Dysfunctional devices in the classroom meet the habitus of the new

Nicola F. Johnson

*Edith Cowan University*

Follow this and additional works at: [https://ro.ecu.edu.au/ecuworkspost2013](https://ro.ecu.edu.au/ecuworkspost2013)

**Part of the Education Commons**

10.1177/2042753019831385

This is an Author's Accepted Manuscript of: Johnson, N. F. (2019). Dysfunctional devices in the classroom meet habitus of the new. *E-Learning and Digital Media, 16*(3), 208–220. Available [here](https://ro.ecu.edu.au/ecuworkspost2013/6048)

This Journal Article is posted at Research Online.

Title: Dysfunctional devices in the classroom meet the habitus of the new

Introduction

Recent debates have focused on whether smartphones have a legitimate place within formal settings across secondary schools and tertiary sectors. As young people increasingly use their smartphones for leisurely purposes, their need and/or desire to be online has also increased; as I have argued elsewhere, it is a form of cultural and/or social capital that warrants maintaining (Johnson, 2009). Given the focus on connecting with others, these digital practices have bled into the classroom walls whereby a form of digital distraction can occur. This has led some to suggest a blanket ban on smartphones within secondary schools.

This article reports on the practices surrounding individual and class use of digital devices where at times, for some students, smartphones were their digital device. It also explores teachers’ understandings of the usefulness of these smartphones and of digital devices in general. In other publications, we have analysed and contrasted the different ‘Bring Your Own Device’ (BYOD) and information and communication technology policies of the school (Selwyn, Nemorin, Bulfin and Johnson, 2018; Selwyn, Nemorin, Bulfin and Johnson, 2017; Bulfin, Johnson, Nemorin and Selwyn, 2016). In this research project, three secondary schools were included in the study. Each had a BYOD program. The particular school I am focusing on in this article stated smartphones could be used as digital devices as part of the BYOD program, but towards the end of the three-year study, the policy changed to exclude smartphones as part of the BYOD.
The aim of this article is to apply the ‘habitus of the new’ concept to digital devices within the classroom. This article points to the dysfunction of some devices which are an ongoing frustration for some teachers and some students in a climate where digital technologies are expected to be utilised in the classroom as their use is a signifier of contemporary pedagogy. The article incorporates theorisations of new media in everyday schooling. It however, goes beyond ‘ICT integration’, ‘early adopters’, ‘risk-taking’, ‘diffusion theory’ or the need for Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK), as it focuses on what is going on in young people’s lifeworlds and the (mis)match between that and of contemporary schooling. It builds upon work such as Stewart’s (2015) who commented on the affordances and limitations of social media within the classroom.

From habitus to the habitus of the new

Before explicating the intricacies of the ‘habitus of the new’, I first revisit the concept of habitus as coined by Pierre Bourdieu (e.g., 1984, 2000, 1990, 1991). Habitus encompasses how people act in a way that is reflective of social structures and their process of socialisation, which is in turn reproduced by their actions. Habitus is:

- a product of a history, the instruments of construction of the social that it [habitus] invests in practical knowledge of the world and in action are socially constructed, in other words structured by the world that they structure. (Bourdieu, 2000, p. 148)

Habitus can be described as a system of dispositions and what leads people to act, and yet is embedded as natural or preferred and constituted as who they are. The accepted ways of operating in a particular field is known as ‘doxa’ or as ‘doxic practice’. This is in keeping with
Bourdieu’s summary of his theoretical framework, that is, ‘[(habitus) (capital)] + field = practice’ (1984, p. 101). As habitus develops history and generates practices, the present reflects the past and shapes the future. It shapes, structures, organises and generates actions as a structural code of the culture and the field (context). The habitus comprises a set of potentials for action as a result of accumulated practice (see Johnson, 2009). Habitus is enacted by the capital (economic, social, cultural, symbolic) valued in that field.

