



## College Quarterly

Fall 2006 - Volume 9 Number 4

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### **Critical imagination: A pedagogy for engaging pre-service teachers in the university classroom**

*by Patricia Cartwright and Lynne Noone*

#### **Abstract**

In this paper we consider the aspect of teacher education which takes place, not in the school, but in the university classroom. Teaching about teaching, it is argued, must be grounded in students' understanding of the present, but must foster both hope and critique. Beginning from Maxine Greene's (2000) concept of imagination, this paper develops a notion of critical imagination as a way of conceptualizing a critical pedagogy in the university classroom. Two pedagogical strategies based on critical imagination are outlined and analyzed. Writing is prioritized as a pedagogical tool. Excerpts from our professional teaching journals, together with samples of students' writing in response to these strategies, clothe the strategies in the reality of teaching practice. We argue that the use of teaching strategies based on critical imagination as a means of 'jarring' students to think differently seems to move our students to think a little more humanely and a little more critically. But this is neither a simple nor unproblematic task.

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#### **Introduction**

The current dominance of technicist modes of teacher education (and indeed teaching) present challenges for teacher educators who understand teaching and teacher education as a value-laden and political endeavour. One version of this dominance of reproductive practice over transformative thought is the current advocacy of improving teacher education by more school-based practice. In this article we are considering those aspects of teacher education which take place, not in the school, but in the higher education classroom. Whether or not this is in conjunction with school-based experience is not central to our argument here; it is the nature and content of the ways of thinking about teaching generated within the university classroom that is our focus.

An antidote to technicism is to reinscribe teacher education with those characteristics of human life which make it truly human. If technicism reduces teacher education to a series of practical recipes which leave unexamined the purposes, values, constraints and possibilities of what a teacher might be and do, a focus on critical imagination may enable future teachers to develop self-reflective willingness to think against the grain in new ways. But this is neither a simple nor unproblematic task.

#### **Contradictory Position of Teacher Education**

Educating future teachers is fraught with contradictory pressures and controls, with multiple groups vying to shape future teachers in ways which further a preferred vision of schools and society. Teacher educators are positioned within at least two discourses.

On the one hand, they are part of the higher education discourse. Like all higher education employees, teacher educators confront the corporatization and marketization of these institutions and the future of university education. Gordon and Albrecht-Crane (2005, p. 408) suggest that all teachers in higher education confront a new historical conjuncture which calls for progressives to generate new analyses of political power and new strategies of pedagogic engagement.

On the other hand, teacher educators are part of the school-education discourse. As teachers of future teachers, they confront the government and semi-government regulators of the teaching profession who increasingly wish to 'fix' teacher education (for example, the 2004 review of teacher education by the Victorian State Government which is the employer of the 70% of teachers in public schools in the state, and the recently announced inquiry into teacher education by the Australian Federal Government which funds student places at universities for the study of education). As members of the education community, they confront the immediacy of the requirements and discourses of schools and practitioners, and the future directions of schools. As teachers of young adults who wish to become knowledgeable about education in order to gain employment in the field, they confront the realities of young people and the nature of education.

Thus within this conjuncture, teacher educators are called upon to consider their pedagogy, both as higher education teachers and as teachers of future teachers. On both fronts, it is helpful to think of the task as being within and against the academic discourse (Cartwright & Noone, 1996), and within and against the school education discourse.

### **A Critical Pedagogy in Teacher Education**

We find a way forward in Maxine Greene's (2000) view that it is the task of the educator to "create situations in which our students are moved to begin to ask, in all the tones of voice that there are, 'Why?'" (Greene, 2000, p. 6). To create situations in teacher education which provide the intellectual, moral, and emotional spaces which allow students to ask 'why' and to 'think differently' is at the heart of our understanding of a critical pedagogy in teacher education. According to Britzman and Dippo (2003, p. 131-2), Greene suggests that the places to begin searching for a critical pedagogy are in uncertainty, in multiple perspectives, and in landscapes of meaning – "places fraught with contingency and strife but which represent both potential and inhibition".

