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Towards an Educational Humanities for Teacher Education: Building the Relational, Emotional, and Ethical Bases of Teaching Practice

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Abstract

In medicine, concern about preserving the humanity, empathy, and moral reasoning of prospective doctors during their medical education has spawned the field of medical humanities. Building on the logic of the medical humanities, I propose an educational humanities to support the relational, emotional, and ethical bases of teaching practice. After a brief review of other attempts to bring the humanities into the preparation of educational professionals, I illustrate two main ways that such a field could contribute to teacher education, using poems as examples. Drawing on the way in which the medical humanities expand dominant discourses about medicine, I show how poems can highlight alternative narratives about students' experiences, particularly through the use of metaphor. Those alternatives may offer better foundations for fruitful and satisfying relationships between teachers and students. Second, I illustrate the use of poems as emotive case examples of ethical dilemmas of practice. I show how discussion of such poems offers a substantive, theoretically grounded approach to the teaching of values, rooted in recognition of the complexity of ethical decision-making in practice.

Keywords: teacher education, humanities, educational ethics, caring, emotion, teacher identity

Introduction

Teaching and learning are holistic, human activities that are relational, emotional, moral, as well as cognitive. Around the world, standards for primary and secondary school teaching include the need for teachers to build caring, respectful, professional relationships with learners, as well as act within ethical codes of practice. Increasingly, learning to fulfil

those standards is seen as involving identity work, in which those learning to teach must construct integrated narratives of self-as-person and self-as-teacher (e.g. Beijaard, D., & Meijer, P. C. , 2017; Garner & Kaplan, 2019; Schaefer & Clandinin, 2019). In higher education, the importance of teacher identity formation and its relationship to emotions, moral concerns and the larger socio-political context also have been highlighted (e.g. Clegg, 2008; Quinlan, 2019; van Lankveld, Schoonenboom, Volman, Croiset, & Beishuizen, 2017)).

To support a holistic conception of teaching and teacher development, I make a case for an 'educational humanities', parallel to the medical humanities. First, I briefly describe the medical humanities, including the field's claims and approaches. Then, I explore those claims in the context of preparation of educators and outline a theoretical stance that may ground future development of such a field. Finally, I illustrate how an educational humanities might be practiced by drawing on poems about students' and academics' experiences of higher education.

Medical Humanities

During the twentieth century, medical curricula evolved as a primarily scientific endeavour. In doing so, matters of emotion and ethics were generally de-valued in medical school, although human-centred motives often attracted students to becoming doctors. Concern about preserving these motives, empathy, and moral reasoning of would-be-doctors during their medical education has, in the past 40 years, spawned the field of medical humanities (Shapiro, Coulehan, Wear, & Montello, 2009), leading to new journals (e.g. *Journal of Medical Humanities; Medical Humanities*) and new professional associations (e.g. *Association for Medical Humanities*).

The field is broad and interdisciplinary, focusing on 'matters relating to health, illness, disability, and health care', rather than exclusively on what doctors do (Evans & Greaves, 2002, p. 1). It tends to focus on healthcare education and practice rather than on

using arts as a health treatment (e.g. dance therapy, arts therapy). My case for an educational humanities is similarly delimited; I do not attempt to address arts education or humanities education, but instead the contribution of humanities to the professional development of educators and a broad understanding of learning, teaching, and educational contexts, systems and processes.

Recently, there has been a movement to rename, and refocus, medical humanities as 'health humanities' to explicitly include others involved in healthcare, reflect a broader focus on health and its social determinants, and support trends towards inter-professional education (Jones, Blackie, Garden, & Wear, 2017). Nonetheless, I use the term medical humanities here, as it is more established and its original definition and scope (Evans & Greaves, 2002) do not necessarily exclude the interests advocated by proponents (Jones et al., 2017) of the term health humanities.

The humanities, traditionally comprising history[1], theology, philosophy and theories of literature/art/music, explore what it is to be human. Their methods are rooted in interpretivism, which values multiple arguments and perspectives. In contrast, the empiricism of science and social sciences relies upon data collection and analysis, valuing the replicability of findings to test shared, parsimonious theories (De Rijcke & Penders, 2018). Humanities have now expanded to include interdisciplinary fields such as race studies, cultural studies, gender studies and media studies, which are also reflected in course titles in the medical humanities (Jones et al., 2017). Arguably, these newer critical interdisciplinary fields blur the boundary between humanities and social sciences. Nonetheless, across all humanities disciplines, scholars critically examine 'products of human existence, be they artwork, belief systems, political structures, or even sciences and technologies' to explore

[1] History is sometimes classified as a social science because it relies on the collection and analysis of historical evidence. Newer methods in the digital humanities also lean toward social sciences insofar as they quantitatively analyse text as 'data'.

their underlying beliefs about what humans are and ought to be (Edgar & Pattison, 2006, p. 93).

