THE UNFINISHED PROJECT OF CRITICAL PEDAGOGY

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Main moves for this paper

Propositions

1. There is serious disconnect between the challenges of our nation and dominant framing of schooling policy

2. There are various ‘games of truth’ in play in our space and many of them are counter-productive for teachers

3. The project of ‘critical pedagogy’ provides conceptual resources for social critique and for thinking about ‘teaching and learning’
Preamble
I think there's a basic flaw in the rationalist existentialism at the point of impact.

Believe me, the question of neo-narcissistic diversionary quasi-neo-nihilism is in fact inapplicable...

The Last Diatribe of the Serrenghetto
Sir... sir!
... it was the Prime Minister who wrote it sir...
John Howard did it.

The teacher is a loser and the school is crap.
Finding 5
The performance of Australia’s schooling system is about more than just literacy and numeracy results in national and international assessments and Year 12 or equivalent attainment rates. Defining and measuring the broader schooling outcomes is difficult and requires further development and information gathering if Australia wants to be able to gauge the effectiveness of its schooling system as a whole.

Finding 24
An evidence base is emerging from National Partnership arrangements demonstrating that investment in integrated strategies that are responsive to local circumstances and need can be effective in improving outcomes for disadvantaged students. Critical elements in these strategies include building teacher capacity, strengthening instructional leadership and engaging parents and the broader community.
**Recommendation 5**

The Australian Government and the states and territories, in consultation with the non-government school sector, should make reducing educational disadvantage a high priority in a new funding model. This will require resourcing to be targeted towards supporting the most disadvantaged students and should:

- capture variation in performance within categories of disadvantaged students
- significantly increase support to schools that enrol students who experience multiple factors of disadvantage
- significantly increase support to schools that have high concentrations of disadvantaged students.
Subtext

I write this paper out of some despair at the what is going on in and around schooling in Australia and especially the appalling public debate and the general direction of policy. And because policy processes are now mangled inside of media culture then these 2 are connected.

Most significant is the denial of increasing inequality and the lack of attention to the role that schooling plays in its (re)production.

In Education Studies, the ‘critical pedagogy’ movement provides a space for debate about these matters and this paper makes a case for its ongoing rejuvination and especially focus on contemporary translation of ‘critical pedagogy’ into ‘actually existing’ schools.
The presentation draws its title from a famous paper by Habermas, published when there was a lot of debate in the social sciences about postmodernity. ..and with some arguing that our age was definitively new, after modernity ...

‘Modernity revolts against the normalizing functions of tradition; modernity lives on the experience of rebelling against all that is normative’ (p. 5) .....  

‘linking between the progress of truth and the history of liberty’ (Foucault, 2007, p. 110) ... knowledge/ (reason) leads to liberation .. Rethinking the link between will, authority and reason ..
Hunter (1997) distinguishes four different senses for the term ‘critical’.

Firstly, the word ‘critical’ refers to carping or fault-finding: ‘

Second, there is literary criticism ...

Thirdly, a broad field of social criticism

Fourthly, Kantian and post-Kantian critical philosophy’ (p. 27)
...Kantian and post-Kantian critical philosophy’ (p. 27) ... ‘drawing on a variety of post-Kantian improvisations on the critical thematic’ (p. 27).

‘What is the reason we use? What are its historical effects? What are its limits and what are its dangers? How can we exist as rational beings, fortunately committed to practicing a rationality that is unfortunately crisscrossed by intrinsic dangers?’ (Foucault 1984b: 249)
CRITICAL PEDAGOGY

• Invokes post-Kantian notion of being ‘critical’
• Where ‘education studies’ intersects with critical social theory
• Reflexive educational movement, where curriculum and pedagogy studies collides with concerns for justice,
• site of ongoing conceptual invigoration from theory and practice
• Skeptical towards ‘common sense’ ‘official knowledge’
• Pushes for analyses that are sensitive to power relations or power/knowledge
• Committed to social justice
Proposition 1: There is serious disconnect between the challenges of our nation and dominant framing of schooling policy

Increasing inequality whilst concern for social justice disappears

‘Back to basics’ curriculum that ignores the challenges of the times and decades of pedagogy studies
  • Increasing cultural diversity
  • The crisis of science
  • Semiotic society

A de-democratising of the nation, more authoritarian governmentality, pushing teachers towards highly scripted pedagogies
Schools to go back to basics to lift flagging literacy

October 17, 2008

Farrah Tomazin

ENGLISH will be stripped back to basics under a draft national curriculum so students learn more about grammar, punctuation and spelling in a bid to raise flagging literacy standards in schools.

