools. Using exemplars further showed the importance of drawing on resources available within the community of education. These links to community authenticated the pedagogy and provided the link between curriculum and learners.

EDUCATIONAL MESSAGE SYSTEMS		
STAKEHOLDERS		Pedagogy
	Learners	2.1 Studying by distance and online; engagement at different times of the day; 22 student initiated posts in previous 4 weeks (9 assessment; 3 community links; 8 study tasks; 2 general greetings and thanks)
	Teacher/s	2.2 Continual presence; additional multi-modal resources to connect to Chifley Home site; became reactive rather than proactive; 9 initiated teacher posts in last 4 weeks; focus on supported application; dynamic individual approach to work in progress; focus on student autonomy; email contact became more important
	Community	2.3 Connections through assessment tasks; case study of Chifley Home-real site; authentic tasks; modelled using exemplars from art educators; exemplars explained and annotated; links provided individually; expertise of museums drawn on to create audio and interviews

Figure 4: RFITP –Data point three

Emerging Themes

In identifying themes from this research, I have focused on what the data has suggested about my teaching in this instance, about teacher education generally and about the broader use of this framework. I have identified specific themes in relation to these purposes that can be broadly identified as knowing, connecting and doing.

Knowing: Understanding and Addressing Student Diversity

Using the framework has enabled me to engage with the nature of the student cohort in more depth and to develop my understandings of them in relation to aspects of the teaching and learning experience. In undertaking this study I have found that my assumptions about students and student engagement with online learning have at times been unsupported. For example, while I assumed that students predominantly engaged in study during evenings and on weekends, tracking of student engagement across time has shown that they engage at different times than was anticipated and across days and times. Understanding the nature and patterns of engagement has enabled me to rethink my teaching and points of interaction in relation to the learner experience.

Taking the time to learn about the learner has clearly been a beginning point for my teaching. It enabled students to get to know one another and allowed for background knowledge and experience to be identified and worked with. It thus foregrounds the individual and enables the collective sense of interaction to be developed. Often the learner is assumed in university education, and arguably most particularly in distance education and in online environments because of the need to create teaching and learning materials in advance and because the learner is not physically present and 'see-able'. In this case, the use of a digi-story became a way to approximate the kind of connections that can happen in internal class situations. The information gained from this exercise then became the starting point for responding to particular student needs.

Working with individuals to apply understandings developed in the first part of the teaching session to the final assessment tasks was a feature of my teaching that enabled me to connect with students and scaffold their learning. The implication of this was a reduction in interaction on the Interact site and a subsequent reduction of the group dynamic. While this did not seem to detract from the student experience, there is a need to think to think about how this might be balanced to enable both individual and collaborative connection. There is also a need to think about whether this might be sustainable with larger cohorts of students.

Connections: Linking Theory to Practice Through Community

Connections with community appeared to be a crucial aspect of my teaching that enabled me to link theory with practice. Through engagement with the concept of community I was able to relate curriculum, assessment and pedagogy to the world beyond the higher education classroom and to illustrate how it could be applied in practice. This fostered an ecological view of practice that situated the field of art education more broadly in the world.

Identification of this link enabled me to identify a particular strength of my teaching. In online teaching and learning, there is a requirement to develop teaching and learning materials in advance. In examining this theme it became clear that while resources such as websites, readings and modules are an important aspect of online education, on their own, they cannot always make meaning of curriculum. In addition, students cannot always make

meaning of this material without further links being made. It was clear that resources needed to be supported with interaction in the form of considered pedagogy and a focus on relevance that is possible through considered engagement with community during teaching and in response to the student cohort.

Exemplars are one way that community can be utilised. Exemplars can be used to illustrate concepts, show practice and provide an entry point to assessment tasks. In my case I sourced examples of practice from practitioners or developed exemplars with practitioners. The availability of such resources appeared to make curriculum come 'alive' while also helping students to make sense of what was being communicated within the subject. Representations of what teaching might look like, how documents might be formatted and compiled or how resources might be developed in a physical and concrete form appeared to be important to this meaning making. It is clear from this that, while discursive forms of teaching and learning are relied upon in online education, in the form of text, imagery, audio, or video, such resources need to be supplemented by examples of practice that move beyond the discursive and beyond the higher education classroom context. This requires a conversation with and about the communities in which practice occurs. Likewise, it is clear that assessment that is linked to community and practice increases the perceived relevance of assessment tasks and hence the level of engagement and investment by students. This relates to the perceived authenticity of tasks and their alignment with curriculum and pedagogy.

Doing: The Artistry of the Teacher

Despite online education being a distinctive mode of teaching and learning, which differs from face-to-face teaching, it appears that in my case, the relationship between the teacher and the learner remains central to the effectiveness of teaching practice. While in my practice every effort was made to make teaching and learning materials transparent, clear and consistent, great importance was given to actively teaching with those materials and resources. This was about linking purposefully to community, while also modelling the practice of teaching, but it also created the basis for building relationships over distance. It is clear from examination that this action was based on a belief that it is through engagement with the materials of learning that the teacher shows the artistry of what they can do and what is possible in teaching. It is also this artistry that allows for the consideration of the individual as a part of the collective group. While this belief is at the core of my teaching, it was not until I went through this process of examining my practice that I have been able to articulate that belief and how it has impacted on my practice as clearly as I am able to now.