Edgar and Pattison's defence of humanities suggests a vital dialogue between art, which is emotive and can be propagandistic, and the humanities which provide critical, sustained arguments. Art has the potential to expose otherwise implicit or tacit understandings and feelings so a community can reflect on them. Through humanities-based inquiry, we then 'use reason to reflect on and check actions that might otherwise be motivated solely by blind emotion' (Edgar & Pattison, 2006, p 96).

Several debates remain about the field of medical humanities. First, there is a question about the extent to which medical humanities scholars pursue curiosity-driven intellectual inquiry in areas related to humans' embodied nature versus pursuing instrumental benefits related to preparing health carers for professional practice (Edgar & Pattison, 2006; Evans & Greaves, 2002). Second, it is unclear the best level (e.g. undergraduate, postgraduate, continuing professional development) at which health professionals should engage with the medical humanities, as well as how to integrate the field into health professionals' education.

Many medical schools have optional courses that explore literary and artistic representations of medical practice and the experiences of doctors and patients (Grant, 2002); some have created a core requirement in medical humanities (Jones & Verghese, 2003; Shapiro & Rucker, 2003); and others seek to integrate science and humanities perspectives throughout undergraduate medical curricula (Bleakley, Marshall, & Bromer, 2006).

An underlying assumption of the medical humanities is that the arts and humanities offer ways to cultivate moral and emotional sensitivity that help sustain caring. Medical humanities activities offer rare spaces in over-packed curricula for students to critically reflect on the profession they are entering, their own development, the kind of doctor they

want to be, and the kind of relationship they want to have with their patients (Shapiro & Rucker, 2003).

Leaders of the Centre for Humanities and Ethics at the University of Texas Health Sciences Center explained, 'By weaving the humanities and the arts into the tapestry of undergraduate medical education, we can preserve and promote critical thinking skills, acknowledge and reinforce the value of the affective domain, and enact and model honest and respectful communication' (Jones & Verghese, 2003, 1010). Their curricular objectives focus on principles of ethics and ethical analysis, promoting critical and reflective practices, fostering sensitivity and self-awareness, enhancing communication and listening skills, and modelling professionalism.

Discussion of stories is a primary teaching approach: 'Because we privilege story and image over theory and data, we can focus on the power of the human imagination, the complexity of the human person, the significance of human emotion, and the commonality of the human condition' (Jones & Verghese, 2003, p. 1012). Stories of patient and doctor experiences are presented in poems, short stories, novels, ethical cases, films, guest speaker events and students' own writing of experiences. For example, students must write their own illness narrative after studying various examples from literature and films (Jones & Verghese, 2003). Today, in keeping with technological advances, content may also include blogs, graphic novels, family-made videos, and discussion forums (Jones et al., 2017).

By analysing illness narratives, students begin to understand – and critique – dominant narratives, such as the 'restitution-cure' narrative (Shapiro et al., 2009). This implicit narrative assumes that the role of the doctor is to cure patients, with other outcomes seen a failure. Yet, among its limitations, the 'cure' narrative is not applicable when illnesses are chronic or terminal – themselves clinical words that obscure the embodied and emotional

experiences of patients and their families. Thus stories open up for critical examination cultural assumptions about bodies, illness, patients, and the roles of health professionals.

The humanities also cultivate particular skills in reading, promoting critical reflectivity. In poems, for example, each word is carefully chosen for its (double) meanings, metaphors and associations. Stammers (2014, p 93), after describing how doctors working with poems in workshop became better at reading the multiple meanings hidden in poems, argued, 'Our patients often bring their pains concealed in metaphor and allusion, too, and poetry can help us as GPs [general practitioners] to identify and unwrap those concerns which can't be voiced directly. ' Thus, literature can enhance listening and interpretive skills, which lie at the heart of patient-doctor communication.