### **Imagination in a Critical Pedagogy**

One of the ways which seems fruitful as a means of creating such pedagogical spaces is through the use of imagination. As Egan and

Madoc-Jones (2005) put it, “imagination is not some idle or ornamental faculty, but is the hard working core of educational engagement” (p. 2), an engagement which is transformative in the sense of students becoming more knowledgeable and creative in their thinking (Egan, 2005). Greene points out that imagination is not “wishful thinking” or fantasy, nor does it signify a special creativity which comes out of nowhere (Britzman & Dipbo, 2003, p. 138). Imagination is what occurs as a person encounters new ideas and engages in confrontations with arguments and controversies and “turns towards the world”.

Imagination is key to the critical educational experience for Greene. She claims that “of all our cognitive powers, imagination is the one that permits us to give credence to alternative realities. It allows us to break with the taken-for-granted, to set aside the familiar distinctions and definitions” (Greene, 2000, p. 3). For Greene, this is a process of becoming “wide-awake” (Greene & Griffiths, 2003, p. 88), which she likens to Freire’s process of conscientization.

In our view, imagination is a necessary component in thinking about a critical pedagogy in teacher education. It is not enough for critical teacher educators to raise the consciousness of future teachers through aligning themselves, and the future teachers, with current socio/economic/educational critiques – the basis of much exposition of critical pedagogy. As Ellsworth (1989) convincingly argues in her critique of critical pedagogy, attempting to enlighten students about the right (or, perhaps, left) way to see the world is to proselytize for a “more correct” view – a process that is merely another version of the repressive forms of education to which they have become accustomed and a process that can lead students to feel demoralized, immobilized and hopelessly at the mercy of existing social relationships of domination. Such a residue in future teachers is not consistent with sound social theory which recognizes a place for agency and contingency, nor our ethical responsibility as teachers to our students. We think that imagination as a semiotic tool (Renshaw, 2003, p. 360) provides a means of constructing a pedagogy which does not leave students demoralized, but rather provides them with a hopeful way of thinking about education and the world.

### **Hope and Critical Imagination**

Hopefulness in thinking about education is particularly necessary at the present time, says Halpin (2003). He sees hope as having a creative role in encouraging the development of imaginative solutions to seemingly intractable difficulties (p. 16). What Halpin calls ‘ultimate hope’ entails a way of being which imagines a better way of life for oneself, for others and for society generally while recognizing that there are obstacles on the way which need to be challenged and overcome (p. 18). In other words, for Halpin, ‘ultimate hope’ is grounded in the here and the now.

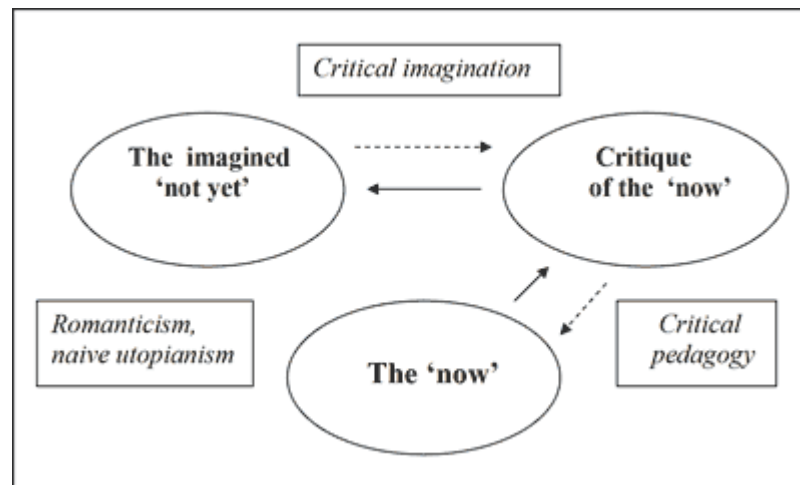
Like Halpin, we agree that hope is essential for teachers, and, like Halpin, we are conscious that a particular form of hopefulness is necessary. Hope without critique can lead to romantic utopianism. Students may find it comfortable to imagine an as-yet-to-be-realized