Decades after English shifted dramatically in the 1970s away from a grammar-based curriculum to a more literary approach, schools are set to reinstate phonics – the explicit teaching of letter-sound combinations – as a routine method to help students learn to read and write.

Digital technology and multimedia will also be classified as literary texts, and children will study literature as early as kindergarten under what is set to be the biggest revamp of English in years.

"The explicit teaching of (phonics) and of other aspects of written and spoken English should be regarded as an important aspect of the English curriculum and therefore as routine," says the draft curriculum, produced by an advisory group led by controversial academic Peter Freebody.
The changes, however, are likely to reignite the long-standing debate about how English is best taught: through phonics, or through the "whole language" method—a mostly activities-based approach, in which teachers read to children and use the stories to guide them to recognise common words and some basic letter-sound combinations.

Professor Freebody has been a contentious figure in the literacy debate, partly for his advocacy of "critical literacy", which opponents—including the Federal Opposition—claim is too postmodern and removed from the basic mechanics of language and phonics favoured by traditionalists.

Professor Freebody said yesterday he did not wish to get involved in the political debate, but defended his advocacy of critical literacy. He said he did not want critical literacy to be imposed or preoccupy the curriculum, but it should be part of the way in which English is taught.

"We've come out of a century where there has been so much violence and so much oppression that has come from propaganda, and I want kids in our society to have the capability, when appropriate, to look at the ways in which text might be manipulating them," he said.
Phonics, faith and coding for primary school kids

THE AUSTRALIAN | SEPTEMBER 19, 2015 12:00AM

Natasha Bita
National correspondent
Brisbane

Federal Education Minister Christopher Pyne says the changes would resolve ‘overcrowding’ in the primary school curriculum.

Australia’s “Christian heritage” will be taught in schools in a slimmed-down national curriculum that focuses on phonics to improve children’s reading.

History and geography have been scrapped as stand-alone subjects, in a back-to-basics return to traditional teaching.

But 21st-century computer coding will be taught in primary school, starting in Year 5, in the new curriculum endorsed by Australia’s education ministers yesterday.

Indigenous issues have been cut from parts of the curriculum, and students will no longer be taught about Harmony Week, National Reconciliation Week, or NAIDOC (National Aborigines and Islanders Day Observance Committee) week.

Students will continue to learn about Australia Day, Anzac Day and National Sorry Day. The Year 6 study of the contribution of “individuals and groups” to Australian society will no longer include a reference to indigenous people or migrants, and will be confined to the post-Federation period.

The existing requirement to study Australia’s connection to Asia has been deleted from the new curriculum.

Australia’s “Christian heritage” will be taught for the first time, in lessons on “how Australia is a secular nation and a multi-faith society”. Teachers will instruct students that Australia’s democratic system of government is based on the Westminster system, although specific references to the monarchy, parliaments and courts have been removed from the curriculum.
De Blasio Says to Tackle Inequities, School Kids Must Go Back to the Basics
PM calls for schools to go back to basics

PRIME Minister Tony Abbott believes sending schools back to basics, as recommended in the national curriculum review, will boost the economy and students' job prospects.
Christopher Pyne, appearing on ABC Lateline a week ago, said:

"Before 1788, our history was Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and history almost exclusively. Since that time, obviously since colonisation, Western civilisation, our Judeo-Christian heritage has been the basis of our development as a nation."

And Tony Abbott, the Prime Minister of Australia, has also said this year:

"The First Fleet was the defining moment in the history of this continent."
Commentary: To offset poverty’s effects, go back to basics on education

12:00 a.m. Wednesday, Sept. 9, 2015 | Filed in: Opinion

A recent study reminded me of what every teacher already knows: There is a link between poverty and poor academic performance.