Towards an educational humanities

Edgar and Pattison (2006) provided a justification not only for the *medical* humanities, but for the humanities more generally as a critical resource for professional practice. I extend their arguments to education[2]. The humanities are more established in the field of education than medicine, insofar as educational philosophy and history of education

[2] In a search for literature on 'educational humanities', the only sustained discussion I found occurred within the US University Council for Educational Administrators (UCEA) which was developing the scholarly and theoretical base of that new field. Robin Farquhar (1967, p. 3) offered four main rationales for including the humanities in the preparation of educational administrators: '1) a general liberalisation of administration; 2) the values and purpose-defining skills in administration, 3) creative and analytical skills in administration and 4) research skills in administration. '

Two decades later, Popper (1987) analysed the limitations of past attempts to incorporate humanities into the preparation of educational administrators. He argued that humanities tended to be viewed as an aesthetic exercise, best undertaken by humanities scholars, while educational administration was a practical endeavour. The field had been unable to demonstrate the instrumental value of humanities to educational practice or suggest feasible instructional methods of integrating the humanities with practice-oriented objectives (Popper, 1987). In this paper, I address both of these issues. Ryan (1994) also made a case for the humanities, emphasising how it can help educational administrators to develop a philosophy to guide their practice and to support the development of moral decision-making.

have been staples in Anglophone education departments. However, there has been less concerted emphasis on the use of literature and arts for the purposes of promoting caring, perspective-taking, critical reflection and moral development, which are centrepieces in medical humanities curricula. Thus I focus on that branch of humanities in making my case. In doing so, I am also following Nussbaum (1997), who privileges literature in the development of 'narrative imagination'.

Articulating a positive vision for educational humanities is timely. Bridges (2011) argued that in the US and UK, the balance has tipped disproportionately toward scientific research in education, neglecting contributions from humanities to educational knowledge. These trends are reflected in a tendency to privilege 'what works' research (Oancea & Pring, 2008). Meanwhile, various scholars in Canada, the US, and Britain have lamented the decline of educational philosophy over the past thirty years (Colgan, 2018).

Reflecting a denigration of the value of the knowledge bases of teaching, university-based accredited programs of initial teacher education in the US, Britain, Australia and many other countries now compete with alternative graduate pathways into teaching, including schools-based programmes such as Teach for America and its cousins around the world (Darling Hammond, 2017). Trainee secondary school teachers in England also exhibit this instrumental, pragmatic focus in tending to focus on *how* to teach particular content, rather than interrogating the aims and purposes of education or how to interpret and analyse students' needs (Hayes, Capel, Katene, and Cook, 2008). Taken together, these trends suggest the need to rethink the role of humanities in teacher professional learning.

Some writers in the medical humanities have emphasised its interdisciplinary nature and resisted breaking it down into separate disciplines. Doing so, it is argued (e.g. Evans & Greaves, 2002), would exacerbate the already specialised and siloed nature of medical education that contributes to de-humanisation. Existing disciplines of educational philosophy

and educational history may similarly benefit from an integrative re-thinking under a broader umbrella of rationales for the humanities of professional practices, as put forward by Edgar and Pattison (2006).

The role of literature in an integrated educational humanities

An integrated educational humanities could, like the medical humanities, emphasise arts and literature in service of moral reasoning, multiculturalism, critical thinking, empathy and self-awareness. These outcomes are even more important in preparing future teachers than future doctors because teachers are charged, in part, for cultivating the humanity of their own young students. As such, they need the teaching tools and personal development to be able to do so. Insofar as those general aims are also tied to democratic ideals (Nussbaum, 1997), an educational humanities has a particularly important role.

Nussbaum (1997) argued that literature plays a key role in cultivating 'sympathetic imagination', allowing readers to envision and wonder about 'the kind of things that might happen' (Nussbaum, 1997, p. 86). By reading about and discussing diverse lives, people come to appreciate both the similarities and differences between their experiences and those of others. She sees the resulting empathy as the foundation for moral choices about how we interact with others. This act of imagining other possible experiences of our fellow humans is also the basis for compassion.

Some teacher educators have written about how they used contemporary literature in teacher preparation, illustrating different aims and approaches. For example, Villenas (2009) analysed a novel, *The Brief, Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* by Junot Diaz, to show how teacher educators in the US can use novels to complement ethnographic accounts of Latina/o students' transnational lives to help prospective teachers see Latina/o students differently. Latina humanities, she argued, 'provide possibilities for unknowing one-dimensional and

deficit-oriented generalizations and stereotypes which posit any experience beyond the United States as irrelevant to youth's education' (Villenas, 2009, 132).

Taylor (2007) problematised the use of multicultural literature with white teacher education students in Canada. She constructed assignments that required students to recursively re-interpret the novels they were reading through six different lens, ensuring that students came to engage critically and shake loose stereotypical conceptions of the narrators.