future in ways that they feel are comfortable for them, where they can consider that things will be better for them in the best of all possible worlds but without connection to present real-life circumstances. A pedagogy based on hope and imagination which allows students to generate idealized images of teaching and education based only on wish-fulfillment perpetuates the existing unjust institutional and social realities because it does not call them into question. Further, it does the students an injustice in that it positions them as less than full citizens of the current reality and ill equips them to endure, let alone change, the circumstances which they will find, and live within, when they become teachers. A pedagogical means to generate hope, but avoid false hope, and to generate discomfort but avoid depression (Giroux, 2003), cynicism, fatalism, relativism, fundamentalism (Halpin, 2003), demoralization and immobilization (Ellsworth, 1989), can, we think, be realized through the use of critical imagination.

In our view of a critical teacher education, it is necessary to engage students in both a critique of how things are as well as a vision of how things might be; that is, to be hopeful about the possibility of things being better. This juxtaposition of a negative critique with an imagined positive reality is what we call critical imagination. This can be described as a dialectical process which operates in two directions. A critique of the 'now' can be used to generate an imagined and hopeful 'not yet' – a concept of how things could be otherwise (Pinar, 2004, p. 126). Or the imagined 'not yet' can be used to critique the 'now'.

Figure 1 depicts this conceptualization.

Figure 1. Model of critical imagination



As this diagrammatic representation suggests, critical imagination only results through the mediation of a “critique of the ‘now’”. On the one hand, without “The imagined ‘not yet’”, one is left with the forms of critical pedagogy criticized by Ellsworth (1989), and more recently Giroux (2003), with its problems of dogmatism and cynicism. On the other hand, without a “critique of the ‘now’”, one is left with wishful romanticism or naive utopianism ungrounded in contemporary reality.

### **The Linguistic Nature of the Practice of Tertiary Classroom Teaching**

The issue for us as teacher educators is how this conceptualization might be translated into a practice in our university classrooms. To do this, it is necessary to go back one step to consider the nature of the practice of university classroom teaching.

Without wishing to endorse the whole gamut of consequences of the linguistic turn in social theory and without wishing to define away the material reality of power relations in teaching, it is nevertheless the case that teaching is realized in language (Blake & Masschelein, 2003, p. 55). In our classrooms we – teacher and students – talk, write and read. It is in talking, writing and reading that the world is named, ideas are encountered, formulated and engaged. Clearly there are also physical actions and physical surroundings which constitute our classrooms, and the world of social praxis outside our classroom which shape the nature of our classes. But what we do in the university classroom is linguistic. For us then, it seems a logical place from which to begin thinking about a possible critical pedagogy. This means focusing on the centrality of language in the construction of meaning in human interactions, as well in the construction of the shifting, contradictory and multifaceted aspects of human subjectivity.

Specifically we foreground writing. The virtue of written language compared to spoken language is that it ‘stands still’ outside of the body and mind of the writer. It has a permanence (unlike speech) which allows writers to re-visit it and literally see their sense-making. The writing becomes an object in the world external to the author’s head and in this sense becomes public. It is a means of translating the understandings one is making in one’s head into public utterances which can be interrogated with others. We believe that writing provides the possibility of disclosing “the ordinarily unseen, unheard and unexpected” (Greene, 2000, p. 28).

With Brodkey (1987), we believe that writing is a social practice and that we write our way to understanding. Writing becomes a means by which one’s own understandings are constructed.

As Gide, cited in Forster (1982, p. 99), said “How can I tell what I think till I see what I say?”