Habitus of the new

Over some years, I had been working on the notion of a virtual habitus or a virtualisation of the habitus. I had been trying to theorise how the use of digital technologies and social media intersects as part of and in addition to the habitus. I was wanting to theorise how new technologies provide a substitute reality or a virtual reality (see Hayes, 2015) and how this could comprise part of a virtual habitus. However, I never really got to where it theoretically made sense. When I came across ‘habitus of the new’, I realised that Zizi Papacharissi had beaten me to it, and what’s more, had done so in a way that made a lot of sense! With Emily Easton (2013), and Thomas Streeter and Tarleton Gillespie (2013), Papacharissi proposed a ‘habitus of the new’ to imply an ongoing state of change, permanently evolving in particular due to the ongoing state of ‘new media’. Through ‘historicizing’ the new, the habitus draws attention to the practices that connect it (Papacharissi, Streeter and Gillespie, 2013).

So to particularly focus on the ‘habitus of the new’ is to delineate and examine current contemporary practices, which therefore become ‘un-new’ leading further to ‘newer’
developments. Therefore, ‘new’ media becomes permanently ‘novel’ and the social structures associated therein enact a system of dispositions among users. Papacharissi and Easton (2013) theorized the habitus of the new to the context of sociality explaining this as a “set of dispositions that emerge out of the social architecture of social media and frame but also constantly invite the remediation of agency” (Papacharissi and Easton, 2013, p. 172). They also emphasise how the habitus of the new “affords and rewards authorship” (p. 178) as it compels individuals to “author, to tell stories, and to share stories about themselves” (p. 178). Of interest to this article is how digital media is now incorporated into our daily repertoire of “socially oriented behaviors” (Papacharissi, et al, 2013, p. 602) alongside our “habituated predispositions for sociality” (Papacharissi et al, 2013, p. 602). This article applies these concepts to the everyday practices of those within a contemporary secondary school, especially poignant now in this digital era where, increasingly, digital actors’ dispositions are constituted by individualized, personalized, and mediatized practices.

**Approach, methods and context**

As stated earlier, this article draws upon in-depth ethnographic studies of three Australian secondary schools across a period of twelve months. This extended period of immersive fieldwork utilized the main forms of data generation associated with classroom research and school ethnography – including over 100 site visits, 300 hours of *in situ* observations, field notes, documentary analysis, photographing and videoing, corridor conversations and interviews with staff, students and other members of the school communities. The focus of this article is Mountview High School in particular where as part of a research team, I was chiefly responsible for the data collection of observations and interviews. From this
particular school, 36 classroom observations were conducted, to complement 50 individual interviews with staff, and 3 focus group interviews with students. For more information about the larger study, see Selwyn et al (2018, 2016).

Mountview is a multi-campus secondary college is located in a southeastern regional area of Victoria, Australia. Bi-located within two small towns within one council area of approximately 125,000 people, the area is known to be an industrial setting with the following descriptors:

- Low socio-economic status
- High unemployment
- Inland geographical district
- Coal-fired power stations

Like all Australian public secondary schools, in 2009, all year 9 students received a notebook (also known as a netbook, or a Ruddtop, colloquially named after the Prime Minister of Australia at that time) computer paid for by the Australian federal government. This program ceased shortly afterwards due to its unsustainability. From 2014, the school adopted a Bring Your Own Device program which allows and encourages each student to bring a digital device of their choice with the only requirement that it can connect to the school’s network. Therefore, students’ mobile smartphones were part of this policy. The school’s website stated, “With the cuts to the National Secondary School Computer Fund, the College can no longer provide netbooks to students. Students who received netbooks under the old program will continue to be supported until they complete school. All other students will need to supply their own device from 2014”. What follows are four vignettes - emblematic of themes that occurred in reality developed from the critical data analysis.
In this section, I present compilations of student and teacher practices in the form of four vignettes. The first vignette highlights the experiences of a class going from subject to subject throughout their school day. The second vignette shares the practical, ongoing challenges one particular student has over a week. The third vignette exposes the more successful practices of another student who provides insight into current digital practices in and out of school. The fourth vignette focuses on one class period where the teacher has planned that each student will need to use their digital device. Each of these vignettes point to varying levels of digital dysfunction (including dysfunctional practices and dysfunction of devices), mixed incorporation of technologies on the teacher’s part, but also provide a sense of humanity which is prudent to remember and consider when discussing teaching and learning.