Loads, writing from Scotland, offered a brief reflection on the possibilities of the health humanities for teacher development in higher education (Loads, 2018), proposing to call it a 'learning arts and humanities'. Her earlier work on collaborative close reading in educational development provided useful guidelines and prompts for using literature to illuminate learning and teaching. Her approach was explicitly rooted in the assumption that texts are ambiguous and their meanings are co-created between author and readers (Loads, 2013). In contrast to Villenas (2009), Loads emphasised stand-alone readings of excerpts of a variety of texts, arguing that their meaning is not dependent upon wider reading. This stand-alone approach, though, may not do justice to the social dimensions of the educational and ethical challenges I discuss below as a focus of an educational humanities. Nonetheless, these differences in teaching approach open up key questions for debate about feasible teaching methods in an educational humanities based on art and literature.

Preparing teachers for ethical dilemmas in practice

The medical humanities also are rooted in concerns about biomedical ethics, addressing topics where science is outpacing ethical inquiry, such as euthanasia, assisted reproduction, informed consent, and cultural clashes in conceptions of health and medicine (Jones & Verghese, 2003). US scholars Levinson and Fay (2016), argue that 'in the current context of global education reform', which treats dilemmas of equity and justice as 'technocratic challenges', educators are also underprepared for the ethical matters they face,

including issues of merit, equity, respect, inclusion, fairness, and power. Shapira-Lishchinsky (2011) identified several common dilemmas experienced by Israeli schoolteachers, including tensions between caring for students and obeying institutional rules, between individual students and groups of students, between loyalty to students and loyalty to colleagues and between family educational agendas and school standards. Choices about how power and authority are wielded are also central to educational ethics and the everyday concerns of teachers (Buzzelli & Johnston, 2001). These concerns can play themselves out in various situations including grading, grade promotion or retention, discipline, pastoral support, classroom interactions, and school policy-setting (Levinson & Fay, 2016).

In higher education, it has also been argued that teacher preparation in Anglophone contexts focuses too much on technical aspects at the expense of human and ethical dimensions, creating a 'pedagogic gap' (Malcolm & Zukas, 2001). Higher education teachers experience ethical issues such as equity regarding assignment extensions, fairness around individual contributions to group presentations, plagiarism, gift-giving, and protection of objectivity in marking (Macfarlane, 2004). They also raise ethical issues related to challenging students (Scager, Akkerman, Pilot, & Wubbels, 2017). Insofar as teachers in higher education have greater autonomy over curricular decisions, ethical issues can also arise around goal conflicts between different pedagogical objectives, and tensions between tradition and innovation in choice of curricular materials or teaching methods (Quinlan, 2019). Various professional standards exist that list key values for higher education teachers, such as the UK Professional Standards Framework (UKPSF), against which most higher education teaching qualification programmes in the UK and Australia are accredited. However, those values are presented as simple rule statements. How those values are translated into day-to-day decisions by teachers remains under-explored (Quinlan, 2020).

Nurturing a discourse on ethics and values requires not just identifying ethical issues and core professional values, but embracing a theoretical framework that can ground substantive discussion, reflection, pedagogy and action. Fenwick (2016) elaborated a socio-material approach to professional ethics based on a series of studies in primarily health contexts. Socio-material theories have also been applied to preparing educators and child welfare professionals (e.g. Edwards, 2010), as well as to analysing academics' learning (e.g. Zukas & Malcolm, 2017).

Socio-material theories view learning as collective (rather than individual) action within particular, complex situations. These theories emphasise the role of objects (e.g. furniture, physical configurations of spaces, technologies, tools, protocols) in shaping social interactions and, consequently, learning. Fenwick's (2016) also highlighted the impact of broader socio-political contexts of professional practice, such as audits, standards and rules. Taking this view, professional ethics becomes entangled with workplace environments – both material and social.

A socio-material framework is consistent with what Mehta has described as a 'pragmatic educational ethics' (2016). He contrasted educational administrative decision-making, which focuses on reducing conflicts around first principles, with traditional approaches to philosophical (and ethical) reasoning that rely upon first principles. In doing so, he foregrounded the overall system in which a dilemma arose and the series of decisions that had created that system over time. While he valued the goal of treating ethics substantively in educator preparation programmes, he expressed concerns with an individual approach, 'I could imagine it giving some backbone to the reflection that we are frequently urging thoughtful practitioners to engage in. But I would worry if, in so doing, we cordoned off developing individual ethical decision-makers from the larger task of building the kind of good systems that we so desperately need' (Mehta, 2016, p. 20).