For these reasons, we foreground writing as pedagogy in our university classrooms as a means of enabling students’ hearts and minds to engage in critically imaginative moments.

### **The Nature of the Critically Imaginative Moment**

The problem for a critical teacher educator is how to stir students to “wide-awakeness” (Greene, 2000, p. 43) from the domination of the status quo to a vision of what might be that is grounded in contemporary reality. Greene believes that for this to happen, there must be a shock, a crisis made from a combination of negative critique and questioning one’s own

existence in relation to others (Britzman & Dippo, 2003, p. 133). This shock, or in our terms, 'jarring', can be generated by interventions by teacher educators in a pedagogy based on critical imagination.

We see critical imagination as operating in two ways. First, it can be the means by which Greene's shock or crisis, or our 'jarring', is generated. 'Jarring' occurs when students' existing thoughts and ideas about the way things are, are confronted by other ideas which discomfort them, dislodge their weddedness to their existing understandings, and cause them for that moment to withhold certainty, to stand back from what they already think. It is at these moments of openness, and uncertainty, that students may then imagine 'what if'.

The second engagement with critical imagination comes once the free space created by the 'jarring' of the students' understanding has occurred. Critical imagination can allow the development of ideas about possibilities which are imminent within the constraints of 'the now'. In other words, critical imagination can generate the ideas which can enter the free space once it is created.

For example, now, in Australian schools a particular version of literacy is being enforced through mandated measurable assessment procedures. This description of 'the now' can be critiqued either on the basis of the version of literacy which this form of assessment requires, or on the basis of the nature of measurable outcomes as a form of assessment for literacy. In the first case, the notion of literacy is problematized; in the second, the notion of measurable assessment of outcomes is problematized. In both cases, issues of power relations between literacy and assessment are raised, including: Who mandates? How do they enforce the version of literacy or the form of assessment? Whose literacy? What can be measured? In whose interests? Having identified a number of constraints of 'the now' through this critique, one can then imagine how literacy or assessment could be otherwise, to foster different interests, to empower the least powerful.

In short, critical imagination provides a way of conceptualizing the 'jarring' of students out of their usual ways of understandings. It also provides a way of conceptualizing the shift to 'other ways of thinking' (Egan, 1992, p. 42) in students' understandings as the basis of on-going professional thinking. The discomfort and uncertainty may be ongoing – a desirable way of being, in our view – a way of being in which one is constantly looking for other ways of doing things and thinking about things. As Fettes (2005, p. 4) points out, bringing students to understand the powerful connection between imagination and lived reality is a necessary and primary task of teacher education. To do so means engaging their emotions, feeling and empathy (Trotman, 2005, p. 51).

### **Creating the Imaginative Moment in the University Classroom**

of the world, while also acknowledging students' existing and becoming selves, and the experiences which have shaped their understanding of the world. In the following section, we outline two

classroom pedagogical strategies which we have devised and used to create such moments. We also provide extracts from our action research data which illuminate the classroom dynamic and changes in student consciousness. Both strategies are built on the particular characteristics of a writing pedagogy as explained above.

#### Strategy 1: WSACR - Write/Share/Add /Confront/Reconstruct

This is a strategy that creates a 'jarring' moment for students by counterposing students' existing ideas with a conflicting idea deliberately chosen by the teacher to provide a different naming of the world and to draw attention to different social power relations. While the sharing phase recognizes and utilizes the diverse views and realities which are inherent in any social grouping, the strategy puts the emphasis on the university teacher as the 'jarrer'. Wink describes a similar process of Freirian problem solving in which the teacher's role is pro-active and confrontational – asking "hard questions for the students' musing" (Wink, 2005, p. 125) and providing a language for renaming or codifying the contradictions exposed by the counterposed ideas. Whether one describes the process as Freirian problem solving or the creation of a Greenian crisis or shock, the effect is to create a landscape of uncertainty in the student's mind – a place "fraught with contingency and strife", as Greene says. In such a space, the student is invited to critically imagine possibilities and inhibitions to those possibilities. In other words, as the student considers the oppositional views, he/she is engaged in critique and reconsideration /reformulation/renaming of the world. The reformulation requires the student to exercise critical imagination. Following is a description of the procedure for the WSACR strategy.