The study, by researchers at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, found that poverty affects parts of the brain tied to self-control, attention, planning and other traits important for success in school. The study estimated that as much as 20 percent of the gap in test scores of children who live in poverty could be explained by slower development in two parts of the brain.

Obviously, we need to address causes of poverty. But until that happens, we must help those children already in need. How? By using research-proven methods to boost students’ skills in the early years. By testing kids before kindergarten to determine
School report calls for teachers to go ‘back to basics’ on grammar, punctuation and reading

October 12, 2014 5:04pm
Samantha Maiden  Herald Sun
An Australian take on Thomas Piketty’s ‘Capital in the Twenty-first Century’

Is the growth of inequality inevitable?

BY ANDREW LEIGH
Then came the second rise in inequality, which has yet to peak. Since the mid 1970s, real earnings for the top tenth have risen by 59%, while for the bottom tenth they have risen by just 15%. Today, the three richest Australians have more wealth than the million poorest. They are likely to pass their privileged position on to their heirs; three of the five richest people on the 2013 BRW Rich List themselves received multi-million-dollar inheritances.
If Australia continues to become more unequal – as Piketty’s capital theory suggests it might – then it will become increasingly difficult to hang on to these values. A veneer of fairness might persist, but a shallow equality of manners would be a poor substitute for the deeper egalitarianism that has traditionally characterised our nation. How much should we let inequality grow? There is no right answer to this question, but we should not shrink from asking it.
THE WITCH IS DEAD BUT SPELL REMAINS
Goal 10: Reduce inequality within and among countries
- On average—and taking into account population size—income inequality increased by 11 per cent in developing countries between 1990 and 2010.

- A significant majority of households in developing countries—more than 75 per cent of the population—are living today in societies where income is more unequally distributed than it was in the 1990s.

- Evidence shows that, beyond a certain threshold, inequality harms growth and poverty reduction, the quality of relations in the public and political spheres and individuals’ sense of fulfilment and self-worth.

- There is nothing inevitable about growing income inequality; several countries have managed to contain or reduce income inequality while achieving strong growth performance.

- Income inequality cannot be effectively tackled unless the underlying inequality of opportunities is addressed.

- In a global survey conducted by UN Development Programme, policy makers from around the world acknowledged that inequality in their countries is generally high and potentially a threat to long-term social and economic development.

- Evidence from developing countries shows that children in the poorest 20 per cent of the populations are still up to three times more likely to die before their fifth birthday than children in the richest quintiles.

- Social protection has been significantly extended globally, yet persons with disabilities are up to five times more likely than average to incur catastrophic health expenditures.

- Despite overall declines in maternal mortality in the majority of developing countries, women in rural areas are still up to three times more likely to die while giving birth than women living in urban centres.
The top 25 hedge fund managers make more...

...than every kindergarten teacher in America—combined.

The class-warfare rhetoric has been a theme of Clinton's campaign. She officially announced her candidacy in April via a YouTube video in which she complained "the deck is still stacked in favor of
Gross income of households by income quintiles

Annual amount, average for each quintile, 2013-14

Source: ABS 6523.0, Table 1, derived Get the data
For sanity's sake, don't let a class war zealot and the SNP destroy our economy - and our very nation

By DAILY MAIL COMMENT

PUBLISHED: 10:00 EST, 6 May 2015 | UPDATED: 21:31 EST, 6 May 2015

As the polling stations open tomorrow for this vitally important election that will define Britain's economic future, a million more people will be going to work than five years ago.
Class war dreaming

Thursday, 24 May 2012

The Australian’s portrayal of Labor’s class war. They wish.
ALP is reviving class warfare over super: Mathias Cormann

Finance Minister Mathias Cormann has accused Labor of attempting to re-run a “class war against Australians saving for their retirement” by proposing fresh changes to superannuation tax concessions.