In a Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) scheme, the onus is on the student to bring their device to school. Ideally, it should be fully charged, and functional, and if students are going to make the effort to bring it every day, one would reasonably expect devices to be used in each period. At Mountview High School, there were five periods per week day. What follows are two very possible days that map out the use, or non take up of devices during the five periods. It points to the very different prioritisations of digital device use and incorporation into learning, teaching and curriculum. Each student had their own locker where they could store their device (usually within their schoolbag). Sometimes devices would be left in lockers, or bags, or be placed unused on their tables.
Example Day 1

Period 1: English – teacher states the class can use their devices if they wish to.

Period 2: Art – the class is using actual paint brushes and have a workbook so the class do not use devices.

Period 3: P.E. – the teacher shows class images and videos on the large screen then class does physical activities. Devices aren’t used.

Period 4: Science – teacher expects class to have devices and follow the powerpoint as he talks about it. Expects class to submit assignments on Schoology [a freely available learning management system that some teachers chose to use at Mountview High School].

Period 5: Maths – teacher has scanned PDFs of the textbook so students need a device to access the PDFs (textbook) and then complete the activities by hand in their workbook.

Example Day 2

Periods 1 and 2: English – double period where devices are used to draft a story and comment on others’ drafts which they post to Schoology.

Period 3: Maths – maths calculators are used and class completes activities in workbooks because their digital devices can not do the mathematical symbols.

Period 4: Physical Education – the class watches some online videos about throwing techniques on their devices but Wi-Fi is so slow that the video consistently buffers and freezes; the class is admonished for being off-task.

Period 5: Health – a group of classes attempts to watch a 65 minute video on a large screen about cyber-bullying in a 50 minute period. The devices are in their bags.
These vignettes are presented to demonstrate the complex nature of learning and teaching within a digital era. The practicalities of not only using digital devices are challenging, let alone using them to effectively enhance learning experiences for students. In response to my questions about student use of technology, a teacher of senior maths stated:

*Teacher:* My students don’t use technology.

*Interviewer:* So you use technology and they use exercise books?

*Teacher:* Yes.

*Interviewer:* Is that planned?

*Teacher:* It just – we don’t have a technology that we use here, so you can’t plan to use a technology because the students just don’t have it. If you look at sort of the three different things that a student might have as a piece of technology in the classroom they’ll either have a phone, a tablet or a laptop, and they’re not interchangeable things. If you create a class or learning around one of those devices you’re generally excluding the others. And if students all have different things it’s very hard to actually plan to use them. And they all have their advantages and disadvantages. I don’t – I find phones really annoying in class. It’s not that they can’t be a tool; it’s just that they rarely are ever used for that. I think as screens get smaller the level of distraction with them becomes larger. But if all the students had tablets for instance, I would plan on them having their [text]books on a tablet, because they’ve got a nice reading device there (male, aged 51-60).

Upon taking a walk down the street of any western world’s main city’s thoroughfare, one becomes acutely aware of the increasing use of smartphones and digital devices for social connections as part of our ‘socially oriented behaviors’. Consequently, the habitus of the
new invokes a sense of social capital achievement through finding out what others are doing in real-time and utilising vogue apps found within social media as a means of maintaining currency (see Johnson, 2009). Despite this prevalence of use within everyday society, good educational intentions sometimes fail to bring forth any achievement and utilisation of digital media due to practical dysfunctionality. What follows is a typical experience of a young secondary school student, demonstrating the dysfunctionality of the BYOD scheme in this particular context.

Day 1

Ashley: Damn, I’m late. I’ll fill out a late slip at the office. Reason? Slept in.

9:25am Teacher: Ashley – where is your device?

Ashley: Sorry, miss, I left it at home.

Day 2

Ashley: Damn, I’m late. I’ll fill out a late slip at the office. Reason? Slept in.

9:23am Teacher: Ashley – what’s up?

Ashley: Sorry, miss, my device is flat.

Teacher: Have you got your charger?

Ashley: Uh, no, I left it at home.

Day 3

8:50am

Teacher: Ashley – where’s your device?

Ashley: At home
Teacher: Go to the library to get one.

Ashley says to the librarian: Can I get a device please?

Librarian: I need to see your student ID card.

Ashley: Oh I don’t have it.