The strategy is a combination of individual and group writing and interaction. In response to a question posed by the teacher, each student initially writes several lines, then shares this with a peer. The partners then question each other's views, ask for clarification, and share each other's thoughts in order to extend the other's view. An opportunity is then provided for each student to add to the original response. At this point, the teacher may provide further perspectives on the question, prompting and challenging the students to confront their existing response with questions such as: What are your reasons for...? What connection can you see between ... and ...? How would author X apply ...? Do you find yourself resisting the points made by...? Why? Whose knowledge is it and whose interests does it serve? It is during this questioning process that the critically imaginative moment occurs – when the student is 'jarred' and has to consider a different point of view. Finally the student takes time to reconsider in writing these and other oppositional points of view, and indicate in writing how their original views have been extended and or challenged, or re-constructed.

In Table (i), we present some of our reflections on the uses we have made of this strategy and an example of a student's writing which illustrates the change in thinking as the student is 'jarred' by the critically imaginative encounter.

Table (i) Example of Strategy – WSACR

How I've used it	What works for me?	What are the difficulties/limitations?	Stories from my classroom when using the strategy
<p>I use it in a number of classes, including first years and fourth year education students. Generally, I'll use it when I want students to grapple with any concept at all which they seem to take for granted, eg getting into University, gender in language, the notion of ordering in schools, power relations in a range of sites, the construction of gender, the construction of 'student'. It will always be connected with their readings, and with the theories underpinning the content being taught.</p>	<p>It's a particularly effective way of focusing students quite deliberately on a particular notion/concept. Because it is somewhat 'teacher led', and has a set format, they respond to each step quite willingly (due, no doubt, to their own construction as students and to the notion of conforming to 'authority'). It also involves them in a range of learning situations, writing, reflecting, reading, sharing with a partner, revising, re-reading, and reflecting critically. It enables me to intervene in their thinking/learning processes and challenge their taken-for-granted assumptions.</p>	<p>If there is only a 1 hour tutorial, the strategy can take up quite a bit of that time allocation. Not that I necessarily see that as a limitation, if they are really engaging with the material. I also use it in lectures, again with the understanding that it will constrain content – again I don't see this as a particular difficulty.</p>	<p>The following sample of student writing illustrates the process of thinking and writing which eventuates from this strategy. It is an example from Week 1, where a generative question was set as a way of validating and building from students' existing knowledge and experience, and as a beginning to a process of broadening and rethinking existing understandings about education. Within the one tutorial session, as the student's certainties are 'jarred' and other possibilities are entertained, the student has begun to critique 'the now' with hope that things could be</p>



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#### Sample of Student Work

Generative question: How is it that you are doing this course at this institution?

#### Write

I don't really know why I'm here. I've had no life long ambition to be a primary teacher or anything and basically I'm here because I didn't want to go too far away. It's better than doing nothing.

#### Share/Add

Being a girl, teaching seemed alright. Or hospitality. But my auntie's a teacher. My family didn't push me because they are not academic people. But they give me economic support, and they want me to get a better job than them.

Confront (Lynne/Pat does class brainstorm on personal factors, and structural factors, influencing educational experiences and pathways)

#### Reconstruct

I'd never thought about bigger things controlling my life. I've always thought my family and me could do whatever we liked. I got into this course because I got an all right TER score for this course in the selection system.. And it's not really fair because some of my friends missed out because they got a low score and because their family couldn't afford to send them and some of their parents didn't think uni is much use. If I'd been in their family, I might not have gone either. If things were different, all students could get into university if they wanted to. It could be just like school where you had a right to go to, not be selected for. And if it was just expected that everyone went to uni, kids who had parents that didn't like it wouldn't be stopped either.