The Coalition’s economic team of Joe Hockey and Senator Cormann yesterday rejected suggestions the government was sending mixed policy signals by tightening the Age Pension assets test but refusing to act on wealthy retirees accessing millions in tax-free income from their super earnings.
"More than Half Of American Households ... Do Not Pay Any Taxes At All." During the July 27
Commentary: ‘Shock Doctrine,’ Reaganomics trigger explosive class war

SAN LUIS OBISPO, Calif. (MarketWatch) — Yes, “there’s class warfare, all right,” warns Warren Buffett. “But it’s my class, the rich class, that’s making war, and we’re winning.” Yes, the rich are making war against us. And yes, they are winning. Why? Because so many are fighting this new American Civil War between the rich and the rest.

Not just the 16 new GOP governors in Wisconsin, Michigan, Ohio, Florida, and across America fighting for new powers. Others include: Chamber of Commerce billionaires, Koch brothers, Forbes 400, Karl Rove’s American Crossroads, Grover Norquist’s Americans for Tax Reform — which now has 97% of House Republicans and 85% of the GOP Senators signed on his “no new taxes” pledge — the Tea Party and Reaganomics ideologues.
The end of the age of entitlement

April 19, 2012

Joe Hockey

This is the text of Shadow Treasurer Joe Hockey's speech to the Institute of economic affairs in London on April 17, 2012.

Introduction
I wish to thank my friends at the Institute of Economic Affairs for the opportunity to discuss an issue that has been the source of much debate in this forum for sometime....that is, the end of an era of popular universal entitlement.

There is nothing much new in the debate other than the fact that action has now been forced on governments as a result of the recent financial crisis. Years of warnings have been ignored but the reality can no longer be avoided.

Despite an ageing population and a higher standard of living than that enjoyed by our children, western democracies in particular have been reluctant to wind back universal access to payments and entitlements from the state.

As we have already witnessed, it is not popular to take entitlements away from millions of voters in countries with frequent elections.

It is ironic that the entitlement system seems to be most obvious and prevalent in some of the most democratic societies. Most undemocratic nations are simply unable to afford the
End the Age of Entitlement

Stop the reckless and feckless profiting at the expense of the more prudent who subsidise their follies

Terry Barnes 19 October 2013
Leading Articles

Welcome to your preview of The Times

Ending the Age of Entitlement

Tony Abbott’s crackdown on Australian welfare is a radical experiment in economic reform
The Advertiser

NEWS

Murdoch supports end of age of entitlement

AAP  APRIL 30, 2014 2:01PM

MODEL and TV personality Sarah Murdoch has thrown her support behind the Abbott government’s call for an end to the “age of entitlement”.

Speaking in Sydney alongside federal Social Services Minister Kevin Andrews at the launch of
Krugman: Rich are waging “pure class warfare”

The Nobel Prize-winning New York Times columnist argues the rich are even more selfish than you thought

ELIAS ISQUITH

TOPICS: PAUL KRUGMAN, CLASS WARFARE, NEW YORK TIMES, THE 1 PERCENT, WALL STREET, BAILOUTS, POLITICS
The Age Of Entitlement Really Is Over

Economics & Deregulation | John Roskam
Australian Financial Review 1st November, 2013

The hardest task in life is to say no to someone you care about. A weak government tends to give its citizens everything they wish for. A strong government has the will to say "NO!"

That's from Joe Hockey's The End of the Age of Entitlement speech at the Institute of Economic Affairs in London in April last year. The NO in capital letters is exactly as in Hockey's original.

It's an important speech and a good one.
Gina Rinehart hits out at welfare recipients and the Left for dragging Australia into debt

JENNIFER SEXTON BUSINESS EDITOR  THE DAILY TELEGRAPH  MARCH 07, 2014 12:00AM
We need to be lifters, not leaners, if nation is to thrive

THE AUSTRALIAN | MARCH 10, 2012 12:00AM
"STRIVING TO ACHIEVE EQUALITY IS NOT THE ROLE OF THE GOVERNMENT"
‘Poorest people either don’t have cars or actually don’t drive very far in many cases.’

Treasurer Joe Hockey, on the impact of the proposed fuel excise increase

Hockey’s ‘poor don’t drive’ claim fuels row
A PREVAILING myth of Australia’s left-leaning education establishment is that increased funding of government schools leads to improved educational outcomes.