From a socio-material perspective, the complexities of practice can defy individual good intentions, moving the pedagogical focus beyond individual practitioner dispositions, behaviours and identities. Emphasising this complexity, Fenwick (2016) argued for the importance of professionals 'attuning' ethical and emotional sensitivity to be able to deal with a wide range of issues they may confront in the messy world of practice. Attunement means using the whole range of senses (including emotional) to read, reframe and respond to the dynamics of practice as they unfold, sometimes in unexpected ways (Fenwick, 2016).

Attuning ethical and emotional sensitivity through stories

Engaging students in discussions of real life professional dilemmas that defy simple rules is a key way to develop the kind of attunement for which Fenwick (2016) argued. Stories, as messy case examples of practice, become essential teaching materials. Through conversations about those stories, students can become more aware of ethical concerns buried in everyday situations and the ways in which socio-material conditions can push and pull professionals toward particular actions. That is, attunement involves developing a critical sensitivity to external requirements and demands, one's own personal moral commitments and concerns, and the dynamic interaction between internal and external mandates. Thus, a solid identity is a necessary but insufficient condition for navigating practice.

'Attunement' aligns well with the concept of 'sympathetic imagination' (Nussbaum, 1997) that lies at the heart of the humanities, particularly literature. Practicing the skills of critical reading, perspective taking, and attention to language in relation to narratives of learning could prepare teachers to notice the nuances of language students use. This process is parallel to what Stammers (2014) described in relation to using poems with medical students.

Furthermore, discussions of stories engage educators in critically reflecting on the contexts in which human characters (students, teachers) operate, including the dominant

narratives of the field. Thus the educational humanities, like the medical humanities, can facilitate critique of these narratives, opening up alternatives that enable teachers to forge different identities (Schaefer & Clandinin, 2019), explore different kinds of relationships with learners, and consider different courses of ethical action. In higher education, a dominant discourse of neoliberal educational policy in many fee-paying contexts is 'student-as-consumer.' (Molesworth, Nixon, & Scullion, 2009). In the US primary and secondary teacher education context, Dale (2004) also argued that growing up in a consumerist culture inculcates in prospective teachers an 'unreflective acceptance of capitalism and economic utilitarianism' that sees education as 'commodity exchanges' between 'economic role-incumbents' (Dale, 2004, p. 66). In the first example of the educational humanities in practice below, I discuss two poems that offer alternative narratives of education, 'restorying' students as people engaged in processes of maturation and growth, rather than economic exchange.

The messy 'entanglements' of practice (Fenwick, 2016) also include particular 'affective practices', unwritten emotional rules that professionals are expected to follow (Wetherell, 2013). For example, female schoolteachers often find that expressions of anger are socially unacceptable, making it difficult for them to find a voice with which to resist external mandates and policies that interfere with their own internal duties of care to their students (Liljestrom, Roulston, & deMarrais, 2007), creating moral stress (Colnerud, 2015).

Attunement, then, involves building emotional sensitivity. In medicine, Rees, Monrouxe and McDonald (2013) found that students' ethical dilemmas of practice were highly emotional. In research with schoolteachers, Hargreaves (1998) traced teachers' anger to the thwarting of moral aims, concluding that teachers' emotions were inextricably linked with their moral purpose of nurturing children. Likewise, Quinlan (2019) demonstrated a link between higher education teachers' emotions and moral concerns.

Thus, helping teachers examine dilemmas they will (or do) encounter in practice means examining the emotional dynamics that arise in real-life situations. It also means being prepared to manage strong feelings that may arise in classroom discussions of messy, emotionally-laden case studies, including prospective practitioners' own stories. In sum, an educational humanities that focuses on critical reflection on stories offers an approach for attending to the human dimensions of learning and teaching, rebalancing the cognitive and affective, and exploring moral aspects of teaching, learning and student growth.

How an educational humanities might be practiced

To illustrate how educational humanities might be practiced, I present several poems drawn from (Quinlan, 2016). Each of the poets has given written permission for their poem to be used in this article. Poems as 'stories' are used because they are short and deliberately emotionally evocative (Padel, 2002). Their length makes it possible to present the whole poem and facilitates their integration into existing educational curricula, as a supplement to other texts. In short, poems offer an opportunity to practice Edgar and Pattison's (2006) blending of emotive arts and critical humanities inquiry.