### Strategy 2: Journalling

Journalling is used in a variety of ways by different teachers in different circumstances (Holly, 1989). Some teachers and students see journalling as akin to diary writing, a style of 'informal' writing that describes personal thoughts and feelings. Others see journalling as reportage, a style of writing which recounts events and material, and which gradually allows students to become familiar with both discipline content and language, and with the ways of writing for the academy. While each of these forms can be useful developmentally, it is another form of journalling, academic journalling, which we find the most powerful form of writing to engage the students' critical imagination. Like diary writing, it continues to privilege the "voice" of the writer, but places this "voice" among discipline theorists. Students are thus able to critically

reflect on their growth of understanding of their discipline; confront particular theoretical perspectives, which they may find problematic; and imagine new meanings in writing as they engage with contradictory ideas. Academic journaling combines the personal with the political in that it allows the “voice” of the writer to be heard, but theorizes and politicizes the particular event to which the writer refers. Rather than seeing “personal” and “academic” writing as a dichotomy, academic journaling negotiates a position in writing that allows the writer to speak a multiplicity of voices into the cultural and academic dialogue (Cartwright, 1998). In this strategy, another voice is added to the dialogue – that of the lecturer. It is made known to the students that the journal is the vehicle for a written dialogue between the student and the lecturer, and in this sense is not private to the student. Following is a description of the procedure for the Journaling strategy.

On the basis of the content of a particular class, the lecturer/teacher sets questions to be answered in writing by students. The nature of the questions is crucial. On one level, the questions are designed to probe students’ understanding of the content of the lecture/tutorial. But the questions are framed in such a way that they require students to think below the surface of the matters under consideration and engage in critically imaginative thinking. The following questions act as guides for students’ responses:

If these ideas were followed, what would be the implications? For whom? Why? What stops these ideas from being realized now? What competing views are possible?

In what ways do these ideas make me think differently about my experiences? What is it that causes me to maintain my theories/beliefs? What acts to constrain my views of what is possible? What view of power do they embody?

During or after the class in their own time, students respond in writing to the questions. Students submit their writing to the lecturer/tutor, but not for correction. The submission is for purposes of reciprocal written communication. Lecturer/tutor responds in writing to each student’s ideas, writing in the student’s journal at the end of the student’s script. The journal is returned to the student. It is in the counterpoising of the teacher’s views with the student’s views that the critically imaginative moment occurs as the student is ‘jarred’ to consider other possibilities. This process is repeated over the semester, with a different question provided each week for students’ response. The cumulative effect over the duration of the semester is particularly important in this strategy. At the end of any one journaling cycle, the student is left uncertain. The ‘jarring’ is reinforced in each subsequent journaling cycle so that the comfort of a possible resolution is constantly deferred. Students experience living with the disruption of cognitive and emotional certainty. They are thus living with the preparedness to withhold judgment and comfort in the face of alternative claims, which is the basis of critical thinking (Burbules & Berk, 1999).

In Table (ii), we present some of our reflections on the uses we have made of this strategy and an example of student's writing which illustrates the change in thinking as the student is 'jarred' by the critically imaginative encounter.