Analysis of the OECD’s Program for International Student Assessment international tests across the past 14 years, however, shows increasing expenditure is not the solution.

The OECD’s Education at a Glance 2000, analysing results for 25 countries, including high-performing nations such as Japan and South Korea, concludes: “There seems to be neither a strong nor a consistent relationship between the volume of resources invested nationally and student outcomes.”
Austerity: punishing the poor for the mistakes of the rich.
PEOPLE IN THE LABOUR FORCE WITH UNIVERSITY QUALIFICATIONS
As a percentage of the labour force
HIGH INCOME HOUSEHOLDS

Per cent
- 37.6 or more
- 26.5 - 37.6
- 17.2 - 26.5
- 9.8 - 17.2
- Less than 9.8

Kilometres
PROPOSITION 2. There are various ‘games of truth’ in play in our space and many of them are counter-productive for teachers.

There are multiple ‘games of truth’ in play in our space including those played by ‘science,’ government and media culture.

Unfortunately the truths of practitioners are mostly ignored.
Régime of truth & games of truth

Media culture
Mediatising machine

‘Policy’

‘Science’
Régime of truth

Each society has its régime of truth, its ‘general politics of truth’: that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanism and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true (Foucault Truth and power p. 131).

Neoliberalism, neo-conservatism, religious fundamentalism, ....School effectiveness and School Improvement
Games of truth

There is more heterogeneity of truth practices than Foucault’s over-emphasis on scientific and quasi-scientific modalities. Truth is not singular and hence we could map the different games of truth. How things are made to appear, how they come to be represented, and how the relation between things and words is formulated. Weir identifies 4 different games: veridical, governmental, symbolic, and mundane.

**Scientific knowledge is veridical** ... ‘truth is simply what science speaks’ ... scientific truth is provisional, ...a self-correcting discourse normatively oriented to truth.

**Symbolic** ... supposes things can exist without being present and can only be made present by representation. The transcendent, the sovereign, the people, democracy,..

**Governmental** ... aimed at the management of conduct by authorities ... epistemologically unstable ... acts to render things present by representing them ... spans veridical and symbolic truth ... non-truth appears as both error and disorder.

**Mundane** ... or common knowledge ... truth comprises a normative standard to which people regularly appeal. And hence invokes a moral economy and accountability ... Lying forms mundane truth’s opposite.
Régime of truth & games of truth

Multiple truth games:
- Governmental
- Veridical
- Polemical
- Sophistry

Media culture
Mediatising machine

Governmental truth games

Veridical truth games

‘Policy’

‘Science’
Many more games of truth

Postmodern conservatives ... Putin and unreality .. The game of truth in which ‘Truth’ has nothing to do with it ...

Polemics ... Foucault introduces 3 models: religious, judiciary and political

In heresiology ... the task of determining the intangible point of dogma ..and hence to denounce the moral failing of the other ..

In judiciary practice ... polemics allows for no possibility of equal discussion ... it examines the case; it isn’t dealing with an interlocator, it is processing a suspect; it collects proofs of his guilt, designates the infraction he has committed, and pronounces the verdict and sentences him.

In the political model ... defines alliances, recruits partisans, unites interests or opinions, represents a party; it establishes the other as an enemy, an upholder of opposed interests against which one must flight until the moment the enemy is defeated and either surrenders or disappears..
Truth for governing

Govern-mentality is focused on governing populations
We need to be knowable to be governable
The etymology of the term statistics ..data about the state, signifying the ‘science of state’ ...

Truth for policy makers .... the knowledge interest is focused on control of populations .. ‘the conduct of conduct’ ... mostly pretends universality, context-free, interested in ‘what works’, overly simplistic, technical solutions, simple-minded idea about causality, hides its will to power through claims to scientific objectivity
TO: ALL STAFF OF SCHOOLS WITH R-10 ENROLMENTS

RE: DECD CURRICULUM PEDAGOGY ASSESSMENT AND REPORTING POLICY AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM R-10

Curriculum, pedagogy, assessment and reporting are the core work of teachers. The development and implementation of the Australian Curriculum as part of the national education reform agenda, combined with the Brighter Futures initiative, provides us with the opportunity to renew our commitment to higher standards of engagement and achievement for each and every student.