In terms of pedagogy, engaging artistry meant that I was finding the spaces to demonstrate teaching practice and to make links between concepts and ideas while also responding to needs as they arose. In terms of curriculum, I had developed curriculum and assessment that effectively had enough 'spaces' to allow for independent enquiry and tangential explorations. I also actively sought elaborations on concepts in the form of additional and timely resources that could leverage current issues or particular student issues. In particularly looking at student responses across the session it was clear that students viewed this active teaching as positive and that it enhanced their learning. In fact, in looking specifically at their end of session responses, it was most often these aspects of the experience that they noted as significant.

From the perspective of the teacher, having the space to engage artistry and to model practice was also central to feelings of purpose and investment. I found that opening up spaces for conversation that allowed for questions, challenges, examinations of identity and alternative learning journeys was the most satisfying part of my teaching practice. While it

may not be a common or accepted way to approach online education, it was clear that for me to transition to this particular mode of teaching effectively and to make the most of my teaching strengths, I need to particularly focus on how I can maintain and enable this approach. The challenge for me is how to continue to do this in an online environment in which students engage in a variety of ways. Related to this is the recognition that the lecturer who is potentially working with a variety of different patterns of engagement, can experience weariness, fatigue and potentially burn-out in attempting to be all things to all people.

Implications for teaching and teacher education

The use of the RFITP Framework in a process of self study enabled me to see my teaching a new. By taking a systematic approach and focusing on discrete identified dimensions, I was able to focus on details that I might otherwise have assumed or over simplified. I was then able to reassemble those aspects into the teaching whole through consideration of the entire matrix and relationships within the matrix structure. My process was informed by evidence collected from a range of perspectives and across time. This work provided me with significant data to investigate connections and relations. While it is undoubtable that some of these connections were previously clear to me and some were being consciously developed, other connections only became apparent through this process. In addition, the relative importance and sequencing of those connections also became visible. As a consequence, I have been able to identify strengths and weaknesses and areas for improvement. This has contributed to a reflexive re-framing of my practice and the development of professional learning plan to address specific areas. Continued use of the RFITP over time allows development in these areas to be tracked so that transformation can be evidenced.

Ultimately this example has aimed to explain an approach that has been valuable to me in the context of the university setting and in the particular area of online education. As such it provides a particular instance. Beyond this example, I believe that this approach has broader value to teaching and teacher education. In teacher education, it has the potential to contribute to a practice- based teacher education curriculum. Following Grossman (2009) I have developed representations of teaching practice that can be decomposed with and by student teachers, as the teaching occurs or in relation to previous delivery. The multiple layers of the matrix enables decomposition to initially occur at the simple level of the cell and to build in complexity over time as student teachers develop understandings of the relational nature of teaching. As Flyvbjerg (2006) explains:

> Phenomenological studies of human learning indicate that for adults there exists a qualitative leap in their learning process from the rule governed use of analytic rationality in beginners to the fluid performance of tacit skills in what Pierre Bourdieu (1977) calls virtuosos and Hubert and Stuart Dreyfus (1986) true human experts. [...] Common to all experts, however, is that they operate on the basis of intimate knowledge of several thousand concrete cases in their areas of expertise. Context-dependent knowledge and experience are at the very heart of expert activity (p.391).

Depending on the particular timing of study and the needs of the particular group of student teachers, the dimensions of the matrix can be adapted, altered or extended. In considering the application of theoretical knowledge, student teachers can likewise use the RFITP framework to plan for teaching, possibly on the basis of developed and controlled

scenarios that address differing educational contexts. Such activities would constitute approximations of practice.

In terms of teaching, there is potential for the RFITP to be used to examine teaching over time and across careers and it has been used for this purpose in additional research projects (Mathewson Mitchell, 2013). Working with teachers to document their practice using the RFITP and a methodology of self study provides valuable professional learning to develop understandings of teaching. If considered as a body of knowledge these understandings can inform knowledge about teaching generally, at various stages of career trajectories, in relation to differing experiences and in relation to the affordances and limitations of different educational contexts.

Conclusions

Developing my own framework for investigating teaching practice has challenged me to investigate practice theory, explore practice-based teacher education and articulate relational aspects of teaching, as related to structure and agency. The action of framework development has been significant in placing practice at the fore front of my consciousness, enabling me to generate knowledge through the act of teaching rather than being a passive recipient of received knowledge.

The cyclic continuum of implementation has given structure and focus to my investigations, while also enabling me to evaluate and at times reconsider previously unexamined perceptions about my teaching. It has affirmed some areas while also highlighting the importance of key aspects of my practice that have adapted to the university environment. The emergent themes were: knowing through understanding and addressing student diversity; connecting theory with practice through community; and 'doing' as the artistry of teaching.

While the RFITP framework has served its purpose here, there are adaptations that can be made to create different focus and to allow for different connections to be made. For example, the framework can be extended through the addition of cells to the horizontal or vertical axis. The dimensions of the framework can also be altered to reflect different aspects of teaching. In addition, while the framework has been used independently in this example, it has potential for collaborative use within professional learning and initial teacher education. In responding to Grossman's challenge for a practice- based teacher education, the framework has particular potential to be implemented in a model of representation, decomposition and approximation.

Bourdieu has asserted **"**We tend too easily to satisfy ourselves with the commonplaces supplied us by our commonsense experience or by our familiarity with a scholarly tradition" (1989, pg.24**).** In this project, I have attempted to address my familiarity with teaching to look more closely at the conditions that impact on teaching and the experiences that shape practice. My aim is to engage in a conversation about teaching that has the potential to reframe my thinking and more broadly develop understandings of the practice of teaching.

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Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Professor Jo-Anne Reid and Emeritus Professor Bill Green for their significant contributions to my thinking about practice and practice-based teacher education.