Table (ii) Example of a Strategy – Academic Journaling

<b>How I've used it</b>	<b>What works for me?</b>	<b>What are the difficulties/limitations?</b>	<b>Samples of Students' Academic Journaling</b>
<p>There are a number of ways of journaling with the students. The way I use it is to have students write in their journals both in class, and out of class. In their weekly study program, I provide questions for them from their readings. Specific questions are set concerning their time in a school classroom or issues that arise in their readings eg understanding of gender construction, understanding of power relations in different sites etc.</p>	<p>Writing in class assists in students seeing their thoughts in writing, rather than the transitory nature of making points in a discussion. It focuses the students on a particular concept/notion that I want them to interrogate. Writing out of class enables me to gauge to what extent they are understanding what we are doing in lectures, tutorials etc, and how they are handling the theories being presented in lectures and tutorials.</p>	<p>For me, the major difficulties come from the fact that I collect their journals each week, and, respond in writing to what they are thinking This can be very time consuming.</p>	<p>The extracts from the student's journal indicate the way in which the student is prompted to question her initial understanding as a result of the lecturer's writing- back intervention. The writing back provides one of the jarring moments which continue to occur throughout the semester. The Week 10 entry suggests that the dislodgement of certainty which has occurred has allowed alternative possibilities to be considered. Further, the writing is now more in the academic genre.</p>

### Sample of Student Work

Question: Is teaching people to read a political exercise?

Week 3:

This view I don't exactly agree with. Most people wouldn't agree with it because politics shouldn't be in the classroom. You have to learn to read and it's got nothing to do with politics. It's the teacher's job to teach you to read.

Lecturer's written response:

... What about the ways in which the government is telling teacher and schools how to teach reading? Doesn't that bring politics into the classroom?

Week 4:

I've never really thought about why teachers do it in a special way. I didn't realize that governments could tell teachers how to teach. This stops teachers doing what they think is best for the kids. I don't like to be told how to teach my class by the government. I want to do what I think is best and get the kids really interested.

[Notice the change by Week 10...

Week 10: Teachers may be resistant to critical pedagogy. As Freire (1997) comments, teaching the purely technical aspects of a procedure is not difficult and it means that the teacher doesn't have to think about values. I like his idea of teaching not being a mechanical method. One idea that I will use when I am teaching is the problem-posing approach because I have experienced it in this class and it is very encouraging because it makes you think of bigger issues. I didn't really notice any shift away from a focus on individuals, which Symes and Preston (1998) say is a problem in an emancipatory perspective.

### Discussion

This conceptualization of critical imagination assists in thinking about a number of issues, of which two are the dilemma of preparing future teachers to fit into the existing system as well as having understandings and values for changing the system; and the understanding of criticality.

### Preparing Future Teachers

As we mentioned earlier in the article, the need to ground critical imagination in reality – in the 'now' – derives from a peculiarity of the education of future teachers. There is a tension in the education of teachers which, as Britzman and Dipbo (2003, p. 133) express it, has to do with the present and the future. In the present, the future teachers are

students, living within a student culture of strategic thinking about learning and a youth culture of anti-intellectualism, immediacy and narcissism. In the present also, the teachers of the future understand and experience schooling in a particular way – that is, as a hierarchical system that sets up certain expectations about the way education and schooling works, and for which they expect to be prepared as worthy employees. But critical teacher educators wish to develop in future teachers understandings about themselves as transformative educators who can make democratic and socially just changes in education and the world, not necessarily replicate existing practices and structures.

Similarly, Kincheloe (1993) points out a persistent tension in teacher education between preparing teachers for schools as they presently exist and educating teachers for schools as they could become (p. 230). Students need to be prepared to survive in existing institutions but for critical educators they need to be engaged in understanding the subtleties of institutional policies and critical reconceptualization of teaching and teacher thinking to envision the pursuit of justice. Kincheloe suggests that the two discourses do not have to be mutually exclusive. We agree with Kincheloe (1993) that it is important not to dismiss the need of future teachers to be able to “get by” or “make it” in the every day world; but it is equally important that they be exposed to alternatives, to visions of what can be. As Kincheloe states: “Without such visions we are doomed to the perpetuation of the structural inequalities and the cognitive passivity of the status quo” (p. 227).

### **The Understanding of Criticality**

And what does thinking critically mean anyway? We have found the work of Burbules and Berk (1999) useful in helping us think about ‘criticality’. Rather than take sides in the critical thinking versus critical pedagogy debate they prefer to think in terms of the practice of criticality by asking the question: “What are the conditions which give rise to critical thinking, that promote a sharp reflection on one’s own presuppositions, that allow for a fresh rethinking of the conventional, that foster thinking in new ways?” (p. 59).