These documents will be provided to you in hard copy via the next Info Connect.

The *Curriculum, Pedagogy, Assessment and Reporting Policy for Reception–Year 10*
- establishes expectations about delivering curriculum to optimise learning for all students from Reception–Year 10;
- is a required policy for all DECD school principals, staff and school communities;
- requires teachers in DECD schools to base their teaching on the *Teaching for Effective Learning Framework* to ensure that how they design learning for students with the Australian Curriculum improves student engagement, intellectual challenge and achievement; and
- makes explicit requirements for assessing and reporting on students’ progress to parents and carers.
Recent demand for evidence-based policy

Contemporary logics of neoliberal schooling policy

Marketising version of ‘local school management’ ... public schools should be like private schools, Private is good, public is bad ...

School reform should be driven by ‘parental choice’ ... there is a level playing field ... and all parents get to choose ... families are autonomous and responsible ... the ‘good’ parent sends their children to private school ... public school teachers don’t have values

Schools and teachers should be accountable ... and learning can be measured by high stakes testing (NAPLAN) and making it public (MySchool website) improves schools... that high stakes testing are valid and reliable .. they improve student learning ...
Figure 1: Distribution of students by socio-educational advantage quarter, by sector, 2010

Note: Percentages do not total 100 due to rounding.
Source: ACARA dataset 2011.
The Inside Scoop on the Texas Miracle

By dianeravitch
August 11, 2012

Hey, I'm a historian and it's my job to have a long memory, but I know that many people don't remember how the whole nation got stuck with this crazy No Child Left Behind law.

Back in 2000, when George W. Bush was running for president, he talked about the Texas miracle. There was a secret formula, he said, and it was really simple: Test every child every year. If scores go up, the school gets honored, maybe even a bonus. And if the scores drop or go flat, the school is humiliated.

How easy. Testing! Accountability! And look what happened, or so he said: The test scores went up, the dropout rate went down, and the achievement gap was closing.

That sounded so totally wonderful (and almost cost-free except for buying lots more tests) that Congress decided everyone should do it and they passed NCLB. The law ended up on President Bush's desk in January 2002, and he proudly signed it, with Democrats and Republicans together behind him.

True bipartisanship.

Now we look around at the wreckage and we see that lots of children are still left behind.

What happened? Here is a good place to find out. There was no Texas miracle.
In Punchy New Memoir, Former Education Czar Joel Klein Defends His Record

Sitting in a glassed-in conference room in Midtown, Joel Klein is intense and attentive, soft-spoken in the manner of a man who is long accustomed to being heard. In his latest incarnation, Mr. Klein heads up Amplify, a Rupert Murdoch-backed initiative to sell education technology and data-tracking tools in a tablet. Despite the start-up feel of Amplify’s reception room—blackboard walls graffitied in pastel chalk—the actual workspace is pure News Corp: silent, with stations in orderly rows and no chatter. Also, no skateboards or nap rooms: Tablet tech is serious business.

Until January 2010, Mr. Klein was the longest-serving schools chancellor in the postwar era, holding his post for more than eight years under Mayor Michael Bloomberg. The education czar’s impact was so profound that his protégées have now seeded market-based, and often highly politicized, education reform agendas across the country; scores of principals and superintendents have been weaned on his philosophy. Now, with the benefit of three years’ hindsight, Mr. Klein, 68, has written Lessons of Hope: How to Fix Our Schools, out this month from HarperCollins (yet another News Corp subsidiary!). The man has his synergy down.
SCHOOL EFFECTIVENESS AND SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

The critiques can be grouped under the following broad headings:

1. Abuse by Government

2. Oversimplification of the complex 'causalities' associated with schooling and sidetracking into focusing on 'league tables'.