I have been using these and other poems from my book, *How Higher Education Feels* (2016) over the past five years in numerous workshops to prompt university teachers to reflect on their feelings about teaching and learning, critique cultural assumptions, 're-see' and 're-story' students and the learning and teaching process, and support emotional and ethical attunement. In poem-based workshops, we have had a different kind of conversation, one that honours feelings and a wider range of values than is captured in the 'scientism' (Bridges, 2011) of evidence-based policy, or the 'commodity exchanges' of our marketised society, or the accountability movements in which educational development is embedded. My experience of these discussions and informal feedback from participants suggests that the poems supported a more reflective environment in which values of care were expressed and

the dilemmas associated with enacting those values were explored. Novice higher education teachers appreciated the strong link between theory and practice, the range of perspectives, and better understanding of how to 'solve' dilemmas that discussing poems as case examples provided. Participants' subsequent assignments demonstrated their reflectivity about the values underpinning their own dilemmas of practice and their ability to contextualise those dilemmas, critique the context that gave rise those dilemmas, and to consider different possible resolutions. Participants in one of the workshops for experienced higher education teachers described the discussion of poems as 'thought-provoking', 'interesting', 'a novel approach', and 'the best workshop I have attended in a long time. '

Examples of poems for 're-storying' students' experiences

Here I present and discuss two short poems (Paulette Mae's The whole fruit; Bao Huynh's Wings) that illuminate the felt experience of transformation through education. My interpretations should be read as illustrative, rather than definitive. They are meant to suggest the potential of poems to open new narratives that are not well-represented in the reified terms regularly used in political and even research discussions today. The range of possible interpretation of the poems is their strength.

At one level, the themes of these poems are not new. For example, they can be read as mapping onto three previously documented experiences in transformation: pain, perspective and partners (Baxter Magolda, 2009). However, they present these aspects of student experiences in a way that foregrounds the emotional experiences of growth, prompts a different kind of response from readers, and invites multiple readings. Because poems are designed to evoke emotions in the reader (Padel, 2002), they are particularly useful for practicing emotional attunement (Fenwick, 2016). Poems can make the familiar appear strange, demanding that readers take a fresh look at a common phenomenon.

Poems also work through and with metaphor. A close reading of poems can suggest new narratives and emergent core metaphors, just as stories in medical humanities open up different narratives and metaphors for the role of healthcare professionals. Thus, these poems illustrate the potential for an educational humanities to capture student experiences that defy dominant discourses, such as student-as-consumer (Molesworth, Nixon, & Scullion, 2009).

Paulette Mae's the whole fruit
is truth
firm…
or can it be
soft, peach-like
spread with downy fur, altered
once bitten, tasted,
stewed into something
else. . . if truth
is forever changing
am I too, its softness, burst
from the pit
of what I think
I am…

This poem suggests changes in epistemological orientation, a process that has been documented in various theories of student development (e.g. Baxter Magolda, 1992; Perry, 1970). It raises issues for discussion such as that students often start higher education seeing knowledge in absolute terms as black and white or right and wrong and held by outside authorities. They move through phases in which they recognise the relativity of knowledge, and begin to form their own opinions. With increasing intellectual experience, students appreciate the ways in which knowledge is generated, justified and legitimated and how they, too, can make and support claims and make commitments under conditions of ambiguity.

Mae captures this change in her view of 'truth' and its implications for her own sense of self. She discovers that as she bites into truth – like a peach – it changes. Interestingly, in her metaphor, she is, herself, the active agent in the transformation of knowledge through her biting, tasting and processing of it. But she is the object of change, too. Her question, 'If truth is forever changing, am I too…' allows for the possibility of personal growth and change through higher education and links it to changed views of the nature of knowledge itself.

Mae's story is one of wonder and awe at both the world and the possibilities it presents for her personally. She bursts from 'the pit/of what I think/ I am…', becoming the blossom and then the fruit itself. Thus the poem plays with the relationship between the knower and the known – blurring the boundaries between subject and object. She reminds us that, as students learn a subject, they are also learning about themselves, which is as much an emotional as epistemological process. They come to see both the subject and themselves differently. She presents this as a process – like the maturation and stewing of fruit. These processes take time to unfold and students' experiences will be different depending upon where they are in this process. In the next poem, by Bao Huynh, we also gain insight into the process of education from a learner's perspective.

Bao Huynh's Wings

I came here
a fledgling
blind and helpless.

On these heights
I met an eagle
whose keen eyes saw in me
something I couldn't see,
and took me up.

As my eyes
opened
I watched
his majestic flight.
and he watched,
my first wing-beats,

there to catch me when I fell.