The principles informing our pedagogy based on critical imagination are consistent with the characteristics of conditions for critical thinking suggested by Burbules and Berk – contextual/non-contextual thinking, multiple interpretations, creating and dialoguing across alternatives, self-reflective willingness to think against the grain in new ways, a way of being rather than a way of thinking. These characteristics are also consistent with our notion of critical imagination in that while they involve students in taking a critically reflective stance towards existing circumstances, they also encourage students in an openness to their environment, imagining ways that it might be better. Some of our attempts to create these conditions through particular pedagogical strategies have been outlined earlier.

While the data outlined above provided a snapshot of where the critical pedagogy worked, other data collected from some students’ writing

showed that their reactions could take other forms. This is not to say that such students had not been 'jarred' in their existing understanding, but it is to say that such students seemed to have not engaged in a serious consideration of critique or possibilities. There is a range of ways that students appear to respond to the 'jarring'. For instance, they can resist engaging in critique; they can reassert their existing understanding of the now as also the most desirable possibility; they can assert a romanticized version of a possible future which is not grounded in the reality of the now; they can play the academic student game of 'reading' what the lecturer wants as a 'right' answer that would show as engagement or critique or imagination; they can go along with the tutorial process because their friends are conforming, and like their friends, they can forget about the content as soon as they walk out the door of the classroom.

Two types of student reaction to exploring a present which is discomfiting or to seriously considering alternatives are particularly noteworthy. One reaction entails serious engagement with imagined alternatives being dismissed as a case of "You're entitled to your opinion and I'm entitled to mine" – end of conversation. The other type of reaction dismisses imagined alternatives which do not fit with a comfortable view of the existing world as 'bad' or 'mad' – again, end of conversation. And not infrequently, the same student will hold both views simultaneously without understanding the contradiction in their argument. Both narcissistic individualism and conservative judgementalism seem to be easily adopted in order to avoid serious engagement with the 'what if' or the 'not yet'. While these two reactions seem to be particular 'favourites', there are a number of other ways in which students can respond to the 'jarring' that a critical pedagogy through critical imagination produces. But a broader discussion of the types of student responses to critical imagining is the subject of another essay.

Despite some student reactions which we might deem less than effusive, the most common reaction has been of the type that all teachers recognize – the eyes widen, there is a gasp or an 'Oh', as the 'light goes on'. As a teacher, these are the signs that you have hit the mark, that your words have caused an engagement in which some sort of new sense is being constructed by the student.

## **Conclusion**

Developing a critical pedagogy is for us an ongoing professional and political problem; it is an ongoing conversation. We constantly see things happening or not happening in our classrooms that give us occasion to go over our practice again, and yet again - to rethink why something is or is not working. In this paper, we have explored a notion of critical imagination as a basis for undertaking a critical pedagogy within the teacher education classroom. The use of critical imagination as a means of 'jarring' students to think differently has informed the construction of pedagogical strategies through writing, two of which have been outlined. Examples of evaluative data collected from students and our own professional journals during teaching episodes using each of the outlined

strategies have been presented. We find that our practice has been made richer, more hopeful and more effective as we have sought to realize critical imagination in pedagogical practice. Such practice seems to have moved our students to think a little more humanely and a little more critically.

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**Dr. Patricia Cartwright** is Senior Lecturer in the School of Education at the Australian Catholic University, Ballarat Campus. She can be reached at [patricia.cartwright@aquinas.acu.edu.au](mailto:patricia.cartwright@aquinas.acu.edu.au)

**Lynne Noone** is a Lecturer at the Mt. Helen Campus of the University of Ballarat. She can be contacted at [l.noone@ballarat.edu.au](mailto:l.noone@ballarat.edu.au)

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