3. That 'theory' in SE work is little more than reification of empirical relationships

4. Too much SE research is simply poor quality

...pretends to objectivity, value free, unbiased, evidence-based ... but then offers decontextualised accounts, often in the form of lists of factors, that assume a correspondence between their knowledge and reality ... usually banal, offering little insight into actually existing schools ... of course this form of knowledge provides those governing with power/knowledge for the purposes of control.
In an environment where parts of society, or even states, define themselves and justify their actions through a fundamentalism which is rooted in a specific mode of reading (literalism), the critical form of reading (attention to ambiguity, rhetorical structuration, the destructive effect of figuration on the notion of the proper, the literal, the singular, the monadic) becomes a potentially radical force in the battle against centralism, totalitarianism, fundamentalism, anti-humanistic assertions of univocal meaning. It is time, in fact, that we recognized that the deconstruction of orthodox modes of ‘humanism’ is not so much the birth of an ‘anti-humanism’ but implies a reassertion of the human values of plurality, dissent, difference, fiction.
Texas GOP rejects ‘critical thinking’ skills. Really.

By Valerie Strauss  July 9, 2012  Follow @valeriestrauss

(Update: Stephen Colbert’s take; other details)

In the you-can’t-make-up-this-stuff department, here’s what the Republican Party of Texas wrote into its 2012 platform as part of the section on education:

Knowledge-Based Education – We oppose the teaching of Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) (values clarification), critical thinking skills and similar programs that are simply a relabeling of Outcome-Based Education (OBE) (mastery learning) which focus on behavior modification and have the purpose of challenging the student’s fixed beliefs and undermining parental authority.
PROPOSITION 3. The project of ‘critical pedagogy’ provides conceptual resources for social critique and for thinking about ‘teaching and learning’

If we are take up the problem of inequality in schooling then we need to:

• Foreground the existential classroom challenges of teachers

• Sustain school-based professional learning communities that enable teachers to design curriculum that is negotiated locally and pedagogy that demands high expectations
Redesigning Pedagogies in the North
Australian Research Council Linkage Project

- Hawke Research Institute (UniSA)
- NASSPN
- the Australian Education Union
- the Social Inclusion Unit.
- PhD student, 2 honours students
The Research Team

Robert Hattam, Phil Cormack, Barbara Comber, Marie Brennan, Lew Zipin, Alan Reid, David Lloyd, Helen Nixon, Bill Lucas, Brenton Prosser, Andrew Bills, Kathy Brady, Pipa Milroy John Walsh, Faye McCallum, Kathy Paige and Sam Sellar

30 teachers from the northern Adelaide Public secondary schools
NEGOTIATING THE CURRICULUM
a teacher–student partnership

Edited by Garth Boomer
It’s a curriculum and pedagogy problem

Unless we solve the pedagogy problem, all other efforts at reconstruction ... will be in vain. The curriculum is, in the final analysis, what teachers enact in classrooms. (Boomer, 1999, p. 136)

It is through pedagogies that education gets done. (Lingard, 2007, p. 247)
It’s about relationships!
It’s about educative relationships!
Lifeworld knowledge
• funds of knowledge
• place
• vernacular literacy
• popular culture
• out-of-school learning sites

Subject discipline
• vocabulary
• deep understanding
• skills
• understandings
• literate practice
• numeracy

STUDENTS

TEACHER

KNOWLEDGE & IDENTITY
The ‘complicated conversation’ ...

The students
- Their lifeworlds
- Sense of Identity
- Sense of place
- What most existential? – generative themes

academic knowledge

TEACHERS’ WORK
- Curriculum
- Pedagogy

the ‘times’
- Social, technological, cultural, political
- What’s most topical?

Most significant learning processes
- Deep understandings
- Skills
- Academic themes
strong connectedness

• diet / fast food
• issues from lifeworld that need solving (claymations)
• biography of older family member
• popular culture; body piercing & self mutilation; punk & anarchy; goths/emo
• local community (place and library and person) for research
• design and budget for recreation areas
• peer tutoring to form a band and play rock song
• interview of expert in high interest area
• science in the local wetlands
• mobile phone data
• youth culture identity research and presentation
• photostory literacy work based on personal/cultural stories
• problem solving issues in the local area
• local/school groups and legal studies
• exploring local safety through maths
• history of local buildings (esp. pubs!)
• class newspaper on all sorts of issues
perform their learning

- Photostory in literacy
- Claymation in Art
- Podcasts in science
- Powerpoint in Maths
- Model making in maths/SOSE
- Oral presentation (videoed)
A RPiN Process...