Librarian: I can’t issue you a device.

Teacher: Ashley – where’s your device?

Ashley: The library wouldn’t give me one.

Day 4

8:50am

Ashley is engaged in silent reading on her device.

Teacher: How are you Ash?

Ashley: I’ve got my device, it’s charged, and it’s working, miss!

Teacher: That’s great!

Ashley: But I’m not feeling very good.

Teacher: Why’s that?

Ashley: I didn’t have any breakfast.

Day 5

Ashley: Damn, I’m late. I’ll fill out a late slip at the office. Reason? Slept in.

9:25am Teacher: Ashley – where is your device?

Ashley: Sorry, miss, I forgot it.

Day 6 (the following week)
After encouragement and admonishment, Ashley does bring her device to school, fully charged and working, but on that day, none of the teachers ask the student to bring it out and use it during class. Activities are so boring - Ashley puts her earbuds in and listens to music during class time.

Students such as Ashley are part of the parcel comprising 21st Century learners. Despite having a smartphone and a digital device and being an enthusiastic user of social media, Ashley is challenged by the expectations surrounding remembering to bring a charged, working device to school, as well as being on time, and having breakfast. This is a reality for some students in a junior, secondary program. We cannot expect high-tech, state-of-the-art practices if fundamental basic blocks have not yet been built with young learners.

This following vignette is an amalgamation of BYOD experiences in the life of a student in the top stream in their year level at Mountview High School. The top stream is characterized by above average academic ability and achievement, and typically, most of the students have digital devices and bring them to school every day.

I got my device on special [sale]. Its screen is now cracked and Dad can’t afford to get it fixed. It works ok though. It’s a tablet, not sure what kind [brand], but its easy to carry around. I never used a laptop or anything like that much before I got to high school. Now I use it every day. The ones we had at primary school were really slow. My tablet charges really quickly – plug it in, go away for like ten minutes, come back and do another five minutes of work. Sometimes I forget the device or it goes flat and I haven’t got my charger at school so I have to handwrite.
I’ve got a smartphone too, but I mainly play games on mine, and social media. Sometimes I listen to music [via earbuds] while we’re doing work [in class]. I don’t really use it for anything else for school. Some teachers don’t care if you use your phone to text. Some teachers are more strict and you’re not allowed. I just had to turn mine off cause I find it distracting. Its non-stop. Lots of people will say they’re doing research but they’re obviously texting. It’s kind of stupid that the teachers will let people bring their phones in as a device, because people are always going to say, ‘oh I’m reading a book on here’, or ‘I’m doing this work on the internet’, but they’re actually on Facebook or something. I don’t like bringing my smartphone to school cause it might get damaged or stolen especially if we leave it in our bags in the change room while doing PE.

We use our devices to access different resources for our learning, like slideshows to follow along with for homework. Mainly for science and investigate [English and humanities], that’s when we use it the most. Mostly we use an internet browser or Word. Yeah, mainly [Microsoft] Word. In maths, the teacher scans the textbooks cause they’re really expensive and so we just download the PDFs. [Hard copies of textbooks were eliminated in the previous year].

Some of my classmates don’t have good internet at home, so only use it [go on the Internet] at school. We have good Wi-Fi at home so I go on YouTube and stuff like that.

I like having all my work on one screen instead of having several different books. I type much faster than I do handwriting, so it’s much easier when using a computer. Sometimes it’s a bit
weird going from typing or touching the screen and stuff and then going to write something. You say, “Wait, how do you write this word?”!

The devices are good for holiday homework and we submit our assignments on Schoology so our teacher makes sure it isn’t overdue. A friend of mine doesn’t have internet at home so it's hard for her to submit homework and assignments. She got grounded once for doing work in her book instead of submitting it online cause the teacher thought she hadn’t done it. I like it cause you can submit it when its ready and not have to wait until the day its due and hand it in at school. You don’t have to worry about explaining why its not done. Its good for checking you’ve done your homework, and reviewing topics. We just log on and download worksheets and stuff like that, so teachers don’t have to give out handouts. Having a device is more helpful than not having one. If we don’t understand something we can go back over the powerpoints. Our teacher marks our work and leaves comments on Schoology where we can see it and go back to it so its easier and we get feedback faster. If we’re sick at home, we can still do our work and we can email the teacher to find out what we’re missing out on. You can have a conversation about what you need to improve and its really easy to find out your grade.

Sometimes the devices are distracting. Its hard to stay on task cause its so easy to play games and things like that. I hate it when the internet is slow or doesn’t work. Its really annoying most of the time. When the internet goes down it’s a problem cause we depend on it so much. Its normally in the morning when it breaks down and then it doesn’t work until like halfway through the first period. Sometimes when you’re offline it doesn’t feel right and its like you have no connections to the outside world so you don’t know if people are still
alive or if they’ve died! Speed up the Wi-Fi! Sometimes the internet drops out, and you can’t reconnect and then you can’t catch up.

Some families can’t afford devices. Some students wait in line at the library for half the period just to get a device sometimes. One of our teachers has two spare devices in her classroom that we can borrow if we’re having problems. She gives us homework that we can complete using our devices so she keeps us on track.

Our PE and Chinese teachers sometimes use Powerpoints on a screen and its good looking at a big screen. They walk around the room to check we’re looking at the big screen. If we are all looking at little screens, its easier to play games and all that.

Our class is really quiet when we’re using our devices. Some of the students in other streams don’t use their devices as much as us. They sort of scream their heads off and muck around.

Sometimes you lose your work when Schoology updates and you can’t find your files.
Sometimes the battery gets too low and then you lose a file. Sometimes your tablet freezes and your whole story gets lost. I cried when that happened. Auto save wasn’t on! Devices can be unpredictable.

My Dad thinks he is good at using technology, but I have to teach him quite a lot. He takes a long time, like 10 minutes when it’s supposed to take like 2 minutes. Some of the teachers need to be taught how to use a laptop so they know what they’re doing and so they can use
the devices to improve students’ learning. They’re not dumb, but they’re not really smart with the computers they’ve got.

This vignette points to many practical problems and issues. It also highlights how particular teachers of certain curriculum areas may favour the use of digital devices more than others. It highlights how some adults (including some teachers) are mediocre users of digital technologies, but it also points to inequities at home with available Internet, and socio-economic status affecting the ability to purchase quality devices or fix broken ones. This vignette also points to the blurring of leisure and learning evident and enabled through the use of a device. The smaller screens afford students the potential of hiding their ‘off-task’ practices be it gaming, social media, messaging, or other. The habitus of the new demonstrates the familiarity and dependence of some students’ use as they can type faster with less spelling errors and be very dexterous and resourceful in their digital practices. It also points to the differences between teacher expectations and in this particular school, I observed many occasions where the students were being quiet, were focused on their device’s screen, were listening to music via their ear buds, but were obviously not doing anything along the lines of a learning activity, similar to Wiklund and Andersson’s (2018) finding that student use of technology was both for distraction and relaxation.

An ongoing ‘un-new’ practice evident at one of the Mountview campuses in particular was how textbook chapters were scanned, uploaded onto Schoology and provided for the students to access and then complete the work in their exercise books. Because parents were encouraged to buy devices for their children, it was decided that parents could not also be expected to buy hard copies of textbooks. During a few observations, outdated textbooks
that were formerly used (before the BYOD scheme) were sometimes brought in from storerooms to provide students with the information due to them not having their own personal device. A teacher of junior maths noted:

*We’ve decided here it’s been now since I’ve been here [2 years] no textbooks, so no textbooks for maths I mean, so that was a bit of a shock coming down here, yeah I’ll take maths, oh yeah by the way we don’t have textbooks anymore, you’ve got to prepare all the stuff for them. But there are kids unfortunately who just, they don’t want to look at it on the screen, they want hard copy so we’re near a photocopier, we’re in an open space, we’ve got two, we combine two classes and have two teachers and forty odd kids and we’ve got a printer over there. So the kids who want to can print out the sheets if they really and some kids just prefer it that way because they’re hard wired into that’s the way they’ve always had it that way (male, aged 51-60).*

Many of the teachers commented on the frustrations they had during the first few years of the BYOD scheme. Their frustrations included: not all devices having the same software, smartphone screens were too small, some devices were not charged and some were unusable because they were broken. Some parents could not afford to get broken devices fixed. Certain students spent a lot of time going back and forth to the library to issue and return a school-owned digital device for their use during a period. Some students had expensive laptops while others had very poor quality (cheap) digital notepads. Notably, almost all students have a smartphone (regardless of whether they have a laptop or tablet as well). When students logged in to the network, they sometimes had to wait for 10 minutes at heavy usage times. Some teachers did not think it was worth the hassle of trying
to use these devices during their teaching times because of the potential time waste so they resorted to using textbooks, or worksheets.