And I felt
those gentle talons
pushing me from the nest
towards the precipice
to fly again
and fall again
until the wind
would lift me up.

This poem highlights the importance of mentorship in supporting students' growth. There is, of course, much evidence that students benefit from interactions with academics during their time in higher education. Baxter Magolda (2004), for example, writes about the importance of 'learning partnerships' in higher education, emphasising the role of mentors in students' development. Indeed, Huynh's poem shows how that interaction benefitted him. He experienced higher education as arriving on a mountain top, where he needed to learn to fly. His mentor is expert in this new landscape and teaches him how to survive there, pushing him to fly, catching him when he falls, and pushing him again (gently, but with firm talons) to try again. Huynh gives us several different metaphors of maturation, including that of eyes opening and taking flight. Key is that his teacher saw something in him that he could not see himself. Some students, including first generation university students and international students who are moving into a new culture, may especially need the 'eyes' of a more experienced mentor to see the landscape of possibility and seed and nurture new aspirations. Hence this poem illuminates how and why mentors can be so important for students.

Huynh also shows the importance of pushing students to do things that may be uncomfortable at first, and at which they may fail the first time. Failure (falling, being caught, and trying again) is seen as a necessary step in the learning process. Overwhelmingly, discussions, research and theory about student experiences in higher education are framed in terms of success (e.g. Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, & Whitt, 2011). Critics point out that the discourse of learning outcomes, for example, leaves little room for false starts, cul-de-sacs, and

serendipitous discoveries (Hussey & Smith, 2002). Try-and-try-again or productive failure (Kapur, 2016) is a different kind of narrative of education. Such a narrative focuses educators' attention on how sand-pits, dress rehearsals, guided discoveries and feedback might be built into the learning process. It also prompts us to think about how we help students learn to be comfortable with 'falling' so that they can fail productively.

Examples of poems as cases of ethical dilemmas in teachers' practice

In the previous sub-section, I illustrated how poems from student perspectives can be used to explore alternative narratives of students' experiences, including maturation and supported, iterative trial and error. In this sub-section, I offer two poems written from a teacher's perspective that serve as examples of messy, real world cases of ethical dilemmas that can be used to attune ethical and emotional sensitivity (Fenwick, 2016). While there is a 30 year tradition of using cases in teacher education (Sato & Rogers, 2010), including ethical cases (Levinson & Fay, 2016) it is innovative to use poems as cases to highlight the emotional and ethical aspects of practice.

Dilemmas in teaching practice arise when there are competing values that imply different courses of action. In discussing educational ethics above, I highlighted a number of different ethical dilemmas faced by schoolteachers (Buzzelli & Johnston, 2001; Shapira-Lishchinsky, 2011) and teachers in higher education (Macfarlane, 2004; Scager et al,, 2017; Quinlan, 2019). Such empirical studies can be used in conjunction with discussions of poem-cases of ethical dilemmas.

Here, instead of modelling an interpretation, I demonstrate how one might facilitate discussion of these poems as ethical dilemmas. Thus I focus on showing what kinds of open questions might be asked and how to make connections to practice.

Janet McCann's NO

When the visiting scholar tells my class
this is what the poem means,

I want to say no, it does not mean that.

There is nothing unreasonable about
his conclusions, but that is what's wrong:
they conclude. I feel doors slamming

down the hallway of his voice, and soon
he will leave us alone in the clean
swept corridor, watching the solemn paired

plaques in their frames, and I say
no, no, the poem spills out
of this hall, over the landscape,

scatters over the lawns and cars,
resonates in the hedges, and when I leave
after the crisp precise voice

answers the last question, after the punch
and cardboard cookies (students; friends), all
that will be left will be poem.

In facilitating group discussions with academics, I might start by asking what the teacher/narrator seems to be feeling. Reading the poem aloud can help expose the feeling behind the repeated 'no, no, no'. Anger? Outrage? Frustration? At what? What does she object to? What assumptions about the teaching of poetry does this teacher hold that the visiting scholar does not? Although she disagrees with the way the class is unfolding, the teacher/narrator writes, 'I want to say no…', suggesting that she does not actually speak this objection aloud. Instead, the visiting scholar's 'crisp, precise voice' carries on through the answering of 'the last question'. If she is in such disagreement with the visiting scholar, why doesn't she speak up? What are the contextual factors that constrain or enable the possible range of actions? Does it matter that the narrator is female while the visiting scholar is male? If so, what clues in the poem highlight the gendered nature of the interaction? What are the conflicting values that generate the tension in this situation?