- develop and sustain professional learning communities that enable teacher inquiry into reinvigorating curriculum and pedagogy in the middle years;

- support teachers to research their students as people and as learners;

- support teachers to be involved in projects that aim for substantial improvements in the quality and quantity of student school work;

- provide a range of resources, (including planning time, critical friends, curriculum materials, expertise) to assist in the success of research projects and curriculum work.
The pedagogical challenge: take 1

• striking a balance between: (a) inclusive use of the ‘funds of knowledge’ that diverse students bring to school; and (b) redistribution of the ‘cultural capital’ – through explicit teaching and effective practice – that ensures success in mainstream academic terms.

• about finding ways to integrate lifeworld and subject discipline knowledges in ways that don’t trivialise either?
The pedagogical challenge: take 2

• how to sustain high expectations for student learning and positive relationships. Alternatively, worded as: how to sustain educative relationships?
Funds of knowledge

‘people are competent and have knowledge, and their life experiences have given them that knowledge’ (Gonzalez & Moll 2002: 625).

With these issues in mind, Thomson has coined a term—the virtual school bag—that invokes positive content for the knowledges that all students bring along to school.

If students aren’t learning how to study their own lives at school what is the point?
Located in Place

From a standpoint of local knowledge, this approach analyses more ‘abstract’ knowledge from familiar places. It documents regional cultures, maps community assets, researches local environmental phenomena, gets students to identify and investigate school/community issues, and creates internship and entrepreneurial opportunities for students to think through relations between vocations.

Why isn’t the local school the repository for knowledge about that community?
Five common elements of place-based approaches:

1. teachers and students focus on immediate phenomena as the foundation for curriculum
2. an emphasis on learning experiences that allow students to become creators of knowledge rather than consumers of knowledge created by others
3. students’ questions and concerns play a central role in determining what is studied
4. teachers act as experienced guides, co-learners, and brokers of community resources and learning possibilities
5. the wall between school and community becomes more permeable and is crossed frequently p.593

A local literacies approach provides students with opportunities to make connections between their linguistic, cultural, world knowledge and experience and the topics, skills and competencies demanded by the official curriculum.

Having an interest in local literacies, teachers recognise ‘their students as master interpreters and canny theorists of the culture they inhabit’ (McLaughlin, 1996, p. 154)
Identity formed by popular culture

educators cannot assume that students are passive receptors of media, popular culture or youth culture nor can we assume that they will be interested in any part of youth culture.

there is a risk that popular culture is used to engage or entertain students, but it does not stretch them academically. Curriculum planning needs to consider how studying youth and popular culture will teach skills and provide academic rigor.

the power of popular culture needs to be open to critique.
Engaged in out-of-school learning sites

• finding creative ways to learn about what is most existential for their students;
• being able to negotiate with students the themes to study, learning processes, and assessment practice;
• establishing the classroom as a research centre and teaching students to conduct their own inquiries;
• providing space for students to develop the capacity as canny theorists of the cultures they inhabit, and
• providing opportunities for students to take an active role in addressing the specific social issues they have identified and to critically reflect on the action taken.
The pedagogical challenge

How do I sustain high expectations for student learning and positive relationships?

How can I make my research into student lifeworlds pedagogically viable?

How can I prepare my students to perform their learning for an ‘authentic’ audience?

How can I scaffold student learning that enables them to become independent learners?

How do I negotiate the curriculum?
But then a number of things ensure from that:

• the difficult work of **sustaining ‘dialogic relations’** in classrooms;
• of finding creative ways to learn about **what is most existential for their students**;
• of being able to **negotiate with students** the themes to study, learning processes, and assessment practice;
• of establishing the **classroom as a research centre** and teaching students to conduct their own inquiries;
• of providing space for **students to develop the capacity** as canny theorists of the cultures they inhabit, and finally,
• of providing opportunities for students to take an **active role in addressing the specific social issues** they have identified and to critically reflect on the action taken.