

Editorial

Making the case for Pedagogies for Justice

... it is through pedagogies that education gets done. (Lingard 2007: 247)

This special issue represents some of the recent research from the *Pedagogies for Justice Research Group* (as part of the *Centre for Research in Education*) at the University of South Australia. The *Pedagogies for Justice Research Group* was established in 2013, and we have convened a National workshop/conference and a number of Symposia at the Australian Association for Research in Education, (AARE) Conference in Adelaide (2013) and in Brisbane (2014). The four papers in this edition have evolved from these events.

Our research in part is the response of educators to our present era, marked by compounding and escalating global challenges – climate change, loss of biodiversity, growth in population, a widening gap between rich and poor, competition for finite resources, geopolitical instability and rapidly changing technology. Put simply, we advocate for pedagogies that enable critical, creative and imaginative thought, a project that has a long history and one that is now urgent. Whilst Federal and State governments (Labor and Liberal Coalition) promote education policies that narrowly prescribe teachers' work and reduce the curriculum to translating pre-determined content into practice, the *Pedagogies for Justice Research Group* advocate a counter-position to speak back to the limiting effects of such policies on teaching and learning, and the longer term effects on how teachers and students understand themselves in relation to society and the environment.

Our research program focuses on the urgent (inter)national problem of social injustice and schooling. In Australia, there seems to be little argument that the problem of educational inequality is substantial and persistent. Historically, policy logics of the welfare state did make some inroads into ameliorating education inequality, with the shift in logic from 'compensation for deficit' to 'curriculum justice' and inclusive teaching approaches especially during the 1980s. But evidence mounts that policy settings of the past two decades have made little impact on how schools contribute to the production of inequality (Luke 1997; Teese and Polesel 2003). As an example, OECD studies indicate that Australia has a 'low equity' (McGaw 2004) education system, understood here to mean that Australian schooling produces a small highly educated elite and a long tail of educational under-achievement (Vickers 2005). In recent years, 'the link between educational outcomes and social background continues to be misunderstood as representing some kind of 'natural' relationship between socio-economic disadvantage and school failure' (Hayes et al 2009; 252). Whilst such deficit thinking has been comprehensively challenged (Lareau 1987; Hattam & Prosser 2008) there has been a return 'to blaming the poor for their lack of success at school' (Hayes et al 2009: 252). As well, neoliberal forms of accountability are also giving rise to 'increasing specification of curricula and classroom practice' (Lingard 2007) and hence a normalizing of highly scripted forms of teaching, and teaching to the test (Au 2007). This issue matters for a number of reasons, including because of the personal and community costs of educational inequality and difficult educational transitions, including financial insecurity, unemployment or reduced job opportunities, lost productivity and increased welfare costs (Muir et al 2009, p. 37). Simply put, continued educational inequality means a waste of talent, creativity and opportunity. Without new knowledge about how to sustain pedagogical and curriculum change in disadvantaged schools these policies will be unrealized.

Internationally, and in Australia there has been a long history of research in education focused on advancing democracy, social justice, and more recently environmental sustainability. For the past few decades this research has been framed in the field of Curriculum Studies, but the field has shifted recently with the emergence of what Green (2003) calls the 'New Pedagogy Studies' (p. 18). The term 'pedagogy' is a keyword in the field of education and increasingly in the related fields of cultural studies, media studies and social theory more generally (Morton & Zavarzadeh 1991). Some now even claim that we live in a 'totally pedagogized society', a society in which all sites of socialization and work become, in effect, pedagogical sites (Bernstein 2001; Ball 2009). Lingard (2007) captures a key rationale for new pedagogy studies in his phrase: 'it is through pedagogies that education gets done' (p. 247). Invoking the term pedagogy, foregrounds the 'why' questions, and links educational practice explicitly to debates over purposes, and against defining teaching/ learning/ education to a prescription of methods or highly scripted approaches that undermine local interpretation.

Borrowing from Jenny Gore (1993), the papers in this special edition, engage with two modalities for debate in New Pedagogy Studies: pedagogy as politics, and pedagogy as practice. Each of the papers shuttles between these two modes and specifically this special edition ponders:

- examining citizen science approaches to science and sustainability that aim to educate in the public culture, and in schools;
- developing socially-just pedagogies for senior secondary physical education,
- anti-racism and pre-service teacher education; and
- pedagogies for inclusion of students with disabilities in a national curriculum;

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