The poem offers us just a snapshot of this narrator's teaching. In considering how the dilemma might be resolved, it is useful to widen the viewing angle to discuss the larger

context in which this single class session might have taken place. We can infer that the narrator values students' appreciation of multiple interpretations of a poem and the process of (co-) constructing their own meaning. If so, why did she invite *this* scholar? What are the different roles a guest speaker might play within a larger pedagogical sequence? What might she do when she next meets with the students? In educating her students, how might she make productive use of these different pedagogical philosophies between herself and the visiting scholar?

Next I consider how I might facilitate a discussion of another teaching episode.

Penelope Dane's Low Level

On the day the queer student
panel came to speak, I worried
about the reaction. It was the Deep
South. It was English class, but

most of section 56 focused, except
the Christian frat boy in the front row
who radiated fear as he scratched
letters into a crossword puzzle.

When he finished, he erased
so hard his desk squeaked,
I imagined his pencil emitted ionizing rays
which refracted off us all

the other students
and the four panelists
kept on, twisting their fingers
they answered questions

about god, dating, their families,
he began the crossword puzzle again,
his pencil fired out
letter after letter

I regret that I waited

until after class to confront
him about the crossword puzzle
I was too afraid of
detonating in front of them

then all the students would figure me out.

Years ago, I studied gamma radiation
and I learned that low exposures
over time can damage more

than one mean dose
because our bodies don't
even notice the small cell mutations
from low levels and

the cells never think to try
to fix themselves because
they don't know anything
is wrong.

Once the group has described what seems to be happening in this moment, analysis can turn to what the narrator is feeling – during the class itself when she fails to act and retrospectively, as she reflects on the incident. How did those feelings influence her actions? The poem invites us to frame the case in binary terms – to 'confront' the student in class or out of class. Therefore, I might structure discussion questions to put the readers in the position of committing to a choice of action. Would *you*, in that situation, choose to confront the crossword-puzzle-student? Why or why not? Asking participants to take a position on a controversial topic can stimulate interest and prompt a group to articulate the values underpinning different courses of action. If positions are very entrenched, a facilitator can ask participants to argue the opposite side to promote different perspectives on key issues.

Yet, we can also widen the frame of this poetic case. How else might you interpret the crossword-puzzle-student's behaviour? How else might this case play out? What are some of the other options you might consider in this situation? What are their advantages and disadvantages? How might the teaching situation have been constructed in advance to avoid the dilemma in the first place? What are the needs of other players in this situation – the student panellists and other members of the class? What do you think is this teacher's responsibility to those students? What does her core metaphor suggest?

Much of the narrator's fear seems to focus on the risk of 'outing' herself. How do we represent ourselves to our students? How much do we share of ourselves, and for what purposes? How are those decisions complicated by race, gender, class, religion, age, and sexual orientation and by the contexts we find ourselves in?

Conclusion

This paper makes the case for an 'educational humanities' akin to the medical humanities. I have drawn particularly on the use of literature in education to do two things: (1) challenge dominant discourses about students' experience by suggesting alternative narratives and (2) explore ethical dilemmas of practice. I have illustrated these two main purposes with four poems related to learning and teaching in higher education.

These two main purposes for an educational humanities are promoted by several key features of literary and artistic teaching materials. First, these materials are emotive, enabling prospective teachers to engage with the emotional aspects of practice, which have been largely neglected in the educational research and theory that underpins teacher preparation programmes. Second, these materials are complex, ambiguous and open to interpretation, just as real-world situations are. Thus, engaging with them requires prospective teachers to develop skills of close reading, critical reflectivity, and interpretation that are valuable in 'reading' students' comments and concerns, classroom dynamics, and the current context of teaching practice. In sum, I argue that they can promote emotional and ethical attunement (Fenwick, 2016).

As in medical education, an educational humanities approach, particularly drawing on literature, can be integrated across a teacher preparation programme or be a key feature of specific courses in multiculturalism, ethics, or social foundations of education. This paper is meant to be suggestive of what such a field could be, rather than definitive.

My hope is that this piece will stimulate debate about and further exploration of the concept and its applicability to teacher preparation and professional development, as well as study of the effects of this approach on prospective and practicing teachers. Educational researchers have a wealth of relevant knowledge about educating for practical wisdom, the use of cases and narratives in educational research more broadly, the development of identities, educational philosophy, and socio-material approaches to education that can be brought to bear in further building an educational humanities.

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