Consequently, parents and students became frustrated because it appeared the money spent on the devices was going to waste. Many teachers disliked the infiltration of smartphones as students tended to be focused on socialising or playing games rather than using the smartphone as their digital device for school work. Some teachers thought it was not possible to use smartphones as ‘proper’ digital devices. Students tended to not bring their devices every day because they were not used often enough. Some teachers get students to use their devices constantly, while other teachers only use a laptop for teaching purposes and do not ask students to utilise their device at all. Because students were allowed to bring and use their smartphones as part of the BYOD policy, the students were often using them, but teachers could not tell what kind of use they were using it for. A teacher of maths and business shared his frustration with the smartphones being part of the BYOD policy, especially as they fitted in the palm of students’ hands:

*it’s these devices the kids just want to use those as their device and mobile phones and that’s permissible under our policy and it’s not very successful trying to actually look at your mobile phone to look at your page of a textbook isn’t working and there’s just too much things like SnapChat and all those, it’s just too quick and easy for them to quickly do something silly and then sending it off to someone in another room that sort of thing, or they call and that little things about they’ve got their friend in 10D and they’re in 10B and that going on, saying you need to go to the toilet and stuff like that and meet up and so they’re using it for all the wrong reasons. I mean they can still do that with an iPad but at least the screen’s bigger and my old eyes can see what’s going*
on better on it too, I can spot when they’re doing the wrong thing easier (male, aged 51-60).

Consider the final vignette quite plausibly representative of a typical class at Mountview High School:

For a Humanities period, Ms Gray planned a lesson where she got all the class or 25 or so students to get their devices out to they could be used and then she finds:

1. Three devices automatically perform software updates.
2. The projector doesn’t work.
3. Six students don’t have their devices.
4. Four students forgot their passwords and can’t logon.
5. Two devices can’t connect to the network.
6. Seven devices don’t have the right program that Ms Gray wishes them to use.
7. Five devices are flat from previous use during the day. No chargers were brought to school.
8. There are multiple problems in one room.

Evident is the need to have a back-up plan (or three) when using digital technologies. I am not trying to be negative about the place and use of digital technologies within schools. But what must be present in these everyday classrooms is technical support, capacity and functionality, and ensuring compatible software or apps are ‘loaded’ and available. Additionally, the internal policies that govern the use of ICT and devices need to support the teachers’ ability, good-will and desire to implement an initiative (see Selwyn et al, 2018).
When digital technologies fail to enhance learning and teaching, the habitus of the new generates an embodied history and in this case creates conditions that would permeate its existence.

It was an accepted way of operating (a doxic practice), that of, if a student kept quiet and kept to themselves and were looking at their screen, then the teacher would not disturb the student and the student would not disrupt the teacher or their teaching. If students want to learn, they have the opportunity to do so. If students do not want to learn, they know that all they need to do is be quiet behind a screen. Furthermore, it appears easier to hide digital actions on a small screen.

In first conceptualising ‘habitus of the new’, Tarleton Gillespie et al was interested in exploring the ‘state of permanent novelty’ regarding the scholarship of new media (see Papacharissi et al, 2013). In this mismatch between contemporary digital practices of young people and the mediocre digital practices within some schools, what might be more appropriate to claim is a hysteresis of the habitus. Hysteresis points to a phenomenon where a physical property (in this case, digital schooling practices) lags behind changes in the effect causing it – contemporary digital practices. Furthermore, new media and Web 3.0 distinguishing characteristics means that our personal use of digital devices is invariably and specifically curated to our particular interests, wants and needs. Building on Wiklund and Andersson’s (2018) argument, the curricular versus non-curricular technology use dichotomy needs to be opened up.
If the internalised principles of the habitus are the principles which structure the culture, then ongoing practices are organised by principles of this structure (see Johnson, 2014). In other words,

The habitus which, at every moment, structures new experiences in accordance with the structures produced by past experiences, which are modified by the new experiences within the limits defined by their power of selection, brings about a unique integration, dominated by the earliest experiences ... (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 60)

The active presence is the product of the whole past (Bourdieu, 1990). Therefore, it seems that previous, perpetual use of social media that reinforces status, identity and power within a field and more broadly within society, is likely to continue in the present and into the future, enacting the habitus of the new. As these digital actors engage in their preferred leisure activities and social communication, their habitus generates an embodied history, and they continue to make further explorations and discoveries that refine their device use and subsequent choices, thereby creating conditions favourable to its existence. Their habitus continues to be constructed through these structuring structures (Bourdieu, 1991; Johnson, 2014).

Conclusion

In 2019, smartphones now have more technological capacity, power and memory than many of the first used personal computers of the 1980s. In this study, teachers were polarized about the value and usefulness of smartphones and their ability to replace a laptop or tablet. While a couple of those in leadership thought the smartphones did not
have limitations as such, other teachers noted that students viewed a smartphone as a toy, or something for fun, rather than something for ‘serious’ learning. They also highlighted that the small, covert screen (and not having a QWERTY hand-sized keyboard) were practical dysfunctional issues. Despite this, it was often observed that the so-called ‘serious’ devices (for learning) were often used to ‘work around’ teacher directives and enable students to game, socialize and listen to music which might constitute off-task behavior (see also Wiklund and Andersson, 2018). As detailed elsewhere (Selwyn et al, 2018; Selwyn et al, 2017), there are many crucial aspects for consideration in the schoolwide development and implementation of digital device policy and practices and their deployment in the bid to enhance learning and teaching.

It is evident that when seeking to incorporate digital devices within learning and teaching, functionality is not the only consideration. New media practices, digital sociality, implementation of policy, socio-economic challenges, pre- and post teacher education, information technology support, curriculum (including hidden, intended and enacted) and home environments all contributed to the digital doxic practices in this particular school. Indeed, digital doxic practices varied between classrooms, subjects, and their teachers, pointing to how the micro-context shapes expectations and performances. Ongoing tensions within the challenging field of teaching – some of which were identified here – continue to shape the digital practices or lack thereof. While there were many good intentions and careful planning for using digital devices with students, in reality, and even in the 21st Century, effective digital practices are not straightforward and using devices is not always predictable (Selwyn et al, 2018).
For many of the students at Mountview High, they were able to demonstrate agency via the habitus of the new through the ways they chose to engage with their device, the times they chose to do so, and the ways they ‘worked around’ teacher directives. Within the structures of contemporary schooling, the affordances of social media (via digital devices) enable agency through habituated actions. The convergence of technologies, media, spaces and practices (Papacharissi and Easton, 2013) provide ongoing challenges for schooling as the production and authorship of digital practices are enabled and sustained.

The original intentions of how a digital device might be used in the classroom has clashed with the actual performance of how these technologies are actually used (Papacharissi and Easton, 2013). Ways of moving and ways of acting (everyday doxic practices) are being shaped through the use of and observation of others’ use of digital devices. These learned habits, bodily skills, styles and tastes that might be said to ‘go without saying’ or ‘taken for granted’ are part of the lives of these young people. The habitus of the new that these young digital actors espouse is not aligned with contemporary schooling. In applying the concept of the habitus of the new to these digital practices, it is evident there is a mismatch between new media, sociality and schooling. In students’ bid to be socially oriented and to author and share stories about themselves through new media, the schooling practices they experience tend to be at odds with their sociality and their habitus of the new.

**Funding details:** This work was supported by the Australian Research Council [grant number DP140101258].

**Disclosure statement**
No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

Biography: Dr Nicola F. Johnson is an associate professor in the School of Education at Edith Cowan University, Australia. Nicola researches peoples' use (of all ages) of digital technologies for formal and informal learning and leisure.

Acknowledgements: The author acknowledges the support of the Victorian Department of Education